

Uroš Mozetič as a Poet

Not only a literary scholar, university teacher and translator, Uroš Mozetič was also an author in his own right. He published five cycles of poems in the Slovenian *Nova Revija* magazine between 1997 and 2006: *Gallery of Discarded Things* (*Galerija zavrženih stvari*), *Lošinj*, *The Cloud of Knowing* (*Oblak védenja*), *De-dications* (*Po-svetila*), and *The Way of the Cross for the Blind* (*Križev pot za slepe*). Individual poems from *Gallery*, *Lošinj* and *Cloud* were presented at the international poetry festival held at Medana, Slovenia, in 2003: these poems were published bilingually – in the original and in the author's own English translation – in the collection *Days of Poetry and Wine, Medana 2003*. (The details are cited in the bibliography section.)

Even at a cursory glance, these poems are marked by their author's erudition. In the manner of poetry by Thomas Stearns Eliot, whom Uroš admired, they are interspersed with allusions to and quotations from a wide range of poetry and prose, both from Slovenian and (fortunately for international readers) from English literature. Even the short selection printed in this volume of ELOPE contains, for example, a quotation from Philip Larkin's "Whatever Happened?" in the poem "Lošinj, Veli and Mali" and a reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in *The Way of the Cross for the Blind I*. Yet this erudition is steeped in a sensibility, in nuanced emotional and philosophical responses to the world, to the enduring questions posed by the human condition, and especially to the people surrounding the poet. According to his close friends, Uroš appreciated the Romantic poet John Keats (in addition to such near-contemporary poets as Wystan Hugh Auden, Seamus Heaney, e.e. cummings, or, recently, Louise Glück), and it is easy to understand how Keats' sensibility would have appealed to his own. It is telling that the poem "Pax de deux" is dedicated to a famous Slovenian duo of ballet dancers and choreographers, Pino and Pia Mlakar, who represented in his eyes an ideal union. (Parenthetically, it should be noted that the title is not a typo but a play on words, *Pas de deux* being not only a ballet term but also the name given by the Mlakar couple to their house by the Krka River in Slovenia.)

The combination of literary allusions, references to localities from Uroš' favourite places of sojourn (the windy hillscapes of western Slovenia, sometimes also the Croatian island of Lošinj) and references to his everyday life and acquaintances or friends may result in a somewhat hermetic mode. In my selection of texts for this publication, I have therefore observed two criteria: the availability of a text in the author's own English translation, and its communicability. I have included a sample from each cycle: the first three, *Gallery of Discarded Things*, *Lošinj*, and *The Cloud of Knowing*, are represented by extracts in Uroš' own translation, taken from *Days of Poetry and Wine*, while the last two, *De-dications* and *The Way of the Cross for the Blind* (a meditative account of the hike undertaken by the author and two friends) have been attempted by me. In the process, my insights into Uroš' poetry were deepened and refined by the helpful comments and reminiscences of Dr Aleš Grošelj and Anton Janko, Professor Emeritus, his close friends and fellow pilgrims in *The Way of the Cross*.