



To cite this article:

Firth, Will. "Vladka the Pale." *Enriching the Global Literary Canvas: Celebrating Less Translated Languages*, special issue of *The AALITRA Review: A Journal of Literary Translation* 17, (October 2022): 152-170.

aalitra.org.au

Australian Association for Literary Translation

Early in 2021, I translated a fifty-page extract from the novel *Vlatka* by Aleksandar Bečanović. The translation was funded by the European Union Prize for Literature as part of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. Bečanović was one of the winners in 2017. This commented translation looks at some of the challenges I faced.

Born in 1971, Aleksandar Bečanović is a Montenegrin film critic, screen- and prose writer. Although Montenegrin has been recognized as a discrete language through international adoption of new ISO codes and standards, Bečanović writes in the polycentric South Slavic language formerly known as Serbo-Croat(ian). Today, this is often referred to with the acronym BCS or BCMS, i.e., Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian.¹ Like most Montenegrin authors, he does not employ the new letters *ś* and *ź* introduced to represent the phonemes of local dialects.

Vlatka is written in the lesbian vampire trope, one of the many sub-genres of vampire literature (Weiss). It revisits the 1872 Gothic novella *Carmilla*, which predated Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by over a quarter of a century and is thought to have influenced it significantly. Since Stoker's seminal work was shaped by perceptions of the Balkans, a Balkan writer addressing these themes on his own ground in a new millennium makes it feel things are coming full circle. Bečanović is aware that he is moving within a trope and allows himself a degree of tongue-in-cheek as he plays with established stereotypes.

As I was finishing the translation in March 2021, the controversy surrounding Amanda Gorman's Dutch translator erupted (Flood). I asked myself if it is legitimate for a heterosexual male to translate supposedly lesbian perceptions. My personal answer is yes, it is legitimate, at least with a work of fiction. A high degree of empathy is always required of a literary translator, and I think I have a right to do my sensitive best with almost any subject matter.

The translation involved dealing with a range of normal structural issues, such as BCMS's propensity to use the narrative present more than we do in English, or to not always mark reported speech. The language has no articles, so these had to be inserted as required into the target text. Also, since BCMS is a highly inflected, pro-drop language, the relationships between parts of speech are reflected in the declensions (seven cases) and the complex verb system. This is standard fare for a translator, but the original was not edited to anywhere near the standards one would expect of a novel in the Anglosphere (a common phenomenon in ex-Yugoslav countries!). Several spelling mistakes with crucial endings impeded comprehension and left me with no choice but to ask the author.

My sample translation consists largely of the novel's climactic chapter: a thirty-page stream-of-consciousness passage where the eponymous heroine returns to her childhood home in Montenegro to renew her line with fresh blood. Conveying this long sentence was a major syntactical challenge for two reasons. Firstly, although the default word order in the source language is Subject–Verb–Object as in English, it is much more flexible, e.g., for emphasis or special effect. Secondly, it is much more acceptable in BCMS to use parataxis (two complete sentences connected by a comma without a conjunction), whereas in English this can easily

¹ This is my opinion on the linguistic situation, and many Slavic scholars throughout the world take a similar stance. However, official language policy in the four BCMS-speaking states of ex-Yugoslavia (and some overseas countries, notably Australia) insists that these are separate, albeit closely related languages. Here we see the influence of political expediency and identity issues more than genuine linguistic considerations. It would be beyond the scope of this piece to discuss these issues any further.

make the text feel disorienting. My approach was to sparingly add conjunctions and relative pronouns to help the flow. I also added semicolons (over fifty in the extract reproduced below) to create a “soft break” whenever I felt other means were not working. This is a daunting text, replete with complex ideas and associations, and I felt readability was the prime criterion. Apart from this almost unavoidable structural adaptation, I do not feel I have submitted to the tendency towards standardization and “fluency” at all costs – the stark, associative style of the original, with flowery and hyperbolic excesses, remains intact.

I had a helpful exchange on this issue in the online forum of the Translators Association.² The range of informed opinions was broad, with some colleagues urging me to cast readability to the wind and others strengthening my resolve to use semicolons wherever I felt the need. I am still ambivalent about this. If the translation is published for a broader audience, I will discuss the issue with the editor and might revise this aspect of the translation. There were also various lexical challenges, but these were less contentious and more fun to deal with. They are numbered in the text excerpt below.

1. The novel’s title, *Vlatka*, is an allusion to Vlad the Impaler. The voiced D in the root form “Vlad” is assimilated to a voiceless T before the feminine ending *-ka*. In order to maintain the link to the infamous figure despite the consonant alternation, I changed the T back to a D. And to make it perfectly clear, I introduced some flippant wordplay in the spirit of the author by adding “the Pale”.
2. This complex passage, which incidentally contains an intertextual play on Lacan’s *Seminar* and a monologue in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, essentially begins with the notion “spuštam se”, literally “I descend” or “I go down”. I was unsure initially in what sense this is meant, because Vladka often goes down from her family mansion to the seashore, but it turned out that it is meant sexually—she “goes down on” her lover. This is the beginning of a stream of consciousness during cunnilingus.
3. Vladka is referred to in several places as the “gospodarica”, which can mean “ruler”, “lady”, “mistress” or “domina”. I discussed this with Bečanović and settled on “domina”. The sadomasochist associations are appropriate.
4. While playing with synonyms to translate the expression “reskoj hladnoći” – literally “the cutting cold” in the dative case – it struck me that “biting” cold might be better than “trenchant” or “bitter” cold in the context of vampires. Very much in the author’s vein!
5. Finally, the noun “jezik” in BCMS can mean both “language” and “tongue” (the organ in our mouth). In one instance it wasn’t clear which the author means. I told him about the ambiguity of “tongue” in English and he loved the innuendo. So I used “elegance of tongue” to render “elegancija jezika”.

My translation has not been edited, so it still contains the strengths and weaknesses of my own interpretation of the original.

Bibliography

Bečanović, Aleksandar. *Vlatka*. Nova knjiga, 2018.

Flood, Alison. “‘Shocked by the uproar’: Amanda Gorman’s white translator quits.” *The Guardian*, 1 Mar. 2021, www.theguardian.com/books/2021/mar/01/amanda-gorman-white-translator-quits-marieke-lucas-rijneveld.

² A message board on the .io platform for members of the Translators Association, a subgroup of the Society of Authors (UK).

Weiss, *A Vampires & Violets: Lesbians in Film*. Penguin Books, 1993.

Vladka the Pale (1) (extract)³

Translated by Will Firth

IV

SINTHOME:

Autumn 2019

Étendue à ses pieds, calme et pleine de joie,
Delphine la couvait avec des yeux ardents,
Comme un animal fort qui surveille une proie,
Après l'avoir d'abord marquée avec les dents.
— Charles Baudelaire, *Femmes damnées* (*Delphine et Hippolyte*)

... and I bend over and **go down** (2), to where the black sea repels your gaze, where your eye is obsessed by the warm darkness, where you have to be lost and captivated every time, at least for an instant, and the invisible threshold has grown into an immeasurable cleft, I go down as if immersing myself in tepid water, whose surface will never be calm enough to take the light, a space without reflection, as if you always remain without a trace on this path, an encounter that denies retrospection but cannot prevent a new kind of fantasy that grows in the darkness, as a flower demands twilight before it opens its leaves, and I crouch down swiftly as if I have been prepared for this alone, returning again and again to the source that looks different every time, that changes every time and adapts to the erotic intruder who premeditates every assault; there is a rhythm again and again that cannot be restrained, that is evoked and desired, movements that are repeated and discover the law of spreading, a perpetuum mobile that is simple yet inscrutable, because immersion means surrender to the depth of the call, the call of the deep, the eternal cave whose entrance lies in shadow, shadows that will wave and spread when the performance is joined by remembrance, and if the configuration moves it is because craving is united with memory, and as I now go down desire is a subterranean river, Lethe, which is hidden and suddenly emerges, its water sweeping over its stony banks, and preparation is everything in this impulse that cannot run dry, excitement grows in spite of your versedness because nothing compares with the pleasure of the page that is read a second time, that is read again, that retains all that was and yet compares what could have been discovered if only the action was repeated, if the meaning was accepted resolutely, as when your mouth opens after a long dive to inhale life-giving air, and so too my lips separate to impress their seal, to win everything for themselves, and the kiss seizes the foreign essence in the vast darkness; going down is an act of worship, a ritual of consecration for this moment alone, performed with humility on this occasion alone, with its short duration merely confirming its sincerity, but detachment, distance and irony follow, a transcription that will move things the right distance apart, but now I go down with complete conviction that the centre of the world has been compressed into this point or a future colon, into this cleft, where you do not think what the journey back will be like, or if there will be any journey back to the security of avoidance and meditation, which is why the focus has been clearly set although the light is suppressed and an instant of crystallization is possible although everything is

³ Editorial note: Due to the nature of the text (such as lacking sentence endings), the layout of the source and target texts is different to the other Translation & Commentary pieces in order to ensure readability.

diluted; now as I go down to initiate the heady ceremony where I am the high priestess who offers and accepts the sacrifice, without whom no ritual is conceivable, a gift of taking and giving, a sacrifice of apotheosis and desacralization, and in that closeness, just before the entrance, you can already sense the blissful aroma of burnt offerings that engulfs your face at the encounter with what has always beggared description, a living nature that cannot be tamed, cannot be mastered, cannot be reduced to a sign while it stands like this, with a minimum of illumination, in the enchanting close-up just before I close my eyes and the darkness embraces me, a pleasant darkness of warm manifestation, where every time I go down is a return to the old place, to the origin, since recollection is always a homecoming, a return to an intimate place that was lost, only to be spectrally gained later, because the body is a figure of recognition and demeanour, and touch is a materialization of the past – both as lived and as constructed – the body before me is a gate through which I enter with attentive delay and enthusiastic closeness, as when you knock on an open door; the sitting room is a living space and the cobwebs in its corners will then be dispersed by my warm breath together with the papers left on the table because here everything shifts to memory, which has its own laws, its refuge; memory after all is a fluid substance that rounds off the mind at the climax of rapture, a highly excited fluid that fills all the bulges and grooves, abstract arabesques that turn into receptive signs, memory is the diversion of attention from the particular moment, the wish for the separated lines of fate to show a binding combination, a net that covers all of life; the past resonates in the present like a joyful call and a solemnly tolling bell as I crouch down to perform the act that will reveal my craving and establish my control over a body, like a cruel **domina (3)** who shows compassion in the end as part of a choreographed performance, part of a binding procedure that must be respected with diligence and devotion, sometimes even a goddess has to kneel down for her power to take effect, to draw things into her domain, to arrange delight without detachment, and crouching down to the source of craving means to respect the power that comes later, that will climax when what has been invested is returned a hundredfold, because desire is always returned with interest, its nature is constant enlargement, constant progression and determination to reach the goal, although the goal is not the main point since there is no ultimate destination in desire, only extreme exertion, with the ever-present danger of the bubble bursting, of it vanishing with a soft withdrawal, disintegrating before your eyes like a wave that strikes the rocks and leaves only white foam behind in their damp recesses, like beauty fading in the pitiless sun, which is now comfortingly far away as I make the movement that contains the imminence of fate and the cruelty of the decision; she who brings satisfaction as the final gift has to be pitiless and ruthless because fate and the decision approximate each other in the moment before the intention is achieved, before the initiation of pleasure that forgives nothing, and a small emptiness always remains after pleasure, a *petite mort* and a small emptiness at the time that will beat melodramatically in all the clocks on the wall when their Gothic hands align at a ghostly angle; no bird has to call, like the owl that comes at twilight or the eagle that hovers above chasms, for destiny to attest its shadowy power because kneeling down before the source of invigoration is an indispensable rite of procrastination, a last semblance before the particular action, before the opening of the constricted passage, like a dramatic pause, a deep breath before the long-expected monologue where I will take the stage and establish my dominion over the story, which will be accepted in all its retroactive variants, the one I tell and the one that will be told about me, the one I initiated and the one it seems will finish me, because a story always changes direction when it is crossed with pleasure, enveloped in pleasure, inseparable from pleasure, however different the destinations are, because diversion is a form of seduction, but I can no longer be led astray now when

intention is in equilibrium with auguring, however deep the darkness down there was; the chanting is performed with a devotion that astonishes me because nothing escapes without the signature of my lips, which are impatient like a bat taking off when the shadows indite the last augury, nothing that is embraced will remain unconquered, so she who gives the kiss controls the entire situation, like an appropriated frame to which every scene is now adapted, and is all the more powerful if it is a reprise, because reprising means re-enacting the plot for a gaze that arrives with providential delay to establish the supremacy of the second attack, the one that takes place not only as an imbibition but as a sumptuous feast for the eye, in the darkness that thickens, and with it comes a headiness from the darkness, from pleasure and from the inscription whose contours I will forever be able to discern, as one feels motion over a suture that protected a wound but also marked a trail through which blood might appear again, a crimson calligraphy that comes afterwards, letters that will line up later, because the reading comes at the end, reading is the terminus, although the road can stretch through strange and ever stranger landscapes, mountain peaks and valleys, gorges that water will rage through and raze all dams, and when it retreats the horizon will shine even if the sun be imprisoned in fog, because when you crouch down you penetrate the mist, warm air intercepts you like a paramour, and when you inhale you realize every departure was an absence, and so the violent approach is always also a kind of reproach, like underlined sentences of long poems that come alive again inside you, where you have to wait for the build-up, however much has been said before, until the stream of images ends, images where the quatrain and the tercet are condensed, and in a flash memory takes the form of a sonnet never spoken aloud; but now is not the time for incantations as my body flexes to find the best position, a bow whose target will not escape because it is always reachable from the right angle, and it bends to take up the vantage point from where there is no retreat; a snake darts its tongue in front of its prey that has no notion of its own purpose, a rustle articulates the order that will be obeyed, a brief murmur, and then the tension gives way to delectation that finds every crack to bare itself, however profound the darkness is, because a metaphor always finds a way through to the surface, it extricates itself from the crush of reality as a steady stream erodes a wooden dam or the waves craft a rock, the foam gives birth to female apparitions, spectres of the past that await us even beyond the associations we have painstakingly gathered, like now when I crouch down to begin an adventure that will only be of value if included in the existing documentation, so what now has to be listed instinctively returns the book to the very beginning, to the pages where my personal history starts, to the moment when my eyes opened, when the first date was entered in the diary, when the black sea pounded the virgin shore, and the sand tricked onto my hand, the salty fluid poured over the sweet wound, the tremor spread as a message goes out from a ship lost on the horizon that cannot be seen even from the highest cliff, like Morse code for a torn-up telegram; that night was a watershed between what ebbs and what flows, as a plot can go in two ways at the same time, or on two pages, bordered by old ink, a black line that will perhaps fade, only to later convey a mark of surprise, and if there is a *petite mort* there also has to be a little resurrection because what is lost in one moment can later be found, as a bottle floats in the sea regardless of a shipwreck nearby; that night fell slowly just so the embrace would be firmer, because nothing is lighter than the pall of darkness when it touches the body for the first time and disturbs the eye; that night I went down the stairs of the hotel, convinced I knew where the sandy path led, while grains obediently followed my feet, and a cloudbank obscured the moon that commands the prodigal tides, rays sent out towards a water castle, but there was no longer any island to shelter on as the waves shone despite it being midnight; first the stage had to be set for her to appear, a sanctuary for a ghost, whose

contours would ever tremble before my mind's eye because each of her returns was a new temptation, and the shape in front of me would change even though I had the same sensation before, instead of expectation there was only surrender, my faith that I was capable of this, and my fear lest I fail to remember, because pleasure and pain compress everything in themselves, so afterwards it is difficult to leaf through all the layers, even in the peace of the archive room, even in the lonely cell of deliberation and transcription; the text is a salutary delay, as the moon provides light after the profane sun has finally fallen without a trace, I was able to count my steps then, but the final number to the hillock would always vary if I glanced back at the hotel where I tricked my parents by feigning sleep, the hotel where I left my past, as a disconsolate heroine leaves her memory to haunt the empty halls and stone stairs of the building once the tragedy has occurred, the hotel that now looked like the abandoned chamber of a life that no longer belonged to me, however close it still was, and suddenly it became clear to me that my steps in the sand of Bar indited this story, to which I would be returned again and again, just as an echo returns to one who prays on her knees, like me, now, here, as I bury my face in the dark centre, and my thoughts fly back to that moonlit evening, to the beach where I braved the **biting cold** (4) because I felt a different kind of shiver that could melt the ice that formed in the corners of my white lips, and my shudders were in time with my steps as evening assumed its darkest form, which I would enter as a voluntary prisoner and leave as a gracious executioner because blood must be renewed both ardently and heartlessly; I walked like a somnambulist who knows her way, despite all the chasms that threatened to take their toll, and I felt a wind rise above me to add a deathly nuance to the atmosphere, bending the grass on the troubled grave, and the world stretched out like a path from which there is no deflection once your foot has touched the cold yet kindly earth; I walked as if I was ascending to heaven, I walked as if I was plunging in, towards the hilltop from where the horizon of fate extends, towards the sea from where the line of destiny runs, and looking back was now just a waste of time, I closed my eyes to feel the currents above the shore more fully, the veins on my breasts would turn even bluer – I could sense it under the gossamer of my white nightgown – and I wondered if I could hide anything any more because if the black water touched me now I would shudder as if I was on my deathbed that smelled of dried, semi-wilted lilies, and again that would just be a pleasant indication that I was heading for where she was surely waiting for me, I just could not tell if I was going to her or she was coming for me once more to embrace me before she withdrew into the night together with the waves that now lessened on the open sea, and the moonlight on my palm was like scattered drops of blood, forgotten but still fresh; I walked as if the proximity of night did not justify the proximity of the dream that could effortlessly accommodate my anaemic body, all of which now seems to have been the effect of spells, but my step led me on, even though I had been daydreaming upright for too long and its call could not be refused, the invocation could not be postponed as long as the candle flickered to the voice of command and control, the voice that creeps under your skin like a river entering a sinkhole, both rough and gentle; the candlestick left my shadow on the sand, only for the sea to efface it again, it would vanish in the sand and seemed to spill in all directions, but I went on, a sleepwalker who would submit to a force stronger and deeper than nightmare and fantasy, however intimate they were, however much I confessed to them, because we are sincerest in imagination and fear, but this seemed even more powerful, now when desire joined my body that had only just learned what aggression and relaxation are, force and withdrawal, that had only just learned the laws of swelling and withdrawal, and therefore that time it fell short in craving but continued in memory, like a letter written in the heat of the moment later lacks a postscript; the wax from the candles I

carried could later serve to seal a document with a mute address, and my blond hair no longer obeyed the caprice of the wind but only its own inner command, an electricity in the almost cloudless night, in which no storm would come, but the baroness would arrange her last and essential presence, that of the ultimate transmutation, there on the hilltop where the moonlight provided a space for just the two of us; she had said “I’ll be waiting for you”, and all I could do was to repeat those words inside, like a powerful command, an order that would draw me out of the hotel where I was a captive from the best of intentions, an order that changed my foreboding into a bold descent into the night while my parents slept, departure is when you leave all things behind you, therefore my exhaustion was now infinitely selfless and pervasive, and my anaemia was just an emptiness that would soon be filled because nothing is more ravenous than a vacuum, veins that have their own pulse that does not coincide with the beating of the heart, but what is spilled will be gathered up like reddish autumn rain; my lips became moist as the hilltop emerged in the gloom, the place of the final meeting, where everything would be decided, everything would be engraved so as to come alive later in the special atmosphere where the images coincide with words, as memory is in equilibrium with gentle imagination, and one slightly stronger gust of wind was enough to blow out the candles, but that would not happen due to the balance of delight and unease, only later would the morning disturb the equilibrium, but what had to happen was bound to happen, like the last pages read too quickly or the last painting seen out of chronological order; I climbed up, while the sea was deceitful with a scarcely discernible gleam, I cast off my coat, the cold was now a salutary omen, and she had fulfilled her promise, she was always there to meet me after her nightly visits, a figure who has imbibed the patience of castaways and hermits but can also be impetuous in her delectation, and I tried in my mind to resurrect our little scenes before I fell into the embrace from which there would be no rescue, from which I did not wish to be rescued, because that was the moment when the moon’s rays went from yellow to white; only the ideal frame could immortalize the scene where the light turned our bodies to seemly wax apparitions, perfection is as cold as a dying breath, and the moon that lit up the performance froze all movement just before the climax, as ice stops a river on the surface but the depths below are untouched, so our embrace remains as a witness that I will carry with me like a picture and impel like a story; the baroness bent over me like autumn over the ripe fruits on a tree, fate was in free fall, and I felt my body numb and submissive as the cold turned living flesh into a sculpture facing the horizon; away in the distance the night became dark matter travelling like a weary wave that would certainly come to carry me away, but now I was yet in the vice of her embrace, the affection of the domina who cast the candlestick away into the nearest bush since the moonlight was more than sufficient, because the moon’s light is artificial as opposed to the insufferable ubiquity and banal warmth of the sun; the moon’s gentle energy is an embalmer so that memory might be more distinct, the moon is that high call, an icy invocation, an ancient cult celebrated with fear and trembling, because fear is the precursor of love, and touch was now like the smoothing of a statue, its pallor was the perfection of concentration and dedication, a bloodless wax into which one’s name would be impressed, no longer a family blazon but a personal signature, and the breaking of the seal was a small apocalypse on the hilltop where every step looks like it leads to the end of the world; the baroness no longer drew me with her hands but with her eyes, and her pupils grew like bats descending on their helpless prey; she who survived the *fin de siècle* but remained in it, like a sign that determines every ornament, and that sign is the **elegance of tongue** (5) because a symbol is always more perverse than the thing itself, hearsay is always more scandalous than the event it describes, a picture on the wall of a sterile gallery is more blasphemous than the real scene,

the tide does not ravish the shore but preserves it, especially now when the moon laid claim to us, chains that cannot be broken because satisfaction actually circulates, departing and returning to the anaemic heart, which is why pleasure does not vanish but simply ebbs away, recedes; the baroness who escaped the *fin de siècle* but decided to remain in it arranged for me the end of the century that had only just begun, she ushered me into a heritage whose beauty is beyond its purpose, her touch conveyed that message and her mouth bore witness, and exhaustion came on again like the pall that caresses a weary body, but that is the only way lines can be exact, shapes be discernible although the curtain has fallen, traces of ornamental order be preserved; the baroness was now a phantasm that I found wherever I turned, wherever I went, her eyes filled the darkness to which I consigned myself, and the icy, solemn pale of my face was a mask indispensable for this ritual on the hill of fate, where my nightgown rose as my eyelids fell, her icy breath was on my breasts, cold evoked cold, alabaster demanded alabaster, and the surface would crack as when the golden bowl breaks, an indispensable mistake so that its true value and authenticity later be recognized, although the object of one's desires would never be displayed at an auction, and that cracking was only a phantom pain, a penetration of the border; the baroness's face came down as I go down in this other night before a similar goal, the centres are different but the trajectory of satisfaction is the same, the imitation of the pleasure that has transfigured us, that shifts us from one time to another with minimal transition, and however visible the seam may be the textile will not tear, however great the diversion of the structures may be it will survive, because the story is a dark chamber where every voice receives a reply, an echo that holds things together, like the baroness holding my body in the tenderest pose; affection is the virtue of accepting the inevitable, and her face came down onto my breasts to leave two dots, blue dots, red dots, dots still too fine for fangs to penetrate, my hair began to flutter in the wind, blond was black in this midnight performance, and for a moment I felt nothing belonged to me any more, as when the fountain in the courtyard runs dry, or the crimson drops that collect on the open hands of the statues of ancient goddesses, marble and liquid, and the pain always stays like a colon, after which there follows a point; the bite can be a sign more valuable than a fingerprint on the last object placed on the shelf of a private museum, which we closely inspect in the evening as the light brings a sophisticated shiver that seizes the body but leaves the mind sufficiently lucid, a signature achieved by different means, though its significance is undisclosed, reduced to codes and symbols, because reality is only a reminder and pain takes the colour crimson, a sinuous line that moves with our breath; I asked myself if I dared to raise my eyes, but my pupils were disobedient, a blissful inertia threw back my head, and again the baroness put her arms around me, I could hear the water at the foot of the cliff, the rhythm that would later embrace me and carry me away, circles that swiftly moved away from the centre, where the wound was inflicted, and now our blood would mingle like two coats of paint on a picture in the furthest corner of an old castle, and the cobweb on its edges is just an illusion since the has brush brought freshness to the framed family tree; blood dripped like the sand in an hourglass in the night of transformation and the moonlight no longer spilled, it pulsated, and nature followed the red trail, scarlet that has lost its smell and changed to mysterious lettering, we only lose what we have to lose; the baroness detached herself gradually from my breasts – every umbilical cord is cut in the end – and I felt I would stagger, but I managed to stay upright, supported perhaps by the wind, perhaps by an overly long squeeze, and the nightgown now concealed that a dissolute intruder had been there; now one last act and darkness would be my companion for all future episodes, because my story is nothing but a sequence of pasted images that create the illusion of movement, life is simply no longer the right word, I felt that even

before the ceremony ended, before I looked directly from the cliff into the abyss that awaited me, my lips showed silent gratitude as the baroness reached me her hand so that we might enter the final phase of twilight together once more; the closer we moved to our fate, the slower our pace became, the body is heavy when the soul is light, and gravity answered the prayer of the fall on this sheer harbourside cliff, where shipwrecks are the best observation points, yet I followed the baroness more resolutely than ever before, her back in deep shadow was a mystical monument, her blond hair a choppy wave the colour of serenity and whirlpool, a passion laid to rest and then aroused; at the climax the baroness' aureole took on a last tinge, dark blue outlines, she stopped to gaze on me one more time and her eyes grew like a snake's when it swallows its prey, and I was ready to register that face as an unreachable icon beside a tall stained-glass window; I did not wish to turn around lest I suddenly hear my mother's voice or lest my weary father call me, they did not suspect anything there at the hotel and the morning would bring insufferable punishment for them, but I would continue on my way, through ever shadowy landscapes, where darkness is the decisive value, now that the baroness was delivering me to a different destiny, and she took me in her arms for the last time, I leaned my head against her breasts, which had enlarged, swollen from the new blood, and I heard her heart like a drawn-out signal, a listless and majestic luxury, yet the greatest wealth is never shared; now she was overcome by sleep while she let me fall into the Gothic sea, and for a second I felt I was floating in mid-air, with the world gradually falling away, and I stubbornly subsisted in that void as the baroness's face, from my angle, became the infinitely beautiful visage of a stranger, as it was at the beginning when I first saw her beneath my window, features I will always recognize though I will never meet them again, for beauty endures and survives; the sense of impending death did not betray me, I was almost swaying until the fall finally took hold of surrounding nature, then the darkness and the wind and the sand fell with me, and the only thing still plumb was my hair, which fear and pity made vertical in that moment of full consciousness because the feeling of terror hones the senses like a knife that stabs a limp body; the fall would never erase those memories, and my origin will echo in every pore, in the beat of the carotid artery, in the look that will glaze the blue eye; the sea enveloped me like a shroud and the foam immediately dissipated, and when I opened my eyes I was in the deep, in the different darkness of the underwater expanses, but the current carried me back to the surface, and when I opened my mouth to truly breathe in air I tasted a saltiness not of the water that had entered my lungs but of the blood that was not lost, that will never be lost, and the water bore my body as if it was devotedly steering an elegant black coffin that would not sink, even in the wildest of storms, and the safest coffin is made to withstand the onslaught of furious waves in a deluge; I had been floating for some time, hovering and holding out on the surface, and the sky above was a dark mirror that reflected the calm of the open sea as when a polluted spring clears up, and I would be in the same position for a while longer, but then, as implausible as it seemed, I would rise as Millais's Ophelia rose from her watery grave in the end, although it seemed so implausible; we share a common goal beyond death, we reconcile the act of unimagined rising, and only later did her eyes discover the true plan, the dismayed face in the green picture frame was actually preparing for a decisive step in life, she only needed to wait and see what happened the moment after the picture, the moment after the almighty weariness, just as the baroness also knew why she consigned me to a different plane of existence, putrefaction and the wormhole belong to the doom of others, a deathly timepiece that remained as a sign we pass on the motorway, and I arose unburdened and stepped ashore not as a traveller saved by coincidence but as a noblewoman who has found a cove of her own, separate from the world of people, whose

ships would sail past ominously seeking the next port; my clinging nightgown meant I did not feel the cold because now I had the cold on my lips and in my smile, now my teeth would leave a cold mark on silvery skin, a lascivious bite that does not ignite a fire but dictates rest, an ice that gleams dazzlingly and then begins to crackle and burst along the most painful edges; that night I returned, with my new gift, by the same path I came, bending down from time to time to watch the sea obliterate my footprints in the paling night, as I crouch down now to break the resistance of my latest lover, who tries to restrain her thrill by gritting her teeth – first comes breath and then the deed, first comes memory, then the act of repetition and sanctification – and however lost she is in thought it will not disturb the concentration of the body because it knows all the paths and shortcuts, the terrain explored to the utmost boundaries, the length and breadth of which have been marked, however total the darkness of the centre is, because the gravitations of desire are always sensed most strongly there; memory is a transposition that enables you to remain in the same space but for time to expire, a hideaway that is already moist, an ever-slippery ridge that marks the concurrence of life and death, my tongue will bridge the distance that lessens with every breath, waters carry everything out into the open, and there is no more holding back because satisfaction has overtaken procrastination, because choosing this delectation consciously includes the moment that comes afterwards, which will mark every action of beginning and every contemplation of the end, and pleasure in its deepest moments is a blessing, a mellow benediction, a wealth of words that have told stories, a mellow coalescence, as when you fling caution to the wind and your veins fill with unfamiliar blood for the first time, a brief romance-river will flow in a familiar bed, in a direction also determined by the whirls and pools of fascination along the way, and nothing will be lost in this deviation because there is no such thing as a unidirectional story, although my tongue darts like the tail of a sidewinder and I can almost hear the sssssssssssssss as it slithers into the chamber where every sound grows like an echo and a sobbing, a sssssssssssssssssssss that can increase infinitely in the enclosed space; every love encounter both liberates and subdues, every love sheds its skin, and the vestiges are later probed by the sun and moon, so let the moon do its work this time in irritated enthusiasm, while I break through in the scant darkness to touch the point of highest inner elevation, one merely needs to be merciless in delectation, and craving is always a dictate that must be recorded irreproachably so as then to be pronounced with the dedication of the reprise because desire never ceases, but is repeated, just like a verse that has been learned; I go on like a well-versed reciter, deeper and deeper, until her body turns to a spasm in the very centre, and until her red hair, which was tied in a ponytail until a moment ago, comes undone, as if a scirocco suddenly began to blow from the shores of my childhood, from the very shores I walked pompously in the night the baroness left me, the dark mirror that always awaits me, the dark mirror that now allows me, in erotic speculation, to see the hair that tumbles over her shoulders, and then even further, which I will later gather up and return to its strict form when passion rises into her calm figure, when I run my seductive hand over her and tremble with the absolute bliss of this last touch of tenderness before the finale of another episode, but amidst the tempest you have to conceive the final moves and find delectation within their scope because obsession does not end when the goal has been achieved, it remains even after the goal has been attained (...)

Vlatka (1) (izvod)

IV

SINTHOME:
jesen 2019.

Étendue à ses pieds, calme et pleine de joie,
Delphine la couvait avec des yeux ardents,
Comme un animal fort qui surveille une proie,
Après l'avoir d'abord marquée avec les dents.
— Charles Baudelaire, *Femmes damnées (Delphine et Hippolyte)*

... i saginjem se, **spuštam se (2)** dolje, tu gdje crno more odbija pogled, gdje oko opsjeda toplu tama, tu gdje svaki put morate biti, makar na tren, zagubljeni i zarobljeni, nevidljivi prag urastao u besprizorni procjep, spuštam se kao da uranjam u mlaku vodu čija površina nikada neće biti dovoljno mirna da preuzme svjetlost, prostor bez odsjaja, kao da na ovom putu uvijek ostajete bez tragova, susret koji poriče osvrtnje ali ne može da spriječi novu vrstu fantazije koja izrasta u mraku, kao što cvijet zahtijeva sumrak prije nego što otvori listove, saginjem se brzo kao da sam samo za ovo i bila spremna, vraćajući se iznova i iznova na izvor koji svaki sljedeći put izgleda drugačije, svaki sljedeći put se mijenja prilagođavajući se najdražem uljezu koji osmišljava svaki prepad, iznova i iznova je ritam koji se ne može obuzdati, koji se priziva i priželjkuje, pokreti koji u ponavljanju pronalaze zakon rasprostiranja, perpetuum mobile jednostavan a nedokučiv, uranjanje znači prepuštanje dubini zova, zovu dubine, vječnoj pećini gdje sjenke leže ispred, sjenke koje će se razmahati kada se predstavi pridruži sjećanje, ako se konfiguracija pomjera to je zato što se žudnja udružuje sa memorijom, upravo sada dok se spuštam želja je rijeka ponornica, Lethe koje se sakriva pa najednom iskrasne, voda zapljuskuje kamenite obale, sve je priprema u ovom nagonu koji se ne može rastočiti, uzbuđenje raste uprkos uvježbanosti, jer ništa se ne može porediti sa užitkom stranice koja je pročitana drugi put, koja je pročitana opet, koja zadržava sve prethodno a upodobljuje ono što se moglo otkriti samo ako se radnja ponovila, ako se značenje usvojilo na odlučan način, kao kad se nakon dugog ronjenja usta otvore da udahnu spasonosni vazduh, tako se i moje usne razdvajaju da utisnu svoj pečat, da pridobiju sve za sebe, poljubac otima tuđu esenciju u nepreglednom mraku, spuštanje je čin poklonjenja, ritual osveštenja samo za ovaj trenutak, on se izvodi sa poniznošću samo za ovu priliku, njegovo kratko trajanje je samo potvrda njegove iskrenosti, poslije dolazi odmak, distanca i ironija, poslije dolazi prepis koji će razmaknuti stvari na pravo odstojanje, ali sada se spuštam sa potpunom uvjerenošću da se centar svijeta sabio u ovu tačku, ili buduću dvotačku, u ovaj procijep gdje se ne razmišlja o tome kakav će biti put nazad, hoće li biti puta nazad u sigurnost izmicanja i sigurnost meditacije, zato sada iako je svjetlost zatomljena fokus se jasno postavio, u magnovenju je moguć trenutak kristalizacije iako je sve razvodnjeno, sada dok se vrtoglavo spuštam da otpočnem ceremoniju u kojoj sam prvosveštenica koja poklanja i prima žrtvu bez koje se ne može zamisliti niti jedna svečanost, dar uzimanja i davanja, žrtva apoteoze i desakralizacije, u toj blizini, tik pred ulaz, već se može osjetiti blaženi miris paljenice što preplavljuje lice u susretu sa onim što je uvijek izbjegavalo opis, živa priroda koja se ne može pripitomiti, koja se ne može savladati, koja se ne može svesti na znak dok ovako stoji, sa minimalnim osvjetljenjem, u krupnom planu koji općinjava taman prije nego ću zatvoriti oči dok me

tmina bude obgrlila, prijatna tmina usrdnog ukazivanja, svaki silazak je povratak na staro mjesto, na mjesto početka, prisjećanje je uvijek povratak kući, domu koji je izgubljen samo da bi kasnije bio spektralno pridobijen, jer tijelo je figura prepoznavanja i ophođenja, dodir je materijalizacija prošlosti, one proživljene i one izmišljene, tijelo preda mnom je kapija kroz koju se ulazi sa pažljivom zadržkom i oduševljenom prisnošću, kao kad se pokuca na otvorena vrata, dnevni boravak je životni prostor, u uglovima je paučina koju će onda raspršiti topli dah zajedno sa papirima ostavljenim na stolu, ovdje je sve prebačeno sjećanju koje ima svoje zakonitosti, svoje utočište, sjećanje je, nakon svega, tečna supstanca koja zaokružuje um na vrhuncu zanosa, prenadraženi fluid koji ispunjava sve vijuge i sve ureze, apstrakne arabeske koje se pretvaraju u prijemčljive znakove, sjećanje je skretanje pažnje sa konkretnog trenutka, želja da razdvojene linije sudbine pokažu obavezujući splet, mrežu koja prekriva cijeli život, prošlost odzvanja u sadašnjem trenutku kao radosni zov i predsmrtno zvono, dok se saginjem da obavim akt koji će razotkriti žudnju i nad jednim tijelom uspostaviti prevlast, poput okrutne **gospodarice (3)** koja na kraju pokazuje samilost kao dio koreografisanog nastupa, kao dio obavezujuće procedure koja se mora poštovati sa marljivom predanošću, neki put i božica mora kleknuti da bi se obistinila njena moć, da bi stvari privukla u svoj domen, da bi organizovala užitak bez odmaka, sagnuti se ka izvoru žudnje znači poštovati moć koja će doći kasnije, koja će vrhuniti onda kada uloženo bude stotruko vraćeno, jer želja se uvijek vraća sa kamatom, njena priroda je u stalnom uvećavanju, u stalnom napredovanju, u odlučnosti da se dođe do cilja, iako taj cilj nije i poenta, u želji nema krajnje destinacije već samo krajnjeg napregnuća, uz zauvijek prisutnu opasnost da će taj mjehur prsnuti, da će nestati sa nježnim povlačenjem, da će se pred očima rastvoriti kao val koji udara u stijene i tek ostavlja bijelu pjenu u vlažnim udubljenjima, ljepota u nestajanju pred nemilosrdnim suncem koje je sada utješno daleko dok pravim taj pokret koji u sebi sadrži neminovnost sudbine i okrutnost odluke, ona koja donosi zadovoljstvo kao krajnji dar mora biti nemilosrdna i bezobzirna, jer sudbina i odluka su na najmanjem rastojanju u trenutku tik pred ostvarenje nauma, pred iniciranje užitka koji ništa ne prašta, poslije užitka uvijek ostane mala pustoš, mala smrt i mala pustoš u času koji će melodramatično otkucati na svim satovima na zidu dok se gotske kazaljke poklapaju pod sablasnim uglom, ptičica i ne mora da se oglasi, kao sova koja doleće u sumrak, kao orao koji lebdi nad ponorima, eda bi usud potvrdio sjenovitu snagu, kleknuti pred izvorom osvježanja je neophodni obred odugovlačenja, posljednji privid pred konkretnu akciju, pred otvaranje stiješnjenog prolaza, nešto kao dramska pauza, duboko udisanje pred dugoočekivani monolog kojim ću zavladata scenom, uspostaviti dominaciju nad pričom koja će važiti u svim njenim retroaktivnim varijantama, onu koju pričam i ona koja će biti ispričana o meni, onu koja sam započela i ona koja će me prividno dovršiti, priča uvijek zaokreće kad je ukrštena sa užitkom, kada je premrežena užitkom, kada se ne odvaja od užitka ma kako destinacije bile različite, skretanje je forma zavođenja ali se više ne mogu zavesti na krivi put, sada kada je naum izjednačen sa proricanjem, ma kako mrak bio gust dolje, sricanje se obavlja sa posvećenošću koja i mene iznenađuje, jer ništa ne promiče na što neće biti stavljen potpis usana što su nestrpljive poput slijepog miša u uzletanju dok sjenke ispisuju posljednje proročanstvo, ništa što je obuhvaćeno neće ostati neosvojeno, onoj koja zadaje poljubac pripada cijela situacija, kao preuzeti kadar kome se prilagođava svaka scena, tim snažnija ako je reprizirana, jer reprizirati znači ponovo odigrati zaplet za pogled koji stiže sa blagoslovljenim zakašnjenjem da utvrdi prevlast drugog napada, onog koji se odvija ne samo kao upijanje, nego i raskošno nadziranje, mada tmine postaju sve jače, vrtoglavica pred tminama, vrtoglavica pred užitkom, vrtoglavica pred zapisom čije ću konture zauvijek moći da razaznam, kao što se osjeća prelaz preko šava koji je zaštitio ranu, ali i obilježio trag kroz koji bi krv mogla opet da se pojavi,

grimizna kaligrafija koja će doći poslije, slova koja će se kasnije poređati, čitanje dolazi na kraju, čitanje je krajnja stanica, mada se put može pružiti duž sve nepoznatijih pejzaža, planinski vrhovi i udoline, tijesnaci kroz koje će voda razrušiti sve brane, a kada se povuče horizont će zasijati, čak iako sunce bude zarobljeno u magli, saginjanje je proboj kroz maglu, vrući vazduh koji te presreće kao tajni prijatelj, kada udahneš shvataš da je svaki odlazak bio izbjavanje, zato je nasilni prepad uvijek i vrsta prebacivanja, kao što se u sebi obnavljaju potcrtane rečenice iz dužih pjesama gdje na eskalaciju moraš da čekaš, ma koliko toga bilo prethodno rečeno, sve dok se ne okonča protok slikâ, slikâ u kojima se zgušnjavaju katren i tercet, u magnovenju sjećanje ima formu soneta koji se ne nikad ne izgovara naglas, uostalom sada nije vrijeme za glasnu inkantaciju dok se moje tijelo savija da odredi najbolji položaj, luk kojem cilj neće umaći, jer cilj je uvijek dostižan pod odgovarajućim uglom, savija se da zauzme kotu odakle nema odstupnice, zmija palaca jezikom pred plijenom koji ne sluti svoju svrhu, šuštanje artikuliše bespogovornu zapovijest, šum prije nego će zategnutost ustupiti mjesto nasladi što pronalazi svaku pukotinu da se obznani ma kako mrak bio čvrsto začet, jer metafora uvijek pronade način da izbije na površinu, uvijek se iskobelja iz stiska realnosti, poput vode koja samotno dubi drvenu branu i vala koji uporno mijenja oblik stijene, kroz pjenu se rađaju ženske utvare, utvare prošlosti koji nas sačekuju čak i izvan asocijacija koje smo mukotrпно prikupili, kao sada dok se saginjem kako bih otpočela sa još jednom pustolovinom koja će imati vrijednost samo ako se uvrsti u postojeću dokumentaciju, ono što sada treba popisati instiktivno vraća knjigu na sami početak, na stranice sa kojima kreće personalna istorija, trenutak kada se otvaraju oči, trenutak kada se unosi prvi datum u dnevniku, trenutak kada crno more zapljuskuje djevičansku obalu, pijesak koji se rasipa na šaci, slana tečnost koja se prelijeva po slatkastoj rani, drhtavica koja se širi kao što se rasprostire posljednja poruka sa broda koji se izgubio na horizontu i ne može se vidjeti čak ni sa najviše litice, morzeova abeceda za rascijepani telegram, ta noć je bila razdjelnica, ono što utiče i ono što otiče, kao što fabula u isto vrijeme ide na dvije strane, ili na dvije stranice, opervažene starim mastilom, crni redak koji će možda izbljediti samo da bi kasnije prenio znak iznenađenja, ako postoji mala smrt, onda mora da postoji i malo vaskrsenje, ono što se zagubi u jednom trenutku se može pronaći, kao što boca u moru pliva bez obzira na brodolom u blizini, ta noć koja je padala sporo samo da bi zagrljaj bio jači, jer ništa nije lakše od pokrova tame kad prvi put dodiruje tijelo i uznemirava zjenicu, ta noć dok silazim stepenicama hotela unaprijed ubijedena da ću znati gdje vodi pješčani put, zrnca koja poslušno slijede stopala, iza oblaka spušta se mjesec koji komanduje razmetnim plimama, zraci koji su usmjereni ka vodenom zamku, nema više ostrva gdje se možeš skloniti dok valovi bljeskaju uprkos ponoći, da bi se ona pojavila prvo je morala da se sastavi pozornica, sveto boravište za prikazu čije će konture uvijek titrati pred zamišljenim okom, jer svaki je njen povratak novo iskušenje, čak iako sam ranije osjetila istu senzaciju oblik preda mnom će se promijeniti, umjesto očekivanja postoji samo prepuštanje, moja vjera da sam sposobna za to, moj strah da ću propustiti da upamtim, jer užitek i bol sažimaju sve u sebe, pa je poslije teško razlistati sve slojeve, čak i u miru arhivske sobe, čak i u samotnoj ćeliji vaganja i prepisivanja, tekst je spasonosno kašnjenje, kao što mjesec obezbjeđuje svjetlo nakon što je prostačko sunce napokon palo bez odjeka, mogla sam tada da brojim korake, ali krajnja cifra do brežuljka bi neprestano varirala ako bih pogledala unazad, ka hotelu gdje sam prepustila roditelje lažnom snu, ka hotelu gdje sam ostavljala svoju prošlost kao što nesretna heroina ostavlja svoje sjećanje da progoni prazne holove i kamene stepenice zdanja jednom kada se tragedija odigrala, ka hotelu koji je sada izgledao kao napuštena odaja jednog života koji mi više nije pripadao, ma koliko još uvijek bio blizak, odjedanput mi je bilo jasno da koraci u pristanskom pijesku ispisuju priču kojoj ću biti vraćena kao što

se eho vraća onoj koja moli na koljenima, poput mene, sada, ovdje, dok zaranjam glavu u tamno središte, a misli bježe unazad u mjesečinom obliveno veče, na plažu gdje prkosim **reskoj hladnoći** (4) jer osjećam drugu vrstu jeze koja može da otopi led što se nahvatao u uglu bijelih usana, trnci su usklađeni sa koracima, dok veče poprima svoj najtamniji oblik u koji ću ući kao dobrovoljna zatvorenica a izaći kao blagonakloni dželat, jer krv se mora obnavljati i usrdno i nemilosrdno, hodam kao kad bi somnabulist znao svoj cilj, uprkos svim provalijama koje prijete da uzmu svoj danak, osjećam da se iznad mene vjetar podiže da bi atmosferi dao mrtvački obol, trava koja se povija na uznemirenom grobu, odavde se svijet pruža kao staza sa koje nema skretanja jednom kada je stopalo dodirnulo hladnu, ali ljubaznu zemlju, hodam kao da se uznosim, hodam kao da zaranjam, tamo prema uzvišici odakle se pruža horizont sudbine, tamo prema moru odakle seže linija usuda, sada je svako osvrtnje samo gubljenje vremena, zatvaram oči da bih jače opipala strujanje nad obalom, vene na grudima još će više pomodriti, to mogu da osjetim ispod najfinije tkanine bijele spavačice, pitam se može li ona više išta da sakrije, ako me sada dotakne crna voda zadržtaću kao da sam na samrti u postelji što miriše na sasušene, poluuvenule ljiljane, pa opet će to biti samo prijatna najava da sam se uputila tamo gdje me sigurno ona čeka, samo ne znam da li ja idem ka njoj ili ona dolazi po mene još jednom da me obgrli prije nego se povuče u noć zajedno sa valovima što slabe na pučini, na dlanu mjesečina je kao zaboravljene, ali još uvijek svježe kapi rasprskane krvi, hodam kao da blizina noći ne opravdava blizinu sna u kome se moje anemično tijelo može smjestiti bez pò muke, sve što mi se sada čini je posljedica čini, mogla bih tako da kažem, ali korak me odvodi dalje, čak iako predugo uspravna sanjarim i zov se ne može odbiti, priziv se ne može odložiti, dok svijećnjak podrhtava na glas zapovjedanja i vladanja, glas koji se uvlači u kožu kao što se rijeka uliva, grubo i nježno, svijećnjak ostavlja moju sjenku na pijesku samo da bi je, nazad, more izbrisalo, ona će nestati između pijeska, ona kao da se razliva na sve strane, ali ja nastavljam, mjesečarka koja će se povinovati sili jačoj i dubljoj nego što su košmar i fantazija ma kako bili prisni, ma koliko im se ispovijedala, jer najiskreniji smo u imaginaciji i strahu, ali je li ovo još i nešto više, sada kada se priključuje i želja u tijelu koje tek što je naučilo što je agresija i popuštanje, što je sila i povlačenje, koje tek što je naučilo zakone bubrenja i povlačenja, zato se ovaj put skraćuje u žudnji a produžava u pamćenju, kao što pismu napisanom u vrućici kasnije manjka post skriptum, vosak sa svijeća koje nosim poslije bi mogao da zapečati papir sa nemuštom adresom, moja plava kosa više ne sluša hirovitost vjetra već samo unutrašnju komandu, elektricitet u noći koja nije previše oblačna, u kojoj oluja neće doći, ali će baronica upriličiti svoje posljednje i najbitnije prisustvo, prisustvo konačnog preobražaja, tamo na uzvišici gdje je mjesečina priskrbila prostor samo za nas dvije, rekla je 'Čekam te', i ja samo mogu da ponavljam te riječi u sebi kao krepku komandu, naredbu koja će me izvući iz jednog hotela u kome sam bila zarobljenica iz najboljih namjera, naredba koja je slutnju pretvorila u hrabri silazak ravno u noć dok su spavali moji roditelji, odlazak je kada sve stvari ostanu iza tebe, zato je sada malaksalost beskrajno nesebična i prožimajuća, a malokrvnost je tek praznina koja će uskoro biti ispunjena, jer ništa nije proždrljivije od vakuuma, vene koje imaju sopstveni puls koji se ne poklapa sa otkucajima srca, ono što je bilo proliveno sakupiće se kao jesenja crvenkasta kišnica, ovlažile su mi usne dok iz tmine izranja uzvišica koja je mjesto završnog susreta, sve će biti određeno, sve će biti urezano da bi kasnije oživljelo u posebnoj atmosferi u kojoj se slike poklapaju sa riječima, kao što se memorija izjednačava sa tihom imaginacijom, dovoljno je da vjetar samo malo bude snažniji pa da ugasi svijeće, ali to se neće dogoditi zbog balansa uzbuđenja i uznemirenja, tek kasnije će jutro pokvariti ravnotežu, ali što treba da se desi već će se desiti, kao prebrzo pročitane posljednje stranice, posljednje platno viđeno van hronološkog reda, uspinjem se dok je more

pretvornije u odsjaju koji se jedva može nazrijeti, sa sebe skidam kaputić, studen je sada blagotvorni predznak, i ona je ispunila obećanje, ona je oduvijek bila tu da me sačeka nakon noćnih posjeta, figura koja je upila u sebe strpljenje brodolomnika i pustinjaka, a može i da požuri sa svojom nasladom, pokušavam da u glavi vaskrsnem naše male scene prije nego padnem u zagrljaj iz koga se neću izbaviti, iz koga ne želim da se izbacim, to je trenutak kada mjesečevi zraci iz žutog prelaze u bijelo, samo idealni ram može da ovjekovječi prizor kada svjetlost pretvara tijela u dolične voštane sablazni, perfekcija je hladna kao predsmrtni dah, mjesec koji obasjava predstavu zamrzava pokret tik pred vrhunac, kao što led zaustavlja rijeku na površini a ispod je netaknuta dubina, tako naš zagrljaj ostaje kao svjedočanstvo koje ću ponijeti kao sliku a pokrenuti kao priču, baronica se nadnosi nada mnom kao jesen nad dozrele plodove na drvetu, sudbina se nalazi u padu, osjećam da mi je tijelo umrtvljeno i pokorno, hladnoća koja živo meso pretvara u skulpturu okrenutu ka horizontu, tamo u daljini noć postaje tmasta materija, pomjera se kao umorni val koji će sigurno doći po mene da me odvede, ali sada sam još u čvrstom stisku, to je nježnost gospodarice koja odbacuje svijećnjak u najbliži žbun budući da je mjesečina i više nego dovoljna, jer je mjesečeva svjetlost vještačka, za raziku od nepodnošljive sveprisutnosti i banalne toplote sunca, njena energija balsamuje stvari i događaje da bi sjećanje bilo upečatljivije, mjesec je visoki priziv, studena invocacija, davnašnji kult koji se proslavlja strahom i drhtanjem, jer strah je preteča ljubavi, dodir je sada kao glačanje statue, bljedilo je savršenstvo koncentracije i posvećenosti, beskrvni vosak u koji se utiskuje vlastito ime, ne više porodični grb već svojeručni potpis, a lomljenje pečata je mala apokalipsa na jednoj uzvišici gdje svaki korak izgleda kao da vodi na kraj svijeta, baronica me vuče ne više rukama nego pogledom dok njene zjenice rastu kao slijepi miševi dok slijecu na bespomoćni plijen, ona koja je preživjela fin de siècle a ostala u njemu, kao znak koji određuje svaki ornament, znak je **elegancija jezika (5)** jer simbol je uvijek perverzniji od same stvari, prepričavanje je uvijek skandaloznije od samog događaja, slika okačena na zidu sterilno čiste galerije je uvijek blasfemičnija od realnog prizora, plima ne narušava nego čuva dostojanstvo obale, posebno sada dok nas mjesec prisvaja, lanci koji se ne mogu pokidati jer zadovoljstvo zapravo cirkuliše, odlazeći i vraćajući se u anemično srce, zato užitak ne nestaje nego otiče ili ističe, baronica koja je pretekla fin de siècle odlučila da ostane u njemu za mene upriličava okončanje vijeka koji tek što je počeo, predaje mi nasljeđe čija će ljepota biti iznad svrhe, dodir prenosi tu poruku a usta će je posvjedočiti, opet malaksalost što dolazi kao pokrov koji mazi umorno tijelo, ali samo tako linije mogu biti precizne, oblici koji se razaznaju iako je pala zavjesa, očuvani tragovi ukrasnog rasporeda, baronica je sada fantazam koji se nalazi gdje god da se okrenem, gdje god da krenem, njene oči ispunjavaju mrak kojem se predajem, ledeno, svečano bljedilo mog lica je maska neophodna za ovaj ritual na brijegu sudbine, spavaćica se podiže dok se kapci spuštaju, njen ledeni dah je na mojim grudima, hladno prizivahladno, alabaster zahtijeva alabaster, površina će napuknuti kao kad popuca zlatni pehar, neophodna greška da bi se kasnije prepoznala prava vrijednost i autentičnost mada obožavani predmet nikada neće biti izložen na aukciji, to napuknuće je samo varljivi bol, probijanje granice, baroničina glava se spušta kao što se u ovoj drugoj noći ja spuštam pred sličnim ciljem, različitasu središta ali je ista putanja zadovoljstva, oponašanje užitka koje nas je preobrazilo, koje nas premješta iz jednog u drugo vrijeme sa najmanjim prelazom, ma kako šav bio vidljiv tekstil se neće rasparati, ma koliko bilo veliko skretanje struktura će se održati, priča je mračna komora u kojoj svaki glas dobija svoj odziv, eho drži stvari na okupi, kao što baronica drži moje tijelo u najnježnijem stavu, nježnost je vrlina da se primi ono što je neizbježno, njena glava se spušta na grudi da bi ostavila dvije tačke, modre tačke, crvene tačke, tačke i dalje uske za prodiruće ocnjake, moja kosa počinje da leprša na

vjetru, plavo je crno u ponoćnom igrokazu, za trenutak osjećam da mi više ništa ne pripada, kao kad presuši česma u dvorištu, grimizne kapi koje se skupljaju na otvorenim dlanovima kipova davnašnjih boginja, mermer i tečnost, bol se uvijek zadržava kao dvotačka nakon koje slijedi poenta, ugriz može biti signatura vrijednija od otiska prsta na objektu koji se posljednji stavlja na policu privatnog muzeja, koga u predvečerje pažljivo razgledamo dok svjetlo unosi profinjenu jezu što obuzima tijelo a um ostavlja dovoljno razbistrenim, potpis ostvaren drugačijim sredstvima, ali njegovo značenje je neraskriveno, svedeno na šifre i simbole, realnost je samo podsjetnik a bol ima boju grimiza, vijugava linija koja se pomjera sa dahom, pitam se da li smijem da podignem pogled dok su zjenice neposlušne, blažena inercija koja mi zabacuje glavu unazad i opet će me baronica obuhvatiti, mogu da čujem vodu u podnožju, ritam koji će me kasnije prihvatiti i odnijeti, krugovi što se hitro udaljavaju od središta tamo gdje je bila nanijeta rana, sada će nam se krv pomiješati, kao dva premaza na slici u najdaljem uglu starog dvorca, paučina na rubovima je samo varka, kičica donosi svježinu na uokvirenom rodoslovu, krv kaplje kao pijesak u klepsidri u noći transformacije, mjesečina se više ne razliva, ona pulsira, i priroda slijedi crveni trag, skarlet koji je izgubio miris i prešao u misteriozni krasnopis, gubimo samo ono što smo morali da izgubimo, baronica se odvaja od mojih grudi postepeno, svaka pupčana vrpca se na kraju pokida, čini mi se da ću se zateturati, ali i dalje stojim uspravno, podržana možda vjetrom, možda jednim predugim stiskom, spavačica sada prikriva da je tu bio razvratni uljez, još posljednji čin i tmine će biti moj pratilac u budućim epizodama, jer priča inije ništa drugo do niz zalijepljenih sličica koje pružaju iluziju kretanja, život jednostavno više nije adekvatna riječ, to osjećam i prije nego što se ceremonija okonča, prije nego što sa litice direktno osmotrim ambis koji me čeka, na mojim usnama počiva zahvalnost dok baronica pruža ruku da još jednom zajedno uđemo u završnu fazu sumraka, što se više približavamo sudbini to korak postaje sporiji, tijelo je teško kada je duša laka, gravitacija uslišava molbu pada na ovoj strmoj pristanskoj litici, brodolomi su najbolje osmatračnice, pratim baronicu odlučnije nego ikad prije, njena crna leđa su tajnovit monument, njena plava kosa uzburkani val, boje spokoja i vrtloga, upokojena pa razbuđena strast, na vrhu baronica dobija posljednju nijansu na njenom oreolu, tamnoplavi obrisi, ona zastaje da me još jednom pogleda, oči joj rastu kao kad zmija proguta plijen, spremna sam da to lice zabilježim kao nedostupnu ikonu kraj visokog vitraža, ne bih se okrenula ni da iznenada čujem majčinski glas, ni da me pozove umorni otac, oni ništa i ne slute u hotelu, jutro će za njih biti nepodnošljiva kazna, ali ja ću nastaviti svojim putem, uvijek između sjenovitih pejzaža, tamo gdje je tmina odlučujući valer, sada kada me baronica predaje drugačijem usudu, posljednji put me uzima u naručje, prislanjam glavu na njene grudi koje su se uvećale, natekle od nove krvi, čujem njeno srce kao spori signal, troma i veličanstvena raskoš, najveće bogatstvo se nikada ne dijeli, nju već obuzima san dok me pušta da padnem u gotsko more, za trenutak mi se čini da zaustavljena lebdim u vazduhu, da se svijet spušta a da ja tvrdoglavo opstajem u tom ništavilu, iz mog ugla baroničino lice postaje beskrajno lijepo lice strankinje, kao što je bilo i na početku kada sam je ugledala ispod prozora, crte koje ću uvijek moći da prepoznam mada ih više neću sresti, ljepota i traje i opstaje, predsmrtni osjećaj ne vara, gotovo da lelujam dok konačno pad ne preuzme kontrolu nad prirodom koja me okružuje, sa mnom padaju i mrak i vjetar i pijesak, jedino uspravna je kosa koju podižu strah i saosjećanje, moment pune svijesti jer jeza oštri čula kao nož koji se zabada u omlitavljelo tijelo, pad nikada neće izbrisati sjećanja, porijeklo će odzvanjati u svakoj pori, u udaru vene u vratu, u pogledu koji će zastakliti plavo oko, more me obavija kao tkanina za čuvanje pokojnika, pjena će se odmah raspršiti, kada otvorim oči biću u dubini, drugačija je tama podvodnog prostranstva, struja me tjera na površinu, kada otvorim usta da istinski udahnem vazduh, u njima osjećam slanoću ne vode koja je prodrla

figuru, kad pređem preko nje zavodljivom rukom i zadrhtim od apsolutnog blaženstva posljednjeg dodira nježnosti pred finale još jedne epizode, usred bure već morate zamišljati završne poteze i naslađivati se njihovim dometima, opsjednutost ne prestaje ni kada se ostvari cilj, opsjednutost ostaje i nakon što je postignut cilj (...)