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Reflecting on my first translation experiences and the projects that have ensued over the past thirty years, in particular several recent book translations, I have been continually struck by how a translator does not work alone, but is connected to a wide network of scholars, authors, publishers, and editors.

I always assumed I was going to study American literature. At Beloit College in the early 1970s I majored in Russian and Comparative Literature. In addition to Russian and Spanish, I also took courses in Bulgarian and Modern Greek for reading knowledge, a semester of Czech, and two years of Serbo-Croatian (as it was then taught). My interest in the Balkans had begun in my teens when I read almost the complete works of Nikos Kazantzakis, but it was folk dancing and learning folk songs at Beloit that pushed me to study South Slavic and Balkan languages in more detail. I went to The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill to study Russian literature, but once I met Victor Friedman, my focus shifted back to Slavic and Balkan linguistics. In graduate school, in addition to Russian I studied Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish, and Albanian. I also studied at summer seminars in Sofia, Bulgaria and in Ohrid, Macedonia. My M.A. thesis centered on Turkisms and dialectisms in a volume of unpublished erotic folk stories compiled by Kiril Penušliski.

As part of the thesis, I translated the stories from Macedonian into English. When I began translating them, I had very little formal knowledge of Macedonian; my knowledge of other South Slavic languages was better. At that time there were few reference materials for English speakers learning Macedonian, and the dictionaries available were extremely limited. The only Macedonian-English dictionary was a small volume published in Macedonia; though filled with typographical errors, it was useful in its capacity as the only thing available. My main reference work for the translations was a three-volume Macedonian dictionary published between 1961 and 1966, with glosses in Serbo-Croatian (as it was then called) and Macedonian. I translated the folk stories by moving from the three-volume dictionary to Benson's Serbo-Croatian – English dictionary, with help from Božo Vidoeski's dialect descriptions and overview published in *Makedonski jazik* and consultations with my advisor, Victor Friedman. The process was so difficult that it is no surprise that little had been translated from Macedonian into English at that time.

Thirty years later, it is a very different universe. There are some excellent reference materials for Macedonian. However, these are either very expensive or not widely available outside of Macedonia. The three-volume dictionary mentioned above was updated and glossed in English by Reginald de Bray, Todor Dimitrovski, Blagoja Korubin, and Trajko Stamatovski. After de Bray's death in

1993, the dictionary was edited by a group headed by Peter Hill at the Australian National University and published by Routledge in 1998. The dictionary has been updated somewhat with some new words and new meanings since its original publication in Yugoslavia. The cost is prohibitive, however, and the dictionary will be bought by few individuals. The best dictionaries are difficult to obtain without going to Macedonia. Zoze Mugorski has become well-known for his relentless commitment to producing and publishing reference materials for Macedonian. He has published – at least – a Macedonian-English dictionary and an English-Macedonian dictionary, a Macedonian dictionary with glosses in Macedonian, and a dictionary of idioms. There are additional dictionaries that are useful for translation: Usikova's three-volume Macedonian-Russian dictionary; the 1983 *Rečnik na narodna poezija* (Dictionary of Folk Poetry,) and the Macedonian dictionary currently being published by the Institute for the Macedonian Language (four volumes of the projected six have been published). In addition, there are several on-line dictionaries. The publication of these materials has opened the door for increased translation of Macedonian works that would have been very difficult to translate previously.

It was not through Macedonian, however, that my translation career began again, but through Bulgarian. For many years, I had hoped to pull together a team of translators to tackle an English translation of Aleko Konstantinov's *Bai Ganyo*. In 2002, Victor Friedman was able to assemble a team of translators: Victor, Grace Fielder, Catherine Rudin, and I. We divided up sections and completed our own first versions. We then met for two two-day conferences in Chicago where we read the entire work out loud. Wayles Browne of Cornell and Bill Darden and Daniela Hristova from Chicago also attended the sessions. Victor Friedman then edited the entire volume for flow and wrote the introduction and glossaries. The whole process was difficult and exacting, but enjoyable, collegial, and creative. More details about the translation and the teamwork can be found in Friedman's introduction to Aleko Konstantinov's *Bai Ganyo: Tales of a Modern Bulgarian* published by University of Wisconsin Press.

Prior to *Bai Ganyo*, I had in mind a particular Macedonian project. In 2000, the works of Luan Starova had been recommended to me. As I sat in a restaurant in Vienna en route home from Skopje, I began to read the first volume of his multi-volume *Balkanska saga*, and I decided that if I were ever to translate something from Macedonian into English, this is where I would want to begin. The idea was

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put aside as various professional obligations and administrative tasks took over. Working with the *Bai Ganyo* translation team, I thought again of my desire to tackle Starova's works.

Luan Starova is an Albanian who writes in Macedonian. He was born in the town of Pogradec, on the Albanian shores of Lake Ohrid. Two years later, the family left Albania for Macedonia. His works hold a special fascination for me because they cross many boundaries, seeking to universalize rather than particularize twentieth-century Balkan history. As he writes in the second volume, *The Time of the Goats*:

But the waves of the war had tossed up on to the shores of the river Noah's arks filled with the many families rescued from all parts of the Balkans, and beyond. There were even some Sephardic Jewish families; there was an Armenian family of musicians; there was even a Russian family, rescued from the October Revolution; there were several Turkish families; there were several families from Aegean Macedonia; and here was our Albanian family, amidst the large Macedonian population that had landed in this small Goatherd Quarter. But there were also other unknown families that came and left the Goatherd Quarter. Here were intermingled nationalities, faiths, and customs; people lived in trust, understanding; together they more easily countered the blows of fate in these uncertain times.

One of the themes of *My Father's Books* is the complexity of establishing linguistic identity in a multi-lingual society. A couple of sample excerpts from *My Father's Books* demonstrate this:

- a. While still an untaught child I could easily "read" various scripts. Even at that time, I "read" that my father had books written in Arabic, Cyrillic, and Latin letters. At that time, all books were the same at first glance, but when I opened them up, they immediately showed themselves to be different from one another. But these "differences," texts in different alphabets, began to have significance for me, to have specificity, before I had yet entered the world of interpretable signs.
- b. My dear son, there's no big secret, study any language at all, but study one rather than several, just learn it as it needs to be learned. Enter into the depths of any language, and eventually you will learn that, at heart, all languages touch one another, they stem from the same human root...

After saying this, my father once again immersed himself in his old texts, the judicial records from Bitola, written in the old official language of the sixteenth century. I thought then about the languages my father knew, how he had acquired that knowledge that, in the end, he bequeathed to me, like something found after long searching through linguistic labyrinths.

In what language does one write, cry, dream, suffer?

In fact, part of the difficulty in translating Starova is his multilingual identity. He writes his books in Macedonian, the language he learned in school and the language he writes most comfortably, but he then translates the works himself into Albanian, his mother tongue and the language he speaks at home. The two editions are not identical and, therefore, I had to make a choice. I committed to the Macedonian edition, rather than attempting to produce a hybrid of his two different originals. To add to the complexity, Starova had worked in close collaboration with the translator of the French edition. Starova was a professor of French and comparative literature, and all of his works contain many references to French literature. Whenever I ran into a problem with my translation, Starova suggested I consult the French, since he had worked intimately with the translator. The French edition is, however, not the same as either the Macedonian or the Albanian. The French translator used both works to produce his own. Some sections from the Macedonian edition were omitted and the order of the vignettes was changed. At times, the authority of the French translation, as reinforced by Starova in conversations with me, proved to be extremely beneficial. Here is an example. I was having great difficulty with a particular sentence. My first tentative translation was:

Here, in the scorched heart of Constantinople, here where Atatürk would wage his final battle for Turkey after the abolishment of the rule of the sultans and the caliphate, *in the conversation in the battle* for the survival of all its subject citizens, all the peoples of the former empire, at that moment when the Turks, in the ruins of their empire, sought to rescue what they could of their core essence, my father was overcome as never before by a deep existential disquiet. At the end of the empire, Constantinople ended in flames.

I could not figure out what to do with the phrase "in the conversation in the battle". I consulted the French only to discover that there was a typographical error in the Macedonian edition. Instead of *razgovor* 'conversation' the word should be *razgori* 'ignite, flame'. Here is a much more satisfying translation:

There, in the scorched heart of Constantinople, there where Atatürk would wage his final battle for Turkey after the abrogation of the sultan's rule and then the caliphate, *there in the flaming battle* for the survival of all the subject citizens – all the peoples that had just recently belonged to the empire – while the Turks sought to salvage what they could of their core essence from the ruins of their empire, my father was overcome, as never before, by a deep existential disquiet. At the end of the empire, Constantinople ended in flames.

There are now ten volumes in Starova's *Balkan Saga*, all of which have been published in Macedonian, and a number of which have been translated into more than a dozen languages. Surprisingly, none of his works have appeared

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