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Dr. Lidija Kapuševska-Drakulevska

Poetic Trajectory

Vlada Urošević[1]: author-epoch, remarkable intellectual, wondrously curious spirit, exceptional person, man-labyrinth. Equally successful in a variety of literary genres and artistic practices. As a writer, he considers poetry his primary vocation. He appeared on the Macedonian literary scene as a poet, mostly in journals. At the same time, his debut book *Another City* (*Еден друг град*) (1959) marks the beginning of his original individual investment in the achievements of Macedonian poetry, literature, and culture in general. Since then, poetry has remained his endless love and continual creative challenge.

Urošević's poetry is not rigidly closed in narrow national frames, although he is primarily a Macedonian poet, but is dialogically turned towards the European (and world) culture/civilization heritage. Urošević builds his very original and typically recognizable poetic discourse from this remarkable symbiosis of the national and the foreign, the personal and the universal, his unquestioned unique talent, and his experience with literature, the individual affinities and the collective heritage. This poetic discourse, in its content, hide palimpsest traces from ancient cultural layers (primarily mythical), and corresponds intellectually with some other artistic (painting, architecture) and extra-artistic, above all scientific (archeology, anthropology, astronomy, physics, psychoanalysis), but also pseudoscientific spheres (esoteric studies).

Poetically, his discourse is much closer related to the heritage of the European literary (artistic) tendencies (especially the European avant-garde, whose experiences undoubtedly correspond to Urošević's sensibility) than the current national developments. Placed in the Macedonian context, his poetry, at its appearance, is a reaction to both intimism in poetry and the revolutionary pragmatism and realism in Macedonian poetry after World War II. "This is poetry that has set off on a long counter-current adventure"[2], which has provoked the earliest labels attached to this poet by some critics, such as: "enfant terrible" of modernism, "Dadaist," and "aesthete," of course, in a negative connotation. Later, the "European" or, rather, the cosmopolitan orientation of Urošević will be adequately valued, and will become an advantage and recognizable trait of his creative profile. Today, Vlada Urošević has his prominent place in the Macedonian poetic Pantheon. He is, above all, an urban poet. But at times, he is a careful listener to the secret speech of nature. Urošević is a poet who, from one collection of poetry to another, traces new excitements and broadens the borders/horizons of the poetic. This text is only one possible interpretative aspect of the great map of persistent, extraordinary curiosities and challenges of the poet Vlada Urošević.

Yearning for the miraculous

"If I were a critic of my work,
I would say that my poetry strives for the miraculous."
Vlada Urošević

Urošević relates the genesis of his interest in the wondrous as an aesthetic ideal with his childhood and the first "visual" book he was reading – the German lexicon "Duden." In the conversations with Vladimir Jankovski, he emphasizes his fascination as a child with the drawings and all the miracles in the mentioned lexicon, from the unusual objects and creatures that

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[1] V. Urošević (1934, Skopje) is a Macedonian poet, prose writer, critic, essayist, anthology editor and translator. He is a member of the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the European Academy of Arts and Sciences (Salzburg), the European Poetry Academy (Luxemburg), and the Slovenian Academy of Literature and Art (Varna); an external member of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Belgrade) and a corresponding member of the "Mallarmé" Academy (Paris). He is a retired full professor at the Faculty of Philology "Blaže Koneski" in Skopje, at the Department of General and Comparative Literature. He has published 12 poetry collections, six story collections, seven novels, three books of notes and travelogues, several books of criticism and essays, two books about the fantastic in literature, and two books about the fantastic in painting, and he has edited several anthologies. He translates from Serbian, Russian and French into Macedonian. The Government of the Republic of France has named him a Knight of the Order of Art and Literature and then an Officer of the same Order for his literary and translation output. He is a winner of numerous national and international awards. Urošević's books have been translated into: English, Bulgarian, German, Danish, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Serbian, French, and Spanish. For this occasion we list the titles of the poetry collections: *Another City* (*Еден друг град*) (1959), *The Invisible Land* (*Невиделица*) (1962), *A Mannequin in the Landscape* (*Манекен во пејзажот*) (1966), *Summer Rain* (*Летен дожд*) (1967), *Star Scales* (*Ѕвездена терезија*) (1973), *Diving Bell* (*Нуркачко ѕвоно*) (1975), *The Dreamer and Emptiness* (*Сонувачот и празнината*) (1979), *Hypnopolis* (*Хипнополис*) (1986), *Risks of Handiwork* (*Ризиците на занаетот*) (1993), *Mane, Tekel, Fares* (*Мане, текел, фарес*) (2002), *Secret Gold* (2016) и *Indiscriminate Laboratory* (*Безразборна лабораторија*) (2019).

[2] М. Матевски, Forward in: В. Урошевиќ, *Ѕвездена терезија*. Скопје, Нова Македонија, 1973, p. 8.

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belonged to different realms. But, printed on the same page, they showed mutual "secret" relations. He states: "All of it created in me an idea of a miraculous world that exists outside of the house in which I lived, that there is an immeasurable wonder of the universe that astonishes us at the same time explains something to us."[3] Or, stated in poetic terms:

Indian temples have become musketeer's home
Piranhas and pyramids are on the same page
From volcanos erupt mummies and coins of Rome
Kites, dirigibles, and cars fly on the celestial stage.

All is connected: Papuans and papayas
Pineapples and watermelons are brothers and sisters.[4]

("Lexicons from Childhood" *Indiscriminate Laboratory*)

Sprung from the large reservoir of childhood memories, or from the child's perception of the world, the miraculous grows into the pivotal principle and aim of the poetic adventure of Urošević. His sense for the miraculous, as a dominant "strategy of perception" – to look at the ordinary, the every day, the banal, *and to perceive* the miraculous – is probably related to his great love, surrealism. "Surrealism was a significant school for me," – he says, "because it has taught me to see the magic of the ordinary, as the surrealists used to say, i.e., to discover the miraculous around myself in every moment in life. (...) That is the message of my first collection of poems, *Another City:* in this everyday city, which is ordinary, gray, and tedious, there is another city that opens in front of us only at certain moments, and then we discover the miraculous."[5]

"A city exists / whose boundaries / merge / like rain and fog / with the cement frontiers of the city" – the central poem in the first poetry collection states. The city here is a space which – as the dark woods were once in Romanticism or the neglected gardens in Symbolism – offers entrance into the world of the unusual and the impossible – Urošević wants to say with his typically urban verses. The poet can discover that unknown, invisible, second side of reality, which earns poetic status and functions according to its miraculous rules. Here are a few paradigmatic verses: "A power plant suddenly resembled a matchbox," "A leaf of grass became big, a poplar small" ("Summer Story"); "At the end of the city / the castle of the Tattered Queen rises and on / the hill the stones climb..." (the poem "Evening Games"); "Gnats in the air: the air teams with gnats. / Fire in the greenhouses. Glassworks are burning. / A taxi flees across the sunshine aimlessly. / The cyclists are but shining meteors." ("The City at Sunset"). What is exciting and suggestive here? The *play* itself. The seductive *principle of playfulness* is one of the main postulates of the life/work of Urošević. That poetic principle is almost always connected to humor and irony as a protective mechanism from pathos and the banal of our existence.

In the area of playfulness in the sence of discovering, and recreation or transforming of reality, becomes evident the closeness of Urošević with the act of foregrounding or "estrangement" promoted by the Russian formalists. The postulate of "estrangement" is in harmony with Urošević's tremendous and permanent obsession with *childhood.* The childhood is another essential experiencing of the world and the "wonder" of his worldview. Leopardi has said that "the children see everything in nothing, and the adults – nothing in everything." Likewise, for Urošević, childhood is "a wondrous period of our life." For him, "all things seen through children's eyes and touched by children's hands have almost unrepeatable and irreplaceable meaning."[6] In the poem "The Golden Age of Childhood" (*Mane, Tekel, Fares* / *Мане, текел, фарес*), alluding to childhood as a lost paradise ("There was a miraculous light which reflected" – one verse goes), the poet makes current the ancient myth in an imposing way:

There were empty snail shells in which
could still hear the noise of the sea

(...) There were butterflies upon whose wings
were spread maps of an island with buried treasure
with marked sea paths leading to it

(...) But there were also vile wizards whose sorcery
betrayed it all for plastic and paper money
and who lied to us that we would become adults.

According to Urošević, the roots of our imagination are situated in childhood. Every poet (and artist, in general), tries to regain the power of childish discovering of the world "as for the first time." The child's free imagination offers a possibility to approach the every day from another angle, from another different, unusual, and alternative perspective. Opposed to rational logic and habit, the outside sensations carry the taste of a miracle for any child. "Each, even the banalest object or event opens the doors that lead towards the magical areas of the incredible" – Urošević considers.[7] In this sense, the poem "Shadow Theatre" (outside of the collections, 1980) is illustrative: "The fire bites the great body of darkness. / The night as a wounded beast twists and wriggles," "over the white wall of the house terrible flocks fly," "The child stands in the yard at night / and waits for the electrodes of the welding machine to swish." The poem's end reveals the illusion, the

[3] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević). Скопје, Сигмапрес, 2003, p. 16.

[4] The poems quoted in the article have been translated by: Zoran Ancevski, Elisaveta Ritchie, Eugene Prostov, David Donnel, and Kalina Maleska.

[5] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p. 54; 60.

[6] Л. Капушевска-Дракулевска, Секоја средба со Влада Урошевиќ е чудесна (A conversation with V. Urošević). *Културен живот*, 2019, No 3-4, p. 22.

[7] Л. Капушевска-Дракулевска, Секоја средба со Влада Урошевиќ е чудесна (A conversation with V. Urošević), op.cit., p. 23.

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delusion: the imaginary panopticon, which is a cause for estrangement, is momentary (according to critics, Urošević is "the poet of the unrepeatable moment"), but for the child, it has a meaning of a whole cosmos. This poem ("Shadow Theatre"), according to the principle of construction and according to the final solution, interacts with the poem "The Drunken Boat" by Arthur Rimbaud. The series of images of exotic areas in the last part of Rimbaud's poem ends with the appearance of a child that plays with paper boats in a pond. The areas the child's imagination creates are poetic and much more impressive than the prosaic reality.

The program principle for foregrounding the miraculous and miraculization of the ordinary, crystalized in Urošević's first collection, remains a constant mark of his poetry. However, in the following books, it receives different shapes and functions. At the beginning (*Another City*), the outcome of exploring the city labyrinth carries amazement and joy (so that, as in Chagall's paintings, "the sleeping lovers to the sky depart," the night bus, "a joyous monster, a scarecrow" "always takes us to unseen thing"). Later, in those (almost always a little oniric) urban adventures, there is always a feeling of repulsiveness ("The city tightens around like a noose" – we read in the poem "Dusk in April," *Diving Bell*). There is no longer "a surprise waiting" for you behind the corner (as one verse in the first books of this author says), but most often, the wanderer through the city streets colored with the shadows of a dream, feels a threat lurking: "The pursuit follows me: / tanks chase me through the waking city," "Helicopters, cyclists – everyone chases me" ("Erased space"); or: "If falls. What falls? Poisonous caterpillars / fall on the city. The city is emptying" ("Fake news"); or: "The smoke drops like a curtain upon the sight / of the city that writhes in spasms of alarm." ("Alarm")[8].

Where do these horrifying visions come from? Are they a result of the memories of war scenes seen in childhood? Of the innate, natural tendency for a kind of catastrophe? Or a reflection of the events in the contemporary world (wars, natural disasters, refugee crises, etc. which do not differentiate between time and space)? "City" – a character in the novel *The Dragon's Bride* (*Невестата на змејот*) by Urošević says – "a dangerous place for living." Still, regardless of whether the views of the urban cityscape are attractive or catastrophic, Urošević very lucidly builds his estranging outline of the city, revealing its poetic qualities, in the style of his great predecessor – Baudelaire. Baudelaire, in the "wasteland" of the city, managed "to sense a previously undiscovered secret beauty" (Hugo Friedrich). That paradoxical, and unusual beauty is full of the attractive power of the ugly. In this sense, Urošević's poems in which the topos of *monsters* appear (especially the cycle "A Tower with Monsters" in *Hypnopolis*) are paradigmatic as a manifestation of the animal-like:

"Warm and sleek, handsome and cruel,
monsters creeping out of the corners in the twilight.
Their fur glistens like ancient velvet,
the white of their eyes is like porcelain.
(...)
They are all around, horrible and enchanting,
even, the child stretches its arms toward them."
("Monsters")

This poem demonstrates the poetic nature of the ugly, which simultaneously frightens and amazes. About the "terrible beauty," understood in Blake's sense, Urošević says: "The unusual that attracts me contains the two elements – on the one hand, the unusual frighten, because it is outside of the norms and understandings that persist in our way of thinking, but it can simultaneously amaze."[9] The monsters, "lazy and slow," are sometimes rendered concrete, and have mythological ("Minotaur"), Biblical ("Behemoth and Leviathan") or alchemical symbols (*Secret Gold* / *Тајно злато*), sometimes they have unusual forms that the scientists admire: "three pairs of legs each / and their tongue twists as snakes' ones" ("Tamed Monsters"), and sometimes a whole arsenal of composite creatures walk through Urošević's verses as a projection of the unconscious (oniric): "lions with horns on their head," "a lion with donkey's head," "evil women with bodies like birds," "half dog-half bird," "people-fish," "people with legs of grasshoppers..."

The poems whose theme is monsters are illustrative of the interweaving between the imaginary and the realistic in the poetry of Vlada Urošević. The monsters, by rule, break the laws of the world/cosmos order, they are a sign of the out-worldly. They symbolize the irrational forces (chaos), but our author situates them in the space of the city (cosmos) or, possibly, on its periphery, in a separate tower, so again in some kind of a building, construction – an embodiment of the human. (For Urošević, the tower "represents a road to the celestial heights and the depths of the earth, so towards both poles of the Unknown.") In this way, the animal-like does not begin where the human ends. Still, it penetrates the "normal," and suggests the concept of the interweaving both seemingly contrary realities in the dual division of the world: visible-invisible, lightness-dark (day-night, cosmos-chaos), good-evil, conscious-unconscious, reality-dream, human-animal... Perhaps even the world in its essence is "monstrous"?!

The irrational in this poetry offers the reader an encounter with an incredible, exciting world. Among the

[8] The poems: "Erased Space" and "Fake News" are from the collection *Diving Bell*.

[9] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p. 100. Additionally, Urošević is also the author of an essayistic book titled *Miracles and Monsters* (*Чуда и чудовишта*) (Скопје, Магор, 2001), dedicated to the fantastic in literature.

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types of the irrational that Urošević practices, the oniric imagination has an exceptionally privileged status. It is enough to see the titles of separate poems to notice the frequency of the motives of night and *dream* in his poetry. Understandable because the miraculous, whose great admirer he is, exists in dreams and fantasy: "Where does the wave take her and who makes her eyes widen / what sight does she see, what wonder – seventh, eighth?" – the lyrical subject in the poem "A Sleeping Woman" (*Star Scales* / *Ѕвездена терезија*) is curious, subtly alluding to the abundant miracles that are hidden in the plentiful layers of the dream understood as "another life" (Gérard de Nerval). The dream, undoubtedly, is poetic, but this author, according to his recognition, strengthens its poetic qualities consciously, using the language of symbols inherent to dreams. Urošević is a rare poet that knows "the secret of the dreamers"; his dreamer "toward the core of secrets sails" ("Night Sail," *The Dreamer and Emptiness* / *Сонувачот и празнината*) and "the dreamer unites with the unknown / feverishly in love" ("The Fall of Night," *The Dreamer and Emptiness*).

The Unknown is the common denominator of the dream and of another very frequent thematic and leitmotif attribute in the poetry of Vlada Urošević – *the sea*, that "sleeping horizon." "In my poetry, the sea has the role of a dream about free spaces, about touching the unpredictable, traveling towards the unknown," – he explains.[10] The summer, according to him, also symbolizes freedom, becoming engulfed in adventure, dismissing the established order, and discipline. Slobodan Micković[11], in one of his studies dedicated to Urošević's poetry, he interprets the summer as an atmosphere (dominant in *The Invisible Land* / *Невиделица, Summer Rain* / *Летен дожд*, etc. and in certain poems in *Indiscriminate Laboratory* / *Безразборна лабораторија*) in correlation with the Mediterranean landscapes, fragrances and colors, and with the sea in general. Sensing the closeness of the sea or its presence is especially significant to our poet, such as in the poem "Sensing the City" (*Summer Rain*): "Salt smells from somewhere," "I stand on the city square, and I hear the voice / of the sea, a hundred and one sea miles away." Regarding to the mentioned rhyming between the dream and the sea, the final verse of the poem "A House Surrounded by Ripe Wheat" (outside of the collections, 1980) is illustrative: "A house the man sleeping in, says in his dream: 'Sea,'" and especially the end of the poem "The secrets of the City" (outside of the collections, 2004): "... from the small boat, / above the bed in the corner of the child's room, / it smells of vanilla, canella at night, / the sea splashes and ties the world together."

The poet wanders with the "compass of the dream" through the landscapes of the oniric on a microcosmic level. But he uses another favorite instrument, the astrolabe, to make a daring journey towards the stars and space (macrocosm). Concerning the dichotomy between micro- and macrocosm, Urošević's line of thought is close to the idea of Paracelsus (and other great masters of esoteric sciences, especially alchemy) about their mutual unity, which results in the possibility of identifying the infinitely small with the infinitely large. Understanding poetry as "a kind of essence of the spirit," a "sudden cognition" that "each grain of sand is, in fact, a cosmos" ("To see a World in a Grain of Sand," says William Blake), this poet wants to point to the presence of the miracle both up there and down here: "In each fruit a star hides"; "fruits are planets, the light – their juiciness"; "What space flight aim to discover is hidden in the content of the fruit" – we read in the poem "Star Orchards" (*Star Scales*).

Through the stars, announced with the poem "Southern star" (*The Invisible Land* / *Невиделица*), a link is established with the *scientific miraculous* that this poet shows affinity to, by the cult towards knowledge that he cherishes so unselfishly, and with interest for astronomy and the new scientific discoveries in general. According to the statements of Urošević himself, this is another fascination from childhood. His encounters with books dedicated to celestial mechanics and the secrets of the universe resulted in a taste for the poetic sence of science. "Vlada Urošević is one of the rare poets (...) who introduced into poetry the miracle of the scientific epoch, not only of 'science fiction,' but also of our ordinary life. Reality could be more imaginary than fiction" – Francis Combe writes in an impassioned essay, and continues: "His 'Poems for XXI Century' (*Mane, Tekel, Fares*) are almost prophesy. They announce the risk of seeing how life on Earth ends: the burial of a lake, the space tree that no longer gives fruit, the plastic planet with sulfurous flowers, etc. A world in which all beautiful things are under threat."[12] In poems of this kind, the poet becomes a proponent of a type of bioethics:

> Whether due to pesticides or other inventions
> they are less and less among us, as you may have well noticed:
> as are, in fact, all other beautiful things
> that have silently been proclaimed unnecessary ornaments.
>
> ("Butterflies," *Mane, Tekel, Fares*)

In these and in many other warning and dramatic verses in which phantasmagoric visions and

[10] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p. 113.

[11] С. Мицковиќ, Опсесиите и фасцинациите во поезијата на Влада Урошевиќ. *Разгледи* (XXX), 1988, февруари-март, No. 2-3, p. 137-144 (тематски број: В. Урошевиќ).

[12] Ф. Комб, Франсис, Шумата на чудата на Влада Урошевиќ. В. Урошевиќ, *Во соработка со соност*. Скопје, МАНУ, Фондација Трифун Костовски, 2014, p. 9-10 (translated by: В. Мартиновски).

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apocalyptic situations pulsate, for example: "plastic, oil spots, garbage" ("Library II," *Indiscriminate Laboratory*), Cities on which radioactive rains fall" ("Planet of War"), "Whole continents washed with detergent" ("Plastic Planet"), "...dangerous stars with stings of dangerous light" ("Dead Planet"), "Trains stuck in lakes of tar" ("Landscapes of Silence")[13], the mythical consciousness of the exhaustion of civilization is recognized. Urošević writes about the danger of chaos, destruction and dehumanization of the world (which, paradoxically, is carried out by humans). The new biological, and chemical weapons, as well as the monstrous experiments in the biotechnological laboratories, reshape life on Earth. The current and predicting dimension of these verses is more than evident. Interestingly, Urošević himself recognizes that he experiences the catastrophic poems not only as a warning for the possible destiny of the world, but also as a play of freed imagination.

The poetic adventure of Urošević with so me new shapes of the miraculous continues.

The magic of language

> "Some spirits, among them myself, can hardly imagine something *beautiful*, which would not be, to a certain degree, magical."
>
> André Breton (*Magical Art*)

According to Vlada Urošević, the poetic language must contain "a degree of magic, Zaum." "To be a poet means to be capable of *being astonished* by language," – Claude Roy had said. "Poetry is the highest form of use of language," – Urošević considers, and, in the style of Stéphane Mallarmé, he concludes: "It's not the idea that creates the poem, it's the language that creates the poem. Ideas are, after all, exhaustive."[14] Likewise, for Paul Valéry ("Poetry and Abstract Thought"), the poet's task is to create an impression of an intimate relationship between the word and the spirit, which leads to a remarkable result, close to the illusions and the miraculous in ancient magic. In other words, the principles of magic and the principles of poetry meet in the request of a language that will be different from the usual one; it is a "secret language," as Mircea Eliade would say. Talking about the closeness between magic and poetry as two activities of the human spirit, Urošević says: "The incomprehensible or partly comprehensible words contain the energy of the primordial beginnings. The word still held the close relationship with the object or the action it designated, as well as the possibility of identifying with them. And, therefore, the incomprehensiveness of words strengthens the magic of poetry the faith in their magical power. The child feels it, and the poet sometimes manages to express it."[15]

One such exceptionally successful example of the symbiosis between magic and poetry in Urošević's output is the magical palindrome "Ablanatanalba" from the eponymous poem (*Risks of Handiwork* (*Ризиците на занаетот*)):

> I pronounce you O abla O natan O alba
> There is nothing in you, and there is everything
> (...)
> A spinning word that
> wants to give praise
> to the unutterable
> Ablanatanalba
> Ablanatanalba!

Don't these verses sound like incantations? In the style of magic, poetry, too, is "an attempt to express the inexpressible," – says Urošević. The poem "Ablanatanalba" sublimates his yearning for the miraculous as an ideal, and the magic of the lyrical language game. The idea that words begin as magic, and that through the poetry, they return to magic again is also held by Borges: "There are wonderful verses yet have no meaning. And still, they do have meaning – not for a reason, but imagination" – he says in his Norton Lectures, and explains: "there is pleasure in the words, and, of course, in their rhythm, their music. (...) They don't mean anything, and they are not created to mean anything, and yet they function. They function as something beautiful."[16]

These views of Borges correspond with some attitudes of Urošević expressed in the text "Ars Poetica": "Too much rationality harms poetry. For a poem to become and remain poetry, there is a need for a certain dose of irrationality – achieved through playfulness, through accepting coincidence, through association leading from one thing to another, through some kind of word trance, through humor – to reach the areas that no one can reach with the rational approach."[17] The essence of poetry, according to Urošević, surpasses the sensible, rational message, which can be avoided, can be turned around, the poet may play with it, and "that is what makes poetry – poetry."

So, from a linguistic aspect, the poetic adventure of Urošević is based on the belief in the power of speech. Maybe, he insists much more on the suggestiveness of the sound of poetry speech than on its meaning. Macedonian critics consider Urošević to be "an extraordinary verselogue and a rare versification expert," author of "our most sonorous poems" whose musicality is "rich and abundant," a poet who

[13] The poems: "Planet of War," "Plastic Planet," and "Dead Planet" are from the poetry collection *The Dreamer and Emptiness*.

[14] Љ. Спасов, *Рудните слоеви на сеќавањето*: conversations with Vlada Urošević. Скопје, МАНУ, 2014, p. 131.

[15] В. Урошевиќ, Viola arsenica, (белешки за поезијата). Скопје, Готен, 2021, p. 7.

[16] Х. Л. Борхес, Умешноста на стихот. Скопје, Табернакул, 2014, p. 91-93 (translated by: Т. Сиљаноски).

[17] В. Урошевиќ, Viola arsenica, оп. цит., p. 48.

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"fascinates with his word puns."[18] *The Euphonia* of the verse, and the interest in the phonetic aspect of poetry (rhymes, alliterations, associative listings, etc.) are the crucial characteristics of Vlada Urošević's poetry. Here are a few examples:

It's raining like a woman sleeping,
like a child learning a poem by heart,
it's raining like fugitive hiding and weeping
it's raining as if part

of the seasons are confused, there's rain
pouring as when love is strong
as if in a dream, as if we are in pain
pressed by a hill, it's raining hard and long

("Summer Rain," *Summer Rain*)

Nothing has remained, not even knives or strives
nor fires or shires or spires or wires
nor madness or sadness or darkness or brightness
Nothing has remained, not even salt or vault
nor keepers or sleepers or hangers or winders

("Lullaby – Dreamguile," *Risks of Handiwork*)

"These poems will enchant you in every sense of the word. With their unusual charm, with their music," the French poet, novelist, essayist, and longtime editor of *Europe* magazine – Pierre Gamara has stated, referring to Urošević's verses. According to Blaže Koneski, "Urošević's rich vocabulary, exposed in the position of rhyme, is submitted to exceptionally successful sound harmonies. Hence, the contribution of this poet in refreshing the rhyme in Macedonian poetry is obvious, and not small."[19] The copious "rhymarium" in the creative laboratory of our poet is born, as he explains himself, through a long process of searching for closeness between words, which results in their final sound harmony creating a ray of surprise. Urošević often consciously approaches the act of rhyming words from various areas, and comes to interesting connections that make unexpected effects. Characteristic in this sense is the afterword to the poetry collection *Indiscriminate Laboratory* (*Безразборна лабораторија*), in which Urošević expresses his dilemmas around the choice of the free verse and rhymed verse. Urošević believes that poetry has no strict rules, and that each poet chooses the path he believes will enable him to attain the desired goal. He writes both rhymed verse and free verse, although, according to the poetic practice, he is more inclined toward classical verse.

In the spirit of the poetic strive for achieving a solid form and Euphonia of the verse, he also writes in the sonnet form, probably the highest artistic model of poetic discourse in general, which is a rare form in contemporary Macedonian poetry. Miodrag Pavlović characterizes the unique poetic formula of Urošević as an "Oniric Parnassus." This formula refers to the harmony between the Apollonian and the Dionysian concept as two entirely equitable principles of creation. It is no coincidence that the latest poetic book by Vlada Urošević, *Indiscriminate Laboratory* (*Безразборна лабораторија*, 2019), starting from the title itself, dialectically connects: adventure and order, curiosity for the unusual and the "yearning for a system," playfulness (freedom) and discipline ("l'art pour l'art"), "creative fantasy" and experience, admiration (ecstasy) before life as a minor big miracle and rational control, a sense of wonder and a cultivated expression and style, singing and contemplation.

"I have grown up between those two fascinations: the one with books and the one with natural phenomena. (...) I think that in my experience of the world today, those two kinds of gaining experience are complementary," – Urošević says.[20] And indeed: his poetry is a testimony of a fascinating erudition, on the one hand, and on the other, it is completely submerged into the sea of sensory and perceptions. Regarding sensory stimuli on which he insists and through which he experiences life, Urošević has emphasized many times the importance of the change of seasons and changes in nature, of feeling the fragrances, the type of external light, even of tactile experiences, because, although they are seemingly worldly and physical, they open the gates towards metaphysical essence of life, they point to the cyclical movement of life and death. The stimulus of the specific sensory experience of the world has become a pillar of creation. Consequently, the drama that takes place in the poetic laboratory is in harmony with the great drama of existence that takes place every day in the imagined laboratory of nature. In this sense, the collection *Indiscriminate Laboratory* abounds in especially suggestive verses that show that "the garden" is a kind of "observatory," that "the flight of the butterflies" can be calligraphy or cryptography, and "the text on the field is palimpsest." Similar examples are constantly present in Urošević's poetry: "lichens have their writing rules" ("A Poem about Inscriptions," *A Mannequin in the Landscape*) and "Bushes are syllables / and the speech of the wind stammers" ("A Draft of the Land," *Summer Rain*), "The landscape is a book – unread. / All is writing (regardless of who wrote it)" ("Book – Unread," *Mane, Tekel, Fares*) and "new signs reel in the air pools: the small stars of the dandelion, calligraphic fibers" ("Spring Book," *Diving Bell*); "...only the stars in the sky / and the ants on the earth go on writing the shapes / of an alphabet that no one knows." ("Mane, Tekel, Fares") ... Writing of nature suggests an

[18] Г. Старделов, Поезијата на Влада Урошевиќ. *Разгледи* (XXXIX), 1996, април-мај, бр. 4-5, 109-132.

[19] Б. Конески, Блаже, Меѓу јавето и сонот. Поговор во: В. Урошевиќ, *Панична планета*. Скопје, Наша книга, 1989, p. 83-85 (двојазично, на македонски и на англиски јазик).

[20] Раскажете ми го детството и ќе ви кажам каква личност сте. Интервју со В. Урошевиќ. *Вечер*, 13.02.2019, p. 17

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untouchable quality of phenomena, and reveals the poet's trust in its secret forces.

It is interesting that, apart from the mentioned "reading of the landscape" (the title of one poem), the urban in Urošević's poetry can also be viewed from a semiotic aspect, as a harmony of signs, as a letter that is read and interpreted. Analogously to nature, the city too is a cryptogram, a coded message or "chaotic manuscript":

> Messages flow through the city: tiny
> flickering sparkles, vibrations, hardly
> legible signs, a telegraph of chances (...)
> ... And the entire city
> is a chaotic manuscript, unpaginated pages,
> lost connections...
>
> ("The Secrets of the City")

What the poet insists on in the indicated verses dedicated to the manuscript, both of nature and the city, is the secret, the riddle, the mystery, and the inexplicable – crucial categories for the biographical/ poetic worldview of Urošević. The *poetical image* in this poetry is also a riddle, its second crucial component, besides the Euphonia of the verse. "I consider the poetic image one of the most important elements of contemporary poetry. Regardless of whether we place it in a metaphor, comparison, oxymoron" – Vlada Urošević says in the conversations with Vladimir Jankovski, and continues: "I enjoy creating a poetic image, especially if there are elements of wonder, improbability in it, something that conflicts with the laws of logic and with everyday practice."[21] Or, stated in poetic terms: "The night is dark blue, as the juice of blackberries" ("Dandelion Kites, Dreamers, Night," *The Dreamer and Emptiness*); "Who is that girl over there with her palm/ like green outside landscape over the window?" ("The Compass of the Dream," *Star Scales*); "The cold audibly enters, riding a broom" ("Winter Ceremonies," *Diving Bell*); "the tossed newspaper and the wind hug" ("Picnic Goers," *Another City*); "I exist in the skin of a crystal"; "I exist in the skin of a crystal"; "I exist in the fragrance of a flower," ("Existences," *Risks of Handiwork*); "Leopard's skin stretched on the seabed, / its spots moving: a net / in which I lie making drowsy moves / of a clumsy dreamer / stretching in his cage of light." ("An Afternoon Swim in the Sea," *Mane, Tekel, Fares*).

If the Euphonia in Urošević's verses can be correlated to the inheritance of Symbolism, the visual is most frequently connected with the techniques of surrealism. "Although surrealism had a great influence on his poetry, that inclination limits this poetry, simplifies it and, eventually, makes it cliché, whereas his poetry is much more abundant, more complex and multilayered," Roman Kissiov rightfully warns.[22] Still, Vlada Urošević has written one typically surrealist poem – "A Night of Full Moon above Skopje" (*Mane, Tekel, Fares*) which is considered the peak of the masterfully constructed analogies. It is one of the longest poems by Urošević (maybe even the longest), which fascinates with the disparity, and intensity of the images themselves, with the unusual, impressive, dynamic, paradoxical and wondrous sights: "This is the Vardar, not the Brahmaputra! / What are Indian temples doing in Skopje?"; "Fish from the Southern Seas swim in the City Aquarium (...) But Skopje / never had an aquarium, / someone yells. So what?"; "The Stone Bridge is not of stone but amber / and ancient ivory, slightly darkened / through the centuries"; "The Daut-pasha's Hammam offers its twelve breasts to the sky / stretching restfully like Ephesus's Artemis"; "Surrealism is not dead! / That is the slogan in black letters written on a freshly / whitewashed wall", etc. "The city is slightly removed: / if someone had a compass / he would be able to see that it now lies beneath the stars. / Nothing is the same" – concludes the lyrical subject. And all of this is the doing of the Moon, which, acting as a stage prop, frequently plays the role of a semantic "cut" (according to Lotman). The Moon's duty is "to shuffle the cards / of the possible and the impossible." According to Urošević, the surrealist image does not play a mimetic role. The surrealist image is "a pure creation of the spirit. Each surrealist image wants to be a miracle – a sign of the victory of imagination over reality,"[23] – he states. These positions are self-referential, at least concerning the lavish spectrum of images in the poem "A Night of Full Moon above Skopje."

From a stylistic point of view, this poet also uses other techniques (besides the already mentioned association/allusion), such as the metonymic concept or enumeration. For example, the poem "Illusory Landscapes" (*The Dreamer and Emptiness*), is entirely composed following the metonymic idea (although it is not the only one): "Birds with leaves instead of wings. / Mountains with fur instead of snow. / Volcanoes spitting blood instead of lava. / Storms with spasms instead of thunder. Fruits with eyes instead of seeds", etc. In the poem "Childhood" (*The Dreamer and Emptiness*), the author affirms several common traits of his poetry: *depersonalization and absence of the lyrical I* (absence of lyricism at the expense of creating atmosphere), *cataloging* (without the mediation of the verb-temporal forms) and *turning point* ("The surprise, the deviation

[21] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p.109.

[22] Р. Кисъов, Играта на въображението митологията на съня и паралелните светове на поета – вълшебник (Поезията на В. Урошевиќ). Forward in: В. Урошевиќ, *Митолория на съня*. София, Ерго, 2013, p. 15.

[23] В. Урошевиќ, Машината за шиење и чадорот излегоа во пет часот (кон поезијата на надреализмот). Forward in: *Големата авантура: францускиот надреализам* (составил и превел). Скопје, Македонска книга, p. 26.

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toward the unexpected, is the best salvation from the banal," says Urošević at one point). Here is the entire poem "Childhood":

Thermometers, dictionaries,
alarm clocks ringing,
mother-of-pearl boxes
dolls and oranges.

Glass vials
filled with insects
zeppelins, angels,
Turkish delights and rhinos.

Peddlers
of colorful lollipops
islands with hidden treasure
and old picture postcards.

Expeditions, parrots,
a world closed in a marble,
watermelon lanterns,
shells and butterflies.

Natives and volcanos,
carriages and bats,
evening lamps under arbors
and a war – coming ever closer.

"As far as catalogization is concerned, I enjoy it, it's true," Vlada Urošević says. "I can't explain why. Simply, the enumeration and placing those objects one next to the other is for my enjoyment that might be visual. But I enjoy the objects, the tactile experience with them. Especially the rare, unusual objects. Some objects are unusual, which come from distant countries, which belonged to other cultures. It is all connected to my sense of the miraculous, of wonder."[24] So, the author links enumeration as a visual act (present in many other poems besides the mentioned one, "Childhood") with visual art. Throughout the entire poetic output of Vlada Urošević, there are reminiscences (explicit or implicit) of painters with whom he has his own, unconventional dialogue. For example, in the poem "Paleography of the Dream" (*Diving Bell*), we can sense traces of the atmosphere of De Chirico's paintings: "There are such dreams in which / you walk the empty city squares. / A monument stands in the middle of the square. / You run the smooth stairs..." Giorgio de Chirico is not mentioned here, but in the poem "A Riddle of the Afternoon" (*Indiscriminate Laboratory*), there is an homage to this painter in the motto. Apart from De Chirico, Urošević's imagination museum also contains: Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel, Vincent van Gogh, Marc Chagall (eponymous sonnets from the cycle "Canvases," *The Invisible Land*), Hiroshi Nakamura, Max Ernst and again H. Bosch (*Indiscriminate Laboratory*). As a kind of a counterpart of the museum, in Urošević's poetry (in numerous poems), there is the presence of the library, the literary museum in which a whole series of unique names from literary history gain a significant place: from Homer and Shakespeare – to Baudelaire and Borges, and from Konstantin Miladinov and Kosta Racin – to Blaže Koneski and Mateja Matevski.[25]

The triad: museum-library-theatre, illustrative of the "places of memory" – places in which the images of history, culture, and experience are stored, in the poetry (as well as in the prose) of Urošević, has the status of the city as a product of a specific civilizational model, as a cosmogony act of ordering the world, a transition from chaos to cosmos. All together are parabolas for an inevitable parallel reality. Touched by the magical wand of the poet, the library, the museum, and the theatre become sites of new urban mythology: "The library is a ship that sinks" (the poem "Library," *Indiscriminate Laboratory*), the mythical Minotaur, "half bull, half man" is a museum piece to which "two elderly ladies (...) offer some grass", while "the tourists take photos ("The Minotaur", *The Dreamer and Emptiness*), and below the theatre there are catacombs in which "a whole storehouse of bombs has remained!" ("Panicky Theatre", *Indiscriminate Laboratory*). Yet, in the museums, "metals stand in which / the splendor of the distant fire without sun still burns / and the King and Queen stand still / offering smiles to each other" ("A Poem of Museums," *A Mannequin in the Landscape*), while, after the fire in the Library of Alexandria" "the night printer continues to work / printing dark books with letters of phosphorus" ("The Library of Alexandria," *Secret Gold*). The parallel between the alchemical and the creative process in the mentioned poems suggests, after all, the faith of the poet in the eternity of art (museums, libraries, theatre).

Urošević is a scenographer and a director of numerous scenes in his verses. Beside the connection with the theatrical play, these events can also connect to the narrative of the film art (critics, among other things, have established a relation between Urošević's poetry and the oniric poetics of the cult director Fellini). Scenery in the poetic discourse (theatrical and film shots, but also the production, collage and other techniques) indicates not only the ludic principle, and the poetics of "estrangement," but also the aspect of the *narrative* in poetry. Thus the appearance of characters; through Urošević's verses, a multitude of constant characters appear – especially children and women, dreamers and fantasts; as well as mythological creatures (Minotaur, Dionysius, Pythia, Argonauts, etc.) and fairy tale creatures (Sinbad the Sailor, Scheherazade, princesses, magicians), the alchemical King and Queen and others, but also unique creations of the author, such as: Mister Mysterious Case, Mannequin in the Landscape, The Green Spirit of the Park, The Air Diver, The Great Hunter, The God of

[24] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p. 78.

[25] Konstantin Miladinov, Kosta Racin, Blaže Koneski and Mateja Matevski are Macedonian poets.

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Summer, etc. These inventive names again indicate the infinite potential of poetic expression and the magic of language.

Homo poeticus, after all

"Only poetry is powerful enough to touch the essence of the world."

Martin Heidegger

Poetry is an old anthropological need and one of the most senior human skills. The truth poetry "radiates," – it is an epiphany of the divine, a transition from Non-Being into Being, "an urge that does not ask for sense", as Blaže Koneski would say. According to Danilo Kiš (from his essay this subtitle is taken), poetry is a defense against barbarism: it gives the sense to our existence. "Poetry continues the beauty of the world; it aestheticizes the world" – French professor Gaston Bachelard wrote in his study *Poetics of Reverie*. Without poetry, the world would be a "wasteland" – the Serbian writer Mihajlo Pantić says.

For Urošević, poetry represent "entrance in the realm of freedom, and release from the realm of necessity." Aware that poetry today is excluded from social events and the great movements of the epoch, he considers that "poetry is forced to lead an almost secret life." In one of his essays with a paradigmatic title – "What is Poetry Able for," he declares that poetry "cannot stop any war, cannot reduce the misfortunes of refugees, cannot prevent the destitution of the planet." According to him, the poet feels incapable "before the tragic and increasingly threatening perspectives of the contemporary world." Urošević, however, emphasizes his faith in the "hidden force" of poetry and in the prophesying role of the poet. "Who knows, his verses may have some kind of influence on tomorrow's developments?"[26] – he is optimistic.

To be a poet of the level of Vlada Urošević ("poet-magician," "explorer, discoverer and builder," according to Mateja Matevski), is to be dedicated to poetry whose nature is enlightening. However, "it explores the night" of the soul of the world and "the secrets in which the human being has sunk," as Saint-John Perse would say. "The poet decodes the essence of things, to express it, he must again, in a different way, encode it," Urošević considers. Maybe that is why his ideal in poetry, as he often emphasizes, is to make "a poem that will look like a solid object. As an object carved out of language," "as some kind of beautiful perfect box." "Maybe because the box always hides something inside."[27] In it are stored the past and the memories of childhood, dreams, and yearnings of the poet Vlada Urošević. The book is "a magical object," as he says, an "unread book" and, as the box, it hides – a riddle, "a secret unraveled only by another secret" – as it is said in the poem "Ablanatanalba."

The earthly and the celestial images of this poetry (from "the anxiety in the landscape" to the "star orchards"), fascinate with the unique and wondrous crystallization of the expression. With the "cosmic force" of imagination, Urošević creates the virtual space of the eternal poetry of humankind. I believe that the poetry of Vlada Urošević can enchant an English, American, French or German reader almost as much as a Macedonian one.

Translation from Macedonian into English: Kalina Maleska

[26] В. Урошевиќ, Viola arsenica, op.cit., p. 82.
[27] В. Јанковски, *Огледало на загатката* (conversations with Vlada Urošević), op.cit., p. 26.

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