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Reality fragments: now what can I learn from you?

*Hic tandem stetimus nobis ubit defuit orbis.*

*We finnaly arrived where the Globe no longer exist.*

Danilo Kiš, *Mansarda*

In a time when everything is possible, when everything is wrapped in signals, giving way to a possibility for the better, the moment when you are left without it all and you set out on a road (with oneself, with somebody else) opens new possibilities in front of you. The possibilities you perhaps foresaw earlier, which nonetheless will not happen. The possibilities that did happen, that you did not even dream to be feasible. All of these possibilities come to you when you get yourself going, when you are in a motion. As much as we try to imagine a detail of what once is going to happen to us, our image is indeed considerably poorer, schematized as compared to what has happened to us. As Henri Bergson would have it, *the realisation brings about an unfathomable nothing that changes everything*. People are mostly tied to some place, they do customary things, and thereby reduce their living to the predictable, the usual, the understandable, to linearity... which in today’s world makes no sense. Linearity leads to slumber and searches for a place of safety. Svetlana Volic avoids routine and through her works she records every possible movement. It is not that important whether this movement is related to water, air, earth. The important thing is that one feels the need to move about, to keep running, to not stand still, to be in motion, to search, to explore, to feel, to experience and record. Moment, movement, shot, composition, friction, bite, feathers, air, body, sky... All of it is in harmony when you find yourself in front of it and you are trying to enter a story offered to you. Here one does not deal with a message,1 a way of technical reproduction or the setting of a film frame, but with the essence of the focus on the movement and the search for everything one did not see or perceive, the search for a *New World without a globe*.

Here I want to refer to the beginning of Danilo Kiš’s novel *Mansarda* which draws us not only into the aesthetic part of the journey, namely the way the *crying trains* are described, but also to the question of form and content as such. The road and the train, aforementioned means of transportation, introduce ideas2 and subjects, as an attempt to put together bodies and story through a long period filled with research and quest for a better place and final destination on that road. This is fairly obvious in the work where the dialogue comes in after a painstaking examination of one’s own place on Earth and the need for life. After this examination has taken place, and after explaining mutual little secrets, what we have before us is a streak of inconsistencies as well as a sequence of words:

*“Allow me,” I said, “to introduce my friend to you: Billy Wiseass.”*

*“Oh,” she remarked. “You must surely be a philosopher.”*

*“No,” I said. “He’s an astronomer.”*

*“Yes,” Billy Wiseass said, “and he’s a—”*

*“—globetrotter,” I interrupted, aiming for his rawest nerve. (I’ve never liked to bare my true nature in public.)*

*“Oh,” she replied and her eyes skimmed across a cloud.*

*“Yes,” I said. “I’ve just returned from the Cape of Good Hope by way of the Côte d’Azur.”*3

A similar point of view we can find in the works of Svetlana Volic, where the journey is understood as a breath of freedom4 and a need for a change. Whereas in Kiš one feels that the train and the road lead to a darker side of life, in Volic this road can be grasped as a road taking us towards the sublime. The *sublime*5 which can be frightful and humbling, but also communicating with us through a given reality, so as to remind us on possible dangers, experiences and big pleasures that come about due to the excitement of some moment or a possibility of different ending, or a rescue from a newly arisen situation. With Volic this moment is oriented more towards life, than towards Eros. The joy of life and the search thereof, makes these works interesting and thereby many questions are opened. There are no specific images from the past in the present, instead, the spectacle is oriented towards the view that the visible world is not static, but rather we are being inducted into it. In other words, she reads a given motion, a given note from her own system, but has to once again learn to see, and thus to open towards that which is to come, an another way to go. That is the sort of sublimity Volic searches for. And that is what it provides us with through new frontiers, a world above the threshold, the borderline of light, our presence, our former perception, a feeling that tells us that things can also exist in a different way.

One might say that we came to a point in which we should embrace a new way of thinking about our life and the relationship towards the nature. We are observers,6 always and everywhere, and we are interested in everything, but we are unable to come out of it all. We are entangled and fettered on our road, setting it right, arranging it, while it disintegrates each time a little further together with us. And we are always left with questions, who got us in this condition, and what is the road he intended for us, not looking into the depth (*into oneself*). And each new movement, change, makes us richer for one recollection which through this movement is generated. Thanks to this memory and new experience, we are “transformed” into a new personality. A new personality which emerges is an ensemble of *experienced past*, and it is the only one to speak and tell *anything about oneself (about us)*. The moment we relocate out of our habitual landscape a new life begins.

Volic is somewhat of an artist like Charley Nijensohn or Misha de Ridder, which question our urbanized world through a deep rethinking of and research on the meaning of nature and landscapes that are in us. The landscape as a subject is interesting also in the current era, but the landscape is neglected and diverted from within. Volic persists in awakedness, and on the road she treads, she travels without a road, but the road unfolds with each step she takes.7 Like the Sami people from Scandinavia, she believes that all places and objects in nature have a soul, and we have to pass in silence beside them. Silence and sublimity, which appear in the process, are enough for us to begin the road we embarked on.

Notes:

1. Once asked what would be the message his films convey, John Ford answered: “If I want to convey a message I send a telegram.”

2. “In a section of his *Enneads* the philosopher Plotinus explains how people are born. As he says, the nature just indicates the direction of the development of the living bodies. Left to itself, it does not finish its job. On the other hand, the souls inhabit the world of ideas. Incapable of acting, and not even aspiring to do so, they hover above the time, outside of the space. However, among bodies there are also ones that, given their shape, are more in tune with the aspirations of some souls. Among the souls, there are those that are to a greater extent recognizable in certain bodies. Since it did not originate in completely reliable hands of nature, the body climbs towards the soul, which gives it full life. Whereas the soul, amazed before the mirror, looking at the body in which it sees only its own reflection, allows to be attracted, it leans over and falls. Its fall represents the beginning of the life.” See in Anri Bergson, *Duhovna energija: misao i pokretljivost*, Sremski Karlovci: IKSZ, 2011, p.79.

3. Danilo Kiš, *Mansarda*, Beograd: BIGZ, 1993, p.17

4. Which is best seen in the following verses:  *We know what is really out there only from/the animal’s gaze; for we take the very young/child and force it around, so that it sees/objects—not the Open, which is so/deep in animals’ faces. Free from death.* A. M. Rilke, “The Eight Elegy”, dedicated to Rudolf Kassner (trans. Stephen Mitchell).

5. Which appears in the work of Edmund Burke, who was the first to use the expression *sublime* in philosophy. See *A Philosophical Inquiry Into The Origin of Our Ideas of The Sublime And Beautiful* (1756). He concludes that beside the general category of the beautiful there is also another aesthetical category: *the sublime*.

6. We could say, much like Kafka’s curriers who merely carry the information from place to place, without need to understand it.

7. “Putuje bez puta/I put se za njim rađa.” (Travels without the road/And the road is born behind him.) As the verse from Vasko Popa’s poem “Putovanje” (Travel) goes.