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«SPRING POEM» BY DESANKA MAKSIMOVIC. HARMONY OF SOUNDING AND MEANING

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Abstract. The author makes an attempt to observe and evaluate the expressive performance of the artistic text, to apply a linguo-stylistic analysis as an integral part of every interpretative stream of literary work. The article discusses the role and importance of prosodic elements and analyzes the basic stylistic components of the artistic text: composition, forms of narratives, stylistic figures. Such methods could not be applied as isolated and by themselves, but they are intended to examine the complex structure of *Spring Poem* by Desanka Maksimovic as a whole.

Keywords: linguo-stylistic procedures and resources; composition; narrative form; expressive language signs; accent; metrics

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ГАРМОНИЯ ЗВУЧАНИЯ И СМЫСЛА НА ПРИМЕРЕ «ВЕСЕННЕЙ ПОЭМЫ» ДЕСАНКИ МАКСИМОВИЧ

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Аннотация. В статье показана попытка пронаблюдать и оценить выразительные характеристики художественного текста, применить лингвостилистический анализ как целостный подход к интерпретации литературного произведения. Обсуждаются роль и значение просодических элементов, анализируются основные стилистические составляющие художественного текста: композиция, описательные формы, стилистические фигуры. Такие методы не могут применяться сами по себе, в качестве изолированных, действие их демонстрируется в приложении к изучению сложной структуры «Весенней поэмы» Десанки Максимович.

Ключевые слова: лингвостилистические процедуры и ресурсы; композиция; форма повествования; признаки выразительности языка; эмфаза; стихотворный метр.

Introduction

Desanka Maksimovic (1898–1993) evokes an immediate readership reaction with the widest range of audience – with the most subtle aesthetes and with the most stringent of critics. She fascinates with her simple, colorful and unobtrusive style, clear poetic expression, euphonic verse and the highest spiritual meaning of messages transmitted. Her poetry is thematically rich and diverse, and the songs are analyzed from different aspects [10; 8; 3 et al.]. In addition to several negative criticism and challenge the value of poetry by M. Ristic, R. Konstantinovic and V. Masles [7], Serbian literary criticism is mainly affirmative talking about her talent and literary achievements [7, p. 32].

In many collections of poems and poems in which the evolutionary changes achieve a steady growth of artistic value¹, expressing their inner, love

and patriotic feelings, as and well as the memories of childhood [3, p. 31].

In the introductory part we will talk about her entire opus, single out the basic themes and motifs. Then, we'll ponder about the language and poetic structure using a linguo-stylistic method. Within analysis of the *Spring Poem*, the prosodic and versification aspect of the poem will be in full focus. In this regard, we will mention some of the key terms for understanding the metrics and versification.

The lyrics of Desanka Maksimovic are extremely suggestive and therefore human being lives through and experiences with the poet. The lyrics are prevalent with faith in return of the lost, with faith in life, with youth and humanity. Desanka's poetry is of gentle sensibility, honest, and of direct narrative [8, pp. 213-221], an extremely subjective and intimate, but not introverted, open up towards the nature and other people. Her poetry was

¹ In this paper we chose to analyze Desanka's lyrical debut *Spring Poem*, which, as ode of joy represents the author a powerful lyrical counterpoint of basic feeling, linguistic, thematic and stylistic structure of poems that later occurred.

This poem was first published in 1920 entitled *Spring Poems: III* in the journal *Thought* (Vol. 3, sv. 3/4, pp. 1128-1129), under the title *Spring Poems: II* in 1924.

achieved through a large number of motives and represents sincere confession of the poet, regarding the deepest of feelings. The theme of nature is a very common one, but they are usually not pure descriptive poems – but in them, love, youth and the nature intertwine. They are warm, direct and humanly and naively sincere. We will try to present all that we listed above, in the *Spring Poem* (II) taken from the first anthologies of poetry (*Poems*, 1924).

Poetic language and stylistic analyses

Poetic language does not refer to any reality outside itself: it makes its own reality. In it, lies the secret of the poetic function of a language. We will try to plunge deep into the soul of poetic work by patiently applying linguistic analysis, trying to realize what it is, and how it intensified our ordinary everyday language. We believe that we will make it clear, where that magical power, which seizes us when we read poetry, originates.

If we want to analyze that intensity, we must, first of all, pay strict attention to the sound elements of the words, rhythm and music of language, because these are the basic and most common means of intensifying, strongest expressions come from the highest level of poetic speech – verse.

Meter as an a priori scheme, and rhythm as a living reality, which are able to introduce a barely noticeable change with subtlest differences in accent, are constantly passing through a mechanism of meter that gives it a certain character, the music of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, repeating in every form, from voice over sound complex to words and in the end music of the voices which symbolizes almost nothing, enchants more and enthralls – all this affects us in the verses we read. These are the elements of poetic language, which cannot be easily translated.

Stylistic analysis or stylistic criticism of the poetic text, does not end with the sound elements. It has to precisely study those elements of the language, which act as a poetic language, and style of the poetic work is nothing but the language in the service of artistic expression.

Reading the poems of Desanka Maksimovic gives the impression of lightness of singing, lightness of thoughts and lightness of shaping. Her verse is soft, melodic, and metric of the verse respects the nature of language. The language of this poetry is picturesque, luxurious, emotional, and, what is of the most importance for us on this occasion, rhythmic. The picturesque is spontaneous, natural and the verse is simple and harmonious in the meaning and melody. Musicality is a recognizable feature of this poetry and the poet was awarded the title of „the most musical contemporary poet of Serbia» (Borislav Mihajlović – Mihiz).

About harmony of sounding and meaning

Love poems in which nature is seen through the prism of love possess the greatest lyrical expressiveness, when it is presented as an incentive for expressing emotions of love, as a subject and means of poetic expression. By moving the emotions of love with the natural environment, the poems are given sensory expression, spontaneity and complexity of thought and ambiguity.

Spring Poem belongs to the first creative phase of Desanka Maksimovic, in which her most famous love poems and poetry about nature were made. In it, a perfect harmony of form and content, sounding and meaning, melody and atmosphere, was achieved. In this poem, poetic scenes of joy, elation and love as bright and full of feeling, make their gradational expression through harmony of the poet and nature and the desire to connect the youth and eternity. Nature and love intertwine and complement each other with meaning and sense of completion, as much as they are the framework and the content [1, p. 64]. The power of feeling love transfers to whole being, becomes an expression of deepest spirituality and altruism, through which human being returns to its primordial unity with the world.

Thus, we can say that this poem unifies the characteristics of the three lyrical types: descriptive, love, and in a way, reflective lyricism. When *Spring Poem* is observed as a descriptive lyrical poem, we can clearly see the beauty of nature in the early spring. Desanka highlights the strength and beauty of this season, because with the birth of nature she suspects and awaits an arrival, i.e. the birth of new love.

About sounding

With audio and visual impressions, that the poem as a whole evokes in our imagination, the poet strongly suggests us to pay attention to her inner layer - the world of the meaning of pictures and symbols we come across, and to all the messages, which are contained in this, in externality depleted, and lyrically summarized image of life. The unity of trepidation of the heart and undreamed power of nature is not only determinant of the content structure of the poetry of Desanka Maksimovic. It is often the result of consistently composed formal elements. Continuous combination of stylish and sound figures flows into a joyful poem that awakes an impression of spring «noise» in the reader. We can see and hear the awakening of nature: birds, flowers, a tide of words and feelings. It is notable, at first sight, the desire of the poet for identification. Her thoughts are like lyrical reflections «early buds» and «light wings». In these verses there is an identification we speak about which is expressed through the parallels: a hint of spring – a longing; a gentle tide of

unsaid words - love, etc. Thereby, the description of the scene that the poet observes used mutually enhancing terms (early buds), and create even more complete experience.

The composition of the poem strives to perfection. The entire poem is built on the principle of symmetry: symmetry stanzas, verses, rhymes. It is made up by five quatrains (stanzas of four lines) and each has the same, symmetrical structure – the number of syllables in the verse is repeated by establishing a perfect balance: 12-6-12-12. The lyrics in this poem are so called tide verses, respectively sung by the rules of rhythmic repetition (a certain number of syllables in the verse, the number of verses in the stanza and rhymes position). Therefore, we have three symmetrical, acatalectic twelve-syllable verses and one sextet, i.e. a half-verse. For the lyrics in this poem we can say that they are metrically correct. The metrics in this poem are normative, prosodic, and, we can say, musical. The poet strictly complies with metric scheme or form. The most of the care is taken on fact that the verse has the same number of syllables, voice matching on the ends of verses rhyme and at the end of the verse we have a full cadence – accentuated + unstressed. We can conclude that this poem has the same number of syllables in the verse (isosilobizam), but we cannot talk about syllabic – a ton verse, because there is no equal number of accentuated and unaccentuated syllables, that respectively does not assume a constant schedule of accent in the verse.

For poetry, rhythm is very important. It is made by a special choice of words, their resonance, the repetition of certain words and pacing (transfer of a part of a meaningful whole, which contains several words from one verse to the next). The situation is the same in all the stanzas, for example. «I'm feeling tonight, while I am watching the swallows | and early buds». Pacing connects not only the lyrics but also all five stanzas of this poem [3, p. 31]. In all the verses, there is the same way of crossed, female, rich rhyme: *abab*, occurs (swallows – growing; wounds – days; bigger – happiness; wing – were etc.). This confirms why the verse is rhythmic and tonal continent. And what makes it the syntactic and semantic whole will be understood if we look at what is the order of words in the verse. Epithets in the verse, especially in the sixet, are inverted, i.e. we talk about anastrophe [5, p. 362]. Namely the adjective, in most cases, comes after the noun, it is in postposition (early buds, passionate heart, unsaid words), which further highlights it. Atypical word order for the Serbian language we can observe in verses such as: «I have not given my love to anyone» or «there is in me a whole gentle tide». On the other hand, beside the

meaning of the word themselves, the verse as a whole contains all additional significance achieved with the rhythm of sound, organization and order of words. In this way, an ideal formal framework for achieving inner harmony (for audio and sign plan) is created.

In the Appendix of this work, there is an accentuated poem (in the Serbian language) of which we can observe the following: there are much more short words, occasionally interspersed with polysyllabic, which contributes to the dynamics and the euphony of the poem itself [11]. As the Serbian language does not possess a steady rhythm, in which there is an alternation of accentuated and unaccentuated syllables at regular intervals, i.e. it does not possess the cyclic distribution of accentuated syllables, we cannot talk about measurability in this respect. We notice that in most cases after an accentuated syllable come two unaccentuated. Between the two accentuated syllables, in this poem, there is a maximum of three unaccentuated, and because of the nature of Serbian accenting and distribution rules (based on that the last syllable can never be the holder of an accent) in this poem we talk a trochaic rate (- U) with a female ending.

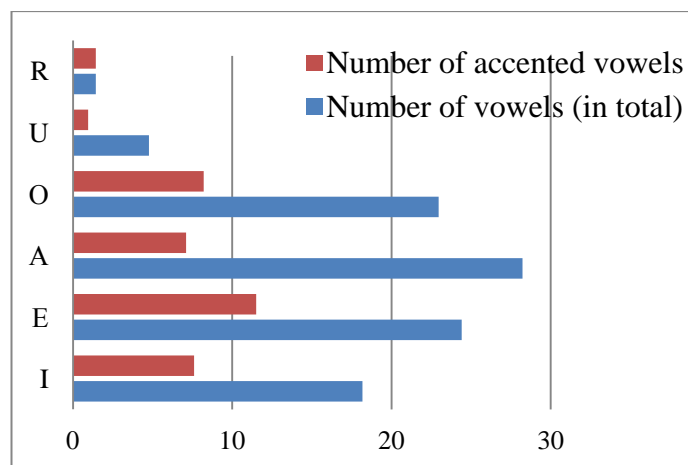
From the above, we can safely speak of euphony and eurhythmy. We are left to reflect on the voice set of speech as one of its factors. As constituent elements of style and words, voices constitute speech rhythm. When we look at the *Spring Poem* before us, there is a picture that contains an artistic enigma hidden behind the primary meaning, skillfully chosen words, voices used and their distribution in the poem. The importance of the choice of the voices is very important, it is also testified by Jakobson, who says that in the poetic language, the sign as such, receives an independent value. The symbolism of voices becomes something real and represents a kind of an accompanying element marked [2, p. 98]. Each phoneme has a symbolic value, but one should be careful because the phonemes is a complex entity and a set of distinctive features, so one should be careful, because these properties are often opposite [2, p. 99]. Talking about the differences between the acute and grave vowels in the Czech and French languages, leads us to check the *Spring Poem* concerning vowels, their distribution and functions.

We have already pointed out that as soon as we read the poem we have an impression that the poem is an upswing, easily catchy, which contributes to a large number of vowels (graph. 1) and sonants evenly distributed [3]. After extracting all the vocals from a poem and then highlighting accentuated vowels we see that it is completely expected, the most common vowel «a» with 28.23 %, followed by «e» to 24.40 %, then «o» – 22.97 %, «i» – 18.18%, and at the end «u» with

4.78 %², syllable «r» occurs three times as much (1.44 %). Unexpectedly, the vocal «a» although often present, very rarely is found accentuated, only 15 times, more precisely in 25,42 %. Most often accentuated vocals were «e» – 45 %, «i» – 42.11 %, «o» – 37.5 % and «u» with only 20 %.

There are neither consonant groups, nor the accumulation of polysyllabic words (there are only four set words, all others are with less syllables). Very rarely in use are compact and gravel voices, and therefore we have an impression that the poem «runs» by itself, and that it is scattered all over the spectrum. We therefore, see that the nature of the verse conditioned by the nature of language, i.e. voices – phonological metrics.

Graph. 1: The vocals in the *Spring Poem* (representation expressed in %)



About meaning

The subject layer of the poem is a parallel image of spring and a woman who is in love. At the beginning of the *Spring Poem*, in the first stanza, «as she watches swallows and the early buds» and admires the beauty of the nature, the poet's heart is slowly growing as it heralds a new love. In the second stanza, the first verse reveals the growth of love. Falling in love is kindled in the youthful soul, and the heart «with young plants getting bigger and easy like a wing» and longing picturesque reflect verses «A whole sky and the hell of pain would not be enough». The third stanza builds on the second, and further emphasizes the motive of love. Nature abhors the poet's heart longing for all the beautiful in life, because a young heart «nothing would be much: such great longings and hopes are». In the fourth stanza the poet understands that until that moment she has not gave all her love entirely as she

² Although there are plenty of vocals they are, mostly, evenly spaced, so we would not talk about assonance.

might and how much she wanted, and that until now it has all been a joke of her hot heart. If we take a closer look at the verses, we will notice the development of love to a higher level – love is born. It means that before the fourth stanza there are certain emotions, but in a milder, we can say, a child's form. In the fifth, the last stanza, a certain form of perfection and the ultimate form of feelings of love are portrayed. The heart of the poet has grown so much that, she says, she could give it away to everyone and still it will be left with a lot.

In the evoked poetic world in the *Spring Poem*, nature empowers, lifts and develops strong feelings of the poet, and becomes the realization of the idea of love and kindness. The feeling of love and delight of the beauty of nature in the early spring are intertwined. It all makes this poem bright, joyful and it becomes a picturesque blast term vision of love.

Of course, we could already observe that just in that making specific and communicative sentence in the poem, forming a gradation – from falling in love, to love that knows no boundaries. Spring and love to her were always together, cause they belong to each other and resort to each other. Her youth is cheerful, but not noisy; passionate, but not too bare. Hence, we see the poet's effort for youth to stop, to remain always, in her, and beside her. Because, in a silent spring dawns the poet's heart «slowly grows like a view in beautiful smiley days» and provides itself boundless and time and time again, «that I could give heart away to everyone, and still remains a lot to me,» which confirms the saying that love multiplies by dividing.

At first sight, what attracts attention is the lack of lyrical fictional entity that conceals the poet. Desanka Maksimovic does not run away from her own personality and clearly points out that she was the one going through hard times, enjoying the beauty of life and love. This is not just observed in the form of the presentation in first person, but also in the present tense, which highlights the timeliness of those events, universality, and also in the tone in which she tells her story. The neutral form was not used (*I feel, watch, etc.*), but also *I did not give* what clearly defines gender of the one who sings and, who in spite of so many misfortunes, she did not languished in spirit, but with potential expresses her great ability and desire (*I could (give away), I would like*).

The poem is dominated by propositional, long sentences that include the entire verse. The tone is calm with a slight hint of elation because of the upcoming emotions. The sentences are, usually, the different types of hypotaxical testimony and have a determinative role (most often, in the manner of modal sentence). The vocabulary is carefully chosen. We will mention just a few of verbs and adverbs (*slow growing, longs for all, give it away to*

everyone), nouns mainly refer to something pleasing and gentle (*swallows, bud, heart, wing, sky*), etc. There are many abstract nouns like *view, happiness, hell, longing, hope, and of course love*. There are many epithets that serve to highlight the level of expressed emotions and to contribute to the richness of vocabulary value of the poet and stylistic value of the poem itself. Almost all the epithets indicate affiliation, beautiful emotion and cheerful mood (*my heart, young plants, whole one sky of happiness, great longing and hope, my passionate heart, my love, the whole gentle tide ...*).

There are some other stylistic means, being known for long time, which themselves were developed by the language to enable affective expression. These are stylistic figures of speech and tropes, mainly means of picturesque and increased expression. We have already mentioned some of them, such as grading, epithets, metaphors and personifications («how my heart grows slowly»). We have said that the whole poem is based on a comparison of nature and love (i.e. along with the birth and restoring of vegetation in the spring, swells new emotions). Comparison is disclosed and in particular verse «how my heart slowly grows | «like view of the beautiful smiley days» or «easily like the wing». In the second stanza we see anaphora (*and easy; and how, and hell*) achieving greater expressiveness of such expressions [5, p. 293]. In the same stanza, we can mention contrast between the terms «heaven of happiness and hell of pain». It is opposes the two extremes which love can cause. Using synecdoche («heart that I could give all») the poet has accentuated the only thing that is important to the human being at the time – to give over, the gift of oneself to the loved being, respectively, giving love is symbolically represented by a gift of the heart. Throughout the poem the feelings are a bit exaggerated, but that is usually what happens when a person is intoxicated with love. No matter how you interpret the mentioned verses from it, they radiate profound optimism, a sense of achievement of human life and satisfaction.

Therefore, the emotional and stylistic unity of poems is based on personification as a dominant figure, but combination of the epithet, simile, hyperbole, contrast and metaphor achieved is a vivid and suggestive detail.

In the poetry of Desanka Maksimovic, there are some rhythmic parallelisms between natural phenomena and human emotions. Flashes of the human soul are determined by changes in the nature and string in time distinctness, in a harmonious rhythm, in homogeneous polyphony tones, which differs each other slightly. The musicality of the verse is also the fruit of a completely original versification that has defied many changes in our poetry.

Conclusion

After all, silent in her speaking, Desanka Maksimovic is a sincere poet who within her several decades of long creative work, marked a century in Serbian literature. We can say that love is a light motive in her poetry. She is deeply experienced and honest, always present. Nature is, on the other hand, anthropomorphized with Desanka's poetic personality and emotionality, because only in this way she can explain all of these personifications that we perceive as a subtle thread of a spring ritual that remains deep within us. The poet is in euphoria, in the cheerful mood. She praises the beauty of spring, the beauty of love and speaks about integration with nature. The heart is, as young plants growing in the spring, becomes bigger, easier and nicer, gets its true form and meaning. It evokes the language, but also the tone of her poems. It seeks to be increasingly well-ordered, measured and harmonious. In this poem, along using many epithets and metaphors are described general spring idyll, love and beauty of life.

Poetic language is *structured*, because she wants to create a compact poetic reality. All the stylistic means of poetic works are mutually connected and serve a specific goal. This goal is a unique aesthetic experience. It works on the reader first as a vague emotion. Stylistic analysis is actually a *conceptual* analysis of these emotions, rather than stylistic devices that aroused that emotion in the reader.

The poem that we have discussed so far is not an exception but rather a rule for the poetry of Desanka Maksimovic, which can be proven by analyzing the poems: *Desire, Happiness, Premonition*, and many others, which we will deal with at another time.

Appendix

ПРОЛЕТЊНА ПЕЌМА

Осећам вечèрас, док посматрам ласте
и пупольке ране,
како с'це мòје полага́но расте
ко в'дйк у лèпе, на̀смејане да̀не:

како с мла̀дим б'љем по̀стаје свè вèће
и ла̀ко ко кр'ло,
и ка̀ко му це́ло је́дно не́бо срèће
и па̀као бо̀ла не́ би до̀ста б'ло;

како че́зне за св'м што би жи́вот мòгò
лèпог да му да̀де,
и да му ни́чега не́ би б'ло мнòго:
та̀ко су вèлике че́жње му и на̀де.

Осећам да до̀сад свè је б'ло ша̀ла
мòга с'ца врèла;

да још нѝком нѝсам лѝубав своју дала
колѝку бих мѝгла и колѝку хтѝла;

Да ѝмā у мѝни цѝла нѝжна плѝма
рѝчѝ неречѝни',
да бих сѝце мѝгла пѝклањати свѝма
и да ѝпет мнѝго ѝстане га мѝни.

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Source

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