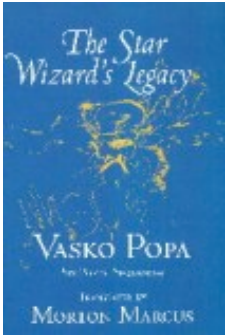


Bone to Bone: Vasko Popa

23 February 2010 by [molossus](#)

Poets have the gift to speak for others, Vasko Popa had the very rare quality of hearing the others.

XX—Octavio Paz



In April 2010 White Pine will publish Morton Marcus' translations of Serbian legend Vasko Popa, *The Star Wizard's Legacy: Six Poetic Sequences* (\$16). The book contains the versions that Marcus and Popa worked out together, over the course of a relatively short visit to Watsonville, California in 1969. Marcus' essay "Remembering Vasko Popa" is included after the poems themselves, and in a mode as lovely as the poems themselves he recalls their time together. He writes of the advice given him by Charles Simic, before their first meeting:

I was to tell Popa I preferred red wine over white and make sure I had a good supply of red wine on hand, preferably pinot noir.

XXX "What's that about?" I asked.

XXX "Vasko's first impressions of a person are all-important," Charlie said, "and he's decided that people who drink red wine exhibit preferences that show them to be people he can trust."

The essay reminds me very much of Bei Dao's essays from *Blue House*, in tone but also in content, as the poet/translator devotes his attention primarily to that most intangible thing: the friendship between the two collaborators. Marcus also describes a reading in Watsonville, at Cabrillo College, at which he read the poems excerpted below:

"Bone to Bone" brought wild laughter and applause, after I explained that it was a dialogue between two bones that had been buried for some time, but that each one still maintained the personality of the human to whom it had belonged. I also said it was like a dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, and proceeded to read the poem, after Popa's reading of the original in Serbo-Croat, in two different voices.

With special permission from White Pine Press, Molossus is happy to present the following three poems, from the sequence "Bone to Bone."

II. After The Beginning

What shall we do now

That's a good question
Now we'll have marrow for supper

We had marrow for lunch
There's a hollow feeling inside me

Then we'll make music
We like music

What will we do if the dogs come
They like bones

We'll stick in their throats
And have some fun

X

X

III. In The Sun

How wonderful sunbathing naked
I never cared much for flesh

Me neither those shreds didn't fool me
I'm crazy about you so naked

Don't let the sun caress you
Let's caress each other

But please not here not in the sun
Here all can see us dear bony

X

X

VI. Before The End

Where shall we go now

Where should we go nowhere
Where else would two bones go

What'll we do there

There waiting for us a long time
There eagerly expecting us
Are no one and his wife nothing

What use are we to them

They are old they are without bones
We'll be like daughters to them

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