

**Margaret Atwood [Margaret Atwood]. *Telesna povreda [Bodily Harm]*.  
David Albahari (trans.). Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2002, 286 pages.  
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Following the publication of Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm* by McClelland & Stewart in Canada, Simon and Schuster in the United States, Jonathan Cape in Britain, and a number of houses which publish translations into various languages all over the world, *Bodily Harm* is finally available to readers in Serbian, owing to the endeavours of the Filip Višnjić publishing house. Since its appearance in 1981, Atwood's fifth novel has been somewhat overshadowed by her works that soon followed, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) in the first place, and later her masterpieces *The Robber Bride* (1993) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000). However, the fact that it is being translated in those parts of the world where Margaret Atwood's reading public is widening at the moment confirms the high status of *Bodily Harm* among Atwood's novels.

As suggested by the straightforward title, *Bodily Harm* strings together a series of disturbing and eventually terrifying life experiences befalling the main protagonist, Rennie – a breast-cancer operation, a breakup with her boyfriend, unhappy love for her doctor, a break-in by a psychopathic burglar, a trip to a tropical island engulfed in political chaos, acquaintance with suspicious and mysterious people, imprisonment and torture. A possible reading of *Bodily Harm* sees the novel as an indication of Atwood's growing commitment to dealing with human rights issues and her increasingly active involvement in human rights organizations like Amnesty International. This is of course true, and descriptions of the inhuman treatment of political prisoners and the overall manipulation of the islanders certainly convey Atwood's criticism of dictatorship and represent her artistic contribution to the fight for human rights and justice for oppressed people. However, a reading that will probably outlive the level of political criticism is the one that sees *Bodily Harm* as one woman's psychological pilgrimage. Through physical ordeals Rennie reaches salvation in the sense that she outgrows her sterile, shallow and selfish being, becoming a changed person capable of genuine commitment. The climax of the novel is in the scene where the naïve Rennie, who has been thrown into the island prison despite her innocence, kills her cellmate Lora, who has been violated and battered to a pulp by the guards, back to life by taking her hand. This is a moment of absolute intimacy for Rennie, when for the first time in her life she achieves full communion with another human being and thus restores her own humanity.

The goal of the Albatros edition, founded in 1921 by two renowned Serbian academics and authors, Stanislav Vinaver and Todor Manojlović, was to increase the number of readers devoted to the cultivation of the mind rather than to mere entertainment. The authors published in this edition include Edgar Allan Poe, John Milton, David Lodge and Ian McEwan, among others, so that the decision of Filip Višnjić to have Atwood translated into Serbian is more than laudable, especially in view of the translator entrusted with the job. David Albahari is a highly regarded short story writer (in Serbian and English), who has recently moved to Canada. His mastery of the Serbian

language makes the prose of Margaret Atwood congenial to the reader in Serbian, enticing the curiosity of the public towards Canadian literature. Ice was broken for Atwood in this part of the world when *The Handmaid's Tale* was translated in Croatia and *Good Bones* in Montenegro, and now, after Filip Višnjić, at least two more publishing houses have announced proposals for translating the novels of Margaret Atwood.

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