

Translator's Commentary

I first started translating contemporary Spanish poetry in 2004, after a semester as a Fulbright lecturer in contemporary American poetry at the universities of Vigo and Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The four months I spent in Spain had a lasting effect on my own poetry; it comes out in my fourth book *An Algebra* (University of Chicago, 2009) and more directly in my new book *Immediate Song* (Milkweed Editions, 2019). When I went to Spain I was familiar with the work of some of the major poets of the early twentieth century--Machado, Alberti, García Lorca--but it occurred to me I knew nothing about poets of my own generation and younger Spanish poets working now. While I was there, I picked up all the anthologies I could to remedy that situation.

Certain names, Juan Lamillar's among them, appeared in several different anthologies. The first poet I took on as a translator was Julio Martínez Mesanza. After publishing individual translations in *Boston Review*, *Poetry International*, and *Poetry Northwest*, among other journals, I put together a bilingual collection, *Europa: Selected Poems of Julio Martínez Mesanza*, which appeared from Diálogos Books in 2016.

I continue to translate from Martínez Mesanza, but I've also been working with Juan Lamillar's poetry for the past several years. While both are distinguished poets in their sixties who have won major literary prizes in Spain, and both engage the formal tradition to some extent, as poets they are about as far apart as the regions where they grew up: austere Castile for Julio and sunny Andalusia for Juan. Julio is drawn to questions of ethics and history, Juan to moods and the interaction of light and shadow. Rigorous and clear-eyed, Julio's work strives for defining insight, while Juan's poems can be playful and nostalgic, as they evoke more than analyze particular moments in time.

It's an honor and a delight translating each of these Spanish poets.

--Don Bogen