

WAMPYRA

A Novella

Bruce McClelland
Gordonsville, VA

© 1982, 2006 by Bruce McClelland. All rights reserved.

“Есть минуты, когда я помню вампира.”

[after Lermontov]

“Beware, oh woman, of the man who wants to find out what you are. And, oh men, beware a thousand times more of the woman who wants to know you or get you, what you are.

...

“It is the temptation of a vampire fiend, is this knowledge.”

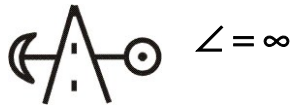
(on Edgar Allen Poe)

D.H.Lawrence

Studies in Classic American Literature

WAMPYRA

The sun, the moon, both low, opposed, in the sky, the right, the left, each, the other, seen, & together only peripherally. That is, there is perceived in the each a wavering wavelength or two, could be atmospheric, or motion of the bodies themselves, the line of sight bisecting this potential perpendicularity, looking down the road. & a new geometry provides the horizontal convergence, the edges remain, on this sphere, parallel, & not only to the eyes. The bisector also acts upon this angle: the apex of projectively geometric parallels, & thus is the sign:



So it must be assumed that the line between the sun & the moon or the moon & the sun is therefore also parallel to some imaginary line within the subtended arc of my field of view. Ah...I see things, or have just claimed I do. Hence, I must know what I am after, since I have determined a parameter or variable or two of the graph of my instantaneous direction, my eye or eyes open, opened. & I am vaguely aware of the words, the creatures I'm for some reason after, or perhaps before, as position is as yet indeterminate. I don't usually write like this. I just woke up.

*

This is to be my story, that is no dialogue. No voices. I am in the mood for telling only what I see.

*

I see many kilometer posts, mileposts, one. I see myself in an indeterminate-number-of-horses-drawn carriage, fully cognizant of the approach of the Pass, where they, the horses, will rear in (projected) fear, & travel no further. & of course, there is no driver, but rather as a guide we (the carriage & I) have a silent diurnal bat, of a species which friend Darwin would roll over in his grave to see in this part of the world, this part of the day.

Clop clop clop go the FX. Coconut shells. Stop. Whinny. All as I expected or supposed, I suppose. The shadows now more angular, or less angular, longer, closer to the damp earth, not clop clop but clump clump. Go the shadows. Jutting carpathians clearly interfering with the dexterous light, left hand moon rises to its occasion, beams with joy, shines on, harvests its pride at the asymmetry, the tips/tops of the mountains actually non-parallel to the naked eye, mine, sharp points poke out the one on the right, glass one on the left glistens. & the music: children of the night. Despite the cacophony, the carriage & I are forced into a listening position; otherwise, there is silence, save for the ceased clop clop whinny & the invisible leather flapping & the soundless sound of snow snowing from no visible clouds, but from a darkness arisen only from lack of light.

*

The diary, of course, changes, from day to day. I am always somewhere else, hard as I am to pin down as the beautifully deathly smell of *Bal à Versailles*, a scent soon to die from lack of interest in its subtlety, or the anima & flora from which it is made. But a scent, nevertheless, I shall follow. My nose. Keen as a bloodhound, there's no way out of that one. The scent, similar to but not congruent with *Bal à Versailles*, will exist always faintly, as having passed, in the same realm as some image

of neighing Clydesdales or whatever & diurnal battery. A major parameter. Perimeter. I will only define my locus in terms of some determinable distance thru space or maybe time to where I could say it was coming from, & it moves about, some magical odor that moves at a constant pace & yet is exponentially further away from me the greater my acceleration vector in its direction. I am by this reminded of something.

*

What? It is the next morning, of course, & there is some question as to why I am where I am, or as to where I am. Some question. I made the mistake of sleeping (much drowsiness lately) again, faintness fainter, perhaps I fainted. The objects that are supposed to, surround me: fourteen-bulbed strings of garlic; eighteenth-century over-colored south Slavic ikons along with expected orthodox crosses of gold, silver, & not yet invented polystyrene, red. No mirrors. Various breads & meats abound in a set more likely designed for a XIII C. epic with a cast of thousands of lower-class Londoners. There is not telling the actual C. from the roughly-hewn picnic-type tables & the blonde-braided (someone's idea of peasant Slavic) med/mead maids, & honeys they are. Somewhere in the back of my mind is a task of grailian proportions, shapely, diametric, silver. Genderful. Certain sectors enclosed within the cranium throb, dance at the possibilities, & that's all they are. Still. I am *vo sledax*, after, in the tracks of, on the scent of. This rest has cost me the distance of a number of town boundary markers, only the numbers, not (except vaguely) the other locational/cartographic information, of which I can make out, but as I have stopped, it occurs that whatever distance there was remains, if anything, the same. My hope, at this early stage, is to find a way, thru either sleep or dream, to actually compress one of the linear dimensions.; that separate me

from whatever. There cannot be any clarity as to how this will be done. Only an idea.

*

There was a point at which the narrative, the plot, was or wanted to unfold similarly in format to that of Stoker's, included all the artificial dialogue that would never have been remembered, much less entered into some obscurely reasoned diary, along with various improbable clippings & documents serving to elucidate chronology or other locations, motivations. & then, too, was an idea for the switcheroo, point of view of the other half, the object, subjectively remarking on the motions & ruses & laughable failures of the (from that stance) antagonist. This latter has not been altogether abandoned, unless of course it's too late, but the stokeresque is too severely outdated for the modern sensibility. This is not, after all, a lark.

*

No, I suppose it isn't. And yet, I find myself constantly assuming that the environment is humorously mutable, or biliously. The garlic, for example, is gone this morning. No signs of the European carriage horses. No overheard distinctive palatalized stops. No peasant speech whatsoever. No speech. & I have not been asleep for hours, but there was a dream somewhere of infinitely-decreasing-in-area wooden roadsigns, marching or hobbling on single pickets in the formation (or proportion) of an imperfectly asymptotal natural log curve, the pseudo-cyrillic letters increasing in size, & therefore decreasing in number, with each measurable decrease in area of the signs. So that the smallest (or upper-end) sign was totally black (black being the color of the ink or paint used in making the signs), giving, out of the context of the progression, only the tiniest amount of information. This

dream passed quickly. I was further away. Must have slept, quickly.

*

It is obvious that I am not going to get anywhere like this. Some strange medieval appearance, some Christianity-influenced pagan story, better left alone, spel binding as it was before they came along & changed the meaning. & I in the same binary fatalism, heads I lose. Stay awake or sleep. & what I'm after is either or neither off & on at the same time, this I know now to create the distance. But to be the hero requires the polarity. The hero never receives messages which can't be deciphered by the ultima.

*

I find myself not thinking this thing thru very clearly, or at least I do not find myself etc. Opposite statements, understood as equivalent, semantically congruent. I should not, for example, find myself laughing so hard at the absurd scene changes that I find

ultimately so intrusive. But I do. I can't help thinking that my inability to escape from this slavoromano-ugric geology is nothing more than some celluloidal behavioristic behavior, & I surely know better. I know, that is, that I am in the midst of a universe while pre-einsteinian still manages to expand or implode, to warp either space or the way heroes must perceive it, hero-halo, warp-spasms that we go thru. One wonders if the vampyre is not of Celtic origin. If the universe is not, as well. Marvellous *diagrammotos*, Ptolemy, Copernic, Newton, equinox all preceded, in those astrocruciform caves. But nevertheless I find myself not thinking this thing thru very clearly, becoming less the hero. Cannot sleep forever.

*

Today, there was a being whose language or dialect was similar to one of those fifty or sixty in which I am to some degree conversant. We did not converse, but rather nodded to each other in agreement to the fact that we could, if we wanted. Or needed. I can't give up yet.

*

He was rather nondescript for a man of 1.75 m or so, aging blond-white hair, lobe-length, extremely pallid, deep, hollow & clichéd black eyes, sharp white teeth, especially the longish canines, thin & very red lips, long, lean fingers well-manicured, wide, high-arched feet with stubby toes: rather nondescript.

*

& irrelevant. Only a man. It has come time to admit I am after some form of woman or feminine gender, be it only a romance moon. Or a lesser probability, as sky-object. The sleeping now always takes on the feminine, such that while position remains fixed, so do the photographic details. The relativism of panning, equireferential frames, sleep long enough to decode the feeling of the feminine, no specifics, no humanoid tendencies. The best thing to have done, sleep, & so doing, see, closely, binocularly, merely, a lack of masculine as the hero understands it. Again, I as hero rely on the binary, the mutual exclusivity of the pursued & the pursuer. There is, before I go to sleep, the whole possibility of being the pursued. Nothing, including parallels, is ruled out.

*

The hero's daily does not end, even here. I have no fear, of either: he or him. Sleep is not one of my at-

tributes, yet nor failure. Does not hardly occur to me. Another point of view, he doesn't understand, is that his sleep is my universe, expanding, his waking, my standstill. That there is the possibility of compressing, when he understands where he is.

*

So in my somnambulance, some dislocated (from body, soma) high-pitched (whistled sibilants) voice, spurring me on, saying vampire is no IE word, comes from an unexpected region, & if I can name it can have it. This must be a clue to what it means to sleep while not.

*

Another plan of attack might be this: to let her (I will call her her alternately with some Mexican movie name like 'Vampira' (i or y?)) come around to me, she the ranger & I snowbound in the forest, don't move. There is a reliance, of course, upon the finitude of the encompassing space, a reliance I may be reluctant to consider too much further, if only because I could never be certain of the magnitude of that finitude. Or more alternatively, the thermodynamical method: I construct a semi-permeable membrane, permeable to everything except vampyres, & sweep it across her space. The dilemma is such that I am considering all entries.

*

I slept long & soundly today & last night, but had no memorable dreams or visions of imminence or immanency. I awoke, strangely, in what seems to be the or a turret of an ancient Hungarian castle. Strange, insofar as I had expected something more romanesque. I know very little of the architecture of this or any region or period, so this castle, if it is a castle, could indeed be more Ruma-

nian, if there is such a quality, than I am willing to imagine. The sleep did me a world of good. Makes for glibness. Must be armed with that, if & when.

*

Later. Busy making arrangements to leave the castle. It is a castle. Arrangements consisted of tying, via granny knots, any & all pieces of woven fabric at hand, including my clothes, into a crude rope, by which I intend to lower myself closer to the ground below than I am now, for it became evident, upon cursory inspection, that I was or am locked in this syringe, this cylindrical cubicle, & although the room is rather comfortably appointed, my feeling is generally that it would be wiser to try to escape.

*

Rather than actually escape. It seems that the total length of my rope, shortened as it is from the total length of the individual components, owing to the necessary intricacies of the knots, does not allow me to descend below a hazardous-for-letting-go height. Perhaps I should stay here. After all, my host has or someone has provided me with a gorgeous selection of Perlas & Cotnaris, & a bottle or two of white Dragnaşani, somewhat sweet but somehow kept at the right temperature, that being some ten degrees cooler than the room itself, which is most pleasant. And apart from the whites, I have also been left a number of '55 grand cru classés. My most immediate task is to fashion some sort of corkscrew.

*

I must assume that the above is either a jocular/polter fabrication or a dream, for I see that 1] it is not in my hand, & 2] there is no longer any wine. There is the possibility that I drank it all, which would explain both 1]

& 2]. But how did I get out here on the grass, with my clothes on & not wrinkled enough to have been involved in a series of granny knots? At some point, I will consider this further. For the moment, I feel as if I must regain the role of hero, & go on with my pursuit. Deliberately ambiguous.

*

There is no reliable method that I know of for ascertaining whether I am in any sense close. Nor, for that matter, whether any of the various techniques I have encountered in my researches, proffered as tried-&-true by some anthropocentric folklorist who *believes* in such things, actually will work. If & when. There exists the possibility that I am, in fact, engaged in the chase of the original wild goose, but I tend to doubt it. There was the perfume. There it is again. Follow it anywhere. Or: I'd know it anywhere. But the olfactory is only one indication out of a possible five or six. The scent itself I shall refer to from time to time or maybe never as a vampyre syndrome. Symptom. I do not believe I am in any way dealing with a ghost.

*

Which thankfully limits the paraphernalia necessary for whatever encounters. I have been, since my waking, questioning what strangers would tarry a moment & give me a plausible or sometimes less than response as to what armaments & amulets might be of any good or use in my travels. I am, from weariness, inclined to here & now list not some but all of the suggestions: the usual Slavofolkloric implements, of course, namely crosses, garlic, mirrors, all things associated with orfodoxy & christianity (tho those seem that they would be the least effectual if the stories date as far back as I am told (assuming that the guesses relating to the tartarian inscriptions are in fact

educated)); stakes of wood & other fabrics, hammers for the task of driving them home, & torches presumably intended to be touched to the casket itself (many of these peasants choosing to believe more strongly in British Gothic fiction, because they figure it to be "closer to the truth" than their native stories). Besides these, or those, less familiar items were & still are included in my compilation: various herbal & floral concoctions & remedies too numerous but hardly too ridiculous to mention, tho I did say all, but including such common goods as sugar, wolfbane or more properly wolfsbane (*Aconitum lycotonum*, the yellow & not the more poisonous blue or some say purple variety); sodium bicarb, which, it was suggested, I was to sprinkle on the resting place to absorb the odor, tho why I would want to eliminate what I considered a rather stately parfum God only knows, but perhaps these yokels have noses keener than bloodhounds, owing I would imagine to the almost absolute freshness of the air, yet I must confess I find it, while not as thin, to be less crisp down here in the village than higher up, but still by all standards worth breathing; torches, this time not for setting fire, but rather for illumination, & hence the second listing; *lycopodium* powder, which is similar to "flash powder" but contains less phlogiston, in order to, in a real sense, scare the hell out of her; *lyconids* (some of these citizens apparently confusing their antagonists), I suppose to slip down the back or front of whatever raiment she might have on, as if she, being a she, would necessarily be terrified & hence be somehow more eliminable (they all figuring by my questions that that was what I wanted to do to her, or rather, what they, for absolutely no reason any could offer, for I didn't ask for any, wanted me to do to her); a death mask of a beloved cat, with bloody chicken feathers in its mouth; the odd-numbered pages from a German edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*; & finally, a Victorian cast bronze replica of a *diaemus* (not, mind you, a *vampyrus*) to hold up only in reflected light in the event she got too close. & one person told me to carry a bottle

of bloody sunshine, the kind you get at dawn, but I paid little attention to that. Perhaps I should have.

*

Where I am in relation to this Wampyra character is a question that still & now tugs but does not nag at some part of my mind. My nasalocation capabilities seem to be slightly off the beam lately, an impairment I discovered when, while following my nose toward a scent identifiable as of the same composition more or less as this quasi-bal-à-versailles, I was led into a candlemaker's on Hraboski Utca, wherein the odor of the day was bayberry. I now have two fine, long bayberry tapers, their length to come in quite handy come the last day of this or some other year, when I shall expect my wish to be promised of its fulfillment. I must leave this village. The candles I will have forwarded when my task is clear or ended. Not deliberately ambiguous.

*

[I cannot tell him this, but it is a peculiar habit of mine, which I cannot help but find humorous, to put little things in his way, to get him to doubt the keenness of his senses. Like today, the bayberry perfume. Ha ha!]

*

Woke up wondering if I am going about this at all correctly. In a strange dream, moon waning a few days, I was asked by a Cheshire cat with a dog's (yorkshire) voice whether I had any idea of WHY (its emphasis). Not so strange. Tomorrow I intend to go to the bakery and consider the dilemma over a *xleb*.

*

Everything is closed today, no telling why. Hence, no bread. No nothing. Peal of two 140° out of phase church bells, same note. I am tone deaf, but I know identity, congruence. & phasing, phase. Therefore, I shall or just did by this speech act make this day my sabbath. Thinking I shall not consider to be an activity that in any way violates or compromises the sanctity of the day, nor writing. But there must be consecration. The youngish & probably rough chianti has been breathing, aloud, close to an hour. The time comes to consecrate. It is a damned shame there is no bread to share with the wine. How a red Italian found its way to this region does not bother me at all—a refreshing change from the sweet grapiness of the Balkans, tho the Hungarians do have a so-called bull's blood, *Egri Bikaver*, which tastes accordingly, but is nevertheless rather dry.

*

The consecration has begun, imperfective. *nesoversemij*. I must learn Hungarian & Romanian & perhaps even Turkish if I am to get along. I shall repose, during my little ceremony, the dilemmæ: she is in some region, & hence exists by my definition. *She* is a feminine pronoun, so she is not at all masculine. Now, if she is either in some region or feminine, then she's either a real woman or she wears nice perfume. Based on that, I have the feeling she is somewhat attractive, which is further confirmed by my own attraction. Furthermore, there seems to be an obscure principle or law involving the relational distance between her & me, & the derivative of that with respect to some other axis (shall I call it time?), such that when (working backwards) the derivative equals nil, the relational distance equals a constant (so that I figure if I work backwards from working backwards, the converse must obtain, namely that when the distance between us is

the same, I am probably asleep); at the same time, however, any change in my position (or even velocity) (working backwards again) represents a state of affairs (my position being the independent one) where her distance from me has increased by a factor of e^x , x being a statable distance existing between her & me before I moved. Now, although I know that that cannot work out mathematically, it seems to be the case, if I can trust my nasalocators. There is a chance that I can't. But it's all I have, at the moment,

to go on. If it is the case that my most acutely developed sense is damaged enough to disenable me from my pursuit, I shall have to figure some other way from this paradox, namely that if I am correct, I can never reach her, & if I am not, I have no means of finding how to do so. The bottle of wine is half over.

*

The bottle of wine is over. Perhaps I shall have to ask advice.

*

They were about today. Seems a young boy had been found toward the edge of the village completely & obviously drained of blood, but not so obvious was the ruby-red lipstick, greasy red stomata, all over his pre-adolescent corpse, yet noticeably missing from his genitals. No other marks, not even, I was told, the expected small mammal puncture wounds in the throat. I wouldn't have expected them at all, I told them in disbelief. Believing his soul to be unpure, as these superstitious villagers are wont, despite the absence of any revlon-esque markings on or about his underdeveloped privates, his body was burned after it had been shaven & cleaned of its labial markings with naphtha. Again I have reason to believe my receptors are working improperly, for yesterday, tho cer-

tain of the smell of naphtha, I had attributed it to the wine; & besides that, I am certain I did not smell burning flesh.

*

This eventuality concerning the lad, although not pressing too gravely on the minds of the villagers, since he belonged to no one in particular, adds another complication to my situation. For I now know she (Vampyra) is or has been either closer than I had imagined, or else she has the power to get within my olfactory field without my knowing. I am inclined to believe now that my senses are not of themselves at fault, but rather that she is able to confound them by some sort of jamming or interference.

*

I will have to guess that she herself is the product of jamming or interference. If I hold to such a guess, it might explain two specific problems in the area of my consciousness that concerns her, first, the effect by which she appears to be more distant from me the more directly I believe myself to be approaching, and second, the disjunctures of self-narrative that keep occurring on my adventure. Such an inference would imply the five following best courses (though there is in me certainly no capacity for absolute evaluation): interference will have to be noticed as a method of creation; the system of interference will have to be altered; the creation herself can be altered (pursuit becomes 'experiment,' 'scientific'); attention will have to be given to the problem of who the creator is (of what I take to be the jamming waves); what is desired can be understood (pursuit becomes 'religious'). The first step then is to examine actual distance by decoding the "noise of time."

*

Speaking of the noise of time. Certain commotions from what must be the courtyard have increased to the point of distraction lately. It would seem, from the loudness of the sounds, that there is a window of some sort within this room. I am torn: if I investigate behind the stacks of dusty books that lean against the walls I might actually discover a perceptual exit from what I have till now considered similar to what I thought a monad was. Is. Such a discovery could lead my interest away from here, which might interfere with the concentration I need for my experiments. On the other hand the definition of that enterprise itself concerns interference itself, so coming upon a 'frame' of interference could be a resource. Since I know almost nothing of magic, I will be restricted to methods of analysis and subsequent synthesis in my experiments of creating her against my will. It seems at the outset that it is advantageous to alter the vampyric aspect. It is more useful to my purposes to describe some kind of 'ghost,' and then manifest a substance for it which can subsist in daylight. This diminishes my jeopardy while perhaps granting me an ally for some riskier enterprise.

*

What could be riskier? It has been some years since that incident with the village boy, but I almost shudder when I try to recall it. I must remember to ask myself why I try to recall it; is it so that I almost shudder?

*

This particular environment (if you want to call it that) seems quite well suited to the performance of my experiments. As I have generally been during the jotting of these entries, I am essentially alone and confined to the dank chambers of some post-medieval fortress or castle in

Southeastern Europe. Whoever reads this will simply have to believe me for the time being, since I have no justification for being in such a place (other than the mere fact of current circumstance.)

I can imagine, in fact, no better matrix for my intentions. I have been equipped with an assortment of paraphernalia much different from that with which I armed myself when I first started to describe my relationship to Vampyra. To be thus equipped makes a good deal of sense now, as I do not consider my devices any longer to be 'armor'. Forbearance will be required by those who would think any of this gear to work by magic, which I continue to insist I eschew. I am not currently at liberty to describe the mechanics of my implements, nor can I tell if I ever will be. Should they work to generate the desired effect, then I might be in a position to talk of cause.

*

Realizing I had forgotten to enumerate at least those objects and sensibilities which occupy this chamber, I shall do so now, lest some reader of this journal be sidetracked into thinking that in anticipation of failure of the project, anxiety caused a denial of involvement and thus an overlooking of the unfulfillment of prior promise. This often happens, by the way, when an individual places himself in a situation of imagining confrontation before completing the imagination of what or who, presumably, is to be engaged. What occurs instead becomes description of the descriptive process, in which the objects that need description, in order to come into existence, are waylaid and thus continue merely to pre-exist in that Realm where they are continually asked, "Know you I am your Lord?"

*

I have recently come to understand that vocalization as a prerequisite instruction for my experiment, although its ramifications disturb me. I had not considered in my examination of the process of inference from interference that there would be forces of pre-existence which actually had voices. In some ways, I am relieved, insofar as language might be of great help in untangling the webs that cover her form. Yet in other ways I am disturbed that the problem of other minds cannot be kept from this isolation. Whether my machines will operate in conjunction with or opposition to such an entity will have to be seen.

*

It is going to happen. Why else would there be dusty books in this chamber? Stanislavsky, as I recall, was a Slav. I don't read dusty books, ever. I am fond, however, of new editions of ancient titles. The fact I have suggested there is an opening behind these worm-eaten tomes implies experiment of the kind I was considering will be superfluous.

*

It is currently almost beyond my powers of apprehension to narrate what has just moved into the present tense. Books from the east wall—I will perhaps announce the reasoning behind my cardinal deduction after I get this down on paper, this being the toppling onto the floor of a great number of editions whose titles I could barely read, save what I could glean from my crusty familiarity with Russian verbal roots, after which was revealed first the frame of the suspected window, & then, which is now, the following figure, & what a one it is! No, there is no time to describe her for the moment, as she is entering into some sort of conversation with me which I

would like to continue to describe. I am getting the feeling I ought to put down this pen.

*

& so I did. But only insofar as doing so allowed me to enter her field of "apt response," as she termed it, all the better to get to know her. Which knowledge I ought relate. Her name, incidentally, is Wampyra, which I find an amusing coincidence. It seems her arrival at my back door, so to speak, is in fact due to one of my basic assumptions holding validity. Namely, that the greater my "approach vector" in her direction, the further she would be from my initial position. What I hadn't counted on, it turns out, was the spherical nature of this geometry. What I had done, in my pursuit of evidence (for the most part olfactory, if you will remember), was *push* her all the way around the globe so that she ended up being almost knocked through the wall of this very room. So here she is. Since she has actually come in from outside, I shall ask her where, exactly, *this* is.

*

You are, she tells me, 1 degree plus 10 minutes further north than twice as far east from zero. The degree of your exact longitude is just less than 1/15 the distance I have lately travelled. You are in a castle indeed, "in a lovely country, full of beauties" as it has been described. On my way here I saw a great river, whose music is wide & famous. Across a great forest to the south is an alpine range it looked like. I think, she said, you have put yourself in the most obvious place imaginable.

*

Obviousness has never been among my strengths, so I am yet confused as to my topographical situation. I

do not mind. As I write right here, her presence continues to surround me, mostly with promises of someday pulling out from the pile at the base of the east wall an atlas of any repute. I am not, by the way, bothered by the observation that the glass, broken during her rather clumsy entry, failed, at a glance to it from the critical angle to her reflection, to solidify an image of her. I may explain this as a property of the polarized quality of reflections from glass (whereas silvered mirrors do not polarize light and hence send back fully illumined albeit backwards images). Or I may not. But such an explanation strikes me as more palatable than that which would say that her failure (it is *her* failure, really?) to cast a reflection in the pseudomirror is a homologue of the schizophrenic's feelings of invisibility. Besides, when the dust from the books was aroused, & as she then came in through the window, she managed to sneeze.

*

She tells me, now that I have asked, that in some non-recoverable past, she was indeed of two minds, or "phrenes" if you will, in which she suffered from a sense of reduced visibility, but feels that that quality of reflectiveness has been sufficiently encountered. Let me try this pen. What a nice pen. This is a fun pen to write with. *Ordog. Pokol. Stregoica. Vrolok.* I like this pen. Let me help you write. Oh here. —*Wampyra Akatoprika* she signed.

*

Rather than find some way of erasing the scribbles just made with this pen by W (we are immediately that familiar), I have decided, since the situation is fraught with potential for various discoveries, that she is to have free run with my pen in these papers. It is not implausible that, like elves with cobblers' wares, certain tasks can be

accomplished whilst I am in another mode of consciousness. Which is to say, asleep. She advises me to replace [how?] this silver pen.

*

Dream me doing this. Dream blue light at cross roads where is buried suicides. Vill of visps. I am once was failure, I counted on projections. Being muse, I lost my life. You restore me. I am not real. I am not vitch. I get here from you. I am blessed with perfume with is ball at Versailles. Nobody you know. Many dead people, dancing, I have never been here. Excuse me from barging into your basement, but was you that call. I did not sneak up. It is my fleeting from you that brought me here. We face each other when you read this Tomorrow.

*

W & I faced each other this morning, I having awakened somewhat tired following a night of I suppose expected restlessness. The wrestling was associated with uncomfortable images of W. performing intimate acts on me which struck me as, if not altogether unnatural, at least unusual. Certainly not wholly unpleasant, but I am sufficiently discomfited upon waking that I cannot avoid feeling rather exposed in front of Wampyra—so much so that it is not easy for me to face her directly. I imagine she is curious about my coolness, but I feel it would be inappropriate for me to explain to her the embarrassment arising from my dream. It is odd that I should thus admit a laps in my ability to distinguish manifest from symbolic content.

*

I do again. I wrote you about faces. You are accusing of me. Do I do something wrong. I cannot ask you this direct. Write me really your dreams.

*

This is emphatically not to become any sort of dream journal except when it becomes difficult to disentangle somnambulistic effects from the more ordinary reality, in which, for example, one accomplishes such necessary tasks as eating. Even as I write the word does it occur to me that I have not “accomplished” that task for quite a number of days—though until now not the faintest trace of that type of hunger has crossed my mind. I wonder what it is that triggers that sensation (in addition to being curious about why I have not recently missed my appetite). Perhaps the increasingly noticeable aroma of some kind of paprikash has caused not only the salivation, for which I ask every night, but also the rather intolerable pain.

*

My previous entry was cut short by an attack of *gorazda bol'na*, “enormous pain” as it translates literally, which incapacitated me for some hours, until I was able to arouse Wampyra with my moaning, shortly after sunset. She promptly was able to remove my symptom by staring right at its center. Her eyes became as clear as scrying crystals, with red fires flickering identically in each. My discomfort went away so immediately at this practice that, in my relief, I forgot

*

Forgot what? The passage of time has once again eluded my ability to measure it—as if a recurrent unconsciousness accompanied the onset of certain painful memories or experiences. I am aware, in my revival, that I am in the company of a very powerful, for lack of a better term, woman. In recognition of her recent benevolence, I hesitate to ascribe to her such evil intent as has crossed my mind often of late. I mean I am finding it more difficult to consider her responsible for that corpse, as I continue to find myself not one, inexplicably. The fact of my writing all this, of course, belies an intention to communicate my distrust to her (if I am not doing so in other ways), as I know that she enters this journal. I daresay I have even encouraged her—so I have put myself in a situation toward which I am quite ambivalent regarding the secrecy of my innermost thoughts.

*

Forgot what? You rest many days. I let you. I read again. You hurt me now when you are thinking I do something to little boy. I know corpse is little boy because that is the only one you mention. I do not remember draining young boy. Why do you not ask me out loud? I will tell you this. Was boy friend of yours?

*

Alright! Did you have anything to do with that lad's death?

*

No. Was boy friend of yours?

*

I'm not sure. But I do recall a certain pity, a certain attraction to the scene itself, while in general I am repulsed by odd & subtle violence. I suppose I am not terribly concerned, except as I now need to determine the extent of my own safety. It is conceivable, given the circumstances, that there exists some other layer of connexion I have not uncovered.

*

I tell you what. I have ways. You have ways. I see you care, we find out. Together. I work at night, you at day. We will save him.

*

From what, I am impelled to ask, having for most of my life believed death to be terminal. I have also generally thought that blood was involved with the maintenance of 'life,' at least to the degree that bloodlessness, ambrosia, would be a signal of incipient demise. It seems to me that there is no mistaking of the condition of death, when observed up close. The admittedly few instances in my life where I have had to deal with the absolute zero of the human corpse—once, in the morgue, where a friend of my youth who was practicing to become either a pathologist or a mortician scared the daylight out of me by wagging the severed masculine member of his cadaver in my face in the near-darkness; another time in front of the chemist's in Whitby, a middle-aged man had apparently dropped from some cause or other just after leaving the apothecary; and most notably the young boy of how long ago, whose drained lifelessness betrayed the innocence of his years—it has seemed to me that there is an absence of spirit, or a substance even less identifiable—the glimmer, or as some say glammer—which marks the particular soul

house as vacant. Until the nearly religious remark of my recent comradette, I should have thought that in general the premises, upon notice of eviction or condemnation, were to be vacated 'forever.' Given the extraordinariness of being displayed by W, I ought least to inquire in these pages what, precisely, she meant when she jotted "We will save him." & who is "we"?

*

We, it turns out, is HER + ME—a strange pair-bonding for the sake of forensic detection. But she claims, from an immovable position of innocence, to have knowledge of the type of character which would leave so gruesome a figure in the world; and that my contribution to the case might involve the resuscitation of my atrophied or at least dulled nasalocational sense. As well, I might add (though she fails to see its potential value), a certain numerical acumen. There is, of course, a discursive quarrel concerning our quarry, namely that the symptomata of the child's corpse indicate nothing other than what is in the literature commonly called a vampiroid. W objects that the absence of fangular puncture wounds *proves* we are dealing with another type of folkloric creature. I will have to insist, then, that there exists (or should exist) a "vampyre syndrome," in which a significant number of indicators is not to be offset by the absence of a symptom. When I tried to discuss my logic with Wampyra, she said something that under that breath of hers sounded like "akakovich" and disappeared. I got the impression she was uninterested in my difficulty with nomenclature.

*

You talk too much and funny. We must begin. There is travel—another boy is south of here, in Bistrița. A

young dancer, or maybe singer. Meet me in two days. I am gone when you wake up.

*

Wonderful. News of more gorey [sic] corpses & Wampirella wishes me to rejoin her at the scene of the alleged perpetration of puericide, traipsing off whilst I am in the state of profoundest slumber, leaving me little if any instruction ('south'), even less motive, & in a state of utter ignorance (without even a desk to hear my complaint) as to how, exactly, I am supposed to exit this fortress. She is certainly putting me to the task, expecting my fascination with her methods to instill the courage I would need to meet her in a strange town, at the funeral of a person I doubt I am acquainted with, most likely risking my life all the while, and for what? Merely so she can move into a relationship with me which is based on "trust and respect" as she once said. So how am I to do this? Lord grant that this is not the last entry in this journal. But lest it is (or to anticipate, lest it is no more), I will set down my intended *raison et methode*, for the sake of those members of the future who might find themselves in a similar predicament, given there exists similarity of predicament.

Namely: I shall (hereby) meditate upon the reactivation of my lapsed nasalocators, for the purpose of finding my way to W & Bistrița. I shall (hereby) hope rather than presume that my exponential-vector relation to W's position is less confounding. *Then:* I shall walk over to the window whence fell those books I have not yet even had time to browse through, and see if I can fashion an escape. Should I manage to leave, & then if all goes well, I might actually be lucky enough to be hobbling southward through lord knows what kind of brush with only a simplex-fractured tibia, and perhaps at a time of diminished pain I will again be able to write herein, assuming neither my pen or this book has got irretrievably far from me during my descent. Here, as they say, goes.

*

That wasn't so hard. I am now resting in a woods, having just scaled down the smooth vertical eastern wall of the castle, using for my escape, the reader will not believe, what I will describe as long-chain hydrocarbon threads of enormous tensility which I found near some of the chemical equipment which stood in a corner of my previous room. Strangely, I had not noticed these fibers before, so that for a second I supposed that in my need to depart I had actually manifested the necessary tools. Obviously, I had in reality merely failed to see them in their translucence and the shadows, and they had been left there, the product of some ancient (or advanced) experiment, by either the proprietor or some previous occupant who, in a similar predicament, had managed to create for himself, as well as for me, a 'way out.'

At any rate, I am suffering only from a sprain to my left ankle—due, of course, to my continued ignorance in the science of how to fall from ropes of that sort (though perhaps it has nothing to do with the rope). Suffice it to say, I am once again in the sunshine. Fog, really, but the relative dilation of my pupils I can only associate with that madness of the day. I am, until further entry, on my way.

*

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. My first day out, and perhaps my shortest, has evened to the point I should stop and write as I promised myself, where there is still light. I have just built a fire to keep away the encroaching frost, but its effects are not yet felt. There is as yet no sign of a farmhouse, though once I did hear harness bells not far off. That sound would indicate snow in the vicinity, but fortunately that problem of terrainal traversal I have yet to encounter. My nasalocators tell me the

city where Wampyra is always off—I would judge I have about miles to go. I think I'll sleep.

*

Sleep does not overtake me, wary as I am of the sounds of the children of the night. What music they make! While I stoke my humble fire with twigs & brambles, I think hard on my situation. I am about to enter a city, filled with people who I hope will be in a gay mood for the most part, & who will most likely be invoking odd customs & rituals to celebrate the holiday. Concurrent with that occasion I ought to be investigating, along with a very diaphanous & certainly pagan charactress, the recurrent modus operandi for a child slaying of a rather ugly sort. My interest in that particular confluence seems other than morbidly scientific.

In the meantime I find myself on a chilly night, with a pained ankle, having descended from a rather literate and comfortable paradise, achy & vulnerable, insomniac, listening to the local (& vocal) wolves I hope, & with only a rather rusty 'sixth sense' to give me a sense of direction.

I am anxious about the city. I know certain slavonicisms, to be sure, but they might actually be of dangerous consequence in that unrecognized environment. I know almost no Rumanian, and even less of the Magyar tongue, except for the names of wines & that luscious dark cake rigo janci, a phrase which I doubt will take me far past the town bakery, if there. I hope Wampyra meets me at a bakery. I could certainly do with some rigo janci. I can almost smell it.

*

OK. I meet you at local bakery, in Bistrița. You deserve food. Rigo was Magyar violinist. I am not sure

you find Hungarian food in Bistritz. Maybe. Please arrive soon. Glad you sleep. Love.

*

How I have gotten this far with only minor mention of food is still beyond me. My life has certainly not in the past lacked for pleasures of the body, as I recall. Perhaps it is my failure to acknowledge, where possible, pain and other deprivations that causes this dryness, this inability to discuss matters of hunger and sustenance with myself, my thinness as a symptom. Even, of course, the metaphor embodied by the now two at the least boyish cadavers. (This weather conspires against me to break: it is that bright grey moisture-laden type that only suggests, but does not promise. And in its suggestiveness implies thirst, for the water about to precipitate.) I need voices, speech, gossip. That is the food I must have before desert, my rendezvous with W—to be near full with a sense of human purpose. I hear them now. And now. They come this way.

*

A disappointment, yet not a disappointment, somewhat like the weather. I am still in the presence of six men, each of whom speaks only (I gather) Romanian, who yet were quite garrulous upon discovering me as I limped along the road, wishing (apparently) to tell me of much in the way of tidings, as if the exclusiveness of their language were no barrier. As if the import of their collective and various messages could be carried across by enthusiasm itself, combined perhaps with the significance contained in gesture. To the extent they were warm in their reception of me, and willing to attempt to communicate whatever they could, I am glad. However, I shall confess in my own language that I was not satisfied with the little extra meat I could glean from the bones by applying

to their talk a linguistic sensibility I thought might prove of more use than it did, considering how frequently I have been able to use Latin in the comprehension of my vernacular lexicon. There was, however, enough of a drift to their urgings that I believe I am accurate in reporting the following: there is much local concern over the recently found young victim. I lifted from the conversation (I think) the word *pararude*, which I recognize to be a particular type of folksong, but also, more apt in this case, the word refers to the Transylvanian brand of gypsy-urchins, children who dress in grass and act like tinkers. There would appear to be, if I am not too far off in my logic, a slight contradiction between the degree of concern shown by these men and the insignificance (to them) of the victim. These men are en route to Bistrița, with either information about the killing or killer (or perhaps with only informed speculation), or else they are a willing group of vigilants who are focusing upon the images of their own sons, from which will emerge the courage to encounter what might turn out to be a supernatural enemy. Against that possibility, by the way, each of them displayed a pendulous amulet, heavy in silver, on which was engraved a symbol I have noticed somewhere else:



These fathers (who at the moment are watching my writing with a great deal of curiosity and an enormous lack of suspicion), as I take them to be, should not be taken for gypsies, despite the gaudiness of their superstition; rather, they must be civilian merchants and foremen, from the qualities of their dress and features, though I cannot say for now whether they are believers in Our Lord, as I see nary a crucifix amongst them.

*

Calea flammândului e cea mai lunga.

Since he was looking at me when he spoke it, I asked the eldest of them to write down this saying here in my book, so that I might see the italic orthography. I am grateful that this bunch is literate—one would hardly expect it in these parts. From the bootstraps of the information just received I should be able to calculate the rough relation between their sounds and their symbols. From that I hope to be able to infer, after assuming Latin cognations, certain sound laws, from which I can backtrack enough to gather some sense about the words I am hearing these days. This to enable me to create a crude but comprehensible lingua franca (or in this case, rumana). Perhaps I can then learn where they come from and what their real purpose is, and hence decide whether my desire to go with them is as strong as it ought to be. How much simpler, in retrospect, it would have been to have perused the books recently at my disposal for the merest phrasebook of the local tongue (did I know what that was?) before my entropic leap. By which I mean one way.

*

I can at least gather the date: too much mention of the proper noun ‘Grigorie’ for me to think myself inaccurate about the approach of St. George’s Day, which has associations among these Transylvanian types as vivid and scary as Walpurgisnacht or All Hallow’s Eve. It is merely the obviousness of that coincidence from which I had hoped to refrain reporting. This group, by the way, was kind enough to give me some of their soup, since I asked, of something called loup. And pain, which I know what is.

*

I have decided to go with these men, as they are probably more familiar with the area. Their purpose seems noble, and if I am to get to Bistrița by tomorrow night, my chances are better with people who know the way. I have encountered in myself a recent hesitation, which I shall have to repress for the time being, viz. the slight feeling that in the fountain of speech in which I have been standing, I heard the (mispronounced) name Vamparea. I only hope that my recognition of that word was false, or that my failure to understand its context has caused me undue anxiety. I shall keep my ears open, of course. We are toward the polis. I shall be able to continue writing only when we pause to eat or rest.

*

The gloss so far: the street of the [something] is very [muy?] long. But it is certainly less lunga as I am accompanied by human beings who seem to have a purpose in common with me. Perhaps even to the extent of actually providing me with a purpose by their very fraternity—I am that fond of this incomprehensible band of somewhat merry men (despite the presumed gravity of their situation). Slightly odd, perhaps even mysterious, but ingenious as well as generous to such a degree that I often don't even feel lost. It has been so long, it seems, since I have been in the company of men that I had forgotten that the support of members of one's own gender can be remarkably reassuring. These men, szekelers from their food, Daco-Thracians by their tongue, are also all so competent in their knowledge of these spruce-bedecked saddles I'd bet we could travel in the dark. I have no way of suggesting this to them, inasmuch as I should not at this point of my uncertainty wish to betray to them the nature of my rendezvous. As much as I have entrusted myself to

these men, I am not yet sure there is no room for misunderstanding.

By the way—from what I gather, this second lad turns out to be one of those gypsy urchins, more primitive even than our own tinkers—a filthy across-the-alley type dressed in rolled grass—a so-called paparude. I doubt even Erzebet Bathory would have gone near one, and I relieve myself by the thought that neither would my Wamp. But then, what sort of being would want to put its “mouth” on such a creature, save perhaps another such?

*

My guess is that we are not far from Bistrița, or some other locus of civilization, as the terrain is becoming flatter, the forestation demonstrates a greater hardwood/spruce ratio, there seem to be more houses, especially of the sort that give off great feelings of protection—always a sure sign of civilization—houses with huge brooding rooves, behind fences and gates which are rooved as well. We are in such a place now, our group self-invited by one of us who seems well acquainted with the owner-builder and his wife. Considering the guardedness of these dwellings, it is no wonder they would have to invent as their folkloric shadow figures beasts and monsters capable of transmuting themselves into beings small enough to penetrate the few miniscule openings available in these constructions. Though I suppose great force would not be needed to permeate the parchment windows, it may be stronger than it looks, given the fact that the rest of the construction—the use of notched and pinned 8-inch square beams throughout, for example —seems built to last forever.

It also seems odd that such a charming people should exist so interiorly, having, I would have thought, few natural enemies, and the weather doesn't seem particularly vicious. But so far we have otherwise encountered no one, and we have been travelling a good ways.

But with such wonderful warm and smoky interiors, and food such as the egg-butter-mamaliga dish we just sat down to an hour or two ago, it is no wonder they are so accustomed to the indoors.

Following the meal, the six men joined our host and his soție in a conversation again, presumably concerning our favorite topic. Naturally they were at a loss as to how to regard me, realizing I was at an equal loss, and decided there was not much any of them could do for my linguistic deficiency, and so ignored my presence except when that became part of their subject. Then they would stare at me, individually or as a group, with whatever aspect on their faces as was required by the nature of their gossip—pity, curiosity, rarely scorn, occasional doubt. I am sure they felt safe in their assumption I was ignorant in their language—not bothering to realize, I guess, that my linguistic talents are above the ordinary, and that I have been exposed to a fluency of diatribe for the last couple of days in a language not too distant from some I have learned—enough so that I do not feel at all so isolated as I would were I a couple of hundred miles to the west.

I shall even put this to a test, eventually, by now attempting to discern an element or two of the conversation from which I have been by accident excluded. For example, I would wager that the talk turned to the trustworthiness, in the matter at hand, of any of several village—or state, for that matter—constabulations. *Pestele de la cap simpute*. I hope this is a figure of speech rather than a comment concerning food preparation here (which at any rate would have been quite rude to say so loudly), referring to generalized corruption at the top of local government. It must be that they are trying to decide whether or not to inform or involve the police in Bistrița, feeling that it may be too convoluted a situation to trust to incompetents and corrupt politicians. I suppose I could offer my advice on the subject, if I only knew how. Perhaps in the city I will find an esperant.

But we stay here for the night, graciously. This journey is longer than I had initially imagined—it is certainly not going to be completed in the two days allotted to me by Wampyra, as that time has already passed.

*

We are within a day's reach of Bistritz, which I take to mean we will be there by sunset. I would doubt Wamp would still be in the bakery at that time, but I would not rule it out, given her tendency to appear wherever she intends. I half expected her to find me here, actually, on the assumption that since my approach had *decelerated*, her distance might decrease enough to find me a limit of her position. I suppose I miscalculated.

What I did get during the night, however, was a dream so mystical that it had the import of a visitation of some sort, by a pair of royal twins, a boy and girl of thirteen or fourteen, of Arabic complexion and hair, who sat on either side of a very large bed and posed as my instructors! The boy was at my left, and held in his hand a small but thick book with very thin, translucent white pages, referred to as my 'bible'—which I interpreted more literally and less religiously as 'book'—that is, more *my* book than *the* book. Each recto page had as its 'text' an individual sign, generally rectangular in construction, and reminiscent of alphabetic units. I was told that I should learn one of these 'texts' or glyphs every week—there were fifty-two of them—and if I was to learn the entire 'language' I would have to go through the book fifty times.

Following the receipt of those instructions, I was left alone on the bed, whereupon I was immediately levitated a few inches, and with my arms and legs spread and extended, my face down, I gradually began to travel in a counterclockwise circle parallel to and circumscribing the perimeter of the bed, maintaining an orientation of head to the east. Soon the arc began to increase, so I was actually traversing a spiral path, and my angular momentum

naturally increased as well. My rotation above the bed became more and more disturbing, as I was approaching near and nearer the northern wall of my dream. Since I realized I had no idea of what type of force, in terms of aptitude for benignity, was controlling this tangential acceleration of my corpse, I mistakingly [sic] began to become apprehensive—to the extent that I extended my right arm downwards in an attempt to grasp the right edge of the bed as I passed. The act failed to accomplish the objective of creating drag, as the speed with which I was circling the bed was so great as to make it impossible to grab *anything*. At the point I acknowledged my failure, as I deemed it, to control my fate within this dreamworld, I decided survival was contingent upon waking up before my brains were dashed all over the wall, leaving my hosts and companions most likely perplexed, to say the least. That decision held long enough for me to wake up—and, of course, in the process, I realized I had just abandoned contact with a force both absolutely benign and powerful. Being too tired to kick myself for my lack of unconscious patience, I tried in vain to re-enter that realm—but the gates were closed. I was told by a voice within the room, “Trust what you are given.” And I went back to sleep until now.

*

It being at last the middle of the day—we said our *la revederes*, *viszontla tasras*, and *do svidanie* quite early this morning, promising, no doubt, to return soon—I too am in the middle of my mind, thinking back to the difficult experience of my vision, thinking forward to a reunion with a strange lady whom I sorely miss and yet just now realize am angry at, for the flippancy with which she decided I should meet her in some town at some time she thought best. Not that she is incorrect—that remains to be seen, tonight perhaps—just that I didn’t like the oligocratic nature of the decision.

I should not like to get trapped inside my fumations—the sorts of antistrophes that occur to one who has no one to talk to and has finally let that fact enter him from the Bulgarian side. After all, it has otherwise been a beautiful day, sunshine, relative warmth, and these Flachs (Vlachs?) (so far as I am concerned) have been singing lovely dirges and other folksongs, perhaps out of consideration for my aglossia. I enjoy being amidst their spirit, and only occasionally, in those silences, for example, do I become acutely aware of my isolation from their substance. I now realize the problem is more than just a language barrier (I’ve known that all along, really)—no, the message from the morning is that I have been initiated in dreamtime, while these men belong to a different circle. It is about circles, even the dream suggests expansion. & then the gyre. helix. The difficulty, apart from ordinary language, easy enough to learn, is *extraordinary* language. These six men, with their amulets, must know without words about things I only suspect. The limitation to my understanding does not concern mere ignorance of the vernacular. There is the text of the bible, whose letters are each a gematrian paradox, whose grammar, if I am right, is time itself. I would like to inform these men, who at present are occupied with only the thought of protection, and perhaps vengeance, that I have information they will need from me—and yet, we cannot for the time being share our respective evidence.

“Trust what you are given.” Wampyra. These men. Mystical transport. The dead boys. A choice of countryside. Liberty.

It is time, before I see her, to discover my motives: what do I really care if a couple of coptic urchins are terminated by some protoslavic creature? The modus operandi doesn’t so far include me in its formal logic, unless there is some marker ([+male] comes to mind) which is of more saignificance than I realize; I am beyond suspecting W—or am I? Thus the soliloquy; the police probably don’t care, and six armed vigilantes are most

likely more than enough to handle the unalleged perpetrator—or *-trix*, as the case may be. So am I being honest with myself when I say I am really only travelling towards Bistrița to find Wampyra? Probably not. I find out tonight.

*

It was not without difficulty and confusion that I persuaded my comrades to assist me in entering through unorthodox means and a stone doorway the unfortunately closed Cofetaria Bistriți, and here to leave me for my tête-à-tête. There was the difficulty of getting them to understand both my desire and my position; as well they were reluctant, in broad twilight, and the middle of town (Piața Centrala), to perform a subtle drama of innocence—namely standing about in front of the cafe/bakery ostensibly continuing a barroom conversation—while simultaneously fiddling enough with the medieval latch to undo it from its duty; and upon that accomplishment, they were still unconvinced that I ought to be left alone there, either out of some respect for the general law of sanctity of boundaries or else because they felt I might not be safe in those unknown circumstances. At any rate, I am finally in the place of some old dream, in light that is failing, a cafe/bakery which, despite the roughness of its furniture, the peasant but not unpleasant antiquity of its architecture, and the relative smallness of its size, nevertheless carries for me a nostalgia for a place like Bewley's of Dublin, in its olfactory offerings and its dark spaciousness. The Hungarian cake I promised myself is available here, visible yet through the dirty glass of the display case, but I am without coffee, as the proprietor must have emptied and cleaned whatever paraphernalia are used for brewing before closing up. The legality of my situation is too precarious for me to risk betraying my presence to some passer-by by satisfying my gustatory compulsions for completeness. I shall do without, for the time being.

Wampyra, of course, is not here, but it does not seem immediately necessary to change my position. According to the laws of passage, my location here is enough to define a space sufficiently paradoxical for her to enter, although it is conceivable that that has already occurred. Before it gets too dark to write, I will admit now that at least one piece of *prajitura* will be missing by daylight. As for my meeting with what's her name: one of us is late.

*

It is you. I was here yesterday and also day before. I found out much. I will tell you, but I need you first. Let me show you I am here.

That was almost wonderful. It has been too long for you, I understand. It has been long for me as well but I am female. We have much time from now on, believe me.

Here is not safe for you, but no where is. I mean this town. The police are needing a criminal to persecute. No one here will do. No one cares about paparude. Death was strange. Now you are strange. One and one is cipher. You will be accused.

They say gipsy boy was son of violin player from Magyarország, Jancek. First boy they say was son of English writer who visit here once and did not marry. Most people forgot him until gipsy boy. They burn him too. Villagers say it is lover-mother who comes to small boy as falling star. He is enchanted while she kisses him all over. Like I do you just now but not down there.

Then he never wake up. But police say it is a foreigner, a jew perhaps, who has strange ritual. Like boy was sacrifice. But then, villagers sacrifice his body. Is that any better? But we must leave here now. The baker comes here very early.

*

The past few hours have been spent quite restfully, following the exertions demanded so involuntarily by the teeth and tongue of my rediscovered friend, which took me ever-too-quickly to the necessary ecstasy, and those demanded by our stealthy departure from the cofeteria and subsequent ascent into the belfry of the neighborhood Gothic Evangelical Church—built, no doubt, by the Saxon ancestors of the townspeople below who readily believe in ectoplasms never accepted in the canonical books that form the cornerstone of this house. Despite the eclectic nature of the additional architecture, and forgiving the indiscreet inclusion of late Mongolian furniture whose procurement would be a mystery in itself, the workmanship is to all appearances extremely capable and attentive. However, one would have to suppose that to locate a 250-foot tower in the middle of a town otherwise insignificant, save for its wines, would indicate

But what am I blathering about? Time for *blatha* later. I am safe for the moment, but I must complain that once again, without blueprint, so to speak, I find myself alone in a tower, isolated from such people as constitute the population below, who just now as day arrives I see beginning to conduct their businesses, mostly domestic crafts and wines and foods whose qualities I am once more removed from. Despite that disappointment, I am glad they are conducting business on this presumable weekday rather than getting all dressed up for church, which would be announced rather too loudly from this vantage to suit my taste.

I confess that I feel relatively secure up here, and there is a good to be found in the situation of one-way perspective, but I am tempted to go against advice and simply show up in the center of town, *à la* Caspar Hauser, an oddity but certainly innocent. Wampyra is to bring me local garb somehow, to replace these pieces which have

so offended my nostrils of late as to make me wish I were given a less-than-acute olfactory sense. Obviously, my corporal accumulation of colors and odors was not without its effects even upon a being whose sensual attunement to this plane of longing is spurious at best, as it was she, as a principle, who suggested I could do with a change. This translation to the hall of bats and bells was most considerate, I suppose. In a town this size, it is likely that no matter how closely I fit the description of the average saxorumanian, I would not escape detection as a *strain*, itself a foreign word.

Am I thereby condemned to accomplish all my detection from within, much like the great imprisoned Argentinian Parodi? Or will I eventually be less prominent than the erections in which I find myself so that I am free to move throughout the populus, licensed perhaps but certainly not branded.

The irony of this particular circumstance is that were it almost any other period in this town's mild history, my anglo would be welcomed by the saxons, all the more if I had any *lei*. But then, if the events which now insist upon my remaining so far underground that I am 100 meters above it had *not* occurred, I would probably have no reason to establish even a temporary residence here. Except for the exquisiteness of the r.j., which I don't know what they call locally.

Aside from finding myself in an uninterrupted silence and thereby free to continue this journal at length, the anticipation of Wampyra and her choice of apparel for me—given over as she seems to be in her own diaphanous style to garments most ladies would not want to be caught dead in—causes me great need for distraction. So that I find myself continually standing as far up as feasible and peering out onto the *piata*, trying to discern from this height the nature of various group formations developing below.

A most distressing one has just occurred: a number of uniformed men has emerged into the square sur-

rounding six men whose appearance from this distance is remarkably like that of my companions on the journey hither—which eventuality might otherwise bode less ill were it not for the fact that I can see firearms drawn against the white group in the center. If indeed I am correct, it would appear that those men have been arrested for some reason, and I think I know which. I can hold back no further. As soon as I receive my new set of clothing, and have washed in the lavabo downstairs, I shall proceed into the town to gather more information.

Do not worry why I am writing. I am saving you time. Here are new clothes. You will look like Transylvanian. Get undressed. Wait a minute. We both go, but we must be prepared. I know ancient ritual to make perfect self image. We will not be suspected. Let me take this off—to do this we must first be naked. Now.

*

When there is time I shall have to enter herein a complete and adequate description of the activities just performed in order to bring forth such a perfect self image that the authorities will perceive us as beyond reproach. The ritual itself was fascinating for all its superficially lustful appearance, and especially the way blood was used symbolically. But now we descend into the market. Wampyra has dressed as a peasant wife in from the mountains to buy pottery and the like, and will in this way maintain a low, if squat, profile, while being in a position to garner local attitudes and bits of gossip. Her Polish-Italian pronunciation of Rumana will most likely be interpreted by the arrogant (as always) small town coppers as transhument ignorance. The only problem with this arrangement is that, she says, W. is not always totally visible to all people. As to what percentage of people she *is* visible to, she would not remark. I shall have to trust that this fact is as much an advantage as an encumbrance.

*

I myself am tempted to devise some sort of adequate cover for the eventuality in which I am interrogated as an outsider, such as that I am or was in some way connected with the ‘English writer,’ living in some nearby province but one sufficiently distant to explain my distinct deficiency in Vlah, which lets out Wallachia, obviously. However, the adequacy of whatever masquerade will depend much upon its relation to the nature of the inquisition it is designed to elude, so I shall wait until I have formed a more complete opinion about attitudes concerning my presence before fleshing out the details of my illusion. I admit it will be most difficult to explain my foreignness, especially if I am confronted by nationalist bureaucrats anxious to ensure restoration of Rumanian as the tongue of the town; and my writing book, which even in my native land, how long ago, was looked on as a symbol of judgmentalism and superciliousness. So that even in a restaurant jotting one's journal, one was regarded as a minor threat, odd to say the least, if only for discovering anything noteworthy in such surroundings. But then, it is equally possible that my foreignness and oddness will coalesce into one assumption, making my presence less noticeable. Invisibility, it would seem, would be optimum for this investigation, as I suspect everyone is suspicious in the eyes of the laws of down there.

*

Ironic I should end up here, the cafe, in broad daylight, having just bought a pastry and cofe and newspaper (*Ziarul dimineața*, of all titles. The language seems more accessible in print, however) with change pilfered for just such a contingency the previous eve, as I awaited W. I assumed at the time I committed the crime that the waitress (a cofetaria is not identical to a cafeteria in concept) or waiter who left the change so casually in the sau-

cer either did not notice it or think it worth worrying about at the time. At any rate its absence would not likely lead to criminal prosecution, or even the surmise that a foreigner had been waiting not only for his unnatural mistress but for just such an opportunity to commit the thrilling infraction of whatever they call petty larceny. A small column on page 17 makes reference to six men, from Iași (aha!) and the police, and the death of *țigane*. The correctness of my estimation of their situation, which is really mine, is further borne out by understanding enough of the latinized German that is abuzz and within earshot to realize that these men are in very deep trouble, as they are likely to be rushed through some phony trial and convicted essentially by local sentiment, which expresses at this point more anxiety than concern for the deceased. I will have to find a way of irrefutably demonstrating their collective innocence without tipping the hat of incrimination in my own direction. It is no wonder I constantly find myself within castelary structures, given my propensity to avoid the fray.

*

Speaking of tipping, I find myself in the awkward position of not knowing the custom in that regard, though it hardly matters, as I have nothing so gratuitous as a pfennig to leave as evidence of my avowed homage to my servant, who treated me as if I weren't even here. I'm afraid I'll have to sit here, half empty tassed, waiting as if waiting while I calculate how best to move about the city (which is larger than I had imagined) without visible means of sustenance. It would be all-too-cheap for the police to hold one rather than six hungry men (who I overhear are from Vatra Domej, which makes more sense than Iași), besides which, though I have a propensity for finding myself in such confined spaces, I doubt I possess the wherewithal to make my emergence a casual matter. When will she

arrive, by the way? Ah, there, peasantish woman with silver features I think is her.

*

I got you [not] silver pen for me. No one sees me here even you. I hear this morning, near grave of gypsy boy, man singing *bocet*. I listen very close, try to understand. It is not very good but important. Soul of *paparude* now walks under mountain & he is meeting there soul of young girl from many years. Once she is like him, and is being drained before she is real woman. In song the boy tells how neither can yet remember being drained, but they are needing hero to help them or they must forever be under the hill where in spring many sheep are going. Shall we be hero.

*

Why certainly. Not sure exactly how, but the choices are few, as the fortresses I lately inhabit grow ever taller, so even the wrong type of dream might have precipitous consequences. I suppose first thing I'll be off to interview the mortified spirits (do I unnecessarily conflate spirit with soul? Which, exactly, would *walk—a spirit*, no? But then, in such matters I would often believe W to know better than I), not because I think dream food might do me better than the inordinate amount of chocolate I've consumed during my wait, but rather for more physiologic reasons. If I can only pay for this & retire one last time to the musty coziness of my belfry.

A writer of some repute, whose fictions I doubt I'll ever read, has at least affected me by a dictum which I recall has been attributed to him: "Describe a dream; lose a reader." In order that I not risk the loss of the one reader this journal is likely to have, I shall honor the prejudice of that author and refrain from entering into a description of the dream just awakened from, in which

Wampyra visited me in my cell, and we were discussing in our longhanded way our findings regarding the local murder, when for some reason it grew dark very quickly, and just as quickly it grew quite warm, and I was perspiring and so, believe it or not, was she, such that her garment, the expected “diaphanous nightie” became even more transparent as it gradually became soaked, and clung heavily to her various contours, including her ample I believe is the usual term breasts, whose half-crown-sized areolae, in the depth of their purple, revealed that the creature at hand, so to speak, was anything but ambrosic, when she commenced to lift this clothing from her, over her head, and as she was doing so held my gaze totally upon her rather Slavic figure, heavy, with torso near to the earth, thick if not fat thighs, wide hips, quite hairy and totally unshaven, nevertheless curvaceous and rather sexy. During this brief action it was not only my nasalocator that began to demonstrate rather visibly, and somehow I found upon looking even in this darkness that I had become as unattired as she, a state she apparently did not approve of, for she decided to cover me, first by spreading her perineal and gluteal flesh over my own theretofore exposed lap, and then sort of enveloping the rest of me in a veil, seemingly attached to her arms, of a soft rubbery yet fuzzy quality, not, I imagine, unlike the webbing of a bat’s wing. The sensation, which was equivalent in both my neck and my groin, an odd pairing of sensory locations for congruency of experience, culminated in my coming to feeling drained, relaxed, and quite wet. As I just examined myself, although I am wearing the clothing I was in when I began my nap, I noticed something rather disturbing, given my post-oneiric expectations: namely that the viscous liquid I culled from reaching into my trousers was quite a bloody red, while that appearing on the fingers of my other hand, which went to feel my neck, was indeed a milky, yellowish white.

*

It would be all too easy to speculate upon the mirror mirages of the dually regressive dreams recently visited upon me, each posing into the other a reflection of possible reversals known only by the projected gender consequences before taking action. Or to consider for quite too long the proboscoidal vectors in attempting to analyze the difficulties inherent in actually *interviewing* a soul, or spirit (I suppose really the latter, as it seems loosely tethered to a specific personal circumstance). I am confounded if I know any of Wampyra’s premises anymore, & I am confounded if I do not know the aforementioned. What seems consequential is to ascertain the wherewithal where with I might really encounter the ghost in a setting sufficiently neutral to neutralize whatever in-harmonious extraneities might come into play, or do whatever else they do in an attempt to sound like me. It is clear my suspicions are just, for even now, following the sexual implications of my nap’s narrative, things have altered their course.

As usual, without any government to my estimation of current geometries, I shall have to follow my nose when it comes—if it ever does—to discovering the spiritual source of the victim’s soliloquy.


I mean do I use a crystal ball or what? & what if it’s all in Gipsy, or Coptic, or whatever hierologic they speak in. Where will Wampyra actually be, if I could get my finger on her, & would she be at all proficient in interpreting a language even I have no interest in?

& so it is off to the graveyard, to find a trader who will sell me the wind, what?

*

Unsuccessful as I might be persuading a member of my own tongue to indicate how I might best converse with the spirit of a murder victim, I was (or rather: am)

moreso following the same attempt in Rumanian, which for my part was really broken Latin. Had I been able to from the compulsion to verbs last put myself free, as I suspect any Roman worth his sal would have done immediately upon the death of the last Caesar, at least whatever syntax was left might have held more sway. As it was the oaf just stood there, mastlike, impenetrable, but at last pointed to a strange grave—a heap of loosely woven grasses just lying there—when I said “bocet”. Odd how these caretakers can be so educated in ethnological literary terminology—nothing better to do than read & dig, I guess.

At any rate, closer inspection of the heap revealed that it consisted of grass skirts, of a fashion modeled by the paparudes of the day, as well as the increasingly popular insignium  upon a rough but anatomically correct plaque of the finest mandrake wood.

The symbol itself was beginning to remind me all too strongly of another such fraternal glyph, **O::M::O**, so that I didn't wish to press what luck there was in finding what I had found.

*

Today is *dziady*, appropriately enough, & there are to be profane jokes around the recently demonstrated herbal marker, located by the way in the meadow called Rhodonia. The local suspicion is the boy is the Moldavian equivalent of *zduhacz* now, flying spirit, & I suppose the purpose of the jokes is to entertain the spirit and thus keep it occupied for the sake of the Eve. I'll invoke Wampyra to assist me in understanding the profundities. I see no roses, I suspect the red—but then the boy (battle at that) would be a *krasnik* no *vrkolak*, wouldn't he?

*

You attend by yourself. My shadow must stay behind the oven during Demetrius. Six fraters will arise this night, to watch the spirit eat his sister. You will not be glad he ate her. Or perhaps you must. Fight without me for the time, I watch how you fare.

*

Eery breezy eve alone, slavic spirits & the Roman world, crossroads where the vampyre's always met, my friendly one away, secures a house & leaves me out to watch the jokes delight the ghost, the adolescent host of Rosy meadow within the dark green now is night. The howling down from Tirgoviste, no more towers, churches, till tomorrow lest it never come. No mystery in the animation, events that only happen in the corner of the eye, Wampyra has led me here & by the nose & disappeared again, I cannot be after her at all tonight. The ill wind brings my history, blowing open the shudders of the lapses, my face is buried in, sequestered tops of steeples, down there (this hill) are people, whose lives are not the same. Nor will they ever be, since this year occurs & Roman leges are brought to bear. Were I back in Angletterre, what is about to happen might never have occurred, I make that wish. But debt is up, & death is down, I shall wait here for the men.

*

Though more translucent than I'd thought, the six stand now around the fire in semisesquiquintile, slightly less than a seventh place yet open as an invitation I guess to me, who felt he was unobserved. Their robes are shed, but the fire is big, their fraternal tattoos almost glowing blue. What sort of invitation is it, that I, a foreigner, should without *faux pas*, approach these possibly inimical

paters (foe pa's, it naughtily occurs to me) in the cold, without a sign, without a stitch? The banter begins, the warming up, good natured despite the shadows on their faces, made evil by firelight from below their horizon—**NOW I UNDERSTAND THE A OF ROAD BETWEEN THE SUN & MOON! HOW MUCH WIDER IT IS BENEATH THE HORIZONTAL AXIS!** I certainly wish I could understand these Moldavian amusements, though to tell the truth, the intonation contour, flattened from this hidden distance, seems to be like those which frequently accompany spells & the like. That is to say that if these men are telling jokes, they would not from their delivery appear to be very funny, were it not for the grotesqueries of their antics: for apart from making odd, wrinkly faces, their hands describe obscene gestures & suggestions of womanly anatomies.

Nor can I decipher the mechanism behind the illusion of the 'grass skirt,' by which the ostensible grave marker is made to dance autochthonously around the flame, undulating in epicyclic fashion about an arc subtending some 308°, a cardioidal grassy moon whose gravities are uncertainly described. Nevertheless the men, whose better halves for all I know remain in Bistrița gaol, do not seem to have much to do with such a dance, as they look transfixed by the spectacle of the dancing grass. I am relieved that I chose to observe this exhibition from the penumbra; fo rmy guess is that I have just witnessed some kind of evocation of the gipsy's spirit, brought on by a fusillade of dirty jokes. As much as I like such wit, the sight of these six vigilants, now frozen as if they had gazed at Medusa, naked and, I might as well say it, erect, I guess from the sexiness of the invisible, genderless pelvis gyrating beneath a self-motivated skirt, strikes me as yet beyond the reach of my comprehension. And yet, I long to be so brave as to entertain such magic

at those very words, the fire has grown brighter, the ones from Iasi have fallen prone, the grass skirt appears to disappear, like the eaten

moon. If only Wampyra were here to explain, thereby protect. But no, she is cowering behind some oven, wearing I hope [only] a rosy garland, and is unable even to shield me from the sight.

The sight itself is changing, rising from the fire the boy, eleven or twelve, rubescent stomata still covering the illusion of the flesh, he is even larger, coming neare

Give me that book you anglichan. & look at you. It is those friends or you, who devoured my blood without asking. In retribution I have eaten our sister, who was never born, but would have been, if you'd not forgot. & now I shall tear those hardened men to pieces, unless you take me on. & if you do, no more frightened entries shall you ever scribe while you are in my land, for you never learned our tongue. Your limbs will fly in the four directions, your heart will be nailed to the black earth, your skull will dangle from a pole to mark the spot that your six friends shall never see. You shall stay that way while I am never mourned, & no one finds this book.

The oven was consecrated, you know. I have gathered up your bloody parts & cleaned them, cooked them, made you whole & brought you to native land. It was very brave of you to fight feet first vrkolak, to save the lives of men. He threw you far apart, what a mess the kras upon the grassy hill. So now you know. It is not me, but you who must remember, how you kill the boy. I leave you now to rest, I mean good bye, please leave a page where we might meet again.

*

I'll leave it here, where were it not for her I would not be. Whole again, past the fright (though painless) of my arms and legs fleeing me, watching my heart torn from my breast by a phantom waif, my uncomfortable head at last severed, & by that separation, the vision of so long ago, me kneeling by him like a wolf, taking in his blood. The moon was on my left, sunset on the right, the bloody sky, the bloody earth, the sign now forever, on the remainder of my chest...