

Keith Borg about his participation in a Literary Translation Workshop

Dane, Slovenia | June 2012

The translation workshop was organized by Literature Across Frontiers with the help of the Centre For Slovenian Literature. This opportunity was presented to me by Clare Azzopardi on behalf of Inizjamed. My participation was financially supported by the Malta Arts Fund (for mobility).

As there are no direct flights to Ljubljana from Malta, I had to fly via Vienna (1st June), stay overnight at a hotel near the airport and the following day catch a six hour train to Ljubljana. I was greeted at the station by Katja Gorečan, one of the up and coming poets in Slovenia who was also participating in the workshop. We did a short walkabout in the city and afterwards we met Brane Mozetic, our coordinator for this workshop. After a short meeting we were taken to the small but beautiful village of Dane, an hour or so from Ljubljana (see Appendix 1). There we met Dmitro Čistjak from Ukraine and since not all of the writers had arrived we settled in at the hotel and discussed various topics like literature and its situation in our own countries.

The next day the other writers arrived: Angeliki Dimouli from Greece; Beñat Sarasola from the Basque region in Spain; Julia Sarachu from Argentina and Samira Negrouche from Algeria (see Appendix 2). In the morning we went to a nearby village called Koper and as soon as we arrived back, we had a meeting with Brane Mozetic. He explained the format of the programme, and since Samira Negrouche is very experienced in these types of workshops she was appointed as coordinator. After an introductory lunch, we started working. Before our arrival in Slovenia, each poet had to choose a set of poems and translate them in English. After this was done, each poet had to translate 4 or 5 poems from each author into his native language.

We started with the authors introducing themselves (myself, Katja and Beñat) and then we read our works in our native language so that each one of us would get a feel of the poem and its musicality. We decided that from the next day onwards we should work from 10am to 1pm and from 4pm to 7pm, although sometimes we also worked during the afternoons.

On Monday, the morning session consisted of the rest of the introductions and readings. During the afternoon session we started working in pairs. This was a very meticulous and long process. One would discuss with the other author the poems and their translations. Then we would go through every little detail to find the closest and correct translation. As this was my very first experience in a translation workshop, I found out that it is very hard work. When one translates there is always the fear of losing some of the poem's essence. But with the luxury of being with the author and discussing thoroughly, this fear is almost eradicated.

On Tuesday we continued to work in pairs during the morning (see Appendix 3). In the afternoon, Brane and Katja took us to the beautiful village of Trieste, since we were quite close to the Italian border with Slovenia.

On Wednesday, Katja Gorečan had to leave to Ljubljana for a press conference about her first published poetry book. I was asked to accompany her since most of my translations were already done. At the end of the press conference I was asked by Brane Mozetic if I wanted to share my experience regarding the workshop so far. I explained to the audience what we were doing and then some of the audience was intrigued about the island of Malta and the situation regarding literature. So I gave my point of view and also promoted the idea of Valletta 2018 and the Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival, since this was an unexpected golden opportunity to do so. After the press conference we returned to Dane and continued working in pairs.

On Thursday all the authors finished their translations and spent the day correcting and re-correcting (see Appendix 4). On Friday we were transferred to a hotel in Ljubljana. On our way we visited the Postojnska Cave, which is the biggest cave in Slovenia. In the evening we had a literary event in the centre of Ljubljana (see Appendix 5). This was the first day of a week-long festival called *literarno-glasbeni festival (the 19th literary and music festival living literature)*. Each author read three personal poems and one translation in his / her own language. The audience was very receptive and enjoyed the evening. After the reading, all the authors mingled with people from the audience (most of them Slovenian writers or artists) and shared their experiences in writing so far.

On Saturday there was another reading planned but had to be cancelled from their own end. So we decided to visit the castle in Bled. On Sunday every author departed to his / her own country with memories to cherish and an experience that surely matured each and every one of us with respect to the art of writing and translation.

This was a great experience for me as I have met different authors with different ideas and varying styles. This will surely help me in my future writings and translations, and also in my perspective towards literature. Each and every poet is going to try hard to publish all the translations in their own country. This will help the Maltese language to gain more popularity, or at least more recognition as a literary language. I would like to kindly thank Inizjamed and the Malta Arts Fund for making this experience possible.

Keith Borg

Appendices

Appendix 1 – View from the Hotel in Dane

Appendix 2 – All the authors and Brane Mozetic

Appendix 3 – During a translation session 1

Appendix 4 - During a translation session 2

Appendix 5 – During the reading in Ljubljana

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5

