

## PATHS INTO THE WORLD: ACO ŠOPOV'S "BIRTH OF THE WORD" IN MULTIPLE TRANSLATIONS

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**Abstract:** Aco Šopov's 1963 poem "Раѓање на зборот" ("Birth of the Word") has been recognized as a central text in his work and translated into multiple languages. This paper examines eight different translations into six languages (English, French, German, Montenegrin, Russian and Spanish), focusing on a few telling nodes of sound and meaning that reveal the translators' attitude toward the task.

**Key words:** *poetry, sound, translation, languages, world literature*

As readers from Johann von Goethe to Pascale Casanova have pointed out, the path into world literature, *Weltliteratur*, leads through translation. It is profoundly unfair that what they mean is translation into world languages, but that transfer is also what can make clear that a brilliant Macedonian poet is the equal of any other on earth. Though of course it must be a *good* translation.

Aco Šopov is one poet who has entered world literature through a presence in other languages. A huge wealth of Šopov's poetry, in the original and often in multiple translated versions, may be found at the *Maison Lyrique d'Aco Šopov*, online at <[www.acosopov.com](http://www.acosopov.com)>; this makes it easy to compare different versions of a single poem. Even such a rich and thoughtfully designed website will not have the impact of a physical book of translations that a reader might come upon by chance in a shop, read about in a review, or carry around in a purse or pocket to browse at odd moments. On the other hand, it would be unusual for a journal or book to include translations into multiple languages, unless it were a scholarly journal or a specialized academic publication. That website has allowed me to examine translations of Šopov's fundamental work "Раѓање на зборот" (1963) into six other

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank the organizers of the International Scientific Conference "100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Aco Šopov" conference for inviting me to participate; the other presenters for their very interesting and informative papers; and Christina Kramer and Rawley Grau for making some of their forthcoming translations of Šopov available to me prior to their publication.

languages: English, French, German, Montenegrin, Russian, and Spanish,<sup>2</sup> and to discuss them in this brief study.

One might argue that poetry distills what is most possible and powerful in language of the poet. This makes translating poetry a vexed project from the start. There is so much the translator must know: not only the dictionary meanings of words, but their resonance in history, folk culture, and the literature of the original culture, as well as their relationship to poems and events outside that culture. The rhythm and sound of the original may be easy to perceive for someone from outside, but that makes them no easier to convey in a language endowed with different sounds and rhythms. Šopov works on every possible poetic level: his poetry is rich in sound, rhythmically various, and studded with unexpected words—all drawing the reader's attention to the language itself. As Roman Jakobson (1960) would say, this is the necessary aesthetic quality of poetic language. Šopov's ideas alone may be intriguing, but merely reporting ideas is not sufficient to create a poem. He refers to other texts or lore, forms webs of citation with other places, times and languages. Translators must recognize these elements and somehow address them, though they have only the resources of their own language. Šopov himself was a translator, of course, enriching the library in Macedonian with works by essential foreign authors. That too makes it important to see how the poet himself has been served in translation.

The languages of the translations I examine enjoy various relationships to the Macedonian original: the list includes other Slavic languages with their own distinct verbal texture and poetic habits, closer to Macedonian or more distant in the Slavic linguistic world, and then four Western European languages that have their own traditions and distinctions. Of all these languages, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish count as "world languages" that offer paths into a much broader readership, while Montenegrin,<sup>3</sup> like Croatian and Serbian, may be called a "small" language yet is close enough to Macedonian geographically, linguistically and culturally that it may well capture some elements that English or French—or even Russian—could not convey. When I mentioned this conference to a Serbian poet I have been translating, she said: *Ah, Šopov, on je divan pesnik!* [Oh, Šopov, he's a wonderful poet!] ...But we had never had occasion to speak about him before that. It was Christina Kramer and Rawley Grau's translation project that brought Šopov to my attention.

Since there are eight translations of the poem, I will limit this examination to a few important details across its translations. "Раѓање на зборот" is represented

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<sup>2</sup> Lack of linguistic competence obliges me to leave aside the translations into Bulgarian and Hungarian also on the site. These too may be called "small" languages, but each has a sophisticated poetic tradition.

<sup>3</sup> I recognize, of course, that it is anachronistic to describe Sreten Perović's two translations (1966 and 1977) as being in Montenegrin, an even "newer" language than Macedonian and still the subject of linguistic dispute. At the same time, his translations' linguistic features clearly fit the bill.

on acosopov.com by translations into seven languages.<sup>4</sup> The presence of seven languages (with two versions each for Montenegrin and Spanish!) underlines the poem's importance in Šopov's oeuvre: either the translators noticed its central place in his work of the time, or their editors urged them to undertake this poem. The Bulgarian, Hungarian, Montenegrin and Russian translations date from the socialist period, in which the "brotherly" socialist nations of Eastern Europe more often bothered to translate one another's poetry, but this poem is also represented in English, French, German and Spanish—all of them, again, world languages in terms of translation.<sup>5</sup> The translations appear here in alphabetical order by language for the reader's convenience. I linger on a group of nodes—or knots, or gnarls—in hope that the trouble spots in a poem undergoing translation will be revealed by the variation in solutions.<sup>6</sup> These selected segments are: the first two lines (and their recurrences later in the text), the third and fourth lines, and then the final lines of the poem. In a few cases I offer my own translation of parts of a translation into English, likewise for the reader's convenience but also to make clear my interpretation of the translator's results.

The poem opens with some difficult phonetics, two end-stopped lines that bristle with clusters of consonants, slowing down the reader:

Глужд на глужд.  
Камен врз камен.

Those two lines also repeat in lines 5-6 and lines 18-19, which obviously has the effect of emphasis: either they repeat in the experience of the poet, who seems to encounter them over and over again in the course of his word's birth, or else the poet must keep returning to their weighty simplicity in order to witness the word's birth. Their concreteness points away from the word's abstraction, suggesting that it is both an elemental thing (stone being the ultimate form of the element of earth, the only one that can both burn and melt in volcanic processes) and a complicated thing (глужд, which word offers a challenge to every translator, as we shall see).

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<sup>4</sup> The web page lists Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian as options, but all three links lead to Sreten Perović's translations of the poem.

<sup>5</sup> German is not a world language in terms of number of speakers, but it counts in the realm of translation, given its long and continuing tradition of translating literature, its contribution to theory about translation, and the attention German culture pays to the literatures of Eastern Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Sayers Peden, in "Building a Translation, the Reconstruction Business: Poem 145 of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz," suggests on the other hand that the variety in part of a dozen translations of one sonnet by Sor Juana reveals that the sonnet is weak there: "The seemingly sound architecture of the sonnet is actually trompe l'oeil" (27).

The third and fourth lines form a single sentence extending across both lines:

Камена шума  
изземнина.

Although the idea of a stone (petrified?) forest or a frozen one is not comforting, these sounds are more phonetically open, with vowels shifting between “a”, “e” and “и,” consonants dwelling on “м” and “н”. The poem moves through multiple ideas and sound effects before the poet demands to be admitted to the stone fortress, to burn and melt in contact with the word:

да изгорам во јагленот на зборот,  
да се стопам.

The poem does not foreground rhyme (as many of Sopotov’s earlier poems do), but the ending has a marked musical quality: the sound “o” recurs, and “да изгорам” and “да се стопам” have several elements of resemblance as the two lines begin (and, in the second case, as the poem’s final line ends).

#### ENGLISH

Christina Kramer and Rawley Grau in their 2022 version pay attention to all elements of the original,<sup>7</sup> though their first two lines repeat rather than vary the preposition (“на” and “врз” in the original), and the two-syllable preposition “upon” may undo a bit of the slowing effect of the short nouns:

Gnarl upon gnarl.  
Stone upon stone.

“Gnarl” as a singular noun is unusual—it occurs more often as the adjective “gnarled” or the current slangy adjective “gnarly,” which might be used to describe a complex argument or situation as much as a twisted branch. Even though the *g* that opens the word is silent, the three sounded consonants still give complexity to the first line. Kramer and Grau repeat these two lines identically when they recur in lines 5-6 and lines 18-19, trusting the poet to know what he is doing and why; they respect the order of the lines in general, even though English word order sometimes requires changes within a line. The first two lines also reveal that a trait of English that hinders some translations from Slavic languages works well in this case: “gnarl” matches one-syllable глужд. Like Macedonian, English does not

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<sup>7</sup> I look forward very much to the publication of *The Long Coming of the Fire*, the selection of translations of Sopotov by Kramer and Grau—and the first full collection in English devoted solely to his poetry. My thanks to Kramer and Grau for sharing some of their translations with me in advance of this publication.

decline nouns to add syllables after prepositions—as we shall see Montenegrin do in the first line, “Čvor na čvoru”.

Lines 3-4 in English take advantage of fortuitous phonetics to offer pleasing soundplay: st/st/ss, the long “o”s of “stone” and “frozen”, and a comprehensible neologism in “frozensolidness”. Making a new word from familiar elements lets the translators maintain very close equivalence to the original, though the long and unexpected word definitely slows the reader down—which may be ideal, for the state of being frozen solid. The final two lines again privilege accuracy, though the proximity of the words “coals” and “word” may hint at the resemblance of the words “word” and “world”, by putting an “l” in close proximity. Overall, the English version strives both for adequacy of meaning and for analogous impacts on the reader or listener, be they unexpected word choice, soundplay, or scrupulous adherence to the number and position of lines. The solemn atmosphere of Šopov’s poem and its modernist form allow the translators to skirt many of the issues that could otherwise hamper a translation from Macedonian into English.

## FRENCH

Edouard Maunick’s 1994 translation into French, working with what French has to offer, is almost entirely literal, though it too uses one word, “sur,” to render both “на” (easy to pronounce) and “врз” (more phonetically dense):

Noeud sur noeud.  
Pierre sur pierre.

At the same time, very short end-stopped lines and one-syllable words<sup>8</sup> lend the first two lines in French the same slowing effect, though the words are phonetically simpler. French has fixed word stress, always on the final fully-voiced syllable. Although Macedonian favors stress on the antepenultimate syllable, there are enough one- and two-syllable words (like глужд and камен, here) to allow a variety of arrangements of stresses in a poetic line. Classical French verse, on the other hand, counts syllables rather than stresses or feet. The French translation in *vers libre* has a more modern feeling, suited to a poem first published in 1963.

The third line, “камена шума,” has a different rhythm in the original enabled by the longer word “камена”—which French is constitutionally unable to reproduce. At the same time, “Forêt pétrifiée” offers a satisfying repetition of the sounds “é”, “f” and “r”. In the fourth line, the translator chooses the one-syllable word “gel” (ice) for “изсемнина”, strongly changing that line’s rhythm—the original has no

<sup>8</sup> Traditional French versification and diction would pronounce the final “e” word “pierre” as an additional unemphasized syllable, so in this translation it could be taken here as a perfect rendering of the word “камен”. I do not know how a contemporary French reader would take the line, reading it silently or aloud.

lines with fewer than three syllables, and the single syllable here may force an even stronger pause than expected, “freezing” the poem’s movement before the first and second lines repeat as lines five and six. Maunick uses Ô with circumflex (translating Šopov’s “O”) to open lines 11 and 14, conveying an elevated style with more pathos: this lends the modern-feeling free-verse translation a more archaic or timeless feeling, well suited to the original. The word “enceinte,” which can mean both “enclosure” and “pregnant,” may add an unexpected element in line 23; Mannick ends the poem with similar rhetorical elevation but does not use an exclamation point:

que me brûle le charbon  
de la parole, que je fonde.  
(let the charcoal of the word  
burn me, let me melt.)

Here too the phonetics are poetically effective: “brûle” chimes with “parole”, and the near non-rhyme of “bon” and “fonde” emphasizes the subjunctive of the latter—the indicative would be “je fonds”, a perfect rhyme with “charbon”. Maunick has chosen “parole” rather than “mot”, another and more ordinary term for “word”. “Parole” can have the sense of “password”, a more effective or important word or a word that already partakes of the broader communicative quality of speech.

#### GERMAN

Ina Jun-Broda’s 1963 translation into German takes advantage of German’s fondness for consonant clusters to render the first two lines as follows:

Knorren an Knorren.  
Stein auf Stein.

Jun-Broda retains the difference of prepositions (with *an* and *auf*), and although “Knorren” is two syllables rather than one it has satisfyingly chewy phonetics; the one-syllable “Stein” that follows balances with a shorter second line. Her version repeats the first two lines exactly as lines 5-6, but does not for the original’s second repetition, giving only “Stein auf Stein” in line 17 of the translation. The ending three lines suggest that German wants its grammatical subject earlier in the syntactic unit (and reminds us that German and English much more rarely give a verb with no subject, whereas in Macedonian the subject of “да се стопам” is evident without the first-person pronoun):

Das ich verglüh  
auf blauglühender Kohle des Wortes,  
und zerschmelze.  
(Let me / That I burn up  
on the blue-burning/blue-hot coal of the word  
and melt.)

Adding the word "blauglühender" towards the end, whereas Šopov only uses its equivalent in line 10, is perhaps not necessary: the reader may remember "модар јаглен", with the word "coal" bringing it back to mind. Moreover, the line just before is "Das ich verglüh", so that it is repetitive as well. For the most part, though, Jun-Broda's translation is scrupulous and respectful.

#### MONTENEGRIN

Sreten Perović, a well-known translator of Macedonian literature, published two translations of Šopov's "Раѓање на зборот", one in a 1966 volume of Šopov's work, and one in a different 1977 selection.<sup>9</sup> The two versions display some interesting differences, though many of their elements are the same. I did not have access to the volumes, so I have not seen any introductory material and cannot guess whether the changes eleven years later reflect Perović's own evolving approach and poetics, a meaningful conversation with Šopov himself, or the suggestions (or demands) of editors at his publishing house. All these might explain the changes in versions that otherwise take advantage of the similarities between Montenegrin—again, recognizing that it is an anachronistic to refer to Montenegrin in texts from 1966 and 1977, when only Serbo-Croatian was generally recognized—and Macedonian, such as the word modar/модар, "dark blue" ("indigo" on the light spectrum) as distinct from light blue or just-plain-blue, all that is available in the English, French or German versions considered above.

In both translations, Sreten Perović renders "гљужд" with the word "čvor", not only close in meaning but luckily offering similar phonetic density. "Kamen" is the same word in both languages, so there would be no reason not to choose it, though his two translations vary the use of prepositions in the crucial repeating lines and change the word order in the second line as well. Like the other languages so far, Montenegrin is prepared to convey the free form of the original: poetries in post-WWII Yugoslavia tended to be up to date with worldwide formal trends and to participate in them fully. The variation in the two versions already appears in the first lines:

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<sup>9</sup> Both translations have the same title. "Раѓање рјечи" in *Предвечерје*, Titograd: 1966, and "Rađanje riječi" in *Dugo zalaženje ognja*, Beograd: Reč i misao, 1977. I derived this information from <www.acosopov.com>, and I reproduce the punctuation found there in citations.

Чвор на чвору  
Над каменом камен.  
Камена шума  
смрзотина.  
Чвор у чвору  
на камену камен, (1966)

Čvor na čvoru.  
Na kamenu kamen.  
Kamena šuma smrzlina.  
Čvor u čvoru.  
Nad kamenom kamen, (1977)

Perhaps the change of word order in the second line (1977) compensates for repetition of the preposition “na”: it is the same word, but used in a different spot? In the later version Perović’s third line reveals some poetic license, combining the third and fourth lines of the original into one: “Kamena šuma smrzlina”; the word смрзотина, in 1966, is closer in sound to Šopov’s original. After this, the fourth (or fifth) and fifth (or sixth) lines do not repeat the first two lines exactly. The final repetitions of the first two lines—in lines 18-19 (1966) or 17-18 (1977)—both use “на” in both of the lines. The translator’s free treatment of word order continues even when language differences do not seem to require it, as when line 9 of the original, “Зборот се двоји от темнина”, becomes “Riječ se od tmine udvaja”. It preserves something of the original’s rhythm but loses the dactylic ending, perhaps inevitably given the shape of the available words, which are both like and unlike the words in Macedonian.<sup>10</sup>

The last lines of the two versions reveal a subtle difference:

да изгорим у угљену ријечи,  
да се истопим. (1966)  
da izgorim u ugljen riječi,  
da se istopim (1977)

The earlier version has the speaker burning up *in* the coal (locative) of the word, while the later one has the speaker burning up *into* the coal (accusative): the first puts him within the word’s furnace, while the second turns him into the word itself, identifying him with it.

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<sup>10</sup> The syllable count could have been retained by putting the verb in the past tense: *udvajala*, though that would change the line’s meaning. So many translating decisions cannot satisfy every criterion.



This translator does tend to tinker with word order more than seems necessary. I wonder whether this is meant, consciously or not, in part to underline that these are different languages with different poetic traditions and demands. Perović had a long connection with Macedonian literature and surely made the changes after due consideration of their impact. It may be worth noting that the difference in gender between masculine збор/зборот and feminine riječ has no impact on the significance or effect of the poem.

#### RUSSIAN

The Russian translation by Vadim Sikorsky comes from a 1964 collection of Šopov's poetry with six different translators guided by one editor. Their work almost certainly followed the common Soviet practice of supplying translators with подстрочники, interlinear versions or "trots" of the original that included not only dictionary meanings but also (ideally) information about rhythm, word order and sound patterns. Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, like Macedonian, but it is not a sure thing that these translators ever saw the poems in the original language.<sup>11</sup> A number of Russian translations of Šopov's earlier, more formal poems reproduce their meter and rhyme—additionally easy for a translator into Russian given the continuation and thus familiarity of formal norms in the Soviet period,<sup>12</sup> with the advantages of the language's free word order and variety of word length and stress positions. Since the form of "Раѓање на зборот" is not metrical, Sikorsky (and his editor) had greater freedom in decisions about word choice.

Therefore it is remarkable that he decides to use the word "ветка" to render "глучд". The first few lines are:

Как ветка с веткой—  
Камень с камнем.  
Каменный лес  
на ветру продрог.  
Как живой с живым—  
камень с камнем.  
(Like [a] twig with [a] twig [is]—  
[A] stone with [a] stone.

<sup>11</sup> Vadim Sikorsky, 1922-2012, is listed on the fantlab.ru web site as the translator of science fiction-related poems from Armenian, Hebrew, Kyrgyz, Romanian, Uzbek, and Yiddish. It would be remarkable if he knew all these languages. The background on Sikorsky that I was able to find does not mention his work with Macedonian.

<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that despite the political impositions of the Soviet Union after the Second World War, poetic traditions in socialist countries of Eastern Europe were much more connected to the overall European shifts away from formal verse, especially in comparison to official Russophone poetry of the Soviet era.

[A/The] stone forest  
was chilled in the wind.  
Like a living [being, masc.] with [a] living [being, masc.] [is]—  
[a] stone with [a] stone. – SF)

“Ветка” means a twig, a slender branch, and though one might imagine twigs in a tangle it is an odd choice to render a word that suggests a knot or a complex joint. The image of stone woods shivering in a cold wind is pleasing, but the following line changes the meaning of the original so capriciously that I am persuaded the translator was working from an interlinear version: “Like a living [being, masc.] with a living [being, masc.]” does not repeat the first line with its twigs. Instead it changes them, not trusting the poet’s intentions or the effect of his exact repetitions. The third appearance of the first two lines, here occurring in lines 15-16, does however repeat the first two lines as given.<sup>13</sup> The Russian version does some elegant things with rhythm, as its longer lines tend toward a predominately trimeter rhythm (dactyl and amphibrach) than might reflect awareness of the stress patterns of the original language—if not of the specific achievements of the original poem. See lines 8-11:

Камень о камень  
удариться может  
и высечет синий огонь в ночи.  
Несуществующее существует.  
(Stone on/against stone  
may strike  
and cut out [a] dark-blue fire/flame in the night.  
The nonexistent exists. – SF)

Sikorsky did receive good information about the kind of blue involved, which Russian is able to convey with the word “синий”. The final ideas of the original are shifted up to lines 21-22, with seven other lines still to follow:

И сам я хочу обжечься о слово,  
с обугленным сердцем исчезнуть в ничто...  
(And I myself want to burn myself against the word,  
to disappear into nothing with a charred heart... – SF)

At the poem’s end, the translator again tinkers with the order of lines and adds a few final elements (introduced by the pathos-laden “о”, which Šopov uses

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<sup>13</sup> The text as supplied by <[www.acosopov.com](http://www.acosopov.com)> has what I assume is a typographical error—a missing space—in line 15: “Как ветка светкой” rather than “как ветка с веткой”.

twice in earlier lines with a kind of vocative function, addressing the word), placing the word "Слово!" in final position:

о, существующее незримо  
Слово!  
(o, existing invisibly  
Word! – SF, preserving word order that does not work well in English)

The initial letter C here is capitalized and followed by an exclamation point, which adds more pathos than the original seems to require; the original has no exclamation points at all. I would argue that this makes Šopov seem more rhetorically overheated and less sophisticated as a poet, whereas the original is powerful in its restrained passion. The capital letter and altered punctuation add a touch of old-fashioned poetic rhetoric that does not do justice to the original. The changes introduced are considerably more than what Perović does in his translations, and they cause a greater alteration in the poem's effect.

#### SPANISH

The website devoted to Šopov helpfully includes two translations of "Раѓање на зборот" into Spanish, in this case made by two different translators in different years.<sup>14</sup> The first version, translated by Aurora Marya Saavedra, not only repeats the first two lines precisely in lines 5-6 but offers a footnote supplying the original word, though in transliteration:

Nudo sobre nudo\*.  
Piedra sobre piedra.  
Bosque de piedras.  
Piedra fría.  
Nudo sobre nudos.  
Piedra sobre piedra,  
\* *Nudo de la madera ("Glužd" es el término original)*

"Nudo" means knot, joint or bend (or, as the common etymology suggests, *node*), so the translator (or her editor) sees fit to explain in her note that "Glužd" is a knot or node of matter, something particularly elemental. Lines 17-18 repeat the same first lines; although each iteration uses a single preposition ("sobre" = upon or above) rather than finding two, the precise repetition conveys respect for the choices of the poet. Spanish is more resistant to consonant clusters, so it would be

<sup>14</sup> "Nacimiento de la palabra", translated by Aurora Marya Saavedra, *Lector de cenizas*, 1987; "Nacimiento de la palabra", translated by Luisa Futoransky, *Sol Negro*, 2011.

difficult if not impossible to create the effect of “glužd” even as much as English does with “gnarl” or German with “Knorren”, but the br/dr repetitions in “sobre” and “Piedra” do what can be done to express density with sound. Another advantage of Spanish in this translation is the possibility of conveying a first-person speaker with verb forms alone, avoiding the first-person pronoun. Thus, in the final two lines of this version:

para arderme en la brasa de la palabra  
hasta fundirme por entero en ella...  
(in order to burn in the hot coal/ember of the word  
until I melt entirely [with]in it...)

Saavedra does indulge in a more emotional or romantic-feeling ellipsis at the end, whereas Šopov’s original end-stop is more declarative, making the poem as a whole feel less like a daydream. Like the first lines, the last ones use the “r” sound very effectively, packing in five r’s in the penultimate line (for an effect of strong energy?), followed by only three in the final line and ending with the softer sounds of “en ella” ([with]in it; in Spanish the word “palabra” is feminine in gender).

Luisa Futoransky’s surname suggests a connection with Slavic lands; in any case, her translation from 2011 differs more from Saavedra’s than the two by Perović differ among themselves. This version too repeats the first two lines precisely, and it even takes note of the differing prepositions:

Nudo a nudo.  
Piedra sobre piedra.  
Bosque petrificado.  
Escarcha.  
Nudo a nudo.  
Piedra sobre piedra,

Like the French version, Futoransky’s jumps to a higher level of abstraction with the word “petrificado”, its Latin root already looking and sounding distant from “piedra” (as does “pétrifiée” from “pierre”). The first two lines also repeat in lines 19-20 (a line has been broken differently just before, adding one to the count). The final two lines are briefer than in Saavedra’s version, and they adhere more closely to the original:

que me quema el carbón  
de la palabra, y me fundo.  
(that the coal of the word burn me  
and melt me. – SF)

Both Futoransky and Saavedra choose the word "fundir" (or its subjective form), related to the English word "foundry" (a place for melting metals) but also perhaps suggesting the word "profound", whose root refers to the bottom of something rather than to melting (or smelting). Both also shift the speaker into the accusative ("fundirme", "que me quema", "que me fundo") to be more passively burned and melted by the coal of the word, while Šopov has the speaker planning to burn and melt in active voice once admitted to the word's stone fortress: "да изгорам...", "да се стопам".

In conclusion, it is clear that the number of translations shows this poem taken as one of Aco Šopov's most significant—enough that in two languages it has been translated twice. Even with this examination limited to a few lines of the text, we see that most of the translators have perceived the power of the simplicity and the repetitions and have striven to stay as close as possible to the original in form as well as meaning.<sup>15</sup> Every translation reveals evidence of attention to the sounds of the original, even in cases where the new language cannot convey the effect of a sound cluster or handles word stress in a very different way. The most egregious example of tinkering with the original, the Russian translation, almost certainly suffered as it was translated from an interlinear version by a translator who did not know or even see the original language of the poem, and the resulting compromise of poetic power is much greater than the possible losses in other cases of introduced changes (such as, for example, ending the poem with a hesitant ellipsis rather than a confident period). "Рождение слова" retains some of Šopov's ideas, but it makes a less convincing case for him as a poet. This is especially regrettable given the importance of poetry in the Soviet Union in the years of the "Thaw".

At the same time, reading a variety of translations such as these both foregrounds the power—in this case, somewhat grim power—of the original, and lifts up the beauty of the different languages involved, the things they can do with sound and word choice that suggest to the reader the aesthetic value of a poem in a language the reader cannot access. We see that Aco Šopov, whose work has inspired so many movements across boundaries of language, nation, and literary tradition, can move his translators into birthing a new word.

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<sup>15</sup> Although I cannot comment on the accuracy of the Bulgarian and Hungarian versions, it is easy to see that the translators there too have maintained Šopov's repetitions.

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## LITERATURE

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