

Linguistic Convergence: Medical Terms and Poetry in Translation

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Abstract: Poetic imagination serves as the driving force behind poetry, as it merges emotional depth, intellectual exploration, embodying the poet's innermost thoughts and feelings. Rooted in the poet's experiences, imagination conjures up images that reflect a spectrum of emotions, desires, and states of mind. The poet Iuliana Lungu makes a significant impact in Romanian literature, using her expertise in psychology and psychotherapy, the author navigates the complexities of the human psyche adeptly in her writing. Through her literary creations, she reveals hidden emotions, passions, and struggles with skill, demonstrating a deep understanding of the diverse aspects of human experience.

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1. Introduction

Based on the famous statement of the writer William Wordsworth, “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity” (Patricia Waugh, 2006, 53), which he did in the preface of the opera, “Lyrical Ballads”, it is emphasized that this *reviving* becomes a key element for lyrical creation, a metaphor of abundance, liquidity. Emphasis is put on *feelings*, sending to the fact that poetry becomes a matter of the heart, directly depending on what happens to the poet. The latter one speaks to people, having a superior understanding of the world, a high spirit of observation and sensitivity for beauty, thus the poet becomes *a supreme human being*.

The man is a being composed of two different natures, one spiritual and the other material. The latter is taken from the world of the *bodies*, and the former one comes from the universe of intelligence. The soul is a living, free, spontaneous force in which the beautiful, eternal, sublime pattern must be realized. All individuals should be *poets*, they should be able transform their soul, subject to the material

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world, into a noble and strong personality (J.B. Tissandier, 1858, 131-135). Poetry has the power to reveal itself by highlighting discordant qualities, by reconciling opposites, managing to create a concrete, but at the same time universal means represented by words, building a *bridge*, a connection between individuals and the experiences of the *real* world. It, the poetry, guides us to the unstructured sources of our being, to the unknown. Ambiguity enriches and communicates multiple meanings or thoughts.

The profound intertwining of imagination and the soul stands out as a distinctive trait of poetic creativity, accentuating how poetic imagery emerges from the poet's innermost essence. This fusion prompted the acknowledgment of the creative imagination as the driving force behind artistic endeavours. The soul of the poet, the artist is the only place where imagination can create superior works of art. Exploration of this led to the establishment of a dichotomy between mind and soul. This places the thought in a realm of mind as the objective part of the psyche and imagination in another realm of the soul as the subjective part of the psyche (Gaston Bachkard, 1971, 1-26). Poetry is memory and tranquillity; everything a poet produces must be a whole.

Everything changes, evolves, something new is always sought, something different from what has been done or written; even in literature changes can be observed, "Today's poet feels or is aware that he no longer writes the same as yesterday" (Nicolae Manolescu, 1987, 223).

2. The usage of medical terms in poetry

The last decades of the 21st century bring new interpretations in the Romanian literary field. Postmodernists avoid prejudices and open roads to knowledge and self-knowledge. In the first decades of the 21st century, female literature enriches and solidifies its foundations. In poetry, voices such as Ana Blandiana, Angela Marinescu, Ileana Malancioiu, Marta Petreu, Aura Christi or Irina Nechit begin to be stated. From the very beginning, writers have stumbled upon the problem of gender, which has its roots in Greek philosophy. It is believed that nature has always aimed at perfection, but the woman was seen as an incomplete version of the man. In the XVIII century, a desire for the female voice of affirmation appears, managing to transform real-life episodes into real-life sources of inspiration for their works. Thus, through writing, the woman will manage to overcome her condition and will "break the chains" the world that sees her only as a factor that must fulfil a social role, to give birth and be a housewife; she could not find herself.

Iuliana Lungu emerges as a notable presence in Romanian literature, marked by a deliberate and steadfast approach. Her debut in 2018 with the poetry collection *KOMMOS: Procession for hysterectomy* reflects both careful consideration and unwavering determination. Drawing from her profession as a psychologist and psychotherapist, Lungu adeptly delves into the intricate realms of the human psyche. Through her literary work, she skilfully unveils hidden emotions, passions, and

struggles, infusing her writing with a profound understanding of the multifaceted nature of human experience.

The poet Medeea Iancu offers insightful commentary on the poetry of Iuliana Lungu, providing a sensitive portrayal of Lungu's thematic exploration. In her analysis of Lungu's collection *KOMMOS: The Procession for Hysterectomy*, Iancu discerns a deep engagement with notions of identity, femininity, and the revision of gender roles. According to Iancu, Lungu's poetry serves as a ritual of purification and liberation, challenging societal norms and biases while navigating the journey towards self-realization and authenticity. Lungu's verses confront issues of societal judgment, shame, guilt, and censorship, with a particular focus on the unique experiences of womanhood. Through her minimalist yet evocative poetry, Lungu expresses a profound desire to dismantle these societal constructs, influenced by familial roots, notably her grandmother Rada and parental influences.

The writer Iuliana Lungu embarks on a journey to reclaim her femininity and embrace it, despite societal pressures that led her to behave in a more masculine manner. She manipulates language to express unfiltered truths, sometimes in a manner that shocks the reader, occasionally even displaying hints of violence. Her poetry gracefully traverses through various time periods, starting from the mythical age, subtly revealing the experiences and challenges of womanhood through her words.

The choice of the title *KOMMOS: The Procession for Hysterectomy* holds deep significance. *Kommos* refers to a lamentation from Greek tragedy, sung as a duet between the main actor and the choir, typically when the tension in the play reaches a climax of terror or happiness. Iuliana Lungu's familiarity with ancient literature is evident in her writings, where she references well-known characters like Antigone, Helen of Troy, and Medea, and incorporates the presence of the Choir. This structure lends her work the essence of an ancient poem, embracing the enduring themes and traditions of Greek tragedy. From an etymological point of view, "ekommos" comes from the Greek "κομμός" which means "beating", and from a geographical perspective this word represents the old port of Phaistos, the, it is one of the most beautiful beaches in Crete. In this place is a complex sanctuary with a temple, a circular building with four square altars, which was located in the centre of the port and served as a meeting place.

The author expands on the significance of this word by appending to it *procession*, evoking a religious ceremony where individuals, seated in a line, move together while singing religious songs or prayers. They are typically led by church ministers, either to express gratitude or to seek divine assistance. Iuliana Lungu elucidates the purpose behind this procession, specifically for "hysterectomy," which entails the surgical removal of the uterus.

In the preface to the poetry collection, Nora Iuga observes that the poet enters the literary scene with a fresh, unprecedented voice, presenting a novel perspective on poetry rooted in feminism and authenticity. Lungu fearlessly breaks down barriers, demonstrating the courage to utilize even the words deemed taboo, a boldness not

always seen in other authors. The work brings short lyrics, but capable of conveying a strong message, sentences or a particular way to organize their lyrics "...everything that can give birth to a woman after hysterectomy - a woman who became *a man*" (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 7). This autobiographical piece is characterized by with sharp and lucid lyrics that shock the reader by the direct way of telling the truth, without detours. It takes the reader on an emotional rollercoaster, from feelings of shame and guilt to an overarching sense of fear, with the latter being particularly associated with the fear of embodying womanhood. John Es. Pop aptly describes it as an "ode of fear." The work vividly portrays the image of the marginalized and perpetually demeaned woman, depicted as submissive and censored, relegated to the shadows in the presence of men.

In *KOMMOS: The Procession for Hysterectomy* the hidden sufferings of a darkened childhood, devoid of familial affection, are brought to light, alongside panic states, phobias, and profound restlessness that leave the body breathless. Iuliana Lungu candidly presents the dramatic moments that marked her during surgery, offering readers a glimpse into the emotional turmoil she experienced. She incorporates medical terms such as "blood," *anesthesia*, *anemia*, and *apnea* seamlessly into her lyrical creations, as if they were integral pieces of a puzzle.

As the lyrical ego undergoes a traumatic episode, poetry becomes a therapeutic outlet for expression. Lungu explores various facets of medicine, gaining insight into concepts of health and disease, while examining the intricate relationship between body, mind, and spirit. The cathartic nature of poetry is evident as pain and sensitivity emerge as true muses; each poem unveils and elucidates the complex feelings that have accumulated within the soul.

A touch of naturalism is evident, closely intertwined with realism, as it delves into the harsh, often violent realities of life, focusing on pathological cases and often reducing individuals to their biological components. Naturalist writers are primarily concerned with the physical states of humanity, exploring instinctual behaviours influenced by bodily dysfunctions, heredity, and environmental factors. These elements act as primary determinants of individual behaviour.

In Romanian literature, numerous lyrical works depict intense experiences that lead to genuine bodily crises, with writers honing in on medical symptoms. Ion Heliade Rădulescu, in his work *Zburătorul*, presents love in its initial sequence as a misunderstood affliction, with physiological and psychological effects that deeply unsettle young girls on the cusp of womanhood. The onset of erotic feelings is depicted through a poignant monologue by a girl, later named Florica, directed towards her mother as she grapples with her incomprehensible sensations, hoping for a resolution. Her heartbeat quickens, a condition known medically as tachycardia, and she develops purple patches on her chest, indicative of soft tissue injuries leading to capillary ruptures and resulting in ecchymoses, or bruises. She describes a burning sensation inside her, alternating with cold shivers, while her complexion pales, suggesting anemia. The encounter with the Flyer has devastating effects for the young

girl, her senses are sharpened to the maximum, her sensations become neighbouring with pain. Her body begins to tremble bringing a state of anxiety.

“See, Mom, it hurts me! And my chest is beating,/ Crowds of purple on my breasts are popping;/ A fire is igniting in me, cold shivers down my spine,/ my lips are burning, mother, my cheeks are fading./ Ah! My heart is twitching! [.]And I tremble unsightly, and my eyes are lighting”. (Ion Rotaru, 1979, 60-61)

From the opening pages of Iuliana Lungu's work, the reader is enveloped in an eerie atmosphere, as if the world itself is afflicted by illness. It's like traversing shifting sands, the more one tries to escape, the deeper they sink. The setting becomes a realm where loss and self-neglect seem inevitable. As one “dives” into the verses, a portrayal of internal composition emerges, where the very essence of creation is poised to be extracted through surgery, as emphasized in the title of the work. Here, the body transforms into a symbolic space, a vessel through which Iuliana Lungu navigates her convictions. In the end “My understanding with/poetic resistance/ was” (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 13-14) a touch of a common goal with “edit-/Choir” namely “your body”. One can speak of a declared poetic, in which the writer immerses herself as in her body from which she must *extirpate* everything that is useless to reach a structure, a structure, a skeleton, on which to lift something.

2.1. Analysis of medical terms

The poem "I Too," a title borrowed from Langston Hughes, encapsulates the struggle between body and soul, arising from the perceptions of genesis, highlighting an appearance that can no longer be changed. The title of the poem, "Anesthesia," signifies the temporary numbing of the body's sensitivity through the use of certain substances. This concept of anesthesia offers insights into human consciousness by affecting membranes composed of electrons in perpetual motion, which underpin consciousness. In poetry, anesthesia is akin to a *cloud*, temporarily freezes this electron movement, seen as a *flap of wings*. The poem alludes to a profound encounter with death. The words “the orange tunnel” refer to a state of deep coma, where vital functions such as heartbeat and breathing are sustained with the aid of medical devices. This imagery of the orange tunnel is also found in the works of other Romanian poets such as Lucian Blaga, who views it as the “great passage” and Nichita Stănescu, who portrays death as “the great passing” through the orange tunnel, evoking heightened emotional states.

The title of the poem "an aima" is composed of Greek the words "αν" which mean "if" and "αίμα" which represents “blood”, a term that will be encountered in this work. The author begins by ambiguously announcing the place where she is, “under this wooden staircase, without railing” (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 33). The return of thoughts to the past fails to stir any emotion, while on the staircase, *everyone moves up and down*, “caught” in their own poetry. Everything seems monotonous, nothing new appears, “no birth/does not happen”. This sick experience makes the lyrical ego unable to write anymore, unable “to link the words”. For the writer anemia

becomes a state identical to melancholy. In such a world the bodies “empty/ without tears” are deprived of the “vital liquid”, they are “bloodless”. Everything leads to a tense atmosphere in which both the soul and the body suffer. The author believes that the state of physical weakness, which is caused by anemia and which manifests through fatigue, heaviness in breathing and sometimes a feeling of fainting, is equal (“IT’S THE SAME”) with melancholy state. Thus, the lyrical ego feels the need to isolate itself, to be alone, the psychic state being dominated by sadness.

The title of the poem “apnéE” refers to the interruption of breathing for a while due to illness or in a wilful manner (apnea). The absence of this vital process casts a sombre shadow over the poetry, dominated by an image of mourning. The work delves into the prejudices inflicted upon women simply by virtue of their gender, depicting situations and exhortations that demand mourning.

The poem „in spring, white coats are worn” induces a state of restlessness and pain. The white hospital gowns, typically associated with cleanliness and sterility, take on a hue of red, evoking connotations of blood. Within the lyrics, the medical term *dysplasia* emerges, highlighting an abnormality in tissue or organ development that disrupts bodily function (Poantă Laura, 2005, 29). The agitation of single mothers echoes through the hallways, while children, deprived of the warm embrace of a parent, instead find solace under the neon glow of incubators, which transform the space into a makeshift home for them, “babies will/have/glass houses, neon caresses/all over./ single mothers/rumbling in the hallways.” (Poantă Laura, 2005, 39)

In “without apotheosis” the author confesses that she writes “without red blood cells,/ without iron,/ without oxygen,/ without violence” . The lack of these elements brings the state of anemia to the body and without those red blood cells iron deficiency is installed. The verse “without oxygen” can send to cyanosis, which is the blue shade of the gums, nails or skin due to lack of oxygen in the blood. It all leads to a state of lethargy and difficulty breathing.

The poem "Macrophylla" revolves around the celebration of her mother's birthday, a fact announced from the very beginning. The author interweaves three distinct situations that initially appear unrelated: caring for hydrangea flowers, a visit to the doctor's office for an examination, and a moment in a bakery adorned for the mother's birthday. The interventions performed by the florist on the plant seem to mirror the procedures undertaken by a doctor on patients. The pain that the writer feels is so great that it has spread throughout the body, but also in the soul “the doctor/put in my arms (instead of the child)/ an atlas about/the human body. He gently whispered to me: put your finger there/where it hurts” (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 66). Hortensias are plants known for their medicinal properties in treating cystitis, an inflammation of the bladder caused by infection. The fear experienced cannot simply dissipate upon receiving a diagnosis. As expressed in the poem "fear does not pass/with laparoscopy!", it often necessitates surgery, symbolized by the "operation" performed by the florist in subsequent verses. Laparoscopy is used to detect the condition, which is the examination of the abdominal cavity and organs with the help of laparoscope. The poem concludes with the introduction of the baker and the

writer's heartfelt wishes to celebrate the mother's birthday, "happy birthday, mother!/ everywhere/ everywhere,/ with berries."

Throughout Iulian Lungu's book, there's a notable emphasis on emotions, with a growing outcry to the world evident in direct addresses and metaphors. A striking example is the poem "decanting," where the title signifies the clarification of a liquid by the sedimentation of solid particles, evoking a metaphorical moment when things should become clearer. The poem begins with a call, "come/ someone come/ for the de-/ detachment of the lips/ come/ someone/ for the un-/ untying of the hands/ come/ someone come/ for the re-/ revival!/ Choir:/ from the chest down/ from the chest down/ come/ someone come/ to return!" (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 68), these desperate cries may symbolize the moment of a patient's awakening from anesthesia, signifying the culmination of the intervention. This awakening process unfolds in several stages, with the crucial steps including the patient's resumption of breathing and the gradual return to consciousness (Raluca Fodor, Copotoiu Sandală Maria, Leonard Azamfirei, 2015, 16).

Medical advice appear "no elevations/ of the head,/ Woman!/ you are allowed/ only/ turned,/ when to the left,/when to the right!", because during the operation the body sitting for a long time in the same position appears the risk of blood clots. It is stated that it is "an operation/ a disaggregation" that is, the dissolution of the constituent parts, in which the cauterization process is carried out, the burning with a substance of the wound or tissue for disinfection. The author refers, through the doctor's voice, to the pyramids of Malpighi; they refer to the medulla which is made up of several structures, which are shaped like a pyramid, being surrounded by a cortical. Each kidney has 7-14 renal pyramids, called the pyramids of Malpighi, considered the founder of microscopic anatomy and the father of physiognomy (Drăgoi Gheorghe S., Melinte Răzvan Petru, Dinca Ileana, Pătrașcu Elena, Drăgoi Șerban A., 2014, 200). In Iuliana Lungu's poetry, we find not only vivid descriptions of hospital environments, surgical procedures, and medical tools, but also references to medications used in treating various illnesses. In the poem "lavage," she captures the scene just before a hysterectomy operation (Iuliana Lungu, 2018, 87).

The poem "narcoTango" portrays the period following the intervention, when the writer is out of immediate danger but advised by the doctor to avoid standing alone and to rely on support from walls. The poem evokes a hypertensive state, with the sensation of blood rushing. In "Act III," other medical references surface, including acute haemorrhagic syndrome and autism, the latter being a pathological condition characterized by a detachment from reality and intense inner experiences.

In "atlas," the term *amnesia* emerges, indicating either partial or total memory loss. Meanwhile, in "Orama," the aftermath of the traumatic hysterectomy surgery is depicted through remnants and scars. These wounds, whether physical or psychological, necessitate treatment with ointments designed for superficial burns and skin cracks. The psyche confronts a daunting battle against a world laden with prejudices.

Influenced by dramatic episodes in her personal life, the writer finds a sense of release through her poetry, sharing some of the suffering she experiences. Iuliana Lungu through her debut volume follows the example of other great authors who found in literature a refuge. A prevailing theme in her work is the escape from a suffocating and unhealthy environment. Symbolist poetry, characterized by its emphasis on lyricism and themes of regression, isolation, and neuroses, serves as a significant influence. This is particularly evident in Symbolist poets like George Bacovia, whose work is distinguished by an atmosphere of neurosis, preoccupation with death, a fondness for music, and a focus on the seasons and chromatics that delve into themes of illness.

In George Bacovia's poem "Blood, Lead, Autumn," the opening sets a morbid tone, depicting a sickly state where time passes slowly under the weight of pressure, emphasized by the melancholic rain. Lines like "Slowly through the sad rain/A curved chest of cough/With blood in the handkerchief" (George Bacovia, 2001, 153) vividly portray a diseased condition, with the chest wracked by coughing and expectorating blood, a condition known medically as haemoptysis. This theme of illness recurs in Bacovia's poem "Lead," where the colour grey and the metaphor of lead symbolize a suffocating, monotonous existence, reflecting a life trapped in mediocrity and materialism. George Bacovia identifies himself as a poet of cold autumns, as this season symbolizes the transition to winter, accompanied by its characteristic phenomena: mist, mud, decay, rain, and solitude. It signifies a vegetal death and a descent into frost and isolation. In the conclusion of the poem, the three elements comprising the title—"blood," "lead," and "autumn"—come together, with the final stanza emphasizing horror and coldness.

It's observed that the poets' detachment from reality often manifests as forgetfulness, neurosis, or acute pathological states. Ion Minulescu's works (Ion Minulescu, 2009), for example, portray nearly everyone as sick, with the seasons reflecting this sick ambiance, where spring signifies asthenia and neurosis. The author explores the space "With the blunt stairs/And the square rooms" of a silent hospital. Here the sick, visibly affected by their medical condition, look hopelessly towards the sky.

Despite a glimmer of hope, symbolized by an open window to the sun, the grip of illness remains strong, with the afflicted akin to "silent convicts." Desperately, they strive to transform the imminent end, death, into a *new beginning*, a fresh opportunity at life. The mention of a "dose of quinine", which "slips on the neck of the lost," alludes to the treatment of malaria and febrile states, known for its intensely bitter taste. Here, *lost* refers to patients suffering from malaria, also known as paludism, an infectious disease transmitted by the bite of an anopheline mosquito.

4. Conclusion

In the poetic realm of Iuliana Lungu, we encounter more than just detailed portrayals of hospital landscapes, surgical interventions, and the tools of medicine. Her verses also weave in references to the pharmacological arsenal deployed in the treatment of a

myriad of illnesses, adding layers of depth and complexity to her poetic tapestry. Through her exploration of medical terminology and pharmaceutical interventions, Lungu offers a nuanced perspective on the human condition, delving into the intricacies of health, illness, and healing with a lyrical finesse that resonates deeply with readers.

In conclusion, the author's words resonate deeply as she underscores, "I have written and write from the need to calm down." This poignant statement illuminates how her poetry serves as a refuge, a medium through which she seeks to comprehend her innermost self and articulate the tumultuous emotions that disturb her tranquility. Through her verses, she not only invites readers to embark on a journey of introspection but also implores them to uphold their responsibilities to themselves and to others. Despite enduring the profound pain and sorrow of undergoing hysterectomy surgery, she fearlessly challenges the prevailing misconception that the absence of an organ diminishes femininity. Her direct and, at times, forceful lyrics boldly confront a world entrenched in prejudice, advocating for a more inclusive and empathetic society.

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