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Representing Queen Elizabeth I in Philippa Gregory's *The Virgin's Lover*

Ana-Maria Iftimie

Critics generally consider that the historical novel started to become popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the publication of Sir Walter's Scott novel *Waverley* in 1814. However, even before Scott's novel, there had been writings that incorporated historical themes. According to Georg Lukács, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were the so-called historical novels which tackled history-related subjects and endeavoured to create the veneer of a historical past (through costumes, for instance), but they lacked psychological and behavioural verisimilitude, as the manners depicted were characteristic of the writer's contemporary age. A good example in this respect is the famous eighteenth-century novel *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, in which "history is likewise treated as mere costumery" and there is no faithful representation of the historical truth: "What is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely that specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of the age." (Lukács 1962: 19) Lukács goes on to discuss the realistic social novel of the eighteenth century which, despite its accomplishing a "revolutionary breakthrough to reality for world literature" by its portrayal of contemporary morals and psychology, did not actually present the characters as part of any specific epoch (Lukács 1962: 19).

The need for historical novels might as well have arisen from a feeling of nostalgia, as recent theories suggest. We try to reconstruct the past and aim at filling gaps through literary creativity. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the historical novel has been regarded as a genre on its own genre, "in dialogue with history rather than with the aesthetic strategies of fiction". It has become useful from a pedagogical point of view, to such extent that it is used even in schools in order to introduce students to a specific time period they are about to study (Groot 2010: 47-48). Yet, as Linda Hutcheon emphasises, the postmodernist historical novel, in particular, is not to be reduced to just "sentimental nostalgia or antiquarianism"; it is viewed more as a "re-evaluation of and dialogue with the past in the light of the present" (Hutcheon 1988: 19).

In the contemporary historical novel, history is used as a method of learning certain behaviours and ideas that belong to the present, not as a means of actually knowing the past, which is in fact unknowable, as we would never know all the details unless we have lived them as well: "[the] reader will be miserably deluded if, while he reads history, he suffers himself to imagine that he is reading facts" (Godwin 1797 qtd. in Groot 2010:18).

The reader has to understand that the historical romance writer just seems to assume the role of the historian, presenting the facts to the public in a subjective way. The writer creates 'authentic' characters and places them in a "factual-led framework", writing stories that will present to us as much as is necessary of the past (Groot 2010: 19).

Historical romance might be considered a subgenre of the historical novel. It is directed predominantly towards a female audience and presents mostly "loving and sexual relationships". Such novels sustain "the dominant models of social ordering" such as "family, hetero-normative relationships and strictly defined gender roles". This subgenre is usually associated with pop culture and escapism through the themes it deals with (Groot 2010: 52): "The setting of historical romance provides just that necessary mingling of 'distance' and 'reality' which allows the combining of 'surrogate experience' and 'wish-fulfilling motifs' that are crucial to the genre." (Hughes 1993: 1 qtd. in Groot 2010: 53)

Philippa Gregory is a writer and historian famous for her postmodernist historical novel series of which the best known are *The Cousins' War*, summing up 6 books inspired by the Wars of the Roses, and *The Tudor Court*, totalling 8 books so far, reflecting back on one of the most famous English dynasties, the Tudors (Gregory s.a.). "She uses the forms of popular historical fiction to offer a Marxist-Feminist critique of the economic individualism of the 1980s." In her novels, she presents the past as "the political and economic prehistory of the present" and connects the analysis of capitalism to "a feminist analysis of the relationship between women, property and ownership" (Wallace 2005: 187).

The Virgin's Lover, belonging to *The Tudor Court* series, follows the story of Queen Elizabeth I who, coming to the throne of England after her half-sister's death, finds herself falling in love with Lord Robert Dudley, the son of a traitor, which makes it difficult for her to do what has to be done for her country – marrying a man of royal blood. The novel deals with the problem of gender roles. Therefore, while this paper focuses on how Queen Elizabeth I is represented in Philippa Gregory's novel, it also deals with relationships between men and women, especially the Dudley-Elizabeth, Dudley-Amy and Cecil-Elizabeth interactions.

Besides giving a fictional account of Elizabeth's relationship with Robert Dudley, the novel deals with Amy's story, a neglected and abandoned wife who eventually ends up as a pawn in the game of power. While Elizabeth is remembered for being England's monarch, Amy is erased from history and Philippa Gregory tries to restore "herstory". In this way, "the 're-imagining' of women's history became the province of the novelist, who had the freedom to reinvent the past on behalf of the marginalised and excluded" (Wallace 2005: 177).

The novel begins with the celebration of Elizabeth's coming to the throne after her half-sister Queen Mary I's death. All England is rejoicing unlike Amy who is still in bed trying to put up with the noise of the bells announcing the ascension of the new queen:

The peals, pounding Amy into wakefulness, did not bring her to joy. Amy, alone in all of England, could not celebrate Elizabeth's upward leap to the throne. The chimes did not even sound on key, they sounded like the beat of jealousy, the scream of rage, the sobbing shout of a deserted woman.

'God strike her dead,' she swore into her pillow as her head rang with the pound of Elizabeth's bells. 'God strike her down in her youth and her pride and her beauty. God blast her looks, and thin her hair, and rot her teeth, and let her die lonely and alone. Deserted, like me.' (Gregory 2004: 1825)

From the very beginning we learn about Amy's condition: she was abandoned by her husband, Lord Robert Dudley, who went to Elizabeth's side immediately after she was proclaimed Queen of England, hence Amy's being jealous of a woman whom she has not even met before. Amy lives with her step-mother, Lady Robsart, as Dudley abandons her when he learns that his mother-in-law wanted him to work on the farm as payment. He refuses to do so, as he used to be of high rank, his family lived at court and his father was the advisor of the king, hence it would have been below his (former) station to work on a farm like a commoner. His purpose was to gain power and favour once again, whatever the cost:

He had every reason to hope. The new monarch was a Tudor and the Tudors knew the power of appearances. She [Elizabeth] was devout, and surely would not reject a contrite heart. But more than anything else, she was a woman, a soft-hearted, thick-headed woman. She would never have the courage to take the decision to execute such a great man, she would never have the stamina to hold to her decision. (Gregory 2004: 1828)

Dudley's thoughts reveal that he possesses the typical thinking of an exponent of the patriarchal order: he believes that women are weak and soft and he is going to use that to his advantage. Although he loves Amy very much, he still treats her coldly and orders her around, as a man "should" act towards a woman. Coming home shortly after the fight in which Calais was lost to the French, he meets Amy and tells her that he has to go to court to deliver the news to the Queen. Amy is frustrated with being unable once again to spend time with her husband and insults Dudley in public:

His dark eyes went very bright at the public insult from his wife. 'I am sorry you think me a fool,' he said levelly. 'But King Philip ordered me by name and I must do my duty. You can go and stay with the Philipses at Chichester till I come for you. You will oblige me by taking this woman and her baby to stay with them too. She has lost her home in Calais and she needs a refuge in England for a while.' (Gregory 2004: 1839)

Although the purpose of Amy's character is to revive her historical figure, she is depicted as being illiterate – her step mother writing all her letters to Dudley, which she then copied in her own messy handwriting. This, however, might or might not be historically accurate. Even so, being married to a man of Dudley's station, we presume that she should have been actually able to write and read. If this is the case, her representation in Gregory's book only makes her look weaker and more susceptible to manipulation. To further this argument, in the novel she is shown as an obedient wife, always trying to do her best to please her husband:

‘But what about you?’ Mrs. Woods asked gently, bringing her horse alongside the younger woman.

‘I keep faith,’ Amy said staunchly. ‘I wait for him, and I trust that he will come home to me.’ (Gregory 2004: 1910)

She goes as far as heeding his requests to look for a house for both of them, even though she fails, the houses she chooses being too simple for Dudley’s taste and station:

‘I know you would work,’ Robert acknowledged. ‘I know you would rise at dawn and be in the fields before the sun. But I don’t want my wife to work like a peasant on the land. I was born for greater things than that, and I promised your father greater things for you. I don’t want half a dozen acres and a cow, I want half of England.’ (Gregory 2004: 1831)

The last part of his statement may hint at his true intentions: he either wants to be a very important man in England and own many lands or he wants to become king. We find out later that his real purpose was to marry Elizabeth and rule next to her.

Because of Dudley’s dangerous game of power and his ambition to become king, Amy has to pay the price. Elizabeth is deeply in love with Dudley, she refuses to get married and makes a promise to take him as her husband even though he is beneath her station and this threatens to weaken England, which has little support. William Cecil, Elizabeth’s trustworthy friend and advisor comes up with a scheme to ruin Dudley’s plans without her having to break his heart. He hires an assassin to end Amy’s life and make it look as if Dudley were the culprit who wanted to get rid of his wife in order to marry the Queen. Amy Dudley, née Robsart, has to pay the price of Robert Dudley’s foolish ambition.

On the other hand, there is Elizabeth, the main subject of this paper. Her situation is precarious as she is the anointed Queen of England, but she is young and inexperienced, she thinks with her heart most of the time and not with her head. Besides, she is a woman and a Protestant leading a still widely Catholic country. Although many people are happy when she takes the throne, those who are unhappy about that are equally numerous:

When they went out in the streets there were many who doffed their caps and cried hurrah for the Protestant princess, but there were many also who did not want another woman on the throne, seeing what the last one had done. Many would have preferred Elizabeth to declare her betrothal to a good Protestant prince and get a sensible man’s hand on the reins of England at once. (Gregory 2004: 1856)

Her biggest mistake, as a woman, is that she falls in love with Dudley – mostly due to manipulation, which he is a master of – and, while initially she listens to Cecil’s advice in all matters, she easily switches to obeying Dudley. At first Robert Dudley has a very high opinion of Elizabeth:

‘Not her,’ Robert said with the certainty of a childhood playmate. ‘But she’ll keep him dancing to her tune because he guarantees her safety. Half the Privy Council would have her beheaded tomorrow if it were not for the king’s favor. She’s no lovesick fool. She’ll use him, not be had by him. She’s a formidable girl. I’d so like to see her if we can.’ (Gregory 2004: 1834)

But eventually she becomes his “puppet,” which is obvious even to outsiders such as the French ambassador, Monsieur Randan, who mocks the Queen in front of her own Lord Chancellor: “‘Your queen commands her servants to do as she wishes, does she not?’ He broke off with an affected laugh. ‘Oh! Except her Master of Horse, we hear, who seems to command her.’” (Gregory 2004: 2088) Her attachment to Dudley becomes so obvious that it is hard to hide their relationship any more.

Robert Dudley can be considered a Machiavellian villain in the novel. In the beginning he acts as Elizabeth’s childhood friend, always being close to her and protecting her, even if his actual purpose is to gain favour, but later on he becomes bolder and bolder, to such an extent that he flirts with her openly and even holds a small ceremony with two witnesses where they make a promise to get married as soon as Elizabeth, as head of the Church, will grant him a marriage annulment.

As he gains her favour, Elizabeth makes Dudley ‘Master of Horse,’ allowing him to organise her ceremonies, much to Cecil’s despair, as he seeks to make them as grandiose as possible, using more funds than allotted. When they have a discussion about the horse he chose for her ceremony, their conversation takes a very interesting turn when he compares the horse to Elizabeth:

“And he is your color,” he said impertinently. “You are a bright chestnut yourself.” [...]

“Oh, d’you think he is a Tudor?” she asked.

“For sure, he has the temper of one,” Robert said. [...] “Doesn’t like the bridle, doesn’t like to be commanded, but can be gentled into almost anything.” [...]

“If you are so wise with a dumb beast, let’s hope you don’t try to train me,” she said provocatively. (Gregory 2004: 1875)

Even though he is not explicit in his comparison, his statement could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the manipulation that is to come further on in the novel. In the same scene, he keeps complimenting Elizabeth, leaving aside any inhibition that he might have regarding their Queen-subject relationship, managing to obtain the exact effect he desired:

He could see her hands loosen slightly on the reins and knew that he had struck the right note with her. He played her as every favorite plays every ruler; he had to know what charmed and what cooled her. (Gregory 2004: 1875)

Another key moment that depicts just how great a power Dudley has over Elizabeth is when Cecil convinces her to send Dudley to Brussels to announce her coronation to King Philip. He uses Elizabeth’s affection for him against her (“But how you will miss me when I am at Brussels!” – Gregory 2004: 1877) and, by questioning Cecil’s decision, he manages to make the Queen bow to his wishes:

Robert shrugged. ‘Who cares what the King of Spain thinks now? Who cares what Cecil thinks? What d’you think, Elizabeth? Shall I go away for a month to another court at Brussels, or shall you keep me here to ride and dance with you, and keep you merry?’

[...] ‘You can stay,’ she said carelessly. ‘I’ll tell Cecil he has to send someone else.’ (Gregory 2004: 1878)

Besides using Elizabeth's feelings for him against her, Dudley resorts to one more method: her experience as a prisoner in the Tower. He would tell her about what he went through while in confinement, appealing to her memories of their shared torment in order to bring her closer to him and make her easier to manipulate:

Instantly Elizabeth squeezed her hand on his arm. 'Yes,' she said, for once without coquetry. 'God knows that I know what it is like. And it spoils your love for anything on the outside.' He nodded. 'Aye. We two know.' (Gregory 2004: 1892)

Robert Dudley has the power to make the Queen herself do what he pleases. Even though Elizabeth tries to look strong in front of her subjects, it seems impossible for her to keep up the appearances in front of Dudley. This makes her appear weak in the eyes of the other nations, mostly due to her hesitation of choosing a husband in order to consolidate her power, as many people see her always in the company of her Master of Horse.

The other important figure in Elizabeth's life is her advisor and Lord Chancellor, William Cecil. He has been by Elizabeth's side since she was a prisoner in the Tower, a princess who risked losing her head, and he can be considered a father figure to her, being probably the only one who does not try to manipulate her – at least not for his own good, but for her own sake and for England. The two of them are often seen spending time together. Elizabeth goes to him first when she needs advice and trusts him in all matters, a fact that becomes obvious even to Dudley:

If a man wanted to dominate this queen, he would have to separate her from Cecil, Robert thought to himself, watching the two heads so companionably close together as she read his paper. If a man wanted to rule England through this queen he would have to be rid of Cecil first. And she would have to lose faith in Cecil before anything else could be done. (Gregory 2004: 1872)

William Cecil is the one who Elizabeth turns to whenever she is in need of advice, political or otherwise. Although she does not wish to break Dudley's trust and make him think she does not love him, she confides in Cecil about their secret betrothal, seeking his help in order to fix the problem she caused. Elizabeth sees in him the fatherly figure that has always been missing from her life as her own father never paid much attention to her. Dudley himself remarks that: "Cecil is like a father to her. He's the advisor she has trusted for years. [...] He keeps her steady, he keeps her faithful, even if it's nothing but a dream." (Gregory 2004: 2043) Also, due to her childhood difficulties, she is constantly under the impression that she is going to be betrayed or murdered, almost to the point of becoming paranoiac. This can be sensed in the episodes involving the French who threatened to attack through Scotland. Elizabeth, urged by Cecil's advice, gives orders for her ships to sail, but many times she changes her mind – like a woman – and has to be brought back on the right track by her advisor: "You cannot play the woman now; you have to have the heart and stomach of a man. Find your courage, Elizabeth. You are your father's daughter; play the king. I have seen you be as brave as any man." (Gregory 2004: 2038)

To conclude, Philippa Gregory's *The Virgin's Lover* is not a faithful representation of sixteenth-century historical events, but it examines through the means of the historical romance novel issues of that are still of concern for the present-day readers. Her story focuses on gender relations, exemplifying them through the characters of Elizabeth, William Cecil, as well as Amy and Robert Dudley. These characters can be better understood if one applies to the Hélène Cixous's binary system of gender stereotypes: the man stands for activity, head, intelligibility and culture, and he is the one who brings about progress in action; the woman is perceived as an embodiment of passivity, she thinks with her heart, therefore she is easy to dominate and manipulate, she is associated with nature and is not allowed to act, but rather to guide the steps towards progress. (Cixous 1988: 286) Relevant in this respect would be William Hyde's remarks regarding the Queen's intention to take down the Catholic Church: "I mean strength of mind. [...] She is only a woman, even though a queen. Does she have the courage to go against them?" (Gregory 2004: 1956)

Robert Dudley is the man of action who treats Amy deplorably and manipulates Elizabeth in order to achieve his plans. Amy is the abandoned wife who keeps waiting passively for her husband to tell her what to do – she is the sacrificial pawn in the game of power that has to be moved on the chess board wherever the player wants. Elizabeth is the Queen, a woman who has to strip down all of her feminine traits in order to strive in a world of men, but who can easily fall prey to love, due to her tumultuous background and her delicate nature. So she has to negotiate her identity between the categories of the gender binary owing to her double role as a woman and a monarch.

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INFORMATII UTILE

La Bibliothèque Française Eugène Ionesco

Biblioteca Franceză din Galați este cea mai mare bibliotecă privată din România și a fost fondată inițial în Școala Generală 22, în 1990, la inițiativa doamnei profesoare Anca Mihăilescu. În prezent este condusă de către doamna Dorina Moisă și își are sediul pe strada Basarabiei, numărul 14.

Biblioteca oferă cititorilor săi numeroase cărți în limba franceză, din diferite domenii, iar de curând, rafturile au început să fie ocupate și de cărți în limba engleză. Cititorii pot împrumuta aceste cărți pentru acasă, sau se pot așeza la masă pentru a citi și studia într-o atmosferă caldă și calmă ce îmbie la lectură.

Biblioteca Franceză Eugène Ionesco este vizitată de numeroși elevi, studenți și profesori, atât din Galați, cât și din orașele vecine, și nu numai. Fiind la doi pași de Facultatea de Litere, este și locul ideal pentru studenții programelor de franceză de a-și procura cărțile necesare pentru cursuri, teme și studiu pentru acasă, fiind îndrumați de către doamna Moisă, mereu zâmbitoare și gata să ajute pe oricine pășește pragul acestui tărâm al cărților.



În incinta bibliotecii se organizează, de asemenea, activități culturale precum expoziții de artă, expoziții de bijuterii hand-made, vizionare de film, activități extracuriculare pentru elevi și multe altele.

Așadar, nu mai stați pe gânduri când aveți nevoie de cărți în limba franceză – pășiți cu inima deschisă pragul Bibliotecii Franceze Eugène Ionesco, iar doamna Dorina Moisă, împreună cu voluntarele bibliotecii, vă vor ajuta în căutarea voastră!

TRADUCERI

Viața într-un autobuz...

Mihaela Cardaș

Văd viața prin intermediul unui autobuz. Nu am nevoie să hoinăresc prin ea; nu am nevoie să cunosc o lume întreagă, trebuie doar să urc într-un simplu autobuz, să am curaj. Privesc și parcă aş vrea să cobor! Nu cred că ar trebui să cobor, cred că ar trebui să rămân, capătul poate aduce lumină! Unde e nădejdea?

Autobuzul ducea oamenii spre nu știu unde, dar erau mulți. Unde ne îndreptăm? Cine suntem? De ce facem? Pentru ce? Care este ținta? Interior sau exterior? Material sau esențial? Bun sau rău? Efemer sau veșnic? Ce alegem?

Într-o parte a autobuzului: un om acoperit de fumul greu din mină. Un om ce-și face semnul crucii. O mamă ce-și leagă pruncul. O bătrână ce-și mângâie nepotul și-i transmite valorile prin suflet. Un copil ce citește ultimul capitol al cărții preferate. Un altul întinde mâna spre oameni. Cere milă, dar mai mult are nevoie de inimi. Un om bolnav zâmbește. Un om cu mâinile crăpate. O femeie cu părul alb ce se îndreaptă să-și vândă alimentele. Un tată care aleargă pentru hrană. Bătrâni ce așteaptă vești de la fii. O femeie toarce un gând. Un orfan...

În cealaltă parte a autobuzului: un tată își muștră copilul. O mamă uitată. Un elev ce-și strigă supărările, jignind. Un om grăbit ce aleargă după deșertăciuni. O familie separată. Un ateu. Un nepăsător. Un adolescent cu nasul în cutia virtuală. Un controlor amenință. Un bătrân împins de un copil.

Oameni cu inimi curate stau în picioare. Da, oamenii buni nu-și merită locul. Lipsesc oameni bogați din autobuz, cred că mi-am dat seama de ce.

Închid ochii și-mi spun: nu mai sunt inimi pentru alte inimi, totul e îmbrăcat frumos! Nu mai privim spre oameni, ci vorbim despre oameni! Judecăm, ascundem, mimăm! Ne pierdem credința, ne pierdem valorile, ne pierdem pe noi, nu mai privim Cerul, nu mai mulțumim pentru ce avem; avem o familie, avem prea multe. Să căutăm și să alegem ce e de folos din acest simplu autobuz!

Deschide ochii, vezi ce este în jurul tău, fă și tu curat, încă mai este timp. Nu-ți astupa urechile, ochii și inima!

În colțul autobuzului, până și un ceasornicar martor este rugat, aproape implorat, să întoarcă timpul, dar timpul nu ar mai apăsa dacă noi nu ne-am pierde cărarea...

TRADUCERI

La vie dans un bus...

Mihaela Cardaş

Je vois la vie à travers un bus. Je n'ai pas besoin d'aller par monts et par vaux ; je n'ai pas besoin de connaître le monde entier, je dois seulement monter dans un bus simple, d'avoir du courage. Et je m'imagine comment je voudrais descendre ! Je ne pense pas descendre, je pense que je devrais y rester, la fin de la route pourrait apporter la lumière ! Où est l'espoir ?

Le bus m'emmenait chez des gens que je ne connais pas, mais ils étaient en grand nombre. Où allons-nous ? Qui sommes-nous ? Pourquoi faisons-nous ? Pourquoi ? Quelle est la cible ? Intérieur ou extérieur ? Matériel ou essentiel ? Bon ou mauvais ? Éphémère ou éternel ? Quoi choisissons-nous ?

D'un côté de l'autobus : un homme couvert par une épaisse fumée de la mine. Un homme faisant le signe de la croix. Une mère balançant son enfant. Une vieille femme caressant son neveu ; elle lui transmet des valeurs à travers l'âme. Un enfant lisant le dernier chapitre du livre préféré. Un autre allonge sa main aux gens. Il demande la miséricorde, mais il a besoin de cœurs plutôt. Un homme malade sourit. Un homme avec les mains gercées. Une femme aux cheveux blancs s'achemine de vendre de la nourriture. Un père qui court pour la nourriture. Les vieux en attendant des nouvelles de ses fils. Une femme file une pensée. Un orphelin...

De l'autre côté du bus : un père réprouve son enfant. Une mère perdue. Un élève qui crie ses peines, en insultant. Un homme précipité qui court pour recueillir des fortunes. Une famille séparée. Un athée. Un indolent. Un adolescent au nez dans la boîte virtuelle. Un contrôleur menace. Un vieil homme pressé d'un enfant.

Les gens avec des cœurs purs restent debout. Oui, les bonnes personnes ne méritent pas leurs lieux. Les gens riches manquent le bus, je pense que j'ai bien compris pourquoi.

Je ferme les yeux et je me dis : il n'y a pas de cœurs pour d'autres cœurs, il est tout habillé d'une belle manière. Nous ne regardons plus les gens, mais nous parlons des gens ! On juge, on cache, on mime ! Nous perdons la foi, nous perdons nos valeurs, nous nous perdons en nous égarant, nous ne regardons plus le ciel, nous ne remercions pas pour tout ce que nous avons, nous avons une famille, nous avons toute une vie. Nous devons chercher et choisir ce qui est juste dans ce simple bus !

Ouvrez vos yeux, voyez ce qui est autour de vous et déblayez-vous, il y a encore du temps. Vous ne couvrez pas vos oreilles, vos yeux et vos cœurs !

Dans le coin de l'autobus, même un témoin de l'horloger est demandé, presque supplié de revenir de temps, mais le temps n'aurait pas pressé si nous n'avions pas perdu le chemin...

TRADUCERI

Mama, omul meu cu aripi!

Mihaela Cardaș

Cât de mare este puterea ta, mamă?

De la distanță, de aproape, cu mii de griji și greutatea pe capul tău, tot tu ești cea care are răbdare să asculte și supărările altora, tot tu reușești să dai inimii ceea ce așteaptă: speranță! Tu ai încredere în mine și, de ani buni, văd strădania ta de a mă învăța să am și eu încredere în mine. Eu cred că ai prea multă răbdare și ți-am spus de multe ori să renunți la această încercare continuă!

Mă gândesc tot timpul de unde au mamele atât de multă putere, cum reușesc atâtea într-o singură zi. Pe lângă asta, am grijă să-i pun aceeași întrebare mamei mele: "Cine este cel mai minunat om?" Fac asta pentru a-i reaminti la fiecare pas că e minunată! Mama, omul care dăruiește, dăruiește raze de soare și zâmbete largi, dăruiește bunătate! Mama, omul cu sufletul purtat în privire! Mama, armonie sufletească! Mama, omul care are încredere! Mama, omul care te învață să-L pui pe Dumnezeu în toate! Mama, omul care te învață să vorbești mai mult cu oamenii, nu despre oameni, să încerci să le sădești speranța-n suflet! Mama, omul care te învață să fii bun și să pui sufletul de copil în fiecare lucru dăruit! Mama, omul care te învață că bucuria nu se așteaptă! Mama, omul care te învață că lumea trebuie văzută doar cu inima! Mama, omul care te învață să luminezi mai mult! Mama, omul care te ghidează după nădejde și dragoste! Mama, omul care te învață că ești ceea ce vrei să pui în inima ta și ceea ce gândești! Mama, omul care te învață să înflorești zi de zi! Mama, omul care te învață să-ți iubești valorile și tradițiile, să iubești simplitatea! Mama, omul care te învață să te arăți oamenilor prin faptele tale! Mama, omul care te învață să izbutești și să contruiești un drum al tău, oricât de mari ar fi obstacolele! Mama, omul care te învață să stai lângă oamenii ce contează și mâine! Mama, omul care te învață să fii om senin și să faci loc în suflet doar binelui! Mama, omul care te învață să creezi momente! Mama, omul care te învață că frumusețea stă între Cer și Pământ! Mama, omul care te învață să îți îngrijești ferestrele sufletului și să-ți păstrezi personalitatea! Așa e mama!

Pentru fiecare copil, cuvântul mamă are o altă definiție. Pentru mine, cuvântul mamă, în simplitatea lui, i se atribuie persoanei fără de care astăzi nu aș fi avut cum să cunosc frumusețile vieții. Mama este cea care, prin înțelepciunea și dragostea ei, mi-a modelat caracterul, făcându-mă să devin un om capabil să gândească, să iubească, să distingă binele de rău și nu în ultimul rând să facă față încercărilor. Cu toate că anii au trecut, lăsând urme adânci pe chipul său, în inima mea, mama este aceeași dintotdeauna: singura persoană care suferă cu adevărat odată cu mine și din cauza mea, îmi dă sfaturi și mă pregătește pentru viață, cu toate că am crescut. În spatele cuvântului mamă, nu stau doar niște atribuții comune, nu stau obligațiile și nu stă doar o simplă denumire; mama ajută copilul în formarea statutului de om total și spre creionarea personalității; legătura dintre mamă și copil este cea mai autentică și cea mai strânsă, deoarece mama este ființa cea mai nobilă, care își sprijină copilul necondiționat.

TRADUCERI

Ma mère me donne des ailes !

Mihaela Cardaş

D'où vient ta puissance, ma chère mère ?

Même si tu es loin ou près de moi, avec des milliers de soucis à l'esprit, tu as l'immense patience de m'écouter et d'écouter les autres. C'est toi qui réussis à offrir au cœur ce qu'on attend toujours : l'espoir ! C'est toi qui me fais confiance et, pendant les années, tu fais tout pour que je gagne ma confiance. Je pense que tu as trop de patience et je te l'ai dit maintes fois !

Je ne sais pas d'où vient la puissance des mères, comment tirent-elles leur sève, d'où vient leur énergie ? En outre, je la demande chaque jour : « Comment es-tu devenue la personne parfaite ? » Et je fais cela pour lui rappeler qu'elle est vraiment parfaite, merveilleuse ! Ma mère, c'est toi qui offres... qui donne tout et qui reçoit peu ! C'est toi – mes sourires et ma bonté ! Ma mère, toi qui mets ton âme dans ton regard ! Ma mère, harmonie de l'esprit ! Ma mère, toute ma confiance ! Ma mère, qui m'enseigne de mettre la croyance en Dieu au-dessus de tout ! Ma mère, toi qui me dis toujours de parler plus avec les gens, pas des gens, et de leur donner de l'espoir ! Ma mère, celle qui m'enseigne d'être gentille et de mettre mon âme d'enfant dans toute chose qui m'entoure ! Ma mère, celle qui m'enseigne que l'on n'attend pas la joie ! Ma mère, qui m'enseigne qu'on ne devrait pas voir le monde avec les yeux, mais avec le cœur ! Ma mère, qui m'enseigne d'éclairer et de me guider par l'espoir et l'amour ! Ma mère, qui me dit que je suis ce que je veux être, en mettant dans mon cœur ce que je pense ! Ma mère, tu veux que je « fleurisse » chaque jour ! Ma mère, c'est de toi de que j'apprends à aimer les valeurs et les traditions grâce à leur simplicité ! Ma mère, c'est de toi que j'ai appris à aimer les gens et à leur montrer qui je suis, selon mes faits ! Ma mère, c'est de toi que j'ai appris à me frayer chemin et à détruire les grands obstacles que la vie dresse devant moi ! Ma mère, c'est de toi que j'ai appris à rester près des vrais amis sur lesquels je pourrais toujours compter ! Ma mère, c'est toi qui m'enseigne d'être moi-même et de garder la bonté dans mon âme ! Ma mère, c'est de toi que j'ai appris à créer ! Ma mère, j'ai trouvé la beauté entre la Terre et le Ciel ! C'est toi, ma mère !

Pour chaque enfant, le mot mère a une autre définition. Pour moi, le mot correspond à la personne sans laquelle je n'aurais pas pu connaître les beautés de la vie. Ma mère est celle qui, par sagesse et amour, a modelé mon caractère, me faisant devenir capable de penser, d'aimer, de distinguer le bien et le mal. Bien que les années soient passées, en laissant des traces profondes sur son visage et dans son âme, ma mère restera toujours la même : la seule personne qui souffre quand je souffre, qui me donne des conseils et qui me prépare pour la vie, bien que j'aie grandi.

Le mot mère n'est pas banal ; il cache le portrait de la personne la plus noble qui puisse jamais exister au monde.

CREATII LITERARE (In)Dependent

Doina Susanu

În cotlonul care fierbe de a omului umblare,
Zace firea omenească, nu e loc de ascultare.
Cu privirea poți înghite țeste ultra colorate
Ochii îmbâcsiți de negru , frunțile reliefate.

Înspre zori, când bate gongul pe potecile-adormitea
Suflă vîntul și-ntețește forfotele istovite.
Și apare-n scenă omul, concertîndu-și decăderea
Altă piesă, altă mască, îl aplaudă durerea.

Strigă! nimeni nu-l aude din confuzul circuit
Își crispează fața-n sute, mii de glasuri ne-auzit.
Ce oroare să fii singur și expus pe pedestal
Și să nu oferi nimic, nici măcar un rîs banal.
Unde-i dragostea și pacea , verdele din univers ?
Egocentricele trupuri în dureri se zbat ades.
Ce-au făcut cu creatura monștrii secolului nou?
Lutul, a-ntărit în miera propriului său egou.

În cotlonul care fierbe de a omului umblare,
Zace firea omenească , nu e loc de ascultare.
Toți ca unul în neștire jinduiesc după lumină,
Dar e mai atrăgătoare libertatea cea meschină.

CREATII LITERARE

Heart Issues

Mariana Alexe

This stubborn heart

This stubborn heart just doesn't listen.
I tell her to stop racing when she feels
you close,
To stop making me nervous when I'm
around you,
But all she does is to put more passion.

I tell her that I don't want
To look like a fool in your eyes again,
But she speeds up her beating rhythm
And makes me clumsy again.

I tell her that we shouldn't rush into
things,
But she runs ahead focused on you,
Just like an arrow set on fire
To hit its main aim.

I can't control this stubborn heart,
But just know that she loves you so,
I hope you love us too,
Because we're the sky, and you're our
moon.

The Wave

You've hit me just like a wave hits the
sand,
Forcefully, brutally, not thinking about
the end.
You've drowned me, filling me with your
taste,
Then left, abandoning me, just how the
water leaves the land.

Full of secrets, like the ocean, you
charmed me shamelessly,
Your uncontrollable waves scaring my
heart away repeatedly.
You left me no choice than to embrace
your salt,
The heartache that I'm feeling now, only
being my own fault.

The only beautiful thing that remains
behind this wave,
Is the refreshing feeling given by its end.
The feeling of being hurt, the taste of
salt and dirt
All being gone, to be filled again with
love

Study on a Bad Haircut

Or why we can never agree with our parents

Laura Cojocaru



Say hi to Rascal.

Rascal is part of the Philippe family and has been for 22 years, 23 in a few weeks. He's also part of a few social gatherings here and there and has a great sense of humour. And he's French.

Being born between the late 1970s and the mid 1990s, we could say that he is included in that generation for which we managed to very imaginatively craft an identification with the mere symbol of the letter Y: Generation Y. But let's just call them aspiring yuppies.

So Rascal's enjoying his life as a yuppie and he's very pleased to be Rascal. The only issue is this one thing:

Rascal's kind of unhappy.

To get to the bottom of why, we need to define what makes a person happy or unhappy in the first place. It comes down to a simple formula.

$$\text{Happiness} = \text{Reality} - \text{Expectations}$$

It's pretty straight forward - when the reality of someone's life is better than they had expected, they're happy. When reality turns out to be worse than expectations, they're unhappy.

To provide some context, let's start by bringing Rascal's haircut into discussion.



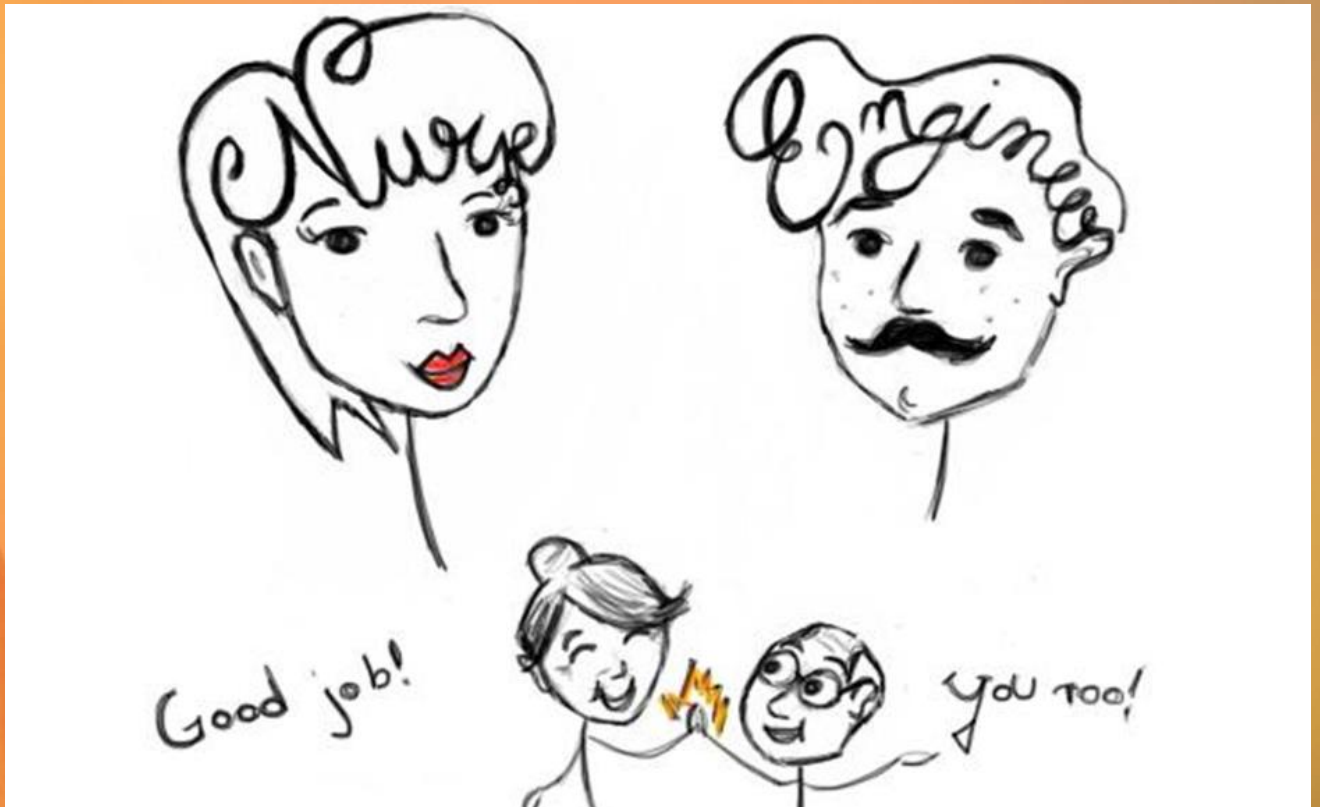
Rascal's hair has never been one of those hard-to-handle morning beasts. In fact, till the age of 16, when Rascal was still kinda new to being a human, his parents were the ones to take care of it and therefore maximize its potential to give their son a neat look.



The reality to expectations ratio was quite of 1:1. Our yuppie didn't really care about other matters than the average early teen would – mostly video games and who would win the next MMA tournament – and complied with no problem to what his parents thought best suited him.

On the other hand, Rascal's parents were born in the 50s – they were Baby Boomers. They have been raised by Generation Y's grandparents, who are members of the G.I. Generation, or "the Greatest Generation," who grew up during the Great Depression and fought in World War II, and were most definitely not yuppies.

Growing up in such tough times, Rascal's grandparents would have found fulfillment in economic security, which was not a granted reality and therefore most likely neither a common expectation. Consequently, wanting their successors to have a better future, they raised his parents to acquire practical, secure careers.



Which is exactly what Rascal's parents want for Rascal, too: a practical, secure haircut. And they made sure he was indeed going to have one by very early times. So they signed him up for med school.

Although Rascal had a little bit of a too curly hair once in a while, like every kid does; he got regular trims from both his teachers and parents, who were very trimmed themselves in the Baby Boom style. But Rascal was still an Y yuppie and not much of a Baby Boomer. Or at all a Baby Boomer.

And here's where the root of unhappiness starts growing: on his scalp.



We have therefore a reality imposed by the surrounding area of teachers and parents and some mixed up expectations, unsure to whom they actually belong.

Rascal does know what he is supposed to do but he's not yet sure if it is also what he actually *wants* to do.

And then he meets Luna.

Luna is also a yuppie, but with a much different haircut than Rascal or what he has seen so far. She is untamed curly.



"And what do you do?"

"Well, you know, I am French and I'm part of a few social gatherings that commonly agree I'm pretty funny."

"But what about your haircut?"

On the other hand, the haircut is not really something Rascal identifies with. The reality he sees in Luna becomes his expectations, but unfortunately, looking in the mirror, it is much different from reality. And his equation goes down to a minus.

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Now you are all maybe expecting his long-time-prepared haircut to be gradually replaced by the curly hair he once had, just because of a little inspiration from someone else. All drastically, all over night. And maybe also have the baby boomers from home go like boom boom all over it because of the newness it brings. And all thanks to a girl he met – not a cliché at all. But these are just inspirational hashtags on Instagram and really have nothing to do with reality.

Yes, we might at some point find ourselves stuck in places we didn't know we wouldn't want to be in, especially not after we had worked so hard to get there. And in most cases, it is even worse when our dreams come into contradiction with what our loved ones wish for us. And that's okay and not as bad as we might think. Happiness is a very personal trait and also very subjective, it is not dictated as much from within as it is adaptable to the circumstances. The happiness we desire for our children is usually the result of a reality we had that didn't afford expectations. Our formula, although generally applied, is much more complicated than it seems and it also brings in a lot of unknown Xs.

Baby Boomers had as granted the possibility of working hard in order to sustain the security of today, which for the Greatest Generation was a luxury. Therefore, they want to pass on a granted security to their successors in order for them to not live with the worry of tomorrow. And that's fair enough and pretty constructive for evolution, trying to raise your children to aim for a higher level than yourself.

If you're a yuppie reading this, please understand how much your parents invested, both emotionally and financially, for you to get that haircut that could easily fit you in the standards that could grant you security and not the recognition of a bad sheep. Thank them deeply for it and take your turn.



Make them happy and secure yourself. If you did already then good job, you fulfilled your hereditary quest. You're free to take it to the next level and start living less for immediate surroundings and more for the wonder and revealing. And advance it in such a way that those old fashioned paps' grandchildren will consider you the old fashioned pap. But begin with understanding that whether we like it or not we have been constructed as social beings and as part of a society, we have to make ourselves useful to it somehow. We contribute with our jobs. For society, we are our jobs. And the more we want to gain back, either respect, money or just good thoughts, the more we have to give and never limit ourselves to only few interests – because we too will become an interest for only a few, and this gets us back to the security issue.

If you're a Baby Boomer, and you observe curliness in your sweetheart's neat locks, don't panic, you did a great job but maybe from time to time it's okay to trust nature too. Comb those nasties regularly and nourish as much as you can but don't suppress them, because Jim Morrison's mother didn't either and we came to be pretty pleased she didn't.

And if you're a Grand Gen, all I have to say is thank you for making all of this possible.

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In time, Rascal understood that there is nothing wrong with curly hair either. And he embraced it, both for himself and those around him, too.



And Luna also decided to start a career as a travel blogger.

Because, although we do need a personal haircut with which each society will embrace us, some simply don't belong to only one, but to each society.

CREATIVITATE LITERARĂ

Les rêves de mon enfance

Corina Ioana Tivdă

Si je pense à mon enfance, il y a beaucoup de choses qui me viennent à l'esprit. Je ne sais pas comment cela se fait, mais le simple souvenir de mon enfance me fait penser à plusieurs événements marquants, mais pas du tout à un certain événement.

D'ailleurs, je considère ces événements marquants comme des souvenirs. Pourquoi? Peut-être parce qu'ils sont trop chers à mon cœur pour les nommer d'une autre manière. Choisir un souvenir de tous mes souvenirs, cela me met dans la situation paradoxale de partager les souvenirs de mon enfance entre les plus chers et les moins chers. Cela m'embarrasse et c'est pourquoi je veux en raconter plusieurs.

Quand je prononce le mot « enfance » l'image de mes grands-parents m'apparaît à l'esprit. Ils ont fait de mon enfance l'événement le plus marquant de ma vie, le plus doux souvenir de mon existence.

J'avais beaucoup de joujoux, mais j'adorais quand mon grand-père marchait « à quatre pattes » pour que je puisse faire un tour sur le dada. Cela se passait notamment le soir, parce qu'il travaillait toute la journée. Mais il ne laissait pas du tout passer un jour sans qu'il me fasse le jeu. Même le jour, il trouvait une occasion de me rendre heureuse. Il me posait dans la brouette couverte avec des feuilles de bardane et me promenait. J'aimais ça.

Quand je n'étais pas avec mon grand-père, j'étais avec ma grand-mère. Elle était d'un calme extraordinaire et d'une bonté qui m'attachait à elle de plus en plus. Ainsi, j'avais un grand plaisir de passer le temps ensemble. Nous cueillions les piments du jardin, les piquions avec l'aiguille et puis les mettions dans les pots. Elle avait beaucoup de petits sacs avec des plantes sèches pour du thé. Chaque année j'allais cueillir de la camomille. Ma grand-mère était une bonne cuisinière (elle faisait les meilleurs beignets soufflés), en même temps qu'une bonne narratrice. Elle me disait, avant de me coucher, des

contes dont les fins étaient souvent les mêmes : « Je suis montée sur une fraise et je t'ai dit un gros mensonge » ou « je suis montée sur une selle et je t'ai dit mon histoire » ou même « je suis montée sur une roue et je t'ai dit toute l'histoire ».

J'aimais ses contes et je ne voulais pas que ma grand-mère disparaisse un jour. J'allais partout avec elle et quand je ne pouvais pas, parce qu'elle commençait à fréquenter l'hôpital, elle m'apportait toujours des bananes. J'aimais partager avec mes grands-parents mes biscuits, mes bonbons et notamment mes vitamines en forme d'animaux. J'adorais leur chanter des chansons et leur dire des poésies.

La disparition de mes grands-parents a marqué mon enfance. D'abord la mort de mon grand-père, ensuite celle de ma grand-mère. Mais je me souviens en détail le moment d'avant, lorsqu'elle m'a donné des conseils en ce qui concerne ma conduite, mes devoirs d'enfant envers mes parents et envers la société, les gens, envers toute ma famille.

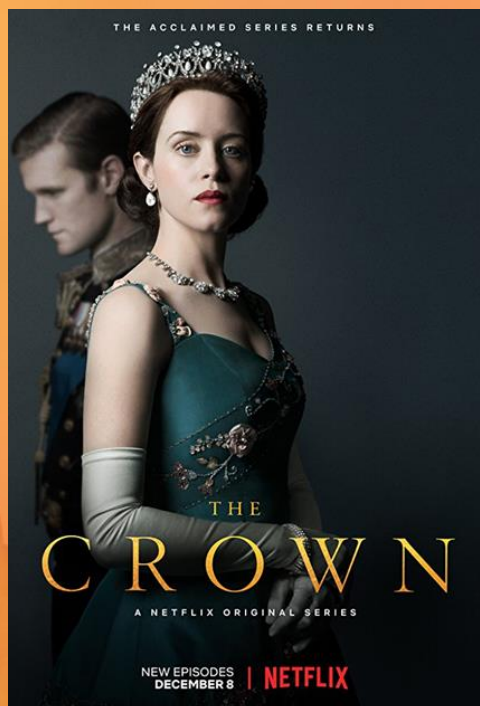
À présent j'ai me réjouis des grands-parents maternels. Ils font partie aussi de mon enfance, mais ceux paternels ont été mon enfance. Ils représentent les rêves de mon enfance ; leur existence dans ma vie restera unique et je ne pourrai jamais les oublier.



RECENZII

The Crown (Serial TV 2016-)

Andreea Elena Eftimie



Număr de sezoane: 2

Companie: Netflix

Durata unui episod: aprox. 60 de minute

Gen: Dramă, istoric

Creator: Peter Morgan

Notă IMDb: 8,7

Distribuție:

- Claire Foy (Regina Elisabeta a II-a);
- Matt Smith (Philip, Ducele de Edinburgh);
- Victoria Hamilton (Regina Mamă Elisabeta);
- Vanessa Kirby (Prințesa Margareta);
- John Lithgow (Winston Churchill).

The Crown este un serial biografic marca Netflix care își propune să surprindă momentele din viața Reginei Elisabeta, de la încoronare până în prezent.

Ziua nunții acesteia cu Ducele de Edinburgh este un factor important al primului sezon, pe parcursul acestuia urmând să fie oferite mai multe detalii cu privire la situația amoroasă dintre cei doi, conflictele, dar și atribuțiile acestora ca părinți.

În decursul primelor 10 episoade acțiunea va fi concentrată asupra urcării pe tron a reginei, perioada cumplită din 5 și 9 decembrie 1952 când Londra a fost supusă unei încercări care a ucis peste 4.000 de persoane, dar și alte momente importante, toate evenimentele primului sezon vizând doar prima perioadă a vieții Elisabetei.

Totodată, acțiunea va oferi detalii și asupra Prințesei Margareta și a relației acesteia cu un bărbat, dar și influențele aduse de Winston Churchill asupra acelei perioade și asupra reginei.

Cu siguranță, un serial care scoate la iveală detalii despre Elisabeta trebuie să ajungă și la urechile celor de la Casa de Windsor.

Astfel, aflăm prin intermediul mass-mediei că la insistențele fiului său și al soției acestuia, regina a vizionat primul sezon. O sursă regală a mai spus că „Din fericire, acesteia i-a plăcut producția, deși au existat câteva aspecte ale evenimentelor pe care le-a considerat prea puternic dramatizate.” Cu toate că primul sezon a primit o notă pozitivă din partea reginei, se pare că aceasta ar vrea să ia o pauză în ceea ce privește al doilea sezon, probabil pentru că acesta plănuiește să detalieze presupusul amantlac al prințului Philip.

Tot despre al doilea sezon ar trebui să știm că se va referi cu siguranță la criza din Suez din 1956, retragerea primului ministru al Reginei, Harold Macmillan din 1963, dar și scandalul politic al afacerilor Profumo. Un al treilea sezon va include aventura de cinci ani a prințesei Margareta cu baronetul și expertul în grădinărit, Roddy Llewellyn.

Recomand acest serial pentru că reușește să creeze foarte ușor o obsesie neașteptată. Termenul de binge-watching mi s-a potrivit de minune în perioada în care l-am vizionat.

Am apreciat enorm și distribuția. Atitudinea lui Matt Smith a reușit să îmi ofere de multe ori nelămuriri asupra acțiunilor acestuia întruchipându-l pe Philip. Pot spune că m-am îndrăgostit de Claire Foy pentru că a oferit o imagine a Elisabetei extrem de gingașă, iar în ceea ce o privește pe Vanessa Kirby în rolul Prințesei Margareta, clar mi-a dezvoltat un sentiment puternic de compătimire. E un serial pe care l-am recomandat în nenumărate rânduri și colegilor de facultate, dar și celor care fac din vizionatul serialelor o pasiune adevărată.



RECENZII

Lebăda neagră, impactul foarte puțin probabilului

Dan Bălănescu

Autor: Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Ediția a II-a adăugită și revizuită

Traducere din limba engleză de Viorel Zaicu

Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2010

Născut în 1960 în Liban și naturalizat în Statele Unite ale Americii, Nassim Nicholas Taleb se impune definitiv cu această a doua sa carte de eseistică, publicată în 2007 la prestigioasa editură Random House și considerată de The Sunday Times drept una din cele mai importante cărți publicate de la al doilea război mondial înapoi, determinându-i pe cei de la revista Forbes să îl includă în 2009 printre cele mai influente personalități din domeniul managementului, iar pe cei de la Bloomberg Markets să îl considere în 2011 în rândul celor 50 de gânditori care au influențat prin ideile lor, lumea finanțelor, la nivel global.

Cititorul român poate anticipa o întâlnire familiar-culturală cu acest scriitor care adaugă în lista sa de mulțumiri cel puțin doi conaționali de-ai noștri cu care a interacționat în faza de concepere și revizuire a cărții. Referințele pe care le face confirmă spațiul cultural din care aparținem ca unul ce ne incumbă într-un orizont care, iată, atinge tărmlurile Levantului, fără riscul de a ne face să ne simțim “umbilicus mundi” ci cu recompensa de a ne vedea ca parte a poporului global.

Titlul cărții, “Lebăda neagră”, s-a impus ca un concept care transcede interesul strict asupra acestui volum și devine sintagmă utilizabilă nu doar în hermeneutică ci și în vorbirea colocvială, ambele contexte folosind-o în egală măsură ca idee consacrată descrierii evenimentului imprevizibil care trebuie și poate fi folosit când încercăm să identificăm semnele viitorului în arătările prezentului și amintirile trecutului.

Prima din cele patru părți în care este împărțit volumul, se numește “Antibiblioteca lui Umberto Eco sau cum căutăm validitatea”, definește

întrucâtva stilul lui Taleb ca unul baroc, entuziast cultural, cu evidente accente de erudiție care fac trimitere la mult mai celebrul scriitor al cărui nume apare în titlul acestei prime părți.

Efflorescența stilistică de care amintesc nu este una a subiectului ci una a formei. Forma la care apelează Taleb este una care vrăjește cititorul într-o permanentă pendulare între conceptual și real. Scriitorul face enunțuri care, cu tot respectul, pot deveni oricând sursă de citate postate pe Facebook (“fenicienii nu au lăsat o literatură cu toate că au inventat alfabetul” – pg.134), pe care apoi le susține cu incursiuni în memoriile personale, amintiri pline de farmec care nu sunt suficiente pentru a sta ca demonstrații legitime dar care cuceresc retoric.

Tot la nivelul stilului, evidentă este compunerea unor titluri atrăgătoare, deschizând capitole scurte, impunând un ritm aproape obositor de alert, cam cum trebuie să fi perceput cinefilii cadența acțiunii din *Natural born killers* a lui Oliver Stone. Cartea curge ca o culegere de reclame, de “copy-uri” cum spun cei din industria publicității, de head-line-uri puternice însoțite de ilustrații complementare: “Antibiblioteca lui Umberto Eco”, „Ucenicia unui sceptic empiric”, „Învățarea învățării”, „Paradisul evaporat”, etc.

Terminologia inventată este la fel de cuceritoare ca și titlurile capitolelor: “Lebăda Neagră”, „Mediocristan”, „Extremistan” etc., dar care, pe cât de creativă, pe atât de obositoare mnemotehnic se poate dovedi, în ciuda apetitului inițial de a le reține, din cauza inflației acestora.

Deși numără 337 de pagini fără eseul post-scriptum, cartea lui Taleb nu este o harațiune ci o culegere de aforisme. Ele se compun totuși, creând un tot unitar sub imperiul intenției de a epuiza subiectul neașteptatului, a puțin probabilului, a ceea ce suntem “programați” să nu luăm în calcul. Toată panopia de sinonime ale aceleiași realități sunt necesare pentru că relevă tot atâtea contexte concrete sau culturale în care se manifestă asimetria informațională.

Într-o lume antrenată să aprecieze, statistic vorbind, cantități, Nassim Taleb ne invită să reconsiderăm realitatea din perspectiva bayesiană a calităților, a efectului și nu a prezenței. El descoperă nu numai că cele mai mici ponderi pot avea (și au) efecte invers proporționale prezenței dar că suntem constant, programatic educați și instruiți să le ignorăm pur și simplu sau le asumăm ca inconcludente.

Erorile, abaterile, evenimentele neprevăzute, toată această menajerie de abominabilități ale realității sunt, împotriva discriminării la care sunt supuse, semne ale unui univers sălbatic, ascuns, care ne ia prin surprindere mereu tocmai din cauza orbirii rațiunii pe care o cultivăm.

Surpriza face de regulă orice cadou mai spectaculos. Copilul devine complice cu părintele, unul respectând interdicția de a nu cerceta identitatea lui Moș Crăciun, celălalt asumându-și rolul de a nu spulbera o iluzie despre care ambii știu adevărul. La celălalt capăt al conceptului de surpriză, avem partea nefastă a evenimentului neprevăzut: ghinionul.

Există un apetit al oamenilor pentru a fi surprinși. Emoția stârnită de o tură în Montagne-Russe, frica ce ne face să ne simțim mai vii ca nicodată, face parte din soluția pe care constient sau nu, oamenii o cultivă pentru a-și conserva iluzia că universul poate fi raționalizat. Că nu este așa, formează teza acestei cărți care se înscrie de altfel într-o galerie deloc nimicnică de nume care s-au impus în filosofie și care, deși notorii, sunt în egală măsură evitați tocmai pentru că tezele lor fac existența insuportabilă: Francis Bacon, David Hume, Karl Popper, John Searle.

La granița dintre pragmatismul lui Charles Peirce care afirmă că ceea ce funcționează care va să zică există și epistemologia lui Thomas Kuhn care susține evoluția neliniară prin revoluții, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, conchide că “ne putem apropia de adevăr prin exemple negative, nu prin verificare”, pentru că “știm ce afirmație este greșită dar nu ce afirmație este corectă” (pg.85).

Cartea lui Taleb este ilustrarea perfectă, sau mai precis, teoretizarea consistentă a ceea ce se numește “efectul Casandra”, adică acel tip de avertizare pe care, deși în cunoștință de cauză, nu își face niciodată efectul; este exact genul de carte care ne-ar schimba pentru totdeauna felul în care vedem lumea dacă nu am face eforturi uriașe să o uităm.

INTERVIEW

Joseph 'The Tourist' Amiri

Mădălina Carp & Ana-Maria Iftimie

As any other normal interview conducted between friends, of course we started with half an hour of sharing how our summer went and what have we been up to, you know final BA papers and all that fun stuff. Our former lecturer Joe Amiri was really impressed with our choice of subjects and also very curious as to how his former students were getting on with their lives. Talking with Joe is always an experience, a learning experience which is full of sarcasm and irony when the topic asks for it. In a single word: fun. Therefore, when a chance was given to us, we did not hesitate to have another discussion with our ex-professor and have it published in our faculty's magazine for all our colleagues to read. We will gladly omit the beginning part and get to the more serious, and better suited for the content of a students' magazine, part.

Can you please introduce yourself to our readers, because not everyone knows you personally?

I am Joe Amiri. I come from the United States of America, the state of Michigan. I was a teaching assistant in Galati and then in Brasov, Romania. Before that I was a Peace Corps volunteer twice in Ukraine, where I taught English, and Ecuador, South America. I was there for more than two years working with a non-profit organization. Currently I am a student at Tufts University, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy studying conflict resolution and political economy. My father is Persian-Iranian, so I like to think that I was raised with a very globalist view just by nature of having him as my father.

Tell us how you got to Romania.

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer I was debating going right to grad school. So I applied to come to school here and I applied to Fulbright, which is a lofty program for smart people. And then somehow I tricked them into giving me a go. I love being abroad and I feel like, in terms of politics, being abroad teaches you more about a country than reading any book. There is this famous diplomat who said that you can learn more in a cafe, a bar or a place of worship than you ever could out of a government office and I feel the same. I'm a firm believer in on the ground experience. And I love Eastern Europe. I studied Eastern European politics and I was very excited to live in Ukraine. So, for me, Romania was one step less extreme. I knew Romanian is a romance language so I thought I would have a better time picking up on it than struggling in Russian. Turns out I didn't learn any Romanian either, because most people speak English.

How did you choose Romania?

Fulbright is open in more than 150 countries in the world and in the application process you just have to say why you are specifically interested in that one country. And you can only apply for one country per year. I applied for Romania on the grounds that I had a professor who was Romanian at the University in Maryland. His home town is Brasov, actually. It turns out I ended up living down the street from where he grew up. I wanted to go to Eastern Europe again; I didn't want to stay in South America.

And how did you end up in Galati, Romania?

That's not part of the application process. If I had visited Romania and, let's say, come to Galati before, I could have included in my application a letter of support from the University. I had never been to Romania before, so they just looked across the map and they chose Galati because they said they had had Fulbright in Galati some 10 years ago and said they wanted to start going to Galati again. But a lot of that has to do with Dean Praisler because she had contact with the Fulbright Office, with US Embassy officials and told them to send Fulbright scholars this way.

And then you went to Brasov because of your connection with the Romanian professor?

Actually, Brasov came out of a long semi-relationship with that University. There was one girl who was a Fulbrighter there for a year and a half until February, and I was done in Galati in February.

What was your first impression of Galati

I understand that a lot of you do not like Galati so much and I highly disagree. I really love Galati and some of my favourite people are still there. In Brasov I was more occupied, because I could take one-day trips, but I didn't have people that I wanted to see who were always taking the time to see me.

What I liked about Galati – and this is selfish to say – but I was something new, because there aren't as many tourists going to Galati. Whereas in Brasov I would see an American virtually every day and I was like: "I don't like this". So, for me in Galati it was nice because I was different and this meant people made an extra effort to make me feel comfortable. And that includes Faculty, students. I think there were 8 Fulbrighters before me in Brasov so I had classes where one or two students would show up, because they were just used to an American vs. [the class in Galati where 21 people were enrolled] and we consistently had 14 at least, which – attendance-wise – I am pretty pleased with. And, again, it comes down to Faculty. For example Dean Praisler welcomed me with dinner and Prof. Ivan-Mohor insisted on having a good-bye lunch for me, which were things that didn't have to be done. When I came back for the festive course of the graduating students I saw you guys for lunch. But the point is there was a reason for me wanting to come back and spending five days instead of three: people made me feel very welcome in Galati. In Brasov it was more like a routine: this is the job, come on in, whereas in Galati people made a huge effort to show they were happy I was there.

As you said, there are not as many foreigners here so you being here was something new for us.

The weather in Galati kind of killed me. I thought it was very cold and then it got really hot. I did not understand that at all. I feel like there was only a month when I enjoyed being outside.

What do you plan on doing next, career-wise?

I'm giving more in Law and Diplomacy here at University. It's the oldest school in the US for Foreign Affairs. My professor in Conflict Resolution is a Palestinian who negotiated with Israel so it's incredible-the people you're around. I am also moving to Spain next year to do a Masters in business. I don't know in terms of my actual career what I'm necessarily going to do. I see myself living in South America again. I'm having a weird time adjusting to life in the US. They call it reverse culture shock. You go back to your actual country and it feels weird. And that's because I spent four, basically consecutive years in three different countries. There are so many things in Ecuador, Ukraine and Romania that I understand more than here.

That was my question, actually: how do you find America now after you've been abroad?

There are so many things that are still amazing: you can find anything you want in the US and it's such a diverse place, people are so different among themselves. But there are many things that I will not understand: like the current state of politics, I don't understand gun violence. These are things that to me are so ridiculous. I don't know if you saw about Charlottesville. And you had these people defending literally neo-Nazis. But the best was this reporting in El Pais, the Spanish newspaper, about a bunch of neo-Nazis in Norway and this Spanish guy became a symbol because he was doing his shopping and he gave his middle finger to them. And the point is: "How are we still having this conversation?" This is not about the right of free speech. You are saying something that is fundamentally disgusting.

So you did not find this kind of problems in the Eastern European countries?

I didn't see it in Ecuador, in Ukraine, I never saw that kind of hate in Romania, except towards the Roma people, but it wasn't that expressed. It is more a question of different mentalities. In the US these people were kneeling before football games and some people are saying it's disrespectful to the troops who lost their lives, but it's free speech. So you have Donald Trump who says "everyone has a right to free speech" regarding the neo-Nazis, and then he's calling the owners to cut everyone of these players in the NFL. It's civil disobedience, that's what the US was founded on: we disagree with things.

But again, I still love being home; it's very nice to be back. I live right outside of Boston and it doesn't feel like I'm in a big city. I'm 15 minutes from Boston and it's beautiful.

Could you tell us what you liked in certain countries and what you did not like?

I don't know if I told you about what I didn't like when I went to Sweden. I flew from Bucharest to Malmö to visit a friend. The city has a high concentration of Middle-Easterners, especially refugees. Sweden, per capita, takes as many refugees as Germany. But at the border they gave me all these problems because I'm Middle Eastern. They looked at my passport and they asked me how much money I had on me. You need to have 200 Franks/day or something like that and I thought that it may be 200\$, but it was 36 \$ US. He did not think that I had like 200 lei on me. And there were Roma people walking ahead of me who did not get a single question. So I was wandering: is it my beard, my hair, the fact that I have a Persian last name. I felt that was the most blatant case of racism at a border that I've ever seen in my life. I really didn't like Sweden for that fact. And again, they have their reasons, but they're shitty (sic) reasons.

Favourite countries... I love South America. I love Spain. But I think that's different, because I speak Spanish. But in terms of countries that took me in, that's Ukraine. It's one of my favourite places on earth, despite all the problems, because I can't speak any Ukrainian, or Russian and I still have felt at home there. When I went back in February I felt like I was going home in a way.

Do you plan on visiting Romania again in the near future?

Well, of course! I love Romania and the Romanian people. I don't know if this is across the board but there are a lot of sarcastic people and the humour is great. That's what I love the most. And by the way, I am invited to your festive course, right?

DE PRIN LUME... Jurnal de călătorie

Irina Iacob

Mi-au plăcut întotdeauna munții cu aerul lor majestuos care te fac să visezi la o lume mai pură, fără poluare și monștri de oțel. Verdele etern al falnicelor păduri de brazi te invită la plimbări lungi, pe vechi poteci adâncite de cărași în căutare de lemne pentru foc.

De aceea, m-am gândit să scriu în acest număr al revistei, despre una dintre aventurile mele de călătorie într-o tabără din Munții Apuseni.

Situată în comuna Șuncuiuș, în defileul Crișului-Repede, depresiunea Vad-Borod, tabăra de agrement a rămas la fel cum mi-o aduceam aminte. Din Sat și până sus, în tabără, trebuie să urci un drum relativ lung, printre pășuni, case și copaci. Țin minte momentele în care luam dumul la pas (autocarul nu poate urca chiar până sus în tabără), dar nu oboseam niciodată. Aerul curat, verdele pădurilor, liniștea uneori palpabilă erau o adevărată binecuvântare față de tumultul orașelor aglomerate.

Tabăra este frumos amplasată, parcă deasupra lumii; cantina la parter iar sus dormitoare. Căsuțele erau în mijlocul naturii, exact lângă clădirea principală.

Țin minte că în fiecare dimineață mă trezeam la 6. Primul lucru pe care îl făceam era să ies afară în aerul rece al dimineții și, având o priveliște a munților splendidă în fața ochilor, făceam câteva exerciții fizice.



Peștera Ungurului (vizitare cu ghid, contra cost), Peștera Moanei, Peștera Lesiana, Fântâna Tâlharilor, Dealul Crucii și Peștera Bătrânului sunt câteva din drumețiile pe care le poți face la pas. Să nu uitați însă să aveți bănuți la voi. Totul este contra cost în ziua de azi.

Una dintre vizitele care m-a impresionat într-un mod deosebit a fost excursia Șuncuiuș-Oradea-Peștera Urșilor. Peștera Urșilor este perla Munților Apuseni și n-am să uit niciodată priveliștea copleșitoare a mării intrări în peșteră - trebuia să treci râul pe un pod din plasă, apoi ești întâmpinat de fosile de animale (urși în prealabil), rămășițe străvechi ale unor vremuri demult apuse. În urma cercetărilor, se pare că fosilele aparțineau unei specii de urs de cavernă (*Ursus Spelaeus*). Ursul avea dimensiuni impresionante față de speciile de urși existente în România în momentul actual și chiar în lume.

Galeria superioară, lungă de 488 metri, este destinată turiștilor și cea inferioară, cu o lungime de 521 m, este pentru cercetări științifice. Apa a fost cea care a modelat calcarul care seamănă cu marmura din peșteră.

Formațiunile de stalactite și stalagmite au transformat interiorul peșterii într-o lume fantastică de obiecte și forme, cărora imaginația umană le-a dat un nume, ca de pildă „racheta” care e pe cale să o ia din loc, „ursul” care vrea să scape din peșteră, „oamenii fantomă” care păzesc caverna, „galeria lumânărilor” etc. Cel puțin acestea sunt numele care îmi veneau în minte în momentul în care mă uitam la ele. Oricum, mi-a plăcut foarte mult și încă mai păstrez o mică bucațică din stalagmitele pe care oamenii locului le vindeau ca suveniruri.

O destinație pe care am dorit mult să o vizitez este Peștera Scărișoara, dar pentru a ajunge la ea trebuie să ne abatem din drum și să mai facem câțiva kilometri în plus. Înfofoliți-vă bine pentru că există pericolul să răciți, chiar dacă este mijlocul lui iulie!

O altă excursie pentru care am avut nevoie de „haine speciale” a fost Șuncuiuș-Oradea-Băile Felix. Trebuie musai să faci o baie de soare - deci costumul de baie este necesar - și să vezi lacul cu nuferi și lotuși.

Totul a fost organizat foarte bine și am reușit să îmbinăm utilul cu plăcutul în cele două săptămâni de tabără. Am reușit să immortalizez peisajele fantastice ale frumuseții țării noastre și m-aș reîntoarce în fiecare an în Apuseni. Vă garantez că nu vă veți plictisi deloc - eu cel puțin nu am avut problema aceasta. Uiți că ai cont pe Facebook!



istudent