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A MAGAZINE WITH CULTURAL ATTITUDE



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The ALECARD magazine is open to any collaboration with students and undergraduates with a cultural attitude.
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"ÎNTÂLNIRILE ALE CART" OF FILIT TIMETABLE / 4-8 OCTOBER 2017

COLEGIUL
NAȚIONAL IAȘI

Wednesday, oct. 4, 14.00-16.00
Guests: DAN ALEXE, KATJA PETROWSKAJA

CASA BALȘ,
SALA CAUDELLA

Friday, oct. 6, 14.00-16.00
Guests: ADRIAAN VAN DIS, LISA STRØMME

Sunday, oct. 8, 11.00-13.00
Guests: DAN COMAN, GYÖRGY DRAGOMÁN

Thursday, oct. 5, 14.00-16.00

Guests: FRANCESC MIRALLES, IMMANUEL MIFSUD

Saturday, oct. 7, 12.00-14.00

Guests: NURUDDIN FARAH, VESNA GOLDSWORTHY

Musical shorts provided by students and teachers of the "Octav Băncilă" National College of Arts Iași.

4-8 OCTOBER / CASA DOSOFTEI / *Intimacy* by IONIȚĂ BENEĂ / *Ink* Graphics inspired by Angela Marinescu's poetry

The school year vs. the ALECARTian year

› Anastasia Fuiuagă

A student's school year revolves around two key moments: the 15th of September and the 15th of June. The first one brings a taste of melancholy, the student feels as if he indeed misses his classmates and maybe some of his teachers too, but not that much. However, the feeling begins to fade after the first week of waking up at 6:30 in the morning and completely disappears after the first tests. The student starts thinking about that second key moment as early as Easter holiday, just when the weather is great for taking walks in the evening and spending time with friends in pubs, but there's no time for such things as the student has to fix his grades, because he wants to have a great summer, go to festivals or even to the seaside. Still, these things need to be approved by his sponsors who have expectations from him and want to see that "their hard work was worth it".

The same goes for the alecartian year that is also divided into two specific moments: FILIT and the International Festival "Poetry is in Bistrița". Thus, that 15th of September gets delayed until sometime in October (last year this happened late in October, now it'll be earlier, anyway October = FILIT). As August slips into September, FILIT draws near and it would be great if it could just erase September from the calendar, if we could just skip this first month of autumn, because it does slow things down. FILIT= a great opportunity for reading, the alecartian is thus pleased, he reads the books of the authors that are announced with excitement, he underlines quotes and writes them down either in some special notebook for quotes or even on sheets of paper that he later sticks to the walls, in journals. Anxious, the alecartian becomes sick with having to study for school subjects instead of finishing a book, in the evening (at night, actually) he starts to count how many hours of sleep he's got left, he looks at the book, then at the clock, hesitates for a few seconds, then chooses the book anyway. After he finishes reading the book and comes to the unpleasant realization that he's got only 5 hours of sleep he just figures "I'll just drink a coffee and make it through" and falls asleep still thinking about the characters in the books he has read.

Last year, alecartians fell asleep thinking about Miranda from *Spre văi de jad și sălbăție* (Veronica D. Niculescu) and Pedro+Ines from *Cu inima smulsă din piept* (Radu Paraschivescu). The meeting with the two writers made up for the lost hours of sleep, and the alecartian didn't even remember them anymore as they were too excited about meeting such people. The alecartian became even more excited the next day when he met the people whose minds gave birth to Jon and Viebeke, Lazar Lindt and his women - Hanne Orstavik, and Marina Stepnova. The last day of the festival is marked by a bittersweet taste every single time, last year the alecartian listened to Angelo Mitchevici, on his way home he realized that he had to go back to the boring and tiring schedule of a student. Still, a bit of this sadness was taken away by the fact that he at least has his beloved books waiting for him at home, nicely piled on the desk.

The second crucial moment in the life of an alecartian is the International Festival "Poetry is in Bistrița" which fortunately marks the beginning of a summer holiday filled with reading, without the stress of having to take tests. Contemporary poetry, a place not too well known for the young alecartian, is explored, heard and felt now and when fully discovered it turns out to be a lot different than it was thought to be, something so strong and at the same time transcendent, something that simply gets into your bloodstream. "One by one, sometimes painfully, my beliefs have been debunked. I smiled and thought to myself this is *beautiful* and this *has to happen* to a sixteen year old. I was encouraged by youth that boiled, fell asleep, masked itself and fought in and from those people. I told myself that, just as mister Tărmure, who quoted the poet Ion Mircea said, poetry is difficult, but at the very same time it is also very young." (Ioana Tătărășanu)

What lies between the beginning and the end

Going back to our student from the beginning, between those two dates (15th of June and 15th of September)

there is a series of small moments that also divide into different periods. There is a life before semestrial papers (actually, that's more like surviving, not living) and the another one after, marked by that specific anxiety when you need one more grade in a certain subject. The stressed student tells his classmates to ask him questions, just to check if he remembers the lesson well enough to get a good mark. Then come the plans after finding out how you did in the semestrial papers, those plans depend on it (bad= "I'm going to study for everything starting from tomorrow." / good = well deserved relaxation day). Put together, these things are some sort of a routine.

We come across these moments in the year of the alecartian student as well, but unlike the other student, the alecartian finds comfort and refuge in the ALECART Meetings, each one of them being an opportunity to intensify the passion for reading and for a dialogue between the readers and the writers.

Short melancholic throwback: Bogdan Suceavă = "Noțiunea de *curbură*, specifică geometriei diferențiale, greu accesibilă unor copii de 15-18 ani, este adusă excelent de autorul conferinței în atenția auditoriului necalificat să înțeleagă abstracte noțiuni de geometrie diferențială, dar la vârsta la care o poveste bine spusă și atent documentată din perspectivă istorică sigur a născut multiple curiozități." (Marius Pașa); Doina Ruști= Written by Doina Ruși, *Măța Vinerii* is a book that makes you visualise Bucharest as it used to be in the past, in a period that seems to be surreal. This book makes you actually feel the city and its phanariot universe faded into the density of history, makes you picture the world and Romanian grounds just as they were back then and last but not least, makes you wish you had been part of this shard of magic" (Anastasia Fuiogă); Adrian Gorea & Dragoș Pătrașcu & Radu Carnariu= "Something that really impressed me was that Dragoș Pătrașcu was a teacher to the two guests, both in high school and in college. Thus, the debate began with a moment of remembering one of the most inspirational lessons Adrian Gorea and Radu Carnariu got from their teacher. While Adrian Gorea said that among the most important things he had learned was to see the world in pictures, Radu Carnariu restated the belief of his mentor that: It's better to be an excellent cobbler, than a mediocre artist." (Anastasia Fuiogă); Alex Condurache & Diana Iabrușu = "The presentations of advertising films and documentaries were meant to help us understand how the image becomes percussive, what manipulation is, what the difference between an artistic film and a commercial one is." (Cristina Plian). Cătălin Pavel = *a deep*

*connection between a writer and an archaeologist, knowing that alecartian's guest work in this branch. That means that the two have a lot more in common than anyone could've imagined: "both of them are searching into the trash." At first glance, a shocking, rational, pragmatismal and at the same time all-embracing answer; what followed generates feelings of wonder and admiration: "Both the writer and the archaeologist are happy when they find something, even if they don't know what it is." (Amalia Carciuc) To these meetings I add: the release of number 17 + the debate *Maths vs. Philology* (guests: Roxana Dumitrache, Ioana Costea, Septimiu Panaite, Marius Pașa) and the release of number 18 + the debate initiated by the book *Cel care cheamă câinii*, guest: writer Lucian Dan Teodorovici.*

The insides: the project & the team

The alecartian student is a part of the ALECART team and thus, a part of the whole project. ALECART is itself a system, because that is how things work, but what makes it different is the fact the alecartian student is there for a purpose, and thus he is not ignored. What he reads, what he thinks and what he writes matters, his potential matters and is valued as such. The magazine is but a part of the ALECART project and is a way of keeping track of everything that happens in it, it's some sort of a collective journal. It is a must to say that for the first time the editorial board of ALECART is formed by only one class, a philology one. However, what makes the magazine and the ALECART project a reference point is its collaborations with important people from the cultural space (see the College of Honour). Moreover, the editorial policy of school magazines (dacă se poate numi așa ceea ce se întâmplă acolo) to publish only the articles of students is to say the least, a wrong and unfruitful one. The alecartian students develop themselves and move forward mainly through the articles of important people from Romanian and foreign culture as they get the chance to understand an accredited point of view and to choose role models. No matter how much we appreciate one another, to further develop ourselves we need to permanently compare ourselves with those bigger and more successful than us.

Last but not least, we, the reborn ALECART team, are determined to explore more of what culture means, ranging from theatre plays to opera shows and from artistic films to musicians and albums that change and shape us and to concerts and festivals where we discover who we really are.





W R I T E R S O F F I L I T

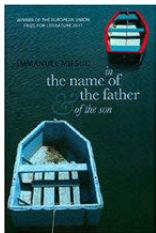
THE POST-WAR DREAM*:

In the name of the Father (and the Son)

by
IMMANUEL MIFSUD

◆
WHAT SHALL WE USE/ TO FILL THE EMPTY SPACES/ WHERE WE USED TO TALK?/ HOW SHALL I
FILL / THE FINAL PLACES? (PINK FLOYD – EMPTY SPACES)
◆

› Anastasia Fuioagă



Immanuel Mifsud's book, *In the name of the Father (and of the Son)*, represents a collage of images, feelings, thoughts and experiences of what being a son and later a father, respectively both at the same time, means. How does the son relate to the father, in which manner does the parent appear to the child and how does the perspective change the moment the son becomes a father are only a few of the aspects the reader discovers with emotion in Mifsud's text. For that matter, although the book has only approximately 100 pages, the author contrives not only to strike a chord of intense uneasiness to the reader, but also to compel him to look upon his own self with honesty.

Immanuel Mifsud constructs his writing in the form of a double journal, which merges in its extension with his father's war diary and his own distorted memories, as well as experiences with & about his father. In the incipit, the author reminds us that Roland Barthes, looking at photographs with his mother Henriette Barthes after she

passed away, realizes that if someone else saw them, they probably wouldn't communicate that person more than a simple moment captured in an even more random image. Furthermore, he confesses that *I am a bit worried that this photograph will not "say" too much*. However, while I was reading, I felt like at some point, behind the lines, on the white pages, images which were unreeling faster or slower depending on what they depicted were printed, while the words were floating concentrically somewhere upon, describing what I could already see. Father's and son's memories are agglutinated one to another, superposed above war frames and the illusions that it breeds in the imagination of the young soldier *Guzeppi Marija Mifsud of Valletta, son of Pawla and Salvu, proletarian and devoted socialist, although I have never read the red books (because they are on the black list of our Mother, the Roman-Catholic Apostolic Church and because I don't have a good head for complex, damned books, though I know how to read a little) [...]*.

*Name of the first song
of the album *The Final
Cut*, released by Pink
Floyd on the 21st of
March 1983.



Dragoș Pătrașcu

The father appears before the son as an imposing character, who overcame the burdens of life and who established certain standards, which are absolutely necessary to be reached by the son. He therefore represents a model, an ideal which the son is aware from early childhood that he will not attain. In these circumstances, fear towards the superior, strong, relentless father's character arises inside the child, while guilt and regret, which emerge from the so-called betrayal against his father, ensue in the later adult.

FROM KAFKA TO ANTI-KAFKA OR THE OVERCAME COMPLEX

In *Letter to my father* (to which Mifsud recurrently refers to), Kafka illustrates his parent as a towering man – physically and psychologically – who ever since early childhood induces the child an oppressive, timorous, "emasculating" fear. The angst towards the father (perceived as The Father) gradually gets to bear away the two from one another, evoking in the end, in each other's eyes, something similar with repulsion. As a matter of fact, the boy's fear develops in time in an inferiority complex initially towards the father, to grow later in one towards everyone. Relevant to this is the fragment in which Kafka confesses to his parent that if he had a map of the world in the size of a man and his father lied down on it, he feels like he could only reach for the bits of the map which remain uncovered, not having the right to pretend something from

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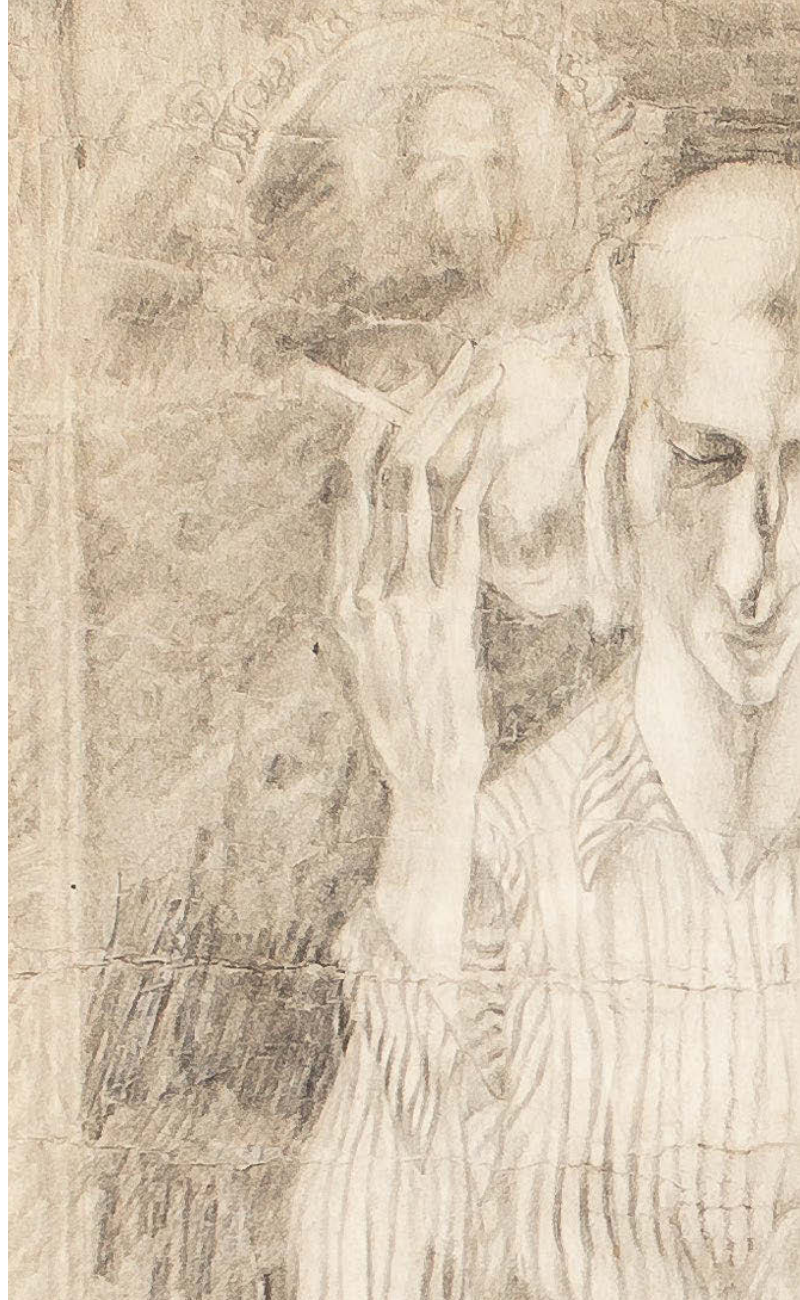
what already is covered by his father's body. Moreover, the writer brings as proof the fact that he could not marry, as he feels deprived of such an achievement precisely because it has (already) been assumed by the father.

In Mifsud's writing however, fear, although it underlines concrete differences between the father's image and the son's, is meant to bring them together eventually. The father occurs to the son and to the reader at the same time as a strong man, former soldier in the Second World War, who as a child had to work hard wherever he could to help his widow mother, wearing only *a shoe in turn so the pair would last longer*, who was constantly urging him not to cry on the assumption that *you can't grow up and be a man if you cry. How can a boy like you still cry? How can you still cry when you are strong enough to turn the house upside-down? You cannot cry, do you understand? You simply cannot*. As an adult, casting his mind back over his childhood, the son's fear turns into guilt and one of the moments in which this circumstance change is the memory of the scene in which the son catches his father crying at the grave of his mother and *I have announced everyone that I saw you crying*.

THE NEED OF THE FALL AND THE FEELING OF GUILT

Another pithy image of the father which leaves its mark in form of guilt is the one depicting a football game from childhood, when, out of amusement and oblivion, the son kicks the ball too far away from his father, who, being gimp (a disability from the time spent as a soldier in the war), has to run a long distance in order to catch it. The first feeling which breaks through is mercy awoken by the father's suffering, followed up by the guilt previously mentioned. The guilt that he is the one who caused the pain (physically and/or psychically), the guilt that he wasn't better, that he did not bring his father the happiness that he thinks he deserved, finally, the guilt that he could not fulfil his father's demands, that he disappointed him.

One of the sequences that impressed me in a particular way, although it is quite short, is the one in which the son goes with his father to watch the movie *The Wall*. Eric Fletcher Waters dies in the Anzio battle, little Pink walks down the trenches and finds the dead soldiers covered in blood and mud, lying down, thrown one over another. He even covers one better even though he is dead. *Does anybody here remember Vera Lynn?/ Remember how she said that/ We would meet again/ Some sunny day...* At the railway station little Pink doesn't find his dad, remaining alone on the platform, behind everyone else. In Mifsud's book, as an adult, the son realizes that his father did get off the train, that he had a father to spin him around as he





Dragoș Pătrașcu

was playing in the park. However, he finds himself in the inability to be grateful for that, as it is too late.

OVERTHROWING THE PERSPECTIVE OR WHAT WE OWE TO THE FATHER

When faced with the birth of his own son and implicitly the transition from being a son to being a father, the narrator understands that he was actually unconditionally loved by his parent, that the forbiddance of crying was in fact meant as a consolation, that when his father finds him crying in the cemetery and goes to *them* to tell them that *I am strong enough to lay all of them down, until the last one*

and pretends not to hear *their* laughters as he comes back to his son, he resorts to such a gesture also out of love and to make his kid feel better.

The final image of the father, the most heartbreaking one I could say, is an incisive, painful one, causing regret and helplessness at the same time. The dead father's skull, which looks at his son without eyes, the father, the ideal man that now has become only a pile of bones thrown in a coffin. An imminent loss and a hole which cannot be filled up, only deepened.



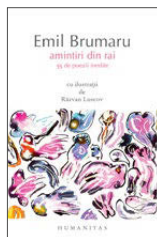
OF SHAMELESS EXUVIAE

Memories from Heaven

by
EMIL BRUMARU

PEOPLE GET TOGETHER AND SACRIFICE SOME OF THEIR OWN TO REPRESENT THEM, SPEAKING IN VERSES, WITH A "SOVEREIGN SHAMELESSNESS" (AS ION MUREȘAN WOULD SAY) ABOUT THE PRINCE IN EACH OF US WHO IS ASHAMED TO BE A PIG, ABOUT THE PIG IN EACH OF US THAT IS ASHAMED TO BE A PRINCE. WITH OR WITHOUT REFINEMENT, OUR POETS EXPOSE US. PARADOXICALLY, THE STORY OR NARRATIVE IS INHERENT TO THE POETIC ACT. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE EMPEROR TO FIGHT IT, THE WEDDING TO PROCEED, THE PIG TO GET OFF THE CARRIAGE, TO PLAY HIS PART ROLLING IN THE MUD AND ASKING THE PRINCESS TO KISS HIM. IT'S POETRY THAT GETS US ACQUAINTED WITH THE SUPERB GESTURE: "SHE TOOK HER HANDKERCHIEF, SHE WIPED HIS SNOOT AND SHE KISSED HIM." THAT IS ALL. THE REST IS JUST INTUITION. .

› Sabinne-Marie Țăranu



Emil Brumaru, a contemporary poet, one of the best, introduces some sort of poetry that does not refrain from any resource. The narrative is not insinuating, it is rather natural, finding its own place, not as a descriptive contrivance, but as an explanatory necessity come to dissect the states of mind. In *Memories from Heaven* (Humanitas, 2016), volume comprising 55 poems accompanied by illustrations, the poetic voice does not adjust reality, but it exposes it nonchalantly in its crude generative form. By reading the book, we can feel the solution coming page by page. Each conflict and each escape finds its completion. Far from being an overpowering demiurge or an authorial conscience, Emil Brumaru anticipates and renders the purpose of each inner event, due to a contemplative spontaneous lyricism, without claiming he had led the development of the feelings. In other words, modern poetry, which borrows the Kafkaesque air of a perpetual unknown, of surprise, is now giving back to us a part of the ancient sense of poetry. One that used to weigh each feeling, used to linger on each aspect, one that was easy to guess while the poet seemed to discover the happenings

together with his readers: "Cleuta, the two vets' wife/ Was thin in the waist, but large in the breast/ A true nymphomaniac type/ But an expert at cooking/ Cold penny buns sides." (*Cold Penny Buns Dish*). The language used is not cliché, on the contrary, it is permanently adjusted to the situation presented, the poet being an exceptional ventriloquist from this point of view. On the other hand, Emil Brumaru's style is recognizable and resides specifically in his magical skill of alternating the lexical registers, from popular and slang words, from the romance area, to religious terms, without forgetting those (irreverently) erotic. We should index this poet's language, so representative is it of our Romanian roots, so fundamental to our type of black humour, bordering vulgarity: "How romantic of you to pluck my hair like that/ Always white of the poet in me/ For the sake of love and dignity/ Till I bled through my nose / Till you drew all my force/ And my drawers were shakingly mad." (*You used to adore me*)

The freshness of the language is environmental, optimum for the reader. In some poems we encounter





Ionitã Benea

some of its more extravagant features, overflowing with feeling, totally nonconformist and purely spontaneous: "smoochlets on your white boobs,/ megasmooches on your hot thighs,/ supersmooches on your sweet wounds,/ cute little smooches,/ übertender smooches on your tender dreams..." (*Smooching all path long*). This special expressiveness conveying so many different meanings reveals the poet's disposition as well as the pressing and transferable necessity of writing anything, from sadness or joy to the most amorphous notions, such as information: "Ruins, Rosie, dog rose flowers, Rosin/ The goat's salt, the pig's seed, Soap, Scarcity." (*Rosie*).

OF COURSE, IN BRUMARU'S POEMS WE DO COME ACROSS THE TRAGIC TRIUMPHANT DIMENSION OF THE INNER EVENT. WHEN THIS IS THE CASE, THE POET REPLACES THE GIGGLING SARCASM WITH SOBRIETY AND CANDID RELIGIOUS RESPECT, CAUSED BY THE IMMINENCE WITH WHICH THE AMPLE HINDSIGHT VISION STRIKES A CERTAIN INCIDENCE OF THE SOUL, FACT THAT DOES NOT EXONERATE TIME FROM THE GUILT OF ITS CRUEL CHANGES.

The poetic tone is often ravishing, almost like a sentence: "Yet what will come of me?/ Eaten by worms will I be?/ I'd like for a flower to gnaw at me/ With its petals crunching / (...)/ And all of a sudden you see Jesus Christ/ As He comes from above/ To tell you in comfort/ What

you have never been told..." (***)). Resorting to the theme of childhood in the poems analyzed is not only a playful element of the lexis; it is also a reiteration of the young age in the conscience of the old man, approximating fatality: "One elephant was jumping on a web/ Its long trunk was dangling in the wind/ While we were happily clinging on it/ Thinking this is love, this is it (...)/ Three elephants were hanging from a sunbeam/ Ever since then the web has disappeared/ A fairy tale of youth is what remains behind/ Beautiful and weird..." (*Childhood Song*).

Prosody and versification are also aspects worth mentioning when it comes to Emil Brumaru's poems. In a world of free and blank verse, he delights us with, and whets our appetite for certain rhyme patterns, puns and word play that rely either on image or on style (eye rhyme, mind rhyme, half rhymes and internal rhymes, some of them even perfect rhymes): "Above us hosts of stars and leagues

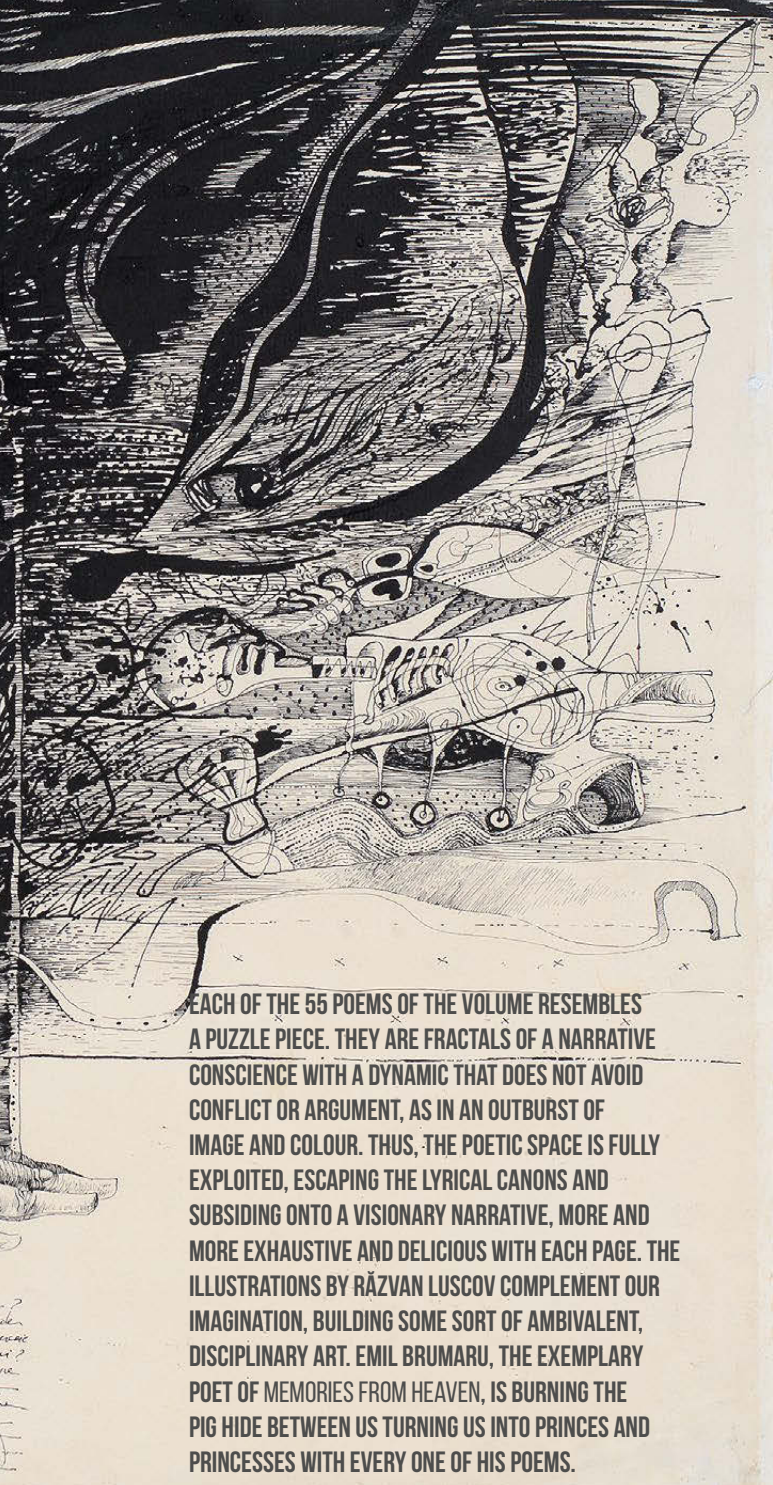
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Dragoș Pătrașcu, *Cuplu* from the cycle *Note despre linie*, ink, Canson paper, 1996, 100x70 cm,
foto: Mihai Panțir

of angels / Are drowning us in shining beams and folding changes" (*Love Song*). The erotic dimension is unarguably characteristic of Emil Brumaru's poems, ranging from so-called misogyny to the real essence of lyricism, avid in its descriptions, organic, even gastronomical, as befits a passionate poet: "To lay you down amongst steaks in ripples,/ To consume you with garlic sauce and pickles,/ For you to

endure my love's committal" (*Queen Mab*). It accompanies some sort of graceful romanticism, which reveals itself shyly, conquering its readers with every page: "I then thought that you should be mature, /And wobblingly beside me you should pace, / With both daring and shameless grace/ In maidenly beauty, demure." (*Queen Mab*). The tragic aspect of love is a vortex of the lyrical voice, monumental



in its angst and often times subsidiary to ironic eroticism:
 "I was a poet, you were a student,/ You were incredibly
 cocaine fluent,/ And I was drinking ten thousand vodkas/
 To honour your trouble as huge as an orca" (*Ode*). Once
 we discover it, it impresses us either through its sense of
 rebellion: "How to our love we lie/ And no one chastises
 us!/ Though we only have one life/ Just one heart to bleed

and gush" (*Sad Song*) or through its sense of
 doom: "Everything is burnt, clothes, bodies,
 look round/ All that surrounds us is ruin!/ Is
 love to blame? Is it us? Oh, this we will never
 find out..." (*Arrested Sun*).

Ars poetica is an indispensable theme for
 a poet that manifests such a chronic need of
 writing and it clearly surfaces in many of his
 poems: "A book is so beautiful/ That it crushes
 my soul/ (...)/ Be merciful, angels, give it to
 me/ In words I have praised you, immortal
 you'll be" (***). In several other poems the art
 of poetry completes the almost neurotic qual-
 ity of the creative act, becoming a semiotics of
 the detail: "My whole life I have tried to write
 on a mug/ Oh, not about one/ but ON one!!!/
 I was fascinated by the ones made of clay,
 scholarly painted/ and lively, roomy and true,/
 mediaeval citadels, with a dainty handle" (*The
 Mug*).

The organic visionary and chromatic sense
 of the exterior constitutes an enclosure of
 effervescence of the most beautiful lyrical
 outflow, of the most human retaliations in
 front of calamity in any of its forms: "Do you
 remember? in heaven there blue pumpkins
 grew,/ And silver grains had the ears/ While
 I was gently trying to lie to you dear/ That a
 blind sun was sipping the droplets of dew"
 (*Memories from Heaven*). With Brumaru,
 metaphors and similes are celestial, round, so
 pivotal that the reader's physiological senses
 become rudimentary: "Afterwards you were

clinging, swinging, falling free/ Dropping the corpuscular,
 undulatory ray/ To thinly melt into my cup of tea/ like
 sugar crystals I'd say" (*Queen Mab*).

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 student at UMF Iași.



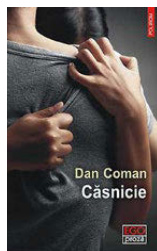
LOOKING THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

Marriage

by
DAN COMAN

◆
EXPLICIT WITHOUT VULGARITY, MARRIAGE PLACES ITS READERS IN REBECA'S UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION: TO STEP OUTSIDE A HORIZON OF UNNATURALLY ACQUIRED CUSTOMS.
 ◆

› Laura Ștreangă



I must admit that I usually avoid the writings that leave me engulfed by reality. Most of the time, the books that have lost the flavour of transcendence, that open no crack in the wall of our inability to be anything but prisoners within this world, make me instinctively reluctant. Dan Coman's novel denied me this cowardice when facing reality, blocking my retreat into the facile imagery of symbols and masks. While reading this book, I felt as if I was looking inside a dormitory through the keyhole. *Marriage* is a novel of physical and emotional nudity, of shamelessly embraced sexuality, of demystified matrimony. A novel that explores the desires, frustrations, lies and regrets which end up slowly eroding a marriage, a novel on strategically trained eroticism, on emotional instability, on desperate longing for harmony and happiness. The two protagonists, *he* and *her*, are systematically analysed, unfolding in front of the reader a whole labyrinth of memories and hopes, of hesitations and fears, of thoughts and sensations.

Initially, the two of them seem to us ordinary, true to an outdated paradigm: he – intellectual, attractive, active, proud, and virile; she – timid, mediocre, and passive, without the slightest trace of self-conceit and fatally in love with her husband. When reading the first pages, the woman in me was rioting; then, the alternation of perspectives enabled me to explore, in parallel, the two distinct psychologies, which end up being fundamentally similar. After all, each of them gets stuck before making a firm step towards the other, failing to find a common language so as to express their emotions and desires. Each of them condemns the other's distant attitude, the lack of understanding and gentleness, the refusal of sensuality. Rebeca is, however, the most complex character, whom the reader

approaches both through her husband's depictions and through her own diary. Dan Coman probes with fervent talent the feminine psychology, with its paradoxes and its internal conflicts between instincts and self-imposed taboos. To a large extent, *Marriage* is a novel about Rebeca's endeavour towards self-knowledge and self-empowering, especially in the light of her sexuality: "I'd never thought that I could do something like this. That I can reach such thoughts and such pleasures without feeling guilty. That I can rediscover myself surpassing what had been unconceivable boundaries, in those areas that had seemed, until now, absolutely forbidden, diabolical, abominable, and now they come to my mind and I cherish them, knowing, feeling with all my heart that they are not forbidden in any way. That they lead very, very close to absolute love, as I couldn't and wouldn't have conceived it beforehand." The woman, who has always been perceived within society by virtue of her passivity, in the shadow of her partner's virility, rediscovers now, much to her own surprise, the greatness of all her conscious and unconscious powers. The first wall for us to overcome, seems to suggest the author, lies within ourselves: it's the wall of our own complexes, norms and limitations. It's the wall of "common sense", of the convictions which we have always rejected deep down, of struggling to fit into the pattern of what is "right" and what is "wrong". In a faded and alienated existence, the only viable solution is accepting ourselves, embracing the obscurities that lie in our spiritual reservoirs.

Coman's novel is overloaded with the sense of reality: nothing is neither edulcorated and veiled, nor ostensibly grotesque. Explicit without vulgarity, *Marriage* places its readers in Rebeca's uncomfortable position: to step outside a horizon of unnaturally acquired customs. Seduction

is also demystified: the book does not depict a poetic game of passions, nor a romantic story of unconditional love, but a laborious process, consisting of his perpetual refusal and her seemingly humble and unjustified insistence.

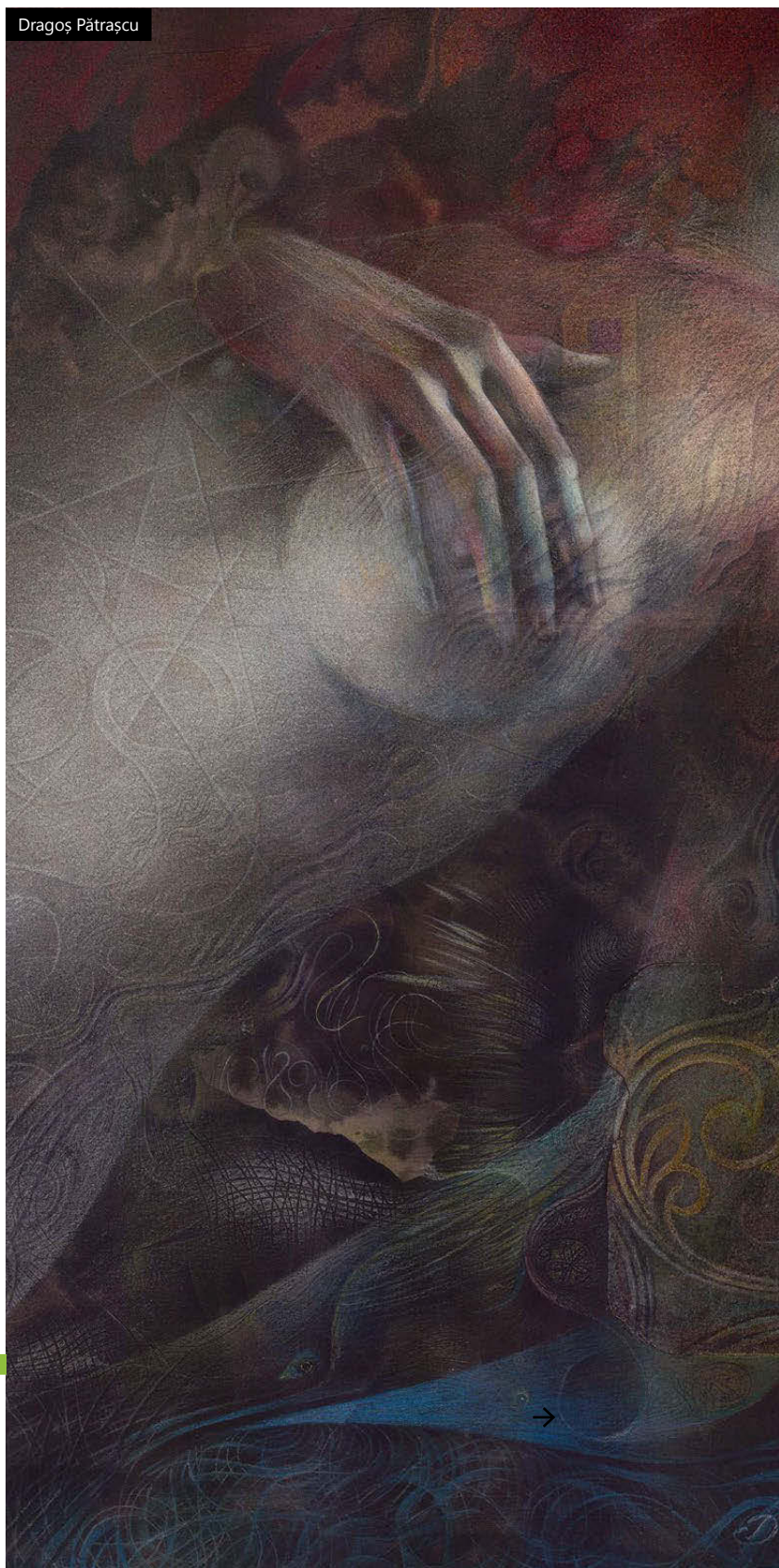
THE COUPLE SEEMS TO BE FORMED BY DINT OF RESIGNATION, OF A "HALF-LOVE", AND THE MARRIAGE RAPIDLY DISSOLVES INTO THE ROUTINE OF FAMILY LIFE AND "SHARED LONELINESS". HURT BY THIS GRADUAL ALIENATION, BOTH OF THEM TURN TO A COMMON FRIEND, NAMED DARIA, "THE HERALD", WHO LISTENS TO THEM AND STRIVES TO SAVE THEIR MARRIAGE.

True to the belief that one can learn how to love another, and that it is essentially "a matter of technique", Daria shows them how to rediscover each other physically and emotionally as well, and ends up being the third point of a love triangle. A cheerful and luminous personality, an attractive yet natural woman, Daria manages to save their relationship due to her patience and creativity. "Just like other couples, in order to resist, have found support in faith or in children or in journeys or in psychologists or therapies, we had Daria. Or, rather, as he puts it, she found us, knowing exactly what we needed, what she has to do, how far she should take us so as to actually rediscover each other. And it is perfectly true: only now can I understand who we are and how much happiness we can experience." However, the couple faces the real challenge only when Daria disappears from their life. As they now have to build bridges towards each other on their own, the two of them seem to return to the original setting, while their marriage is degenerating once again.

The novel has a typical postmodern structure, consisting of successive retrospections, cuts, intercalated viewpoints and anachronisms. The two main characters are thus embedded in a wide network of mirrors, which capture, in clear outlines, each side and each stage of their emotional drift. The writing style is alert, honest and fluid, with every scene exploding with vividness: the colours, the gestures, the sounds, the smells and the touches invade the readers, the concreteness that the words convey seduces them, and the energy of the pages absorbs them. *Marriage* is a novel which you read in a few hours, and then you feel as if you lived it. Uncomfortable, honest and straightforward, the novel challenges us to think about what we truly are, although we refuse to admit it.

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Dragoș Pătrașcu





SONG FOR THE DEAF

Skurtu, Romania

by
TARA SKURTU

TARA SKURTU'S VERSES EMANATE A STRONG FLAVOR OF "HOW NICE IT COULD HAVE BEEN", A MIXTURE OF CONTRADICTIONARY FEELINGS, IN HER MOST RECENTLY RELEASED VOLUME, **SKURTU, ROMANIA**. THE AUTHOR, AN AMERICAN POET AND TRANSLATOR, PRIDES HERSELF WITH HER ROMANIAN ROOTS, AS HER GREAT-GRANDPARENTS WERE ROMANIAN, AND ALSO ADMIRES THE POETRY OF THIS COUNTRY. THE FEMININE, SENSUAL VOICE DOES NOT ACCUSE OR WHINE PATHETICALLY, BUT CYNICALLY ANALYSES THE TOPIC OF SHARED HAPPINESS IN A COUPLE.

› Irina Popescu



The volume starts with *Șoricel*, a poem which conceals a "let it be" attitude, as it acknowledges the human incapacity to love a person for what he or she really is, not only for how the individual makes you feel. It is therefore easier to avoid holding onto a person than to get hurt ("The soul is a white mouse/ burrowed inside the mouth/ of a sleeping child until he yawns./ Easier to leave the soulless boy/ asleep than catch the mouse/ by its tail").

Read in Romanian, it seems like the verses are addressed to somebody and the metaphors, the symbols used are only unnecessarily preventing the message from being more rapidly identified, becoming a burden to the truth conveyed. The memories recalled hide ideas that seem to continuously rotate, because each recalling insists on an idea previously exposed. I believe that the verses were born poetry because of the artist's need to remind herself how the love story developed, what hurt the most, like in a process of psychological analysis where she had to explain herself certain feelings. Maybe this is why the volume starts with the conclusion reached by the artist after the struggle to depict confusing ideas in a clear way. The truth appears dressed in a thin veil so that nobody could tell that is entirely naked, that it is unacceptable.

On the other hand, in English the lines sound different. The movie-like scenes which dominate the poems

do not bother us anymore, as the verses become some flashes from the past. We do not notice the inutility of some details that do not add something fresh, but only repeat some ideas. The author fills the poetic decor with motifs or metaphors which create the impression of getting into an intimate conveying space. Thus, jasmine becomes a symbol for ardent love, lavender for marriage and the association of walls and foreign language for the female character's efforts to overlook her lover's aloofness. Unable to express her grief through direct speech, the poet completes the picture of her memories with meaningful details. The verses "In a park by the city wall you search out/ a green-gold leaf in the grass,/ unzip my breast pocket, insert/ the stem as it starts to rain" depict the simple, unpretentious beginning. At the end of the poem *Derivatives*, the same vegetal motif appears, one small element that we may have previously looked over ("the green-gold leaf is brown").

In Tara's verses we discover a unique type of love, a contemplative one, based on analyzing the behavior and the emotions of the other, aiming to determine how to always please him or her. However, what generates the frustration depicted in the lines is the cold answer of the young man which contrasts with the struggle of the feminine voice. This could be considered the most beautiful aspect of the character's love, in which desire accepts no selfish need.

The desire to spiritually understand her partner is forgotten, love loses its poignant authenticity and this issue strongly affects the female artist. Confusion ("I want to understand you/ I study your obscure language"-Pushkin), regret ("I was happier then"), frustration ("You said you wanted to change/ the title of my poem from *Desire* to *Need*"), all of them run counter to ventricles, atria, because his memory will continue to endure inside the woman's body; until she understands that it is a mistake to think that a man can shelter your soul and make you truly happy.

It can also be said that the volume is but a long, continuous poem, as every text contains references to another or at least a shared element. In *Eclipse* we are offered a new meaning of the word "bird" in the Skurtian dialect. It can be correlated with "sexual attraction" and with this translation we could try and interpret the lines in *Derivatives*: "a love bird merges himself between/ my breasts tonight, stays while I change/ the bedsheets, have a coffee, then/ another. Now he's asleep, his beak still, his quick pulse, quicker than mine [...] I'm not thinking/ of you. I've decided to leave the bird in my shirt". Thus, in each metaphor, a repetitive "Tara was here" can be sensed, as, after the verses are cognitively filtered by each individual, we are left with the impression that we have become acquainted with a person, that we may never meet.

TARA'S POETRY IS MUCH ALIKE A STORY TOLD IN A UNIQUE MANNER, WITH ASSUMED EMPATHY, KNOWING THAT AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE STANDS AN OLD FRIEND. OUR STARTING POINT IS THE FEELING THAT THE POET HAS UNDERSTOOD THE CYNICAL GAME OF AFFECTIVE AFFILIATION (BY KNOWING THAT IT ALWAYS AND SOLELY STEMS FROM EGOISM) AND ONLY LATER DO WE GET TO THE HEART OF THE ISSUE: THE LOVERS' INCAPACITY TO COMMUNICATE THEIR DESIRES AND NEEDS TO EACH OTHER.

Simple ideas, relatable feelings, no revolutionary aspect when it comes to love, but perhaps it is precisely this what makes readers feel close to these verses. The poem does not have a resentful conclusion, it is not a motivational speech or a monologue told by an irritable man but a remembrance of ardent times succeeded by a cynical, cold approach on developing feelings for somebody as topic. What still remains is one curiosity: if prose would have suited better the message.

Irina Popescu is an 11th grade student at the "Petru Rareș" National College and won the 2nd prize at the national stage of the Reading Olympiad.



SOLITUTDE IN FLAMES

House of Triffles

by
RITA CHIRIAN

◆

THE VOLUME *HOUSE OF TRIFFLES*, PUT ON STOCK BY THE MAX BLECHER EDITORIAL IN 2016, IS THE FOURTH POETRY VOLUME BY RITA CHIRIAN, AFTER *WITHDRAWAL* (2006), *POKER FACE* (2010) AND *ASPERGER* (2012). BEYOND THE SLIGHTLY "MINIMALIST" TITLE, THE 66 PAGES ARE SOMETHING ELSE: A PIPELINE FULL OF BLOOD AND MELANCHOLY, REMINDING US OF THE ROMANTIC RECIPE REIMAGINED IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE AUTHOR HERSELF ASSERTS THIS IN A POETIC MANNER, SUGGESTING A PERSONAL APOCALYPSE: "LETS IMAGINE THAT ALL OF THE STORIES, STOPPED AT THE RIGHT TIME, HAVE A HAPPY END, STOPPED ON TIME, THE HEART REMAINING A CLICKING WIRELINE, A SMALL MOTOR TYING PEOPLE ENGULFED IN FLAMES" (SOUTH).

◆

› Violeta Alina Țibuleac



On the way, we discover a crowded universe with discontinued temporal values even in the essence of the existential present: "i'm of a bad kind, the air is muddy around me, but you are an experienced diver" (*kitsch&porn*). Still, Rita's poem always has fluidity, the lyrical momentum removes obstacles, it is profound and dynamic. The lines flow once they are read, giving us the impression of merger between the poem and this line-moving force. The 47 titles not only promise, but also develop a miraculous affective acuity, intuiting and anticipating the feelings of the reader: the poems submerge you into the imaginary world and give you space to carry out. It is an imaginary that transcends into the real. Nothing beyond the limits. Love, happiness, blind rage, loneliness, fear, pain suffering. Everything that the being feels, everything that brings momentary fulfillment, that, a bit later, as "as in a messed up story in which we were called too late, to wash our hands" (*Sharing*), let us realise that Rita Chirian describes the present in a concrete, not-diluted manner "because of happiness we begin behaving the other way around" (*Generator*). The poetic self doesn't bother to get out of the humane sphere, out of the everyday in which it lives in, out of the air that "isn't enough anymore", between walls, where "something breaks&we phase through each other/ the sea moves, still close/with what does the flame of the lighter look like after you blow on it?/ (but every wall of a room can be the wall of another room)/ (what beautifully drowned, how close),/ How in the story the kids sleigh/ a whole season/ & a little bit more" (*Between walls*).

An individualisation on Rita Chirian's manner of writing, and over all else, a stylistic register, maybe on the intuitive way, open to interpretations, is drawn from the graphic of the cover of the book made by Ilinca Pop. On a more profound analysis, in greenish-grey shades, it looks like an image exercise between the desolation of the poet's voice and the effort made to search for humanity, getting organic power from the poems, filling in the hard images with life, surprising the revolt, somewhat balanced, of the identity: "if you are thirsty, pour yourself a glass of water and don't drink it/ ligh pianos on fire/ while, slowly, the execution is prepared" (*While, slowly*).

In *The House of Triffles*, Rita Chirean does not limit herself to moving forward a poetic track but wants to demonstrate (also to the reader) a consciousness of transformation, referring to the subjective and fixed experience in the present time, whose objective is constructing a credible imaginary world through the image, being based on a relative consciousness under the aspect of direct communication: "during the sunset, you will see that the street is just a stair that takes you to the correct world, there lies a very pale man, fulfilled and, from a distance, it looks like he is half the age that he actually is, maybe even you are, he is smoking and looking at the detoured streets with a sweet and big tiredness, [...] and you understand, slowly, without anguish, that reality coagulates itself and you cannot do anything against it, for the dead were also really happy" (*Phantom member*).

And so, the author guides the thematic content to a sinister real, whose obscurity tries to distort the beautiful, a literary way reloaded in the majority of the poems in the volume. But under different forms: "so beautiful that it is a torture to describe it" (*Crab*); "no matter how beautiful, are sums of prohibitions" (*The Imitation of the Carnivores*); "your beauty/ is this late event" (*Live the Lie*). This new type insinuates itself in the mind of the reader even from the motto of the volume, a life oscillating between good and beautiful: "Es ist so schön an deinem Blut" ("It is so good in your blood").

A superposition of images, a gliding of images and states which ensure a precarious self comfort, desperate in searching for the "animal warmth" of the subject: "and if now we would change our smell, the small animal from our head would not recognise the small animal from yours" (*Generator*). Beyond the deeds, with their brutality peeled from any trial of explication, a dynamic and coherent universe is created in the human self, in its common life, with its limits. A few black and white images inbedded on the retina, which get their colours from the definition of the existent equilibrium in the contact with the objects and with the alterity: "everything must be made in slow motion, because life is beautiful" (*Mise en place*).

From confidence ("I finished/the sythesis exercises,/ the mania episodes,/ the bizzare woman compulsions/ which organise/ the nest/without any flaw") until the effort of building, playing, an image of significations ("you will listen to the modular teams in your head, your eyes, transparent, will look like a dance through the empty tables"), like a modular Yin-Yang, capable of concrete exposure, like the wishes of the author, Rita Chirian manages to capture, paradoxaly, through the simplicity of the image, which leaves place for an acute truth: "the commoners of the house turn off all the lights. in the night, cleanness doesn't matter. these prohibited movies go on fast forward, with fire in the forest, with already made dances. tell me the story one more time, undress me at your will, the loneliness is a beautiful onion" (*People falling inside*).

Rita Chirian's poems do not show enormities, does not boast with excesses, but puts the reader in front of the made deal, a novel feminist-realist manner, which makes the lines remain stuck in your head even later, after they have been read, as in an echo of a self-made shout, but always more powerful: "tell me the story one more time, undress me at your will, the loneliness is a beautiful onion".

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AT THE END OF THE PAIN IS THE WORD (OR ITS ABSENCE):

Maybe Esther

by
KATJA PETROWSKAJA

I WATCH THIS PANORAMA WITH MY EYES TIGHTLY CLOSED, BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN. THE WAR IS HAPPENING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE BLACK CURTAIN OF MY EYELIDS. IT IS DYNAMIC AND EVERY EXPLOSION MAKES ME SHIVER BUT EVEN SO, I KEEP THE CURTAIN DOWN, NOT LETTING THE DESTRUCTIVE FIRE RAID INTO THE (NOT SO) CALM WORLD. I HAVE TO KEEP IT INSIDE. IS IT REALLY MY RESPONSIBILITY? EVEN THOUGH I FEEL I'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A MISSION I CAN'T COMPLETE, I BELIEVE AND THEREFORE, I ACCEPT IT.

› Tamara Bivol



I believe, but this time not in myself, not in my body's supposed power to imprison the evil inside for a lifetime. This evil, this war is the one I trust in, the same war that others have gone through and the same war we live when we simply close our eyes. I find myself in front (and above, and behind, and under) of a 360° picture, surrounded by pain and misery, both undoubtedly signs of the inhumanity of war. But not surprisingly at all, due to the way human is built, I can't live without them. I believe in them. Moreover, I will dig them until I find something, any virtue capable to bury the tears and the sadness among the death already buried.

Please don't get me wrong, I am not calling into question even for a second the cruelty of the war. I can't deny that this madness of some people against other people is a total loss, a defeat for both parts, especially when the background of this essay is a book that speaks and even screams these facts through all its words. I'm talking about *Maybe Esther* by Katja Petrowskaja. It is a book in which the state of war is omnipresent but, at that point, the war itself is not harmful, it gets to create. The war is just a circumstance in Katja's book. It is behind, but not in the middle. It acts more like a hypocenter than like an epicenter. It shakes the depths and people's lives with their values, needs and pleasures come to light along with dramas, pain and screams. This is how a story about a broken, saved or convicted, worthily lived life is created. This is how the destructive war gives birth.

The truth is that we owe 200 pages full of emotions to the war (and to author's talent, of course) in order to find someone's roots, to understand them and to build a new identity based on these roots. In *Maybe Esther*, this emotion is never-ending, furthermore, it is increasing with every page. Do we need any other evidence of the fact that there really is life after genocide?

WHAT MAKES THIS LIFE TO GROW ITS OWN NEW ROOTS IS THE HOPE AND WHAT KEEPS THEM ALIVE AND ALWAYS GROWING ARE THE MEMORIES (THEREFORE, THE WRITING).

Literature keeps us alive. The author herself owes her life to the fiction... or to a ficus tree: *Ficusul îmi pare că este personajul principal dacă nu al istoriei universale, cel puțin al istoriei familiei mele*. From an ordinary tree, the ficus changes into the element that gives birth to an entire neighborhood just because it is always there to *fill in the gaps from the street*. In one of the stories from the book, there is the core around which the entire memory is being weaved and without which any other detail would be lost in the huge cave of the mind. Here we have another proof that life can be maintained with literature and furthermore, *a drop of poetry makes the memory truthful*.

Beyond these nuances of meaning, from a general point of view I say that notwithstanding the seeming in-

dependence of each story, the book has a deep coherence reflected in the atmosphere, the feelings it carries and the thoughts you get as a reader. While your emotions are passing through ups and downs, the mind becomes a real tourist travelling frequently along with the narrator back and forth between past and present, between the inner self and the rest of the world and finally between the unknown narrator and her new identity she builds in accordance with the past she is discovering. *Visul exuberant al unei mari familii strânse în jurul unei mese lungi mă urmărește cu persistența unui ritual* – this is how every journey starts – with a dream that it is following us persistently. With the same obstinacy the author follows her dream. She carries it like an enormous boulder climbing mountains and defeating the waves of the sea like a tireless Sisif and then she asks herself: *Why don't we let the boulder to rest?* Because we can't live without pain.

A HUGE DREAM REQUIRES A HUGE PAIN

But this book is about sharing and accepting the pain in order to make it lighter. This happens not only in family, it has to become a way the entire world survives. After all, it's OUR story and our journey. Rivalries and enmity are not between people, but between ideas, principles and beliefs. That is why humanity must keep its unity. *There are no somebody else's victims*, especially when we all are united by suffering. The *I* from the book is me, is you, is everybody.

This *I* is defeating time and reveals some persons-personages whose life story deserves to be remembered. I have to mention here *my* father's uncle – Judas Stern, *my* grandpa who came back when no one was waiting anymore for him and *my* great grandmother whose name was maybe Esther. And yes, they are mine, because they live in my mind.

Judas Stern is this Jewish family's *meschugenner* and notwithstanding his supposed nugacity, he receives an entire chapter for his impressive story, a chapter which I get a very simple (but important!) message from: He just can't endure anymore to wear the *apron*. In a soviet society the equality (but not equity!) is primordial, individuality, freedom and independence are unknown terms for the poor worker, so everybody is wearing an apron. It is the symbol of humility, obedience and lack of personality. *Să fii un adevărat om sovietic înseamnă să te dezbari de*

orice sensibilitate. But Judas Stern is not such a man. He is showing disagreement, he is fighting against the system and... he dies.

The grandfather is another mysterious character. He comes home after almost 50 years after the war ended and brings the same thing that his absence gave: silence. Was it, the silence, really showing the spiritual height he had reached? Can it be the best thing to say when no word reaches the so deep meaning of life? Yes, the silence talks without saying. This is the climax. When words are extra, you can live, teach and love with a smile, just like he did, a smile that kept all the memories alive.

Last but not least, maybe Esther is a character full of paradoxes. The incertitude that followed her name is antagonizing with the confidence she had on her way to Babii Iar. So is her slow walk with her flashing death. And so are we – unidentified persons in front of the so easy-looking life. Maybe Esther... Maybe we will wake up tomorrow... Maybe we won't. But let's keep the optimistic vibe and let's see this probability not as a threat, but as freedom. It is very alike with what deaf-mutes were living in the stories from the book. When they were learning to speak, they were asking themselves not *will I ever speak?* But *Will I speak Russian or Yiddish?* The key to not drowning yourself into failure is to always have two positive options.

THERE AREN'T OTHERS. OTHERS ARE US. WE ARE EVERYTHING AND NOTHING.

I followed the same algorithm in writing this essay – two possibilities, two different ways of making it: should I talk about being Jewish during and after the war (things that sensitize, but about which it has been written more than it could ever be said, although there aren't enough words to describe the tragedy) or should I follow the paradigm of the book and stop dividing Jewish from other people. Remember, there aren't other people! Moreover, this book was not even for a second a field of lamentation, the house of some victims or a tragic documentary of the war. It is just a story, a story about finding identities and tasting bitter roots. It is just a train in which the whole world could travel.



A WALK DOWN THE MEMORY LANE

House of Sleep

by
JONATHAN COE

◆

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH COE WAS IN THE 9TH GRADE WHEN I CHOSE TO PRESENT HIS BOOK FOR A CLASS ASSIGNMENT, WHICH LATER TURNED OUT TO BE MY FIRST BOOK REVIEW. NOW, HAVING GRADUATED FROM THE FACULTY OF LETTERS, I INTENDED TO LOOK BACK ON SOME OF MY FAVOURITE BOOKS FROM HIGH-SCHOOL. I WAS CURIOUS WHAT I WOULD THINK OF THEM NOW.

◆

} Mădălina Tvardochlib



Unlike many other books I could remember most of the major events or the structure of the book and little to my surprise the character of doctor Gregory. The narration starts off timidly, but takes hold of you slowly and before you know it, you are tied up in it with no chance of escaping. Alas after the first hundred pages I was a tad unsure of why I had had such a crush on this novel. However, once you reach the point where the book actually reveals its main focus reading it becomes fascinating. The plot is divided into four main sections which follow the phases we go through while we sleep. Each section flows into the other as do the lives of the characters which we follow flow into each other. We see the phases they go through to find their inner peace as they struggle with the acceptance of sleep or lack thereof, meeting each other again or changing sexes.

This structure beaks the plot into pieces and shapes the two time sequences, allowing the reader to follow all main characters and to understand the events from their perspective.

As such the reader has access to the inner mechanics of the characters, being able to guess their angst and intentions. This is all part of the process of solving the big puzzle that the plot presents the reader with. The events

are selected so that they reflect the turning points in the lives of the characters while also singling out the interactions with others that made them change their course. At the foundation lies the impact that every interaction has on the characters. The art of the narrator lies in the way in which this idea of connection is pursuit throughout the novel - he gently guides the reader through the gigantic maze of relationships and shared memories that have a domino effect upon the lives rendered. It is only natural that the gentle guided attention of the reader becomes apparent only in light of the last part of the novel as all the clues are brought not without plot-twists together.

MEMORY AND THE WAY IN WHICH IT IS INTERNALIZED BY EACH OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE NOVEL AS THEY PRESCRIBE THE COURSE OF THEIR EXISTENTIAL PATH.

All the misunderstandings or the lack of communication play a fundamental role in the final state of the relationship between Sarah and Robert. This relationship is ultimately the backbone of the entire book. It is no coincidence that all characters are connected to each other and relate to the same space - the university - as the one that predetermined their futures. We are shown in contrast these two



Maximilian Lupu, *luminous paint mural*

layers of time that seem to be, simply put, in a cause-effect relationship. They all go back physically and emotionally to the same space. The *House of Sleep* seems hard to review now as it did back then for the same reason: you have to refrain from being too explicit in order not to ruin the guided experience that the book provides others. The frail cobweb that surrounds and links the characters is what makes Coe worthy of our attention and the comparison with other great contemporary authors.

I do not know what I could say about the three authors invited to this edition of FILIT but one thing is for sure: this novel and Coe's presence in Iași should not be missed. He

raised the stakes by capturing the importance of the accidental and the impact it has in our lives. One afternoon or a simple misunderstanding of what one meant can change - as it did for Robert - one's entire life track. These moments can be for one the most cherished childhood memories or simply forgotten. Undoubtedly, our decisions rely on our interaction with others and our recollection of it more than we would be comfortable admitting. This was my intense feeling after having read the novel. 15 year-old and 24 year-old me highly recommend *House of Sleep*...

Mădălina Tvardochlib,
ALECART collaborator, graduated from National College Iași in 2012 and this year she entered the masters degree programme for German studies of the "Al.I.Cuza" University of Iași.





HOW TO FALL IN LOVE WITH MEMORIES

The Bone Fire

by
GYÖRGY DRAGOMÁN

I WRITE ABOUT GYÖRGY DRAGOMÁN'S **THE BONE FIRE** AS IF I WOULD TELL YOU ABOUT ME AND MY GRANDMA AND I'D RECALL THE NOT TOO FAR TIME WHEN I WAS EMMA, ABRUPT AND FALTERING SEIZING THE FREEDOM OF GLOOMY AND DULL LIFE.

↳ Ioana Tătărușanu



Yet I realized, at the same time with grandma's granddaughter, that all this chaotic and *fast-slow* motion, which we pompously call *maturation*, only means the accuracy that each can define for himself the moment when loneliness doesn't generate misfortune.

Emma and her grandma are the polls of a common existence controlled by the circumstance of a solitude that brings them together. When the granddaughter decides to be open-hearted and undisguised with the harmless, unfortunate and magic woman who is her grandma and starts to be at least broadminded in front of this obscure human being, the young woman subconsciously understands the fact that loneliness is based on two fundamental and antinomic moments. The one that releases it and means scission, desertion, and the one that carries it out and ensures the repetition of it. *The Bone Fire* is, in fact, the story of a finding grounded on love, self-knowledge and freedom. In front of these, youth and old age open up, connect and merge with each other, similar to the grandma's hands' game on the draughtsman's board with flour, above which the young woman learns about memory.

Bunica zice să țin minte că de uitat e ușor să uiți. Până și cele mai importante lucruri pot fi uitate, și cele mai plăcute, și cele mai neplăcute, și cea mai mare suferință, și cea mai mare fericire, totul, totul.(.) Odată, pe când era

foarte tânără, a suferit cumplit, atât de cumplit, încât era să moară, și a uitat tot, toate întâmplările de până atunci, iar după aceea Bunicul a învățat-o să-și amintească din nou, și așa să știu eu, că i s-a întâmplat și a doua oară, în dimineața de după moartea Bunicului le-a uitat din nou pe toate.

Grandma's way of talking to her granddaughter abounds in sincerity, intimacy, it is a woman's silenced desire to transfer in Emma's personality, in her femininity, youth and beauty or, at least, in the memories which revealed the magic, the power to remain alone, in her dignity and verticality. Hence the presence of the Bone Fire, under the symbol of which is slowly grinding the suffering brought by memories. For the granddaughter, the unknown history of her family is sorrowful and cruelly revealed by what is said in school and by strangers, even though her grandma urges her not to believe the rumours and only to know that her grandpa was a kind man whom she loved a lot. Otherwise, both of them eyes stand ajar before an exterior reality extremely loud that does not overlap with the intimate and affective one. And if her grandfather was given to her grandmother, then Peter joins Emma. In front of him, young woman's desires, honesty, kindness gain the pallor of love, a love which is fed by shortcomings, the irony of an unjust life, traumas and fears, where truth is sought with the permanent thought of non-existence.



Nowak852

THIS IS WHY, PROBABLY, THE IMAGE OF PETER IS SHAPING UP TO BE ALMOST IDEAL, UNJUSTIFIED, OPPOSED TO THE DOMINANT IMAGE IN WHICH EMMA LIVES, WHERE THE ONLY REFUGEE IS THE MEMORY, HAPPINESS AND PAIN ALIKE.

Îmi rotesc brațul, artificiiile încep să scuipă scânteii, pârâind. În clipa în care le arunc în sus, sub noi încep să sune clopotele catedralei, bat de jumătate, artificiiile zboară în aer, le aruncă și Peter pe ale lui, îl aud strigând, Saturn, Saturn, Saturn, te iubesc, te iubesc, te iubesc, strig și eu, urmărind cu privirea traiectoriile luminoase ale scânteilor, albe și galbene și portocalii.

The explosion of fireworks seemed to me, through Emma's perspective, a reinterpretation of her existence, a resume of her feelings and states, multiplied and invalidated, reaching a climax of young woman's maturity when she accepts the *falling in love* reality that she is through. Now she can even share it, overcoming the stage of dream-like perception. In general, the atmosphere is dominated by disorder, mystery, uncertainty, there is always a shade of

a charm, a magic that goes through grandma's gestures, who accepts and lives modernity with the permanent reference to the traditions of the past, myths and personal rituals, which reconcile her or at least harmonize her with the presence. Emma is meant to live, understand and feel the world the same way, but youth and love tend to rebuild, to rearrange, to abolish the limits and to create new worlds. When nothing and nobody can bring certainties to Emma, the past becomes the Bone Fire's embers and the present is limited to grandmother's face. The young lady declares, kept in disgust and sadness, that truth doesn't exist.

Îi strâng mâna între palme, știu ce-ar trebui să fac, ar trebui să-i apăs inelarul în zăpadă, făcându-l să deseneze fulgere și flori, să deseneze soare, să deseneze lună, îi privesc fața, dincolo de ridurile ei văd chipul Mamei, chipul meu.

Grandma remains the monument of a harmonious, joyful and gentle beauty. In granddaughter's eyes her person is connected to the magical and almost unreal being of whose fingers were given birth to images, forms and faces, all of flour. For Emma, this is a testimony of life, a confirmation that her grandma lives and is still the same, the same woman who does not forget because she is peaceful and loved, the same who finds the courage to give a form to memories in the absence of words. And this woman's face is recognizable in the granddaughter, in the mother's face which is barely visible through the haze and it seems to reiterate indefinitely. Because flour always gives birth to beings and forms whose palate can burn as easily as it was born, because sometimes flour is like wind, like memory and like people.

But once the grandmother's eyes open again, something from Emma is eternally sealed. I would say the purity, if it is to think about the shades of truth that she reveals during her time with her. I would say innocence in view of a past reality that still spreads resentments to her. I could say my own pain if I think of the sufferings and choices the two grandparents did, but also of the tragedy that marked her childhood. Or I could just say a loop in time spinning magically like the flour shaped by grandmother's white hands.





THE RECOMPOSITION OF IDENTITY

The Walker

by
ADRIAAN VAN DIS

◆

WHEN YOU THINK YOUR LIFE IS FOLLOWING ITS NATURAL PATH, WANDERING WITH THE WIND, BODY SCATTERED IN ITS BREEZE AND MOMENTS WITHOUT IT WHEN SUMMER DAYS ARE HOT, SOMEBODY JUMPS IN YOUR ARMS TO WALK ON THE BOULEVARDS NEXT TO YOU. TO BEAT A PATH IN YOUR HEART, PARALLEL TO THE ONE ON YOUR BALD CROWN, AND SHOW YOU THAT "YOU" WHOM YOU CONSIDERED TO BE MEDIOCRE AND INDIFFERENT BECAUSE IT WAS BETTER THAN YOU COULD CONCEIVE YOURSELF...

◆

} Viviana Gheorghian



A thrilling and striking vision, an honest clean writing and an ability to detect the novelty of our days, for which you had no eyes until then, in the everyday simplicity. These are the factors that made me say that *The Walker* is a book which speaks through souls and about souls. It speaks not about dogs, not about people, but about a variety which is made up of relationships of interdependence. Man-dog, dog-man, never separated and never together.

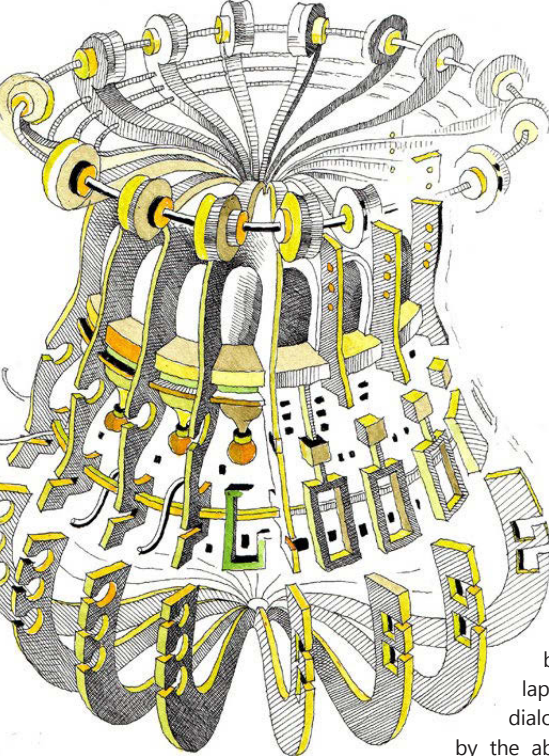
The dog dragged him to a world he had no idea about. He would have preferred to be spared of all these things, the corns that his fine hands were touching, the faces that scolded his righteousness, the stench of their clothes. Their bad dentures, muffins. They were touching him, their stories were burglary. But there was no way back. Not the dog, but he was in the leash.

In *The Walker* there are drawn destinies, characters, fragments of mutilated, desperate, distorted but dignified lives with a great delicacy, being painted the fresco of the society in which we live and which we often avoid to look at, considering it to be too tough for us, those who are following the routine of existence (which is sometimes dissatisfied but comfortable) almost unconsciously. Indifferent people or people who are subjugated by their own responsibilities, by their job, by doctrines, people who have everything and aspire to nothing or people who, having everything, live with the impression that nothing is enough, people who have no shelter and, losing any hope, have started looking for a way to survive by becoming de-

pendent on persons who could fill their extended hands, on a state whose language they are speaking barely, on laws that were made without knowing their needs or their dramas. Indifferent people to their own ignorance or people who are drowning in disquiet and anxiety, white and black people, with or without faith, people of the place or immigrants... And a dog has slipped among all of these people. If every person had a dog like this one (funny thing, but true!), the world would be less cold, with less desperate people, all of them being touched by the unimaginable power of the quadruped with almond-shaped eyes and soul (I don't want to call it "instinct") of an hero. So better... the right dog at the right time and at the right man!

In the Paris of XXIst century, Mulder wanders on the boulevards without any direction, without worrying about looking for a job or about daily living, without questions (this is only what he wanted to believe!), but with some certainties that will prove to be illusory. In this situation, his peace and his vision about life will be shattered under the impact of several meetings that are revolving around a fundamental one: the meeting with the Dog.

Mulder passes by the place of a fire that has almost destroyed a whole refugee building and an injured dog jumps in his arms like an old friend that he has found after a while. The indifferent man was chosen by the dog and not vice-versa, fact which removes irreversibly the barriers that could have been established between master and animal (or master and man). The roles between them reverse



Ilie Krasovschi

continuously until they begin to overlap. Based on a dialogue created

by the absence of the logos, the relationship that takes

shape is profound and lasting, silent without being mute, gentle and touching. In fact, first of all, Mulder needs a dog, someone he had not been in contact with and not from his environment and only then a human presence to find answers or to ask new questions.

Asked by the authorities what his name is, Mulder takes himself the pseudonym of "Nicolas Martin", guided by an unknown impulse. In his vision, Nicolas becomes his generous, kind-hearted and attached to the people in need ego, a kind of unknown, polite and mysterious benefactor, the other part of him without bourgeois hypocrisy, without apathy, without his blindness. In fact, Nicolas Martin was a name on a marble cracked plate, (...) *héros et martyr de la Résistance, assassiné le 16 décembre 1943*. In this way, Mulder has several meetings, "disguised" under the name of Nicolas Martin, that will undermine his opaque peace and existence: the meeting with père Bruno, a non-conformist Catholic priest, who will later become his friend, the meeting with the Indian Sri, with the beggar with the prosthesis, with Le chinois, with the boy in the ghetto and many others who are just now discovered by Mulder on the streets of Paris. Passengers, deportees, gangsters, stateless persons, refugees. Mulder, initially a prisoner of his own life and of the façade of Paris, manages to free himself partially from the veil that covered him, beginning to see the reality beside him through the dog's eyes. His deep character is not indifferent, but it is the result of a replication in a context that he embraced without being favourable to himself which is living alone (and perhaps a suite of previous experiences that brought him to Paris, but which are completely eluded in the novel - we only

learn of his Dutch origin). The first love and its dissolution represent for Mulder an open wound that contributes to the brutal delimitation that he does between the inner world and the outer world. His inner buzz consists in a lot of negations that are not born from too many questions, but from their absence. The protagonist has no questions, but evanescent certainties which are not assumed. In my opinion, he is in a continuous state of hibernation of his own identity: *He could spend hours stretching his nose between her shoulders and smell nothing. The purest nothing.*

Mulder's loneliness is manifested through his isolation and his detached walking on the boulevards, through the exaggerated attention to cleanliness (the outer one), which emphasizes introspection and inner confusion in antithesis with the permanent order around him. The dog represents a radical change in his life, because he gradually removes man's beliefs, putting questions instead of them and showing him a part of the world that he didn't want (and wasn't interested) to know.

IF THE DOG HAS EXPERIENCED DIFFERENT HYPOSTASES AND HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT SYMBOLS IN THIS UNIVERSE OF LITERATURE, ADRIAAN VAN DIS' DOG IS ONLY LE CHIEN. IT HAS NO NAME, IT IS NOT HUMANIZED, IT IS THE DOG AND ONLY THAT, A DOG WITH A "VAST EXPERIENCE OF LIFE" AND WHICH MANAGES TO CHANGE THE TRAJECTORY OF DESTINIES BY ITS NATURE.

I am sure that this dog has something special, because it is the character which remains next to you through all the novel with fidelity, the character you know the most stories about and that makes you realize that the connection between two souls is sometimes in itself more fascinating than the independent individuals. This dog teaches you to make good things, shortens your consciousness and makes you understand that love also means to know how to give up in favor of the other.

With *The Walker* you are traveling among cultures and people, among ideas and thoughts, you are traveling in a world you are passing through every day and which deserves to be discovered in its depth (and in its reality). It is your world, our world, of those like Mulder, it is the world which we live in and which we must discover, because it helps us create not only our future but also our social reality; it is the world of the dog, it is the world where you have to ask your questions, if you have the courage. It is only necessary to get out and walk on the street, preferably with open eyes. And if you have your eyes closed, it is possible that a dog may come and open them... But who knows if you have the chance of Mulder...

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SPAGHETTI WESTERN

Sergio Leone

by
VLAD DRĂGOI

◆

SERGIO LEONE, THE THIRD VOLUME WRITTEN BY VLAD DRĂGOI (PUBLISHED THIS YEAR BY CHARMIDES PRINTING HOUSE), OR HOW TO PUT IN THE SPOTLIGHT THE MOMENT WHEN FEAR STRAINS YOU IN A MUZZLE AND DRAGS YOU THROUGH ALL THE CITY'S FILTH LIKE ITS OWN BITCH: HE WAS JUST LIKE I AM, SOMEBODY WHO TRIES TO INTEGRATE ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT INSIDE IS SHATTERED BY FRIGHT AND INSECURITIES, AND WHEN I SAY INSIDE, I ASSUME IT'S CLEAR THAT NOT EVEN IN DREAMS, BESIDES ON EXTREMELY RARE OCCASIONS, CAN I FIND A PEACEFUL PLACE.

◆

} Diana Diaconescu



The 7 chapters the volume comprises represent a radical change of writing, the poems being more close to prose. Through this set of confessions, the poet cuts literature in half and brings it to its primary form, that of a story you tell to your friends when going out for a drink: what makes them remarkable is their vulnerability, the type of honesty that comes afterwards, the kind you display only when you are alone with yourself, in your room, in perfect loneliness, and think to yourself: *it's ok you can cry nobody will see you here*. In this manner, which brings originality to the poets' world where it is rather scarce, the main part is given to the autopsies of dull events and domestic routines, putting aside any attempt of masking things, and unflatteringly revealing bestiality, fear, frustration and *something rotten inside me, initially unknown but gradually familiar, of whose existence I was becoming aware as well*.

We notice how the poet leaves the impression that he is rather talking than writing. He speaks about poets, friends, dead grandparents, ex-girlfriends, the Maths teacher back in middle school, about himself and his fears; all this talking creates a human shell for him. He starts with simple happenings, without any rating potential, after which he grabs the scalpel and makes incisions all over that happening in order to bring to light the essence and fluid *that makes me be vlad drăgoi and not somebody else* and doesn't give up until the very last drop of blood has been analyzed. For example, in his first poem titled *in June I went to Arad to read written poems*, it is related to us how Andrei Dosa and Vlad Drăgoi almost miss the train going back home and the

stress this feat causes. What truly appeals, though, is the testimony behind the occurrence: *I, from this happening, which seems from the outside pathetic and laughable, even dull, I found out, more articulately in a way, something I already knew, distinctly that no matter how much I want to play the relaxed guy's role, adaptable to most social situations, who can't be bothered by the unimportant causal or spontaneous obstacles of life, I actually am a person prone to despicable blockages of the most inappropriate kind, who immediately gets nervous and causes drama when things don't go his way, and the ugliest is the way in which I react, many times it amplifies a hundredfold for those around me as well*. The writer does self-reflection exercises and renders the impression that, surprisingly, the more he writes, the more he finds out about who he truly is: *because I've been the person looking for conflict long enough (...) after a long, grown-up life in which only I chose to be the slave of teeth grinding and glares, everything that follows would be an incessant blank in the soul, which would make me feel like I am in a foreign country, not knowing the language, with no money, with no cellphone, and without having the guts to approach someone out of the blue to ask for help somehow, basically, through signs, humanly anyhow*.

In *how heavy the world's weight seems to me sometimes with all of it* the speech becomes flexible, Vlad Drăgoi managing to make the transition, with an easiness particular to his texts, from confessions about *how heavy the world's weight seems to me sometimes with all of its wickedness, and it hasn't always been this way* to mocking another poet for posting on Facebook that he has an *ordinary dick*

to later admit (honestly) that yes, *I have an ordinary dick too* and continue with one of the most beautiful comparisons that can be found in this volume: *I will talk about my life inside me, and not only mine, because it's like that time you drop the iron lid from the pan or pot on the kitchen tile, and the initial impact doesn't scare you as much as the following sounds that come from the spiral spinning of the lid on the hard surface fill you with despair, and it's not good at all in the beginning of the spinning, because the sound lasts more, but it's not good in the end either, because it stirs your brains up due to being close to the sounds, and it seems that no one inside the house, no matter how many you are, two, three, ten, as long as the infamous concert lasts, no matter how close to the lid any of you are, won't move to grasp it and stop it, seemingly because of an impossibility to understand paralysis, incurable.*

All his stories create that pleasant impression that he is here with us in the mud and tries somewhat to figure out how this world works too; he doesn't have the power to change the mud, he doesn't even try, he simply tells us: *hey I am here as well and I don't like myself either and I am afraid of what I'm doing too and sometimes of what I've become, but let's talk anyway and sometimes this thing is enough, it's all you need to go on: ignore what this guy says, you be calm, mind your own business and continue your rally, you gypsy, rally on in the corridors of the mall, 'cause you've seen how the days are too, mostly bad than good, and the joys, when you barely see them and are able to say they have come, they leave in that very moment, so make a rally as much as you can, gypsy, 'cause our lives aren't anything but old bones for the dog, forgotten in the pocket of a jacket.*

Another scene that paradoxically shocks through simplicity (and one of my favorites') is the one from *sergio leone, you like to swim, I like it more*, in which the anti-poet describes how he drinks Fanta or Santal: *and while I'm drinking (...) it's as I can get out of my body and I somehow sit at a small distance from myself, enough to see how I physically behave, and to understand myself better in those seconds of incredible detachment and peace, and I think the best clue that I like what's going on tremendously is that I have my eyes wide open and enlarged.* What makes this frame incredibly beautiful is the camouflage of the meaning, the things that actually give you the impression that you are complete and peaceful, in the stupid daily rituals which are apparently useless.

The vacillation between ugly and beautiful, between pessimism (*and I keep on thinking this way I make myself very sad in the end, for I know all these things really don't*

remain anywhere, and that the cruelty rules throughout eras.) and hope (I've ended up as well a nature (...) inclined towards the beautiful poetry in the end, I'm glad that I come home from work in the evening at a few minutes past 10, almost 11, and I can look at a building block wall, and see the shadow of a plant on the wall.) shows us again how human Vlad Drăgoi is and how life is just a ball that perpetually hits the two walls named sadness and happiness of a box which is too big for us to contain and understand.

Through the content that butchers him to the bone and the apparent simplicity that hides an electrical fusion of emotions, Vlad Drăgoi gives birth to one of the most human and, I'd say, surgical volumes of poetry. Vlad Drăgoi becomes a Sergio Leone of poetry, managing like the famous director, to bring together extreme close-up shots with lengthy long-shots. More than that, Vlad Drăgoi becomes the guy with many tales to tell, therefore a guy you'd want to hang out with.

Diana Diaconescu

is a student at "Petru Rareș" College, Suceava.

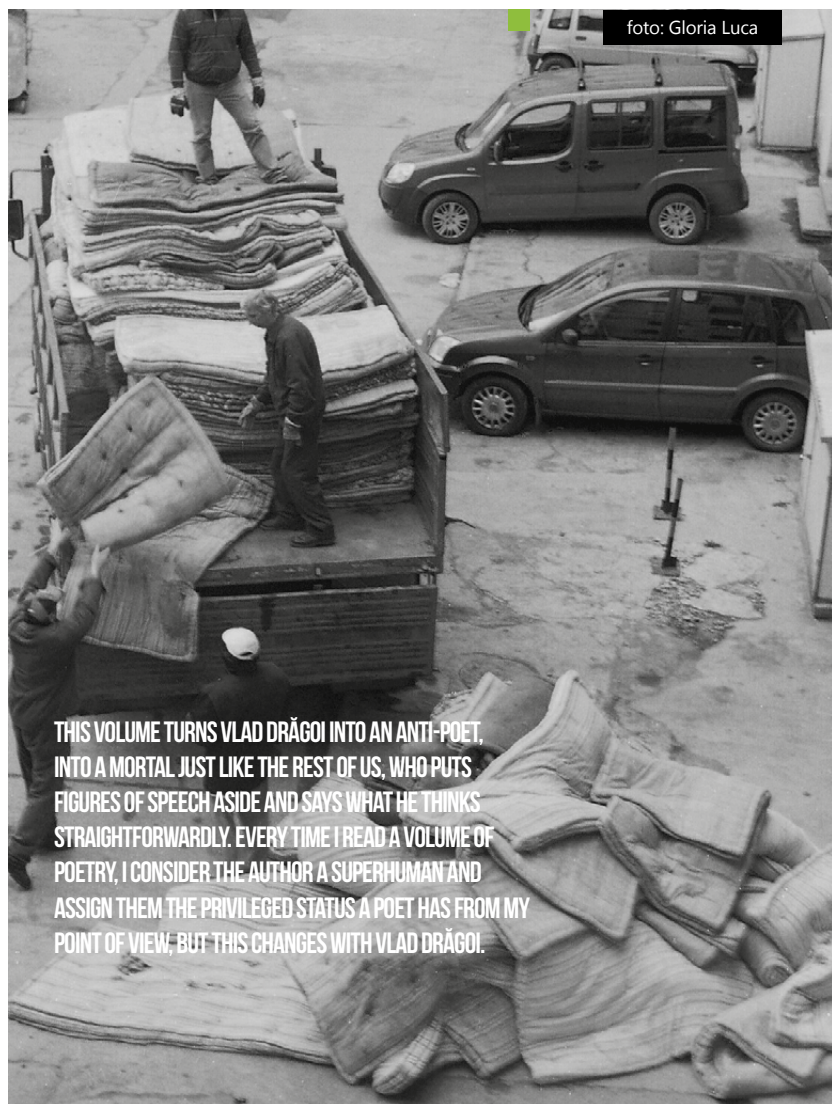


foto: Gloria Luca

THIS VOLUME TURNS VLAD DRĂGOI INTO AN ANTI-POET. INTO A MORTAL JUST LIKE THE REST OF US, WHO PUTS FIGURES OF SPEECH ASIDE AND SAYS WHAT HE THINKS STRAIGHTFORWARDLY. EVERY TIME I READ A VOLUME OF POETRY, I CONSIDER THE AUTHOR A SUPERHUMAN AND ASSIGN THEM THE PRIVILEGED STATUS A POET HAS FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, BUT THIS CHANGES WITH VLAD DRĂGOI.



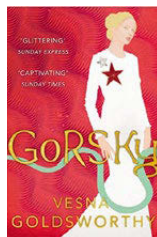
WASTE AND WASTING OR A JOURNEY FROM RUSSIA TO LONDON VIA NEW YORK

Gorsky

by
VESNA GOLDSWORTHY

GORSKY, WRITTEN BY THE SERBIAN AUTHOR VESNA GOLDSWORTHY, AND CONSIDERED TO BE THE PAIR NOVEL OF THE CULT BOOK OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*, BRINGS IN THE FOREGROUND A MULTICULTURAL LONDON OF EXTREMITIES, IN WHICH THE KEY-WORDS ARE BRILLIANCY, MONEY, CRAZY AMBITIONS, PASSION, LITERATURE AND FAILURE, ALL BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY A TRAGIC LOVE STORY WHICH BRINGS TOGETHER SILHOUETTES AND LITTLE PIECES OF THE EXISTENCE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE BLINDED BY THEIR DESIRES AND TORMENTED AT THE SAME TIME. TREATING TWO DIFFERENT THEMES, THE DISTORTION AND THE DECLINE OF THE SOCIETY, IN SPITE OF THE GLAMOROUS ATMOSPHERE THAT SURROUNDS A PART OF THE NEW ENRICHED MEN (COMING FROM EASTERN EUROPE), ON ONE HAND, AND THE ROMANTIC IDEA OF FULFILLING THE DREAM OF LOVE, ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS NOVEL RESTATES THE BELIEF IN AN IDEAL ROMANCE, THOUGH IT CANNOT TRANSCEND THE TRIVIALITY AND THE ABSURDITY OF THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. IT IS A LOVE THAT WAS BORN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FROM ABSENCE, MEMORY AND THE NECESSITY OF RECOVERING A MOMENT OF GRACE ASSOCIATED WITH THE INNOCENCE OF THE YOUTH AND THE CONFIRMATION OF WILL.

› Roxana Agape



The book is divided in 11 chapters, each insisting on an important episode that highlights the deceitful character of this world and gradually revealing a little part of the protagonist's soul. The new *Gatsby*, Roman Gorsky, a Russian Jewish millionaire, seems to be an eccentric emigrant who came to conquer London for the woman he had always loved, but now belongs to another man. His instrument is neither force nor money, but without them, his plan would be impossible. His dream is to offer the woman he loves a library, a magic space in which each volume shall speak about who the man whom she once rejected had become. Rare books, volumes with the author's signature or notes, everything that is truly precious in a world where appearances are the most important. So, she is a reader, (or, at least, an excellent connoisseur of books), and he wants to put a world at her feet. One that could definitively make her a prisoner of her deep inner self. Therefore, the library has to be temptation, confirmation and the promise of an eternal love. Gorsky is not, though, a man of letters; instead he is a man of actions, of ambition, of fortune and of a dream, and that is why he starts looking for someone who can "speak" and act on his behalf. In a side alley of London, he enters for the first time Nikola's bookstore, like Ali Baba did when

he entered the cave of forty thieves, and the destiny of each one of them changes definitively. Nikola is hired to search, collect and grind the treasure...

Nick Carraway, the narrator in *The Great Gatsby*, is replaced by Nikola Kimović (who calls himself Nick, being tired of people telling him that Nikola is a girl name in English), a Serbian who came in the United Kingdoms at the beginning of the '90s alongside a wave of refugees, and who is travelling in reality (and symbolically at the same time) from the middle of the old world to the new world, eventually going back home. From the first chapter, the narrator sketches the socio-economic "geography" of London, he introduces the characters, and he defines the context in which a soul as convulsed and unlikely as Gorsky's becomes plausible. In the moment of his appearance, the reader is as intrigued by his enigmatic personality as the viewpoint character. *On a rainy afternoon in London's old Chelsea, a charming multi-billionaire Russian oligarch, Gorsky, walks into an ailing bookshop and writes the first of several quarter-of-a-million pound checks. With that money, Gorsky has tasked Nikola, the store's bored and brilliant clerk, with sourcing books for a massive personal library. Nikola knows well the Russian art because of*

Natalia Summerscale's interest in books, and she was a woman who *made Grace Kelly look like a market trader* and whose voice, in contrast to Daisy Buchanan's in *The Great Gatsby*, is not *full of money*; rather, *she made you feel vulgar because you dared think that money had any bearing on anything*. Natalia is the second wife of Tom Summerscale, the British echo of Tom Buchanan, but more intelligent, and they live together with their daughter, Daisy, who is almost 6 years old, in The Laurels, a former bughouse transformed in a dream house. She, Natalia, is a Russian woman par excellence, fascinating and cold, unhappy and proud, the woman with a tormented soul and incomprehensible choices from Gorsky's perspective, determined to forget her Russian origins and the misery from home, attracted like a night butterfly by a light that hides, in fact, the deepest darkness. A small part of her temperament vibrates from Fitzgerald's heroine, her pure Russian inner chord being even more fascinating.

A RUSSIAN WOMAN CHOOSING WEST OR RUSSIA NEVER LOSES

While Nick is trying to accomplish the task that he was given, he gets caught in their universe: he meets the world of the local rich people and the one of the emigrants, he gets involved with Gergana (Gery) Pekarova, a famous Bulgarian gymnast and Natalia's personal trainer, and he wanders through a maze which is both dangerous and bright. In the same way as Jordan tells Nick Carraway about the relationship Daisy and Gatsby had before her marriage, so does Gery tell Nick Kimović about the one between Natalia and Gorsky from 11 years ago. Their story is impregnated with Russian echos, and it is both tragic and bookish: Natalia was 19, the youngest child of the major in Volgograd, and Gorsky, 12 years older than her, fell irremediably in love with her, eventually proposing marriage. Her rejection meant nothing but his ambition to put the world at her feet, but in his absence, Natalia married Tom Summerscale and left Russia. Their reunion, in Nick's bookshop, which stops both time and reality, is the most emotional part of the novel, when the past overlaps the present in a moment that suggests that Gorsky's dream might come true. His attempt to take Natalia from Tom not only leads to a confrontation, but to a suite of revelations and adjacent events as well, in which the tragic breath of fatality resounds and the echos of the American novel do at the same time: the equivalent of Myrtle Wilson, Janice Allaoui, Tom's mistress, dies, and Gorsky absurdly finds his end too, before he could fulfill his dream.



It is incontestable that Nick's pick as a narrator had an essential role in the narrative strategy of the author. Adopting the point of view of the witness narrator allows him not only to use the friendship between Nick and Gorsky in order to connect different passages of the book, but to keep the needed distance from the shown destinies as well, connecting even more the novel to Fitzgerald's vision, and also bringing up in a secondary plan a major issue of today's world: the emigrant's condition, his world full of dreams and unfulfilled wishes.

Gorsky embodies the symbolic center of the book, and his destiny reveals the themes which have a resonance that crosses the pages of the volume, while Nick, who is the moral center of the novel, offers to the readers the necessary perspective to decipher these themes. He truly wishes to believe in Gorsky's dreams, in the purity of a dream that can lift you up to greatness, that can fight against reality, no matter how brutal this might be. His dream contains much more than the simple regain of Natalia's love: he wants to regain those 11 years as well, to delete the past, to rewrite the story. This is the real target of Gorsky's desires and searches, so he was condemned to failure from the very beginning.

The book written by Vesna Goldsworthy is distinguished by the courageous recovery and the reconfiguration in a contemporary key of a major issue: who we are, who we choose to be, what we lose, and what determines us to lose in a world of vanity, violence, denial, and superficial ambition; in this world the rottenness hides under the shining veil of power that is given by money. *Gorsky* is, at the same time, a novel that will carry you through London's streets, which becomes itself a character, a real London and an inner London, both of them discovered and ruined by a dream.

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FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE OR SENSATIONS AS AN ENDLESS PRESENT

The Best Place in the World is Right Here

by
CARE SANTOS, FRANCESC MIRALLES

◆
THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD IS RIGHT HERE IS A POEM-BOOK THAT COMES TO BRING YOU CONSOLATION, TO COMFORT YOU AND TO MAKE YOU SMILE HONESTLY, THAT SITS SOFTLY BUT IRREMEDIABLY ON YOUR HEART AND THAT ENCOURAGES YOU, AMONG LINES AND STORIES, TO EMBRACE THE HAPPINESS THAT IS IN YOUR IMMEDIATE VICINITY

◆
} Viviana Gheorghian



I've read *The Best Place in the World is Right Here* with my heart beating fast, being in a good mood that I haven't had for a long time, with breath-taking feelings and with the sad truth that this pleasant feeling I was experiencing and which began to scatter gradually around me (I had the impression that all the persons I was meeting borrowed from my energy) would end up too fast without saying good-bye to the book that made me to smile for a few hours. Actually, I am smiling now too, when I am writing all of these things, because *The most beautiful place in the world is right here* has taken care to be a long-lasting remedy.

A VERY NICE BOOK, PAINSTAKINGLY CONSTRUCTED, THAT MAKES YOU REFLECT MORE ON YOURSELF AND ON THE THINGS AROUND YOU, A BOOK THAT DOESN'T REVEAL YOU THE SECRET OF ITS MAGIC AS EASILY AS YOU WANT.

Even now, after I waited for my emotions and impressions to take a shape, a clear outline that I could finally write about, I can't find the words to tell why this book really fascinated me and made me feel, during the experience of reading, in a continuous mood of dreaming, slightly buzzing, enthusiastic, confused, euphoric... Is this the effect of the collaboration between Care Santos and Francesc Miralles? Are there different ideas and styles put together in an ingenious way?

When we bury our moments of happiness, we lose our best part; we can throw a lot of things overboard, but never these moments.

In a very short period of time, Iris, an adult who does not seem to overcome the memory of childhood, passes through a succession of changes with a major impact on her life. After losing her parents in an accident - the only people close to her - she decides to give up, from a spontaneous momentum, disgusted and dissatisfied with what her life might mean, throwing herself away from a bridge. The appearance of a child (whose name is Angel) is the salvation and it is also the beginning of the young woman's adventure through magic, time and warm chocolate. Stopping from making the thoughtless gesture, Iris begins to walk for no particular purpose, when she accidentally or not sees the company of a café for the first time: *The most beautiful place in the world is right here*. In the mysterious space, the young woman lives magical moments (in the purest sense of magic capable of producing a miracle in her existence) next to Luca, a gentle, enigmatic man between two ages, who always waits her at one of the six coffee tables, each with its distinct features and meanings.

Luca will reveal to Iris secrets which will totally change her way of thinking and empathizing with the others, trying to show her that if we have our eyes open, we can extract from any loss the nourishing essence which is happiness itself. A notion that doesn't remain immaterial

and cold, but which gains consistency by small, significant gestures, by accepting who you are and by choosing to get closer to the people around you, looking at them in a different way. In this café where you rediscover yourself and the world alike, Iris receives from a magician an old watch which is permanently fixed at 12 o'clock, although inside he subtly measures the leakage of time and conceals a message behind the insensible tick. Later, she will discover a tiny letter in the interior of the watch where is written "Leave the past behind and the present will start." What will happen to Luca, who made Iris feel the thrill of love and who is he for real? After the secrets of the six tables in the cafe will be scattered, what should Iris do? Will she continue her life, living her own story, among new and dear faces, fulfilled desires and questions that gradually begin to find an answer? Will the café remain forever in the past or will it be, as the heart of the watch, hidden for others, but present for all who need a dream, a hope?

That sunshine was an injection of hope for him just because he was living in the darkest despair. Although the officer was able to rebuild his life after the war, he said he had never been experiencing the happiness of those minutes when the light reached the bottom of the well.

The narrative is usually interrupted by verses of famous songs such as those of the Beatles or The Rolling Stones that are in perfect harmony with the protagonist's mood. These are potentiating the cozy, no-age, chic cafe atmosphere and making the message deeper. This process reminded me of Murakami and his *Dance, Dance, Dance*. Old age ballads for people who taste the flavor of life. Each row of the book becomes a poem that moves and motivates you. There are no motivational quotes - that kind of phrases that comforts the ego of anyone because of their generality - but there are honest excuses and... A lot of poetry.

The book is marked by a strong and honest lyricism which is not pathetic or exaggerated. It is a lyricism that offers a special cadence to the text and contributes to the transmission of strong emotions. Each moment is viewed in an optimistic manner, the whole volume being a vibrant poem dedicated to the happiness of living.

One of the keys to happiness remains the simplicity... A simplicity that is deeply felt from the way the phrase sounds to the message it conveys. The pleasant and very elegant simplicity of the narrative rhythm, at the same time playful and delicate, difficult to achieve without being monotonous, inspires modesty and attachment to the reader. It is a simplicity that seems to say: "Look, I am with you!", a simplicity that is not meant to synthesize something or to make the idea easier to understand, because the deepest meanings are only discovered by the careful and profound reader, it is only a simplicity which wants to support an idea, an exhortation. People should not lose themselves among sentences or complicated schemes, among theories or burdensome memories; they can live, love, and be what they are just with the help of a few words, like in a haiku poem: (...) *our tendency is to use many words, many means, a lot of time for crunching. Haiku teaches us to reduce the beauty of the world to essences. And who dominates this art will enjoy life as a delicacy.*

The book talks about the man who deserves and who can be good with himself and with the others, about the man who, looking to the future, should leave certain parts of the past behind, about the man who has to see the happiness in small things, next to him and in any place. I mean, here... because the most beautiful place in the world is right here, the place where you are and you are writing, where you are reading or where you are loving. You are going from the past to the future, and maybe, by recalling the protagonist's thoughts, you are experiencing such strong sensations that you feel you are in an endless present.





THE RETURN TO ROOTS

Hiding in Plain Sight

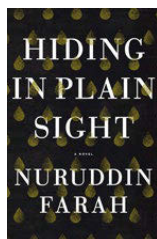
by
NURUDDIN FARAH

◆

AGAINST FAMILY EVEN THE GREATEST SLAVE OF ABSOLUTE FREEDOM LOSES SOME OF THE PLEASURE OF A CONTINUOUS TRAVELER, AGAINST DEATH THE COURSE OF LIFE CAN PERMANENTLY AND IRREVOCABLY CHANGE ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND NURUDDIN FARAH, HAS CHOSEN TO TRANSLATE ALL THIS SHAPING THE REALITY OF A FAMILY TRAPPED BETWEEN TRADITION AND THE NEW REALITY, BETWEEN DESIRE, SUCCESS AND FAILURE, BETWEEN BALANCE AND WANDERING, LIFE AND DEATH.

◆

} Amalia Carciuc



Hiding in Plain Sight is an atypical novel precisely because it tries to remove from the very first pages the preconceived idea of a family universe which can rediscover its peace, the constants of existence through a common effort of its members; it's a powerful novel which you read as in trance, where the characters carry the burden of the drama they are crossing; a novel about pain and rediscovery, resignation and maturity, assuming identity and roots. The debut is a violent one (how else could we catalog a terrorist attack?) and places us in a reality that constantly shakes the world of the last decades. It throws the destiny of an entire family under the shadow of death, marked now irremediably by the loss of its central figure. Aar, a UN official, a victim of the attack leaves behind two children who can find support and affection only in a spirit as free and uncontrollable as themselves: their stepfather's sister, Bella. Although in Somalia death does not rack its brains to announce its arrival, given the political and the social context, it brings with itself, as everywhere in the world, tears, suffering, interrogations but also changes in the life of all the characters.

The first pages are vague for the reader because the connotation of Aar's dream gets a clear shape only during the course of the action. Valerie, Aar's ex-wife, the woman whose heart was not broken when she had abandoned her own children, comes back leading a fierce fight to "conquer" some marmots. (And if we think about it, what do the marmots have to do with her, or with both, actually?) But who are the marmots? The ambiguity reaches its climax when Bella appears with her camera, succeeding to scare Valerie.

It is proved once more that any human is subjected to destiny, choosing to ignore or to see its signs, thus starting on a road which consumes, drains power and eventually ends a cycle which would have found a finality anyway. But given the fact that it is the journey that matters, not the destination itself, the end and purpose depend on personal choices.

Bella is responsible for the two teenagers, Salif and Dahaba, with powerful temperaments, different perceptions, influenced and changed by everything they had lived and felt on the brink of adolescence, being abandoned a period by their own mother. Bella is only half Somali because her father is Italian and his existence is something different than the life lived by a typical family left in her mother's country of origin. Therefore, the fusion of these two ways of perceiving life strongly reflects on her personality and conceptions, as she chooses a life without worries or unreasonable engagements. A famous photographer, a woman with desires and pleasures induced by the impulsive nature and the free, nonconformist society in which she was educated, Bella takes the decision to give up the endless journeys, the men that the chance places them in her way, the uninterrupted run and return to the roots, pushed by circumstances and the pain caused by the death of her brother. It is a confrontation between two worlds, between two ways of understanding the existence, a confrontation with a part of herself which she had not consciously negated it, but she had not known it in depth.

BUT SOMETIMES YOU WIN LOSING... PROVING THAT THE FAMILY OFFERS YOU MUCH MORE THAN YOU COULD IMAGINE, MORE THAN YOU ASKED: THAT PART OF YOU THAT YOU DID NOT EVEN KNOW EXISTED, "HIDDEN SIGHT", WAITING TO BE RECOVERED.

The struggle now extends on several plans: for Bella it is a confrontation with herself, with the nephews' personalities, with Valerie and her daring to demand the rights to the children after years of absence. It's a confrontation with a world which she feels, alike, attracted to and fearful of, a world of responsibility and balance that does not come from success and validation from others, but from the peace of knowing that you are useful to someone, that you are unconditionally loved. Then is the fight of the adolescents with a mother whose sudden presence attracts but also distracts them, a mother whose sexual inclination is not easy to accept and, finally, a fight with her life partner, Padmini. Freedom of speech is repressed on all levels in a world which seems closed in its own crystal globe but Bella is ready to consolidate, to change, to improve, to love. Undoubtedly, Nuruddin Farah drew the image of these family ties in a powerful and authentic way. The brother's report to his sister, Aar to little Bella of the past, justifies his unconditional love for his two children but also the profound metamorphosis through which she passes with the absurd loss of the brother; it's a secondary storyline that completes a story about attachment, trust, feeling of belonging: *He felt obligated to protect her, he even argued with his parents if Bella shivered in her crib, and none of them could calm her.* Brother and sister, accomplices, connected hearts forever, spirits which find refuge in each other, the two offer a concrete aspect of love in the true sense of the word.

Treated with hostility by her son, adored by her daughter, Valerie joins a long-playing game that overcomes her, realizing this only to the end of the novel. Psychologically complex actions just because of their simplicity, trauma, stories about and from the "immediate" reality, all of these are unrolling at a throbbing pace, rendering the image of a living world. To my surprise, Bella becomes a powerful character simply because she knows how to manage her feelings, putting the lucidity above her emotions, although they overwhelm her inside. She prefers to partially support Valerie and Padmini: juridical, when they forget that cities like Nairobi do not offer the freedom of one like Cape Town, financially, but also emotionally, trying to put closer the mother and the children. Between a confrontation in which she understands that she could lose the two teenagers and the determination to openly assume the responsibility that comes from love, she chooses the difficult route of adapting to the new reality, of knowing and assuming her own roots.

Another well outlined aspect in the novel is related to the personality of the two teenagers. Salif assumes

the role of a family's pillar, he accepts the position of a mature man, Bella's advisor and guide for his younger sister. He has an obvious hostility for the mother - who disturbs their life once again - throwing intelligent, subtle replies and at the same time keeping his firm, unshakable position. Dahaba embodies the innocence, not having such a broad spectrum of understanding like her brother and searching desperately for her mother's affection: *from the top, it is heard a cry of joy and Dahaba descends the ladder screaming out Mummy! - a word that she manages to stretch out on three syllables - and drops into Valerie's arms.* However, Nuruddin Farah has the intuition of not building the personalities of the two antithetic because in the adolescence their reactions are naturally contradictory and hence the impression of authenticity.

THE CORE OF THE NOVEL FOCUSES ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ON THE EASINESS WITH WHICH THEY CAN BE BUILT OR DISINTEGRATED. THE NOVELTY OCCURS WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THE STRUGGLE IS GOING FOR A CONNECTION THAT SHOULD NATURALLY BE BORN ONLY AT FIRST GLANCE LIKE THE ONE BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD.

I say this because the family is not chosen, it is not auctioned and in it the rules are pre-established, not like in a friendship in which you are free to keep in touch or to move away from the other.

The end involves the entry in a new age of each one's own self. Valerie realizes that the role of mother does not fit to everyone, in no case to her and she chooses to leave again. Salif and Dahaba are ready for a new beginning and Bella... well, as far as she is concerned, the future seems promising: peaceful, confident, now she knows who she is and assumes it. The absurd death of Aar brought not only suffering but also a placement on the true path of each one's life.

For me, *Hiding in Plain Sight* is a lesson about forgiveness and acceptance, examining carefully the pain from the perspective of many human types, from the vulnerable to the strong one. Each of us, sometimes, chooses to hide what he wants: the kindness, the need of affection, the love; but the most important thing is that all of them remain within the being and the effort to rediscover them should not be in vain.



INCISION & DRAINAGE ALIVE

Cancer Sign. Journal 2012-2015

by
RADU VANCU

◆

IF WE ARE TALKING ABOUT RADU VANCU'S LITERARY WORK, ZODIA CANCERULUI. JURNAL 2012-2015 [CANCER SIGN. JOURNAL 2012-2015] (HUMANITAS, 2017) IS THE MOST RECENT AND SPECTACULAR OF HIS SUCCESSIVE REINVENTIONS. THE WRITER'S BEING IS THE FACE OF AMBIGUITY, THE TEXT IS THE FACE OF REAL. BEING PERFECTLY CONGRUENT WITH HIS OWN POSTULATIONS, RADU VANCU CONNECTS THESE CONDITIONS THROUGH PULSATIONS IN THE DENSE, UNPREDICTABLE, BIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE.

◆

› Ozana Ciobanu



Radu Vancu's *Journal* is defined as a *summa* of his poetry that takes out of his lyrical nucleus a universe of visceral realism, providing his reader a narrator defined by a monopolizing verisimilitude of feelings. Built on the axiom life-poetry-journal, the novel is defined as a journal of absence: poetry seems (only seems) to be an inexistent coordinate. If poetry speaks anthologically about everything, the journal does the same by adding an ailing layer to the subject. Radu Vancu is dealing not only with the incapacity of writing, but also with the sensation that his own body starts to give up, being hunted by the cancer proximity that, fortunately, does not materialize. The author hybridization tends to isolation in domestic intimacy, solitary medium, favourable for reintegration in his own writing. Despite this, we can talk about a large distribution of the poetic symbol in the genetic vein of the *Journal*, from which it is divided in different subcategories, a conglomerate of facts and affects.

In this way, *Cancer Sign* is outlined as a biplane, equally shaped by the tangible nature of the writer and the lyrical entity, marking a visible influence on each other. The *Journal* is seen as an intermission between Radu Vancu's lyrical sequences: the incapacity to write poetry after the *Frânghia înflorită* [*Blooming Rope*] volume is published in 2012 ("Since February, since I finished *Blooming Rope*, I

wasn't able to write poetry [...]) It's true, since February I am a kind of *massa confusa et damnata*, a Bovarism ectoplasm innervated every once in a while by a writing impulse") and the publication, three years later, of a new volume, *Cantosuri domestice. 4 A.M. [4 A.M. Domestic Cantos]*, shaping in this way the canonical approach related to the journal of the time. The *Journal* is only a hybridized form of his lyric. All of Radu Vancu's writings are biographies, in a positive way. And poetry is the most coagulated of them: gloomy but in the same time emotional, equally surface and depth. Through the obsessive notations of the inner the essential quality of the *Journal* is defined: an indirect plea for poetry. The time of waiting is counteracted by the present objective time, as impassive void, marked by the tormenting metastasis of the incapacity to write poetry, seen as the only form of the creation process: "because writing means writing poetry". Radu Vancu's vision about world is a labyrinth of possibilities in which the defining coordinates are represented by poetry – a flowering of intellect and disease. The *Journal* is a presentation of these two anguishes that are combined until they touch the terminus point: when the impossibility of writing crystallizes in creative potentiality and when the physiological debility is transformed in the chance of an acquiescent cohabitation with it. A journal of anomalies in a hermetic construction, smooth at first sight, a journal

that tries not to condensate itself by the form of the person that reads it. The *Cancer Sign* is not conceived in generic intellectual terms, but in concordance with the concrete material, and the concrete material has its own construction, an unique layer, independent, that follows closely the atrophied being, in no way exhaustible, of poetry. The volume curdles spontaneously, its connection with poetry is instantly, ahistorical, free from tension. It's a volume written from and for poetry. This clamant equality between poetry and life determines an experience virulence, a lucid and plenary glance at all the tangible's dimensions, stimulated and innervated by poetry-life mediating agent.

RADU VANCU'S READINGS, OF AN IMPRESSIVE WEALTH, GIVE A REFLEXIVE RESPITE THAT RESUSCITATES THE NARRATOR'S CONSCIOUSNESS, RECONNECTING HIM WITH THE REALITY. WHAT RADU VANCU REPROACHED TO LIFE (NOT TO THE BOOK) IS DEATH'S UNPREDICTABILITY, THE UNFORESEEN. HIS NOTATIONS FROM THE JOURNAL PULSES THOUGHT THE EFFECT OF NATURALISM, IN WHICH IS CONSPICUOUS THE CONCRETE FORM OF HUMAN BEING. THE PLACEMENT OF THE SIMPLE EVERYDAY ROUTINE AND ALMOST MATERIAL FAR FROM AN OPAQUE UNIVERSE, FILTERED FROM HYPERSENSITIVENESS, DOUBLES THE OPENING TO THE SPACE OF TANGIBILITY, MATERIALIZED AS AN AUTHENTIC REPLICA OF REALITY. BY DOING THIS, THE AUTHOR ESCAPES FROM THE SUPERFICIAL WOUNDS OF THE CURRENT MOMENT, AND WALKS TO THE ESSENCE OF ALL THINGS.



room through fluidity, shaping an alter-ego, this time a prosaic one of Radu Vancu. Everything is dissolved in the self-analytical nucleus; everything is dissected in the hyaline material of the imagination. The author does not shape the journal word as a projection of the inner, does not built an excessive version, in a diarist way, of solipsism. He is rather a tacit witness that tries to believe that the world exists, the act of writing rationalizing the world's deficiency.

"We write white our humanity". Under the auspice of this maxim are formed that passages in which Radu Vancu talks about family members (parents, Cami, Sebastian), about writers, about friends (Mircea Ivănescu, his unquestionable mentor, Claudiu Komartin, Mircea Cărtărescu). The text borrows from his body heat and hypersensitivity. The *Journal* distinguishes all the time - like all his compositions - an empathic credo: "I don't believe I have ever participated at a book signing that was more beautiful than the last night one of Mircea. When you see that so many people (over 350) arrived for poetry you almost see "the dead cat of the world" (as Salinger was calling poetry) began to rise from the dead"; "4 minutes ago. Cami (exceeded) Sebastian, I ask you for the last time to eat! Sebastian (dryly): I can't. Cami: Why? Sebastian (equally dryly): I have some melancholic dental holes in my head." The passages related to the loved ones are marked with an emotional charge, moments of enthusiastic celebration of domestic life. It's underlined the hypnotizing bound between father and son: in author's notes it takes the form of a relationship that is unfolding in multiple tri-dimensional aspects: "Last night Sebastian and I both had a nightmare: I,

Described vividly through his emotional implication Radu Vancu's mundane is doubled by a poetic motivation, determining an exhaustion of the concrete dimensions' existence. The literature, a recurrent theme in author's notes, becomes a sphere in which the notations mean nothing more than the physical process of remembering, representing the most authentic way to the human origin, in this context, poetry swings between the projection of lyrical imaginary and concrete evidence. Although anthological, they make

with an UFO like a green parallelogram parked over the near apartment building, [...] and Sebastian with a giant shepherd, taller than the apartment buildings with four floors of our alley [...] He was very frightened when he told me, tears appeared in his eyes, but then, realizing how ridiculous the imagine with the giant shepherd was, began to laugh. His lucidity softened & frightened me more than the *per se* nightmare."



THE CANCER SIGN IS CONSTITUTED AS A PIECE OF WRITING OF TRANSITION THAT SUPPORTS THE POETIC REHABILITATION. THE NOTES FROM THE JOURNAL ARE AT THE SAME TIME POETRY AND PROSE, ARE TWINS EXISTING ONE IN EACH OTHER'S BODY, THE CONCOMITANT VERBIAGE OF POETRY DOUBLED BY PROSE. THE AMAZED READER DISCOVERS ALSO THE INNER PROBE, AND THE REFLECTION OF THE OTHERS. RADU VANCU'S JOURNAL REPRESENTS A NEW FORM OF DRAINING THE LYRICISM, BORN, PARADOXICALLY, PRECISELY FROM THE INCAPACITY (REAL OR IMAGINARY) OF WRITING POETRY.

Dragoș Pătrașcu

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In contrast with Mircea Cărtărescu's *Journal* where the literary material is a cartography of his mind, a hatching of the limes of his own skull, cerebral hemispheres, and in which the imaginary dissolves the points of reality, in Radu Vancu's case the imaginary appears as a semi-deflected, a reverie of some deficiencies of the everyday life that try to be compensated, and who certainly discovers his voices, maintaining in the same time something abstruse. Through the confessable tonality, Radu Vancu creates the imagine of his identity, characterized by a representative

force and a capacity to re(shape) the tangible in a distinct signature. The *Journal* excels in the passages where the social environment is described, which lives a veritable acquaintance *via negationis*, being in the same time a social document. The determinism is leitmotif in these passages and subjugates at the highest level the values of the human consciousness: the irrepressible phenomenon of communism. The aversion towards the Radu Vancu's *Journal* is not a simple passive reflection (Eminescu's line "Sit apart and watch...").



WAR AS AN EXPERIENCE

Svetlana Aleksievici

WAR IS A WORLD, NOT AN EVENT...

› Anca Scheul

For those with an interest in historical events, war became an abstract concept, made of names and numbers. Numbers of troops, of battles, of victims. Dates of military actions, of victories and defeats. All the suffering transposed, or rather hidden behind numbers. Life and death - glanced at from afar, mutilated by ideologies and political agendas, the humanity, the fundamental truth, stripped away.

Man has gotten swallowed by history. Formal compensations and titles are but a mask for the personal traumas and loss, offering no solace or justifications. (*So my son's blood is so cheap?* - *Boys in Zinc*). Svetlana Aleksievici steps into the shadows and records their voices, then she brings them to light. By gathering the hidden stories of women and children from World War Two (*The Unwomanly Face of War*, *The Last Witnesses*), and those of soldier and mothers involved in the Afghanistan war (*Boys in Zinc*), by bringing them to a wide audience, she rebels against the structure. History is dismantled, offering a chance for the truth to shine through.

"I DON'T HAVE TO MAKE ANYTHING UP. THERE ARE SNIPPETS OF ESSENTIAL BOOKS ALL AROUND ME. IN EVERY PERSON."

These books shed light upon the humanity of the war, they encapsulate the authentic emotions, sensations, details which shape the events and the individual and universal memory. Turning her back to the imagery spread by the soviet propaganda and focusing on people who lived in "history", on their stories, Svetlana Aleksievici manages to show a different face of war and to paint, at the same time, an in depth picture of the human soul.

"WAR IS AN INTIMATE EXPERIENCE. AND AS BOUNDLESS AS HUMAN LIFE."

Intimacy can't be summarized, dissected or analyzed, it can only be shared. The image of the war, of the human soul dragged through the extremes, is built like a mosaic, from hundreds of testimonials, hundreds of experiences, hundreds of truths. Svetlana Aleksievici manages to offer space for human experiences. to maintain the colors and

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Dragoș Pătrașcu

the shadows, to abstain from altering them, she respects life, people, humanity, truth more than history or political agendas. War is not an abstract concept anymore, in which people are just numbers in service of ideas, it becomes a collective experience.

Mom bought an apple basket and put it next to me and my sister and we were eating. The bombardment started. My sister had two beautiful apples in her hands and we started fighting over them, she didn't want to give them to

me. Mom was telling us to take shelter, but we went on. In the end I begged my sister: Just give me an apple, otherwise they're going to kill us and I won't get to taste it. She gave me the best looking one. That's when the bombardment ended. (The Last Witnesses)

The image of the great soviet hero is picked apart, the "truth" spread by the propaganda is replaced with authentic memories and feelings, with the realness of the pain (*F... your New Testament! I carried my truth in a plastic*



bag... Head on one side, hands on the other... I don't have any other truth... - Boys of Zinc) The atrocities of the war coexist with the small touches of light such as a bag of candies. The heroes are humanized, but at the same time, you witness the dehumanization that comes with the war. (Yes, I did kill... Because I wanted to live... I wanted to get back home. But now I envy the dead. The dead don't suffer... - Boys of Zinc)

"TO ALL OF A SUDDEN FIND A LIVING PERSON BETWEEN THE DEAD..."

The survivors, the heroes that have been praised throughout history are just young people - young people who strongly believe in their countries; young people for whom death seems but an abstract concept, surrounded by corpses (*After battle we didn't have anyone to bind up... they were all dead - The Unwomanly Face of War*), burnt villages, hanged families, drapes of bullets, bombardments; young people taught to hate and kill; young people who carried their friends in plastic bags; young people who swore and oath and carried orders. Young people for whom happiness meant *finding all of a sudden a living person between the dead* (*The Unwomanly Face of War*)

Then I can remember something else: the black sky and a plane that was also black. Next to the road lays our mother, with her arms spread. We beg her to get up, but it's pointless. The soldiers covered her with cellophane and buried her in the mold, right there. We were shouting and begging: Don't put mom in that hole. She will wake up and we will keep going. There were all sorts of big bugs crawling through the mold (*The Last Witnesses*)

War is not a series of defeats and victories, it is not a fight for some heroic ideals, it is a painful, destructive experience which alters humanity. War is not bound to the battlefield, it stains civilians' lives and it returns home with the soldiers or with their coffins (*I'm not insane, but I still wait for him... I heard about a case: they brought the coffin to the mother, she buried it... and after an year her son came back... So I wait for him. I'm not insane. - a mother, Boys of Zinc*)

For me, this history is over. I'm getting out of it... I don't plan on shooting myself or throwing myself off the balcony. I want to live! To love! I survived twice. The first time - there, at war; the second time- here. (Boys of Zinc)

... AND TO TESTIFY

Svetlana Aleksievici's books operate with people's lives, with their souls, they expose points of view and details that have been swiped under the rug, they penetrate the deepest layers of war, of the soviet regime and they manage to showcase the true nature of this "world". These are books that offer a completely different perspective not only on history, but on humanity. Books that canvass the human condition. Books that have the power to shape their readers, to reshape the world. Svetlana Aleksievici's books can truly be labeled as essential.

Anca Șcheul
graduated from
the "Octav Băncilă"
National College of
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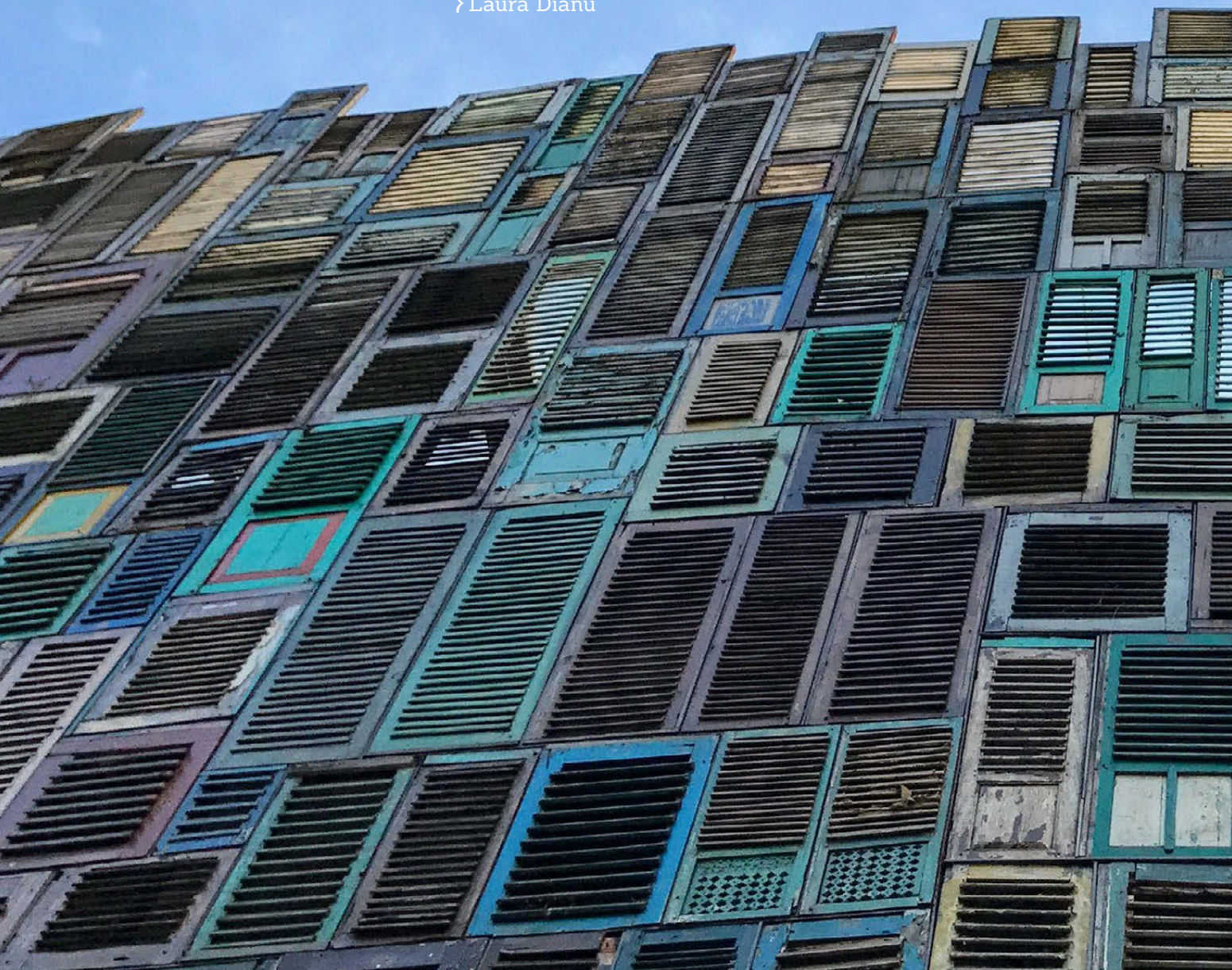


ITINERARIES

Bali

a tropical experience

› Laura Dianu



DENPASAR

I landed in Bali in the last days of December. Flying out on Boxing Day is nicer than I would have imagined. The airport is considerably less crowded and it being an Asian flight, most don't celebrate Christmas anyway in this part of the world. Once I'd landed at the Indonesian airport, the high temperature took me back to the summer times and the long days of holidays, when I could hardly imagine that in other parts of the world it was snowing and it was cold at the same time as I was sweating.

The airport in Bali, situated in the Denpasar area, has that atmosphere that's probably specific to all countries in the tropical climate. The overwhelming heat can be felt even in the immense atrium of the "Arrivals" area. In the semi-open space with rich vegetation of a dark green colour, everything is permeated by the hot humidity.

Towards midnight, I took a taxi to the first hotel. My first image of the city was strange and distressing. I was shocked by the heaps of rubbish by the edge of the road, the heat, the dust and the multitude of scooters that rode even at that late hour. At the entrance, right behind reception, outside, on the wall decorated with wooden sculptures specific to the Buddhist religion, several lizards moved rapidly.

PARADISE ISLAND

The next day I took the boat towards Gili Island, one of the three little islands between Bali and Lombok (these also part of Indonesia, but considerably larger). The boat trip lasted a few hours, as it was an engine-operated craft, with a capacity of twenty people, which made an insuf-

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foto: Laura Dianu

ferable noise and shook us powerfully the whole way. In front of the captain, on the board, a bowl of pink tablets, wrapped like rock candy when we were little, with no instructions, no text on the wrapper. I cautiously took one pink tablet and the sea sickness vanished.

Upon getting off, there was a whole change of scenery. It is hard to find the words to express how charming Gili Island is and the "paradise" attribute is almost lacking in describing the landscape and the atmosphere... I then understood why Bali is one of the most visited islands in the world.

The first image upon disembarking is iconic, a tropical paradise with a clear blue and strong sky, a few clouds, rich vegetation of a green that leans towards black, retaining though its warm tones, and the waters turquoise... Everywhere pavilions covered in reed, as in our Delta...

THE BUNGALOWS OF GILI

A main road, unpaved, surrounds the perimeter of the island. The surface is so small it could be covered within two hours of power walking. Upon disembarking, I was wondering how I would carry the luggage to the villa, but I soon noticed the taxis – mini-coaches pulled by horses! I remembered my childhood and my grandparents' village where it was commonplace to see *carriages*, but the association between carriages pulled by horses and a tropical island internationally favoured as holiday destination seemed strange. Nevertheless, what I found even stranger was the tourists' fascination with this form of transport.

We set off towards check in following the map and after 10 minutes of squeezing through a system of narrow lanes, we recognised the number of the place we had booked on one of the gates. Inside we were met with smiles and were introduced to the first locals: great hosts,



friendly and sincere in their delight to receive guests in their little touristic setup. The entire setup was maintained by one family, brothers and sisters, much younger than us, who were in charge of everything that was necessary to maintain the resort.

The hay bungalow-like little houses, colourful and strangely close together, distributed radially around the swimming pool were so small that they resembled the miniature bungalow-houses one can usually see in kids playgrounds.

BY BIKE

The interesting things to do in Gili are *snorkelling* – a first for me: renting bikes, making the tour of the island and going to the local Balinese massage salons.

The island can easily be circled by bike, pedalling along a narrow road, the beach and terraces protected by wood-

en structures and covered in reed unfolding on the right, the resorts with interior gardens, swimming pools and hammocks on the left.

One can also cross the island using shortcut streets, but of course, in this case one would no longer glimpse the sea on the right during pedalling.

The road is busy, with lots of colourful carriages driven by locals and other tourists on bicycles or on foot. Everywhere in sight there are sunbeds by the sea shore, in the shade of the reeds, with constant movement all around.

SUNSET

In the evening, the island reveals a fairy-tale image, from another time, a fantastic world which reminded me of the images in childhood fairy tales: thick grey clouds,

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almost like mountains and the pink sky opening towards a light blue. The light is grey, de-saturated, resonating with the same grey found in the sand and the powerful blue of the water – a heavy fog.

A light blue carriage, made of wood, with two horses, one a dirty-white and one brown, standing still, as if time in this picture had frozen.

Behind the sea and the boats tied to shore. No one in sight.

THE LOCALS' HOUSES

Unfortunately, the locals' houses have a relatively low living standard: many families and generations in the same dwelling (setup), heaps of rubbish right beside the houses, children modestly dressed and dirty... I thought there is a certain sadism in that the areas, even the countries where life is poor, tend to attract tourist attention, especially from people with a living style that's more than comfortable. Poverty is seen as something exotic by the luckiest in terms of material well-being and who usually come from countries overly developed economically. Gili revealed itself to me as two antagonistic worlds, radially distributed: a touristic ring – border by the beach – which is attractive, superb, comfortable and another central layer – the locals' village, which is the opposite, a modest settlement inhabited by humble yet serene and happy people.

SNORKELLING

Another pleasant experience was the excursion into the aquatic universe. The locals organise one-day or half-day mini-excursions by boat around the three islets: Gili Meno, Gili Air and Gili Trawangan. The tour comprises a group of 10 tourists (who, together with the captain and the two supervisors fill out the capacity of the motorboat). The excursion consists of four-five stops in the middle of the

ocean during which the tourists observe the underwater flora and fauna. This is possible thanks to the equipment which consists of special glasses and a series of other accessories which facilitate swimming. Watching fish shoals – many, colourful, slippery, floating unencumbered in the clear waters – was a source of relaxation I had not expected. There was something soothing in the fluidity of the fish's movements, the literal sensation of flooding (due to the salty water) and the autism of the aquatic universe in contrast to the other world unfolding at the surface.

The group I went snorkelling with consisted of nice and smiling people. It is nice when those you meet during holidays are pleasant and relaxed. The interactions thus become jovial and fully satisfying. The majority of Bali tourists are from Australia. I thought then that I would like to travel to Australia next time, to check whether being jovial is a general trait of Aussies or it was the result of having met them on holiday.

During the tour a German lady my age caught my attention. She explained to us that she was starting a half-year or perhaps longer holiday, in which she decided to start off in the East, in New Zealand, and travel back towards the West, in one of the Middle Eastern countries, where she would look for a job. Her plan was to make a stop in the majority of the countries between these two points as a tourist. The idea of a half-year holiday surprised me. I thought one has to experience a feeling of relief at taking such a long break from the routine of a steady job and travelling and accumulating new experiences in a concentrated manner. On the other hand, I wondered how she could be relaxed without a clear plan regarding her future. The truth is that her life choices made a strong impression on me.

foto: Laura Dianu



DOCTOR KEITUT'S HOUSE

My next destination after Gili was Ubud, the mountain area north of Bali Island.

The road to the mountains, once returned in Bali, consisted of many scooters, dust, crowding, and noise. The closer we got to the mountain area, the more the temples full of scooters parked in front that we discovered. The locals in colourful outfits, with prints and glaring colours, walked along the side of the road carrying gigantic boxes on their heads. Their luggage comprised either offerings for the temple or merchandise to sell to the tourists they came across.

In Ubud I stayed at Doctor Keitut's house. I chose it specifically, because I had watched the film *Eat, Pray, Love* and loved it. Upon finding out that the location in Bali where it was filmed was up for rent, I knew I had to spend at least one night there.

In Doctor Keitut's house I understood what a Zen garden means. In the front, a sort of religious pavilion made of stone and wood nearly blocks the entrance to the bed and breakfast. A local woman was crocheting surrounded by cats, serene and smiling. To the left there was (I found out afterwards) Doctor Keitut's dwelling. Between the two, down a metre-long alley, one entered the reception area. The reception, covered but in an open space, is part of one of the two touristic setups in the garden. A third setup is the restaurant, and this is in open air, with wooden tables covered by reed pavilions. Between all three are the pool and the garden. Everywhere, rich vegetation, low and medium, of a profound green. The leaves' peaks are coloured in bright red and orange tones which, complementary to the green, create a superb visual effect. The circulation takes place through alleyways of natural stone, scattered through the grass. In the garden there are many stone statues, probably Buddhist gods. The temperature is low;

one feels the fresh crisp mountain air and hears the noise of flowing water in the background, from a stream that crosses the garden.

The whole ensemble is so beautifully and sensitively arranged that it is easy to find peace in a quiet and timeless contemplation.

UBUD

Although Doctor Keitut's house is a space so pleasant that it is hard to leave, Ubud is full of touristic attractions.

The forest of monkeys, for instance, is an unusual experience. It has lanes and roads marked for tourists, which are crowded by numerous monkeys which live free. Tourists offer them bananas, take photographs with them and have fun observing their behaviour. Nevertheless, there are everywhere images that warn against getting too close to the monkeys, as they can become aggressive. In fact, I saw multiple times specimens who would jump from a tree onto the tourists' shoulders and then would either steal their glasses or accessories, or pulled their hair.

Rice plantations are equally impressive. They represent a space of monumental nature: wave in a sea of green, spread vertically.

Ubud is essentially an exotic collection of interesting places which deserve to be explored. Among these: the monkey forest, the rice terraces, coffee plantations, shops with wooden statues, silver workshops, Tegenungau waterfall, the fairs of traditional products. Everything is unusual, strange, fun and the atmosphere (thanks to the locals) is of happy peace.

I took leave of these places thinking that Australia can wait: my next holiday I will be here again!

Laura Dianu

graduated the "Octav Băncilă" National College of Arts and is now working as an architect in Dubai.

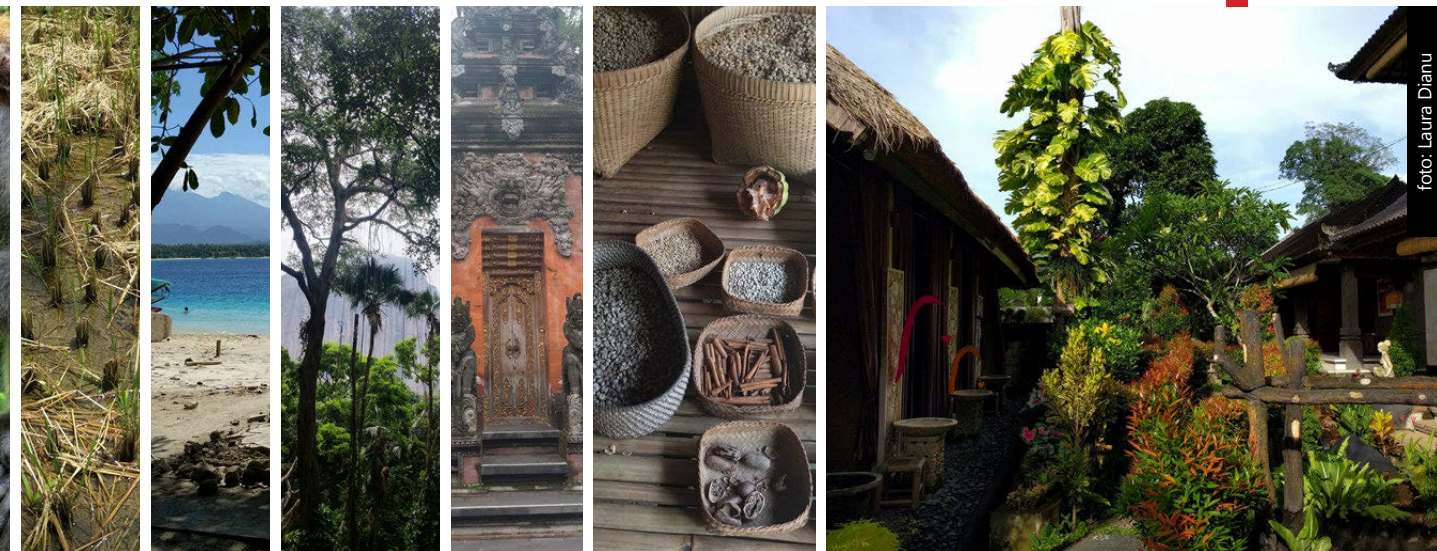


foto: Laura Dianu



India

Stories of yesterday and today

› Alexia Grădinaru

Country of four major religions, India has always been a crucible of traditions, a crossroads of commercial routes, a space of an old and fascinating culture, taking pride in its multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic status. Today, together with the impressive economic growth and the development of the nationalist democracy, India takes up an ambiguous role in the world. I admit I had wanted to see this country for a long time. Let me tell you how it all started, how I set off on my journey towards a dream.

This year I had the opportunity to attend, for a second time, together with another 11 students of the National College, the prestigious International Mathematics Competition (IMC), which was set to take place in Lucknow, India

Every year Mathematics enthusiasts from 40 countries in all 5 continents take part in this competition. I was happy to be among those selected, feeling at the same time the desire not to let anyone down. After three months of intense preparation with Dr. Lect. Iulian Stoleriu as well as the teachers at the National College and "Negruzzi" College, the time we were all waiting for came, the moment of departure. It was a 10-hour long flight with a short layover in Dubai. I personally expected something completely different from this city so written about, a completely different atmosphere. Two years earlier, when I went to Qatar – a place I considered similar – I found the difference more evident between us and the Arabs, the way a woman is treated in Europe and there, respectively; I had set off with the impression that women represented nothing, that they had few rights and hardly allowed a word. This time, it felt different. This is likely due to the presence of many European and American tourists who travel to Dubai, but also to the policy of opening up the country to Occidental investors.

Returning to my lived experience, Lucknow, Agra, Jaipur and New Delhi represent, from my standpoint, totally different facets of India.

LUCKNOW – THE TRUE FACE OF INDIA

I can say that I had formed an opinion on Lucknow even before going into the city itself. How? Because of the airport where insects of all kinds would move around unencumbered, where propellers were used as air conditioning and where doors did not close automatically but with a thick rusted chain. Upon coming out, we were met with fanfare and the competition's organisers. We took photographs and received biscuits and coffee. Not even 10 metres away were stood Indians, staring at us as if we were aliens. I couldn't exactly tell why that was. Perhaps because we were European, perhaps because they might have liked our biscuits or perhaps because we were not wearing the same dirty and torn clothes they did. What was certain was that they were studying us head to toe. It was the first time I had realised that not everybody has a roof over their heads to sleep, food to eat as they please, the possibility of a decent life. Still, the surprises did not end there, as what followed was a half-an-hour journey to the campus where we would stay for the next 5 days. I saw houses which were delapidated, unfinished, which had improvised sticks instead of scaffolding, litter everywhere, stands that sold bags of crisps or fruit that seemed to have lain there for many days and children walking barefoot in dirty puddles. What shocked me was that there was no street crossing, no traffic lights. Everyone moved around following their own rules. Seeing a car was rare, the majority of the locals having bicycles, motorcycles or rickshaws – a three-wheeled vehicle used for transport. Due to the numerous population, the streets were extremely crowded, people driving very slowly and honking every

five seconds (that is not an exaggeration). I remember on the third day I saw a rickshaw going on the counter, a few millimetres from the other vehicles, one of these a police car no less. And yet, the agents had no intention for even one second of pulling the rickshaw over, probably used to such situations. In all this chaos, there was only one constant element: the presence of cows every hundred metres. As they are considered sacred animals, no one disturbs them regardless of them being in the middle of the road or not.

Once we had arrived on campus, everything changed, starting with the atmosphere. Finding myself next to other young people my own age from different countries, from Canada to Zimbabwe, I realised that, although we belonged in places which seemed to have nothing in common, what united us was our passion for Mathematics, the desire to communicate, the pleasure of meeting as many people as possible and discover new places. Right from the opening ceremony, the hosts tried to familiarise us with the cultural specifics of the country, as we witnessed a traditional dance of great amplexity and full of colour. I was impressed by the school principal where we stayed: a sober presence, balanced but authoritative. I can hear her words in my ears even now, "Learn, learn and always fight for what you deserve." Another moment I remember fondly was the Cultural Evening, where we showed up in traditional costumes, danced the *hora*, *sârba* [traditional Romanian dances] and watched each group with great interest. The one that stayed in my mind was the Australian group, who challenged us to a set of questions about their country and culture, the winner receiving an inflatable kangaroo of considerable dimensions, very cute. It was a fun and ingenious idea, an opportunity to learn countless things less well-known.

The next day was the competition. Four hours later, during which we had our individual and the group tests, we were exhausted, waiting anxiously for the results. Since my room was next to those from Iran, the discussion on what had gone on hours before was inevitable. One thing leading to another, we ended up talking about the Iranian education system and the daily life there. Since only one of the four neighbouring boys spoke English, we only heard one opinion. He told us that there is no English or any other foreign language being taught in school over there and that he had to study at home on his own if he wanted to learn another language. Likewise, he said that he was not allowed to greet the girls in our group, only the boys – but that was when he was together with his colleagues; even though he seemed to disagree with this, when in public he strictly adhered to the rules. I had expected him not to speak with us girls at all, but he pro-

ved friendly and nice. His answer to the question, "What happens if the girls in your country don't dress according to tradition?" he surprised me, "It simply doesn't happen." I expected him to tell me about some terrible punishment, but in no way thought that the possibility wouldn't even exist in their view.

The whole Romanian team was awarded – for both the individual and the team tests. I was awarded Merit (Individual Contest) and Second Runner Up Team (Team Contest). I was proud of myself and my country! The last day was the closing ceremony and with that even our stay in Lucknow ended, but not our stay in India.

AGRA – THE GREAT FACE OF INDIA

After 7 hours on the bus, I finally reached Agra, where the famous Taj Mahal monument is situated. I am sure everyone has heard of him, but few know his story. One of the seven wonders of the world, the tomb-monument Taj Mahal in Agra represents "the love of an emperor, inlaid in stone." This jewel of Muslim art was erected starting from 1632 at the order of emperor Shah Jahan, in memory of his first and most beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

Prince Shah Jahan – while walking along the stands of Meena bazaar – met the one who would become Mumtaz Mahal. It was love at first sight between the Prince and the young woman of only 15 years of age. Shah Jahan decided immediately: he wanted to marry her. Although Shah had other wives, his favourite was Mumtaz Mahal, who accompanied him everywhere and was always devoted to him. When Mumtaz Mahal gave birth to their 14th child, her health deteriorated. Before her last breath, she asked four things of the emperor: that he build her a tomb, that he remarry, that he love his sons and that he visit her grave at the anniversary. Shah Jahan swore to build the most majestic mausoleum on top of her grave. Legend says that he was so grieved by the death of his beloved wife that he ordered for the mourning to be held for two years throughout the empire. Inside the dome there is the coffin of the empress inlaid in gems.

The construction that began in 1632 required 22 years of work, by 22,000 workers – artists, sculptors, engineers from all over the world. The Taj Mahal monument attained its final form in 1653. It is said that the materials were brought from all over India and other areas in Asia with the help of a "fleet" of 1,000 elephants.

Although it is made of white marble of the highest quality, the Taj Mahal suffers because of pollution. It is changing its colour to yellow, despite restrictions imposed →



on industrial activities and road traffic. To preserve the tomb, the Indian Supreme Court ordered ten years ago the closure or moving of foundries, brickyards and glass factories nearby.

Access to Taj is through 3 gates made of Agra red stone, perfectly aligned to the centre of the monument. Past the gates, one can see afar the beautiful white jewel as they approach it, crossing the garden as a Persian rug. In Islam, the garden holds a spiritual symbolism. According to the Quran, paradise is a wonderful garden and the garden on earth should be a reflection of paradise. Not by chance did Rudyard Kipling consider this monument a mystery, "an embodiment of all things pure, of all things sacred and of all things unfortunate."

The Taj Mahal emits femininity, fineness, grace, elegance and grandeur. Alongside the sad history of the romance, which brought forth the mausoleum, the palace draws its fame from the fact that the marble changes its shade multiple times a day, depending on the moment when one gazes at it. This characteristic makes the Taj Mahal an Impressionist live painting, changing dramatically, especially in those moments most influenced by the light of the sun: sunrise, noon and sunset. The light reflected in the marble awakens varied shades, ranging from grey and purple to shimmering gold or white; at sunrise the entire ensemble appears pink, while at night it is a yellowish white. It is said that the changing of colours is a symbol of womens' state of spirit.

A FEW ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The complex is located in a natural landscape which communicates with the outside through a massive tall gate, which is the symbol of the entrance in paradise. The Taj Mahal was created in Islamic style, a strong spiritual print noticeable in its architecture. The main dome, surrounded by the 4 minarets, suggests the image of Allah's throne, seen as a great pearl supported by pillars. The monument's artistic styles reunite Hindi influences with Persian, Moorish, Mongolian or Islamic elements, giving the complex its refinement – accentuated by the symmetric style present in almost every element.

There are two halls inside the dome, situated one beneath the other, which contain sarcophagi for the emperor and empress. The white marble sarcophagi, located in the superior hall, are just for show, while the ones beneath represent the true tombs of the two emperors. The halls have very good acoustics, so that a simple whisper will be heard in the farthest corner of the room. The only asymmetric object within the dome is the emperor's

coffin, which was built next to that of the Queen, 35 years later. Despite the fact that you are explicitly told at the entrance that taking photographs inside the monument is forbidden and you must not touch anything, many visitors hold their cameras, sometimes with the flash on and it is as if they want to feel the magic of the place, touching the marble every 5 seconds.

Legend has it that Emperor Shah Jahan had intended to build an identical mausoleum on the other side of the Yamuna river, this one of black marble, as well as a bridge that would connect the two constructions.

As much as I told about the Taj, my lived experience is beyond words. You cannot not feel small, very small compared to this monument's grandeur. I can say that compared to all the other touristic attractions that I have visited, and they were not few, the Taj Mahal is the only one which, in my view, emanates calm... a calm which permeates through bone marrow, uplifting.

On our way to Jaipur, we stopped at Fatehpur Sikri, which lies roughly 30-40km of Taj. The mogul Emperor Akbar, one of India's great emperors, decided to build his perfect city here, raising magnificent administrative, residential and religious buildings, comprised of palaces, public buildings, mosques, living areas for those at the court, the army and the servants. It is the most beautiful example of mogul architecture. The buildings have a foundation of red sand and marble. One of the constructions I liked was the Panch Mahal – an extraordinary structure, exclusively made of columns. It has five floors and is laid asymmetrically. It gives off the impression of infinite tunnels and was the only building that suggested to me a clear image of what was there before: a place for parties and relaxation. Closing my eyes I could imagine the princesses and the Queen, with their infinite waves of silk blowing in the balconies...

Este cel mai frumos exemplu de arhitectură mogulă. Clădirile au la bază nisip roșu și marmură.

JAIPUR - INDIA'S BALANCE

Jaipur has something I liked from the get go: balance. The image it offers is that of a city which evolves and harmoniously modernises itself, at the same time holding on to the remains of the past. It is similar to a scale, as we do not find only the poverty in Lucknow, but also the riches of other cities, being at once patriarchal and cosmopolitan. In the historic centre all the buildings are painted pink and have been renovated, keeping the original architecture. In fact, Jaipur is also known as the Pink City. Hawa Mahal

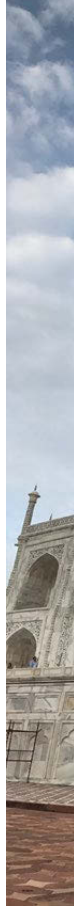




foto: Alexia Grădinaru

(the Palace of Wind) is the most well-known example of this type of "pink architecture," having been built in the shape of a crown – a space once reserved for the king's wives, so that they could observe peacefully the daily life of the street, away from the eyes of the passers by. A detail which could not go unnoticed, especially at night, is the presence of stained glass, which seems to give the building life, drops of happiness. Another place I visited was the Jal Mahal, also called the Palace of Water, a rather inspired name considering that it is built at the edge of a river. It seems taken from a fairy-tale, or at least another world, far away and completely unknown.

At the end of the day we went to a shop specific of the area and before entering we witnessed how they make the patterns on the blouses and the various fabrics. A nice old man showed us how to imprint the natural colour, made of plants, using a wooden block repeatedly. This is sculpted to form the desired pattern. We then also entered the jewellery shop. Despite the fact that Jaipur is a centre of gem processing, the prices seemed rather low for ruby bracelets, diamond rings or pink gold necklaces with emerald. It is still a mystery whether they were that cheap because they were made there or because they were not as authentic as they claimed.

We then decided to go to an Indian restaurant, called Choki Dhani Sonipat. Right at the entrance you got a red

dot on the forehead, but not to signify marriage, but to welcome you. Upon entering, I felt I was on an exotic island. Before us there was an impressive expanse of little houses, with small lights on the roofs, and only sand underfoot. Each cottage was like a restaurant, with different foods. Before entering, one has to take their shoes off. You sit cross-legged at some minuscule tables and wait for the people there to serve you out of the buckets they bring. Traditional Indian food is very spicy and colourful... spicy milk, chestnut rice, chicken curry. The bread is pitta made following the traditional recipe. No cutlery is used at the table. It was an unforgettable experience, which I am happy to have had.

NEW DELHI – THE CITY OF THE RICH

The journey through India is not just a walk through different places, it is before all, a journey in time, through all possible eras. Right upon entering New Delhi, one cannot help but notice that it is completely different to Lucknow, Agra or Jaipur. The chaos from other parts is turned here into order. One no longer sees houses made up of a few bricks and a blanket as the roof. One of the few similarities to Europe is the presence of the Arc of Triumph, call India Gate, raised in the memory of the 90,000 soldiers fallen in the First World War, while fighting for the British Empire. The most interesting experience I had in New Delhi was visiting a temple where we had to take off our shoes, take off our socks and where we were given a scarf, both the girls and the boys, to cover our heads with. It was overwhelming seeing them pray, feeling the breath and ritual of another religion.

OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

Everybody knows that India is known for its quality fabric clothing and its silk scarves. Unfortunately, it is not all true. I saw no European-cut blouses in any shop, only saris – their traditional dresses. However, if you were looking for a scarf, there was plenty of choice, but one had to be careful, as many were made in China and not 100% silk.

Something I didn't know is that Indians work and appreciate any object of marble. You find there anything, ranging from the small elephants coloured in a raw green to the jewellery boxes sculpted in great detail.

Although India is a very beautiful country from an architectural standpoint, I consider it a "once in a lifetime" experience.





A R T E S

Subjective Decantations

TNI, 2016-2017 Season

The beauty of the theatre show, but also its capacity to reframe the spectator's inner universe, arises precisely from the fragility intrinsic to any act that is impossible to capture in a second similar existence. The metamorphosis implied by the living presence of the man-actor is, from this point of view, identical to any moment lived in life. Hence, any show chronicle has a limit in itself and does not speak, in fact, except about the experience of the spectator who attended then and there at the birth of the show. As many representations, so many births.

› Nicoleta Munteanu

This is not, therefore, a top. These are thoughts of the spectacles played on the stage of the National Theatre in Iași that determined a certain emotion. This emotion related to either the human story comprised in the show, or the quality of the direction, or the involvement of the actor, or the attempt to experiment. The role of the following thoughts is merely to signal that, at a certain point, one may have encountered something which would determine them - as a spectator - to be a bit different. And secondly, to awake an interest: that of possible viewers of the world spectacle played on stage, of the actors, directors, coreographers and people never seen on stage (but present for the birth-spectacle to take place) towards what they have just brought into the world, of managers and cultural heads towards that which is taking place (or may take place) under their patronage.

IOV'S BUTCHER'S SHOP, DIRECTED BY RADU AFRIM

An exceptional show, cynical and staggering, which electrocutes every fibre of your being. A spectacle from which you leave crucified, but without any hope of redemption, shaken by the force of the images, the acoustic poignancy of the inner tearing scream, the message that leaves no illusion that the world is anything other than a place from which God was banished long ago. Radu Afrim builds upon Fausto Paravidini's text a meditation on what man is in relation to himself and others in a fallen world in which the being has lost every reference to a superior moral principle, in which Money has become the god to which it prays and the mechanism which generates everyone's fall as well as force, in which everything can be justified

perfectly rationally, thus disappearing every relation to the transcendent. When God does not exist (anymore) and everything is consumed within a relationship of force, salvation becomes merely a manifestation of the instinct of survival in the short-term. The butcher's shop is the world and the dolphin (the two large symbols around which everything gravitates) the sacrificed humane, likewise evicted from the world. What is left of the man in this equation? The camera pulses, is fragile, is an exchange coin, an instrument of manipulation through sex and addiction to pleasure, it is a purulent wound, subject to disease, the great nothing and object of every craving, it is exposed, put up for sale, sacrificed. And with it, so is the man. Not only is every character a victim of the logic they institute, raising it to the rank of absolute justification, but within it, they choose (whether or not consciously) their role of victim or executioner. Radu Afrim talks about manipulation and interhuman relationships as relationships of force, about estrangement, decomposition, betrayal, sexuality, human perversion, desperation, survival at any cost and by any means, humiliation and fear. And especially about how everything can be justified to one's own conscience and becomes understandable and therefore excusable, because *life is not for sentimental jerks*. A modern urban escatology with clowns transformed into prostitutes and transvestites. A zoo in which people love only themselves, in which the madness of believing in a dream is destroyed. The scenic presence of the body is something that Irina Moscu's scenography favours and accentuates in this spectacle. An existential lament transcribed into a modern key and a view of no illusions.

GOLDBERG SHOW, DIRECTED BY MIHAI MĂNIUȚIU

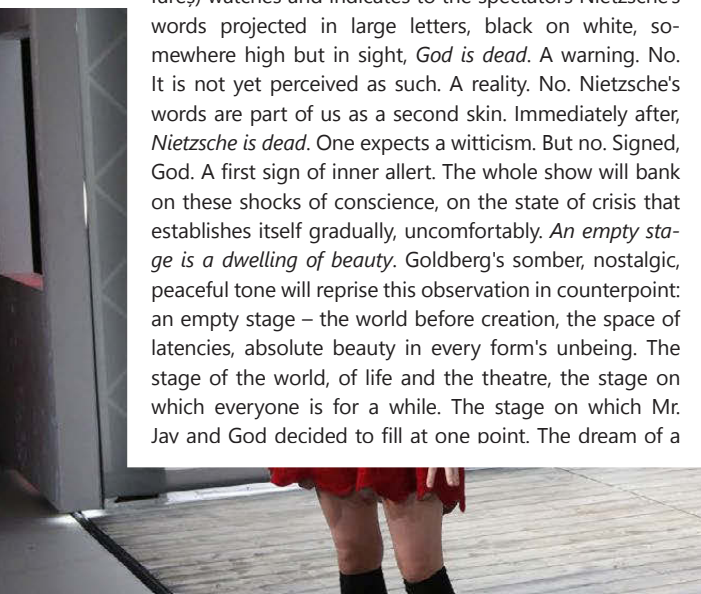
We are in Jerusalem, on a theatre stage prior to the opening, at one of the last rehearsals. Goldberg (Marcel Lureș) watches and indicates to the spectators Nietzsche's words projected in large letters, black on white, somewhere high but in sight, *God is dead*. A warning. No. It is not yet perceived as such. A reality. No. Nietzsche's words are part of us as a second skin. Immediately after, *Nietzsche is dead*. One expects a witticism. But no. Signed, God. A first sign of inner alert. The whole show will bank on these shocks of conscience, on the state of crisis that establishes itself gradually, uncomfortably. *An empty stage is a dwelling of beauty*. Goldberg's somber, nostalgic, peaceful tone will reprise this observation in counterpoint: an empty stage – the world before creation, the space of latencies, absolute beauty in every form's unbeing. The stage of the world, of life and the theatre, the stage on which everyone is for a while. The stage on which Mr. Jav and God decided to fill at one point. The dream of a

director that was insane, despotic, mutilated by his own shortcomings and desires, sometimes sadistic, sometimes absent: a presence one cannot ignore because Mr. Jay is the master of the show and at the same time of the actors and their world. Not of the text. Not of the Word. As God is the creator and master, the Word, but not the deed of man. For it depends on the Word revealed to Moses and Moses of Tabori only looked at God from behind and *You won't believe it: he's invisible!*. And slowly life comes into being: the representation from Jerusalem in rhythms of rock, of electrifying show which hypnotises the crowds – a mad helter of twisted bodies, an alert rhythm of motion. Perfectly recognisable: we are here, in our world, our time, watching, participating, building our lives. Spectacle. Behind: Goldberg, a figure reminiscent of that of a rabbi, seemingly leafing through the Torah. A silence, a shadow. And then, the electrifying appearance of Mr. Jay: king and clown, a mad buffoon with a sceptre. The idea and the power. Creation may now begin. The show is about to take shape: *Let there be light!* But there was no light, because the stage technique betrays the problems which will have to be solved by the director, the cracks, the actors' shortcomings, the revolts, petty interests, props in sight; and on the other plane there is a God *who no longer pulls off all his miracles*. Mr. Jay's show is a rendering in modern key of several episodes of the Old Testament: genesis, the dance of the ritualistic murder, the poem of knowledge, Moses' revelation on Mount Sinai. Iona on the way to Ninive citadel. Reimagined from the perspective of the world we live in: violence, sex, manipulation, autosuggestion, depersonalisation; rock concerts, drugs, pornography. Except that Mr. Jay's show is not once a mere representation before the opening. It is the Show itself, of the world and of each individual, without the power to go back, to reprise, to correct, a show without beginning and without end, closed within a mechanic in which the final point is but the

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Goldberg Show foto: TNI



Iov's Butcher's Shop foto: TNI





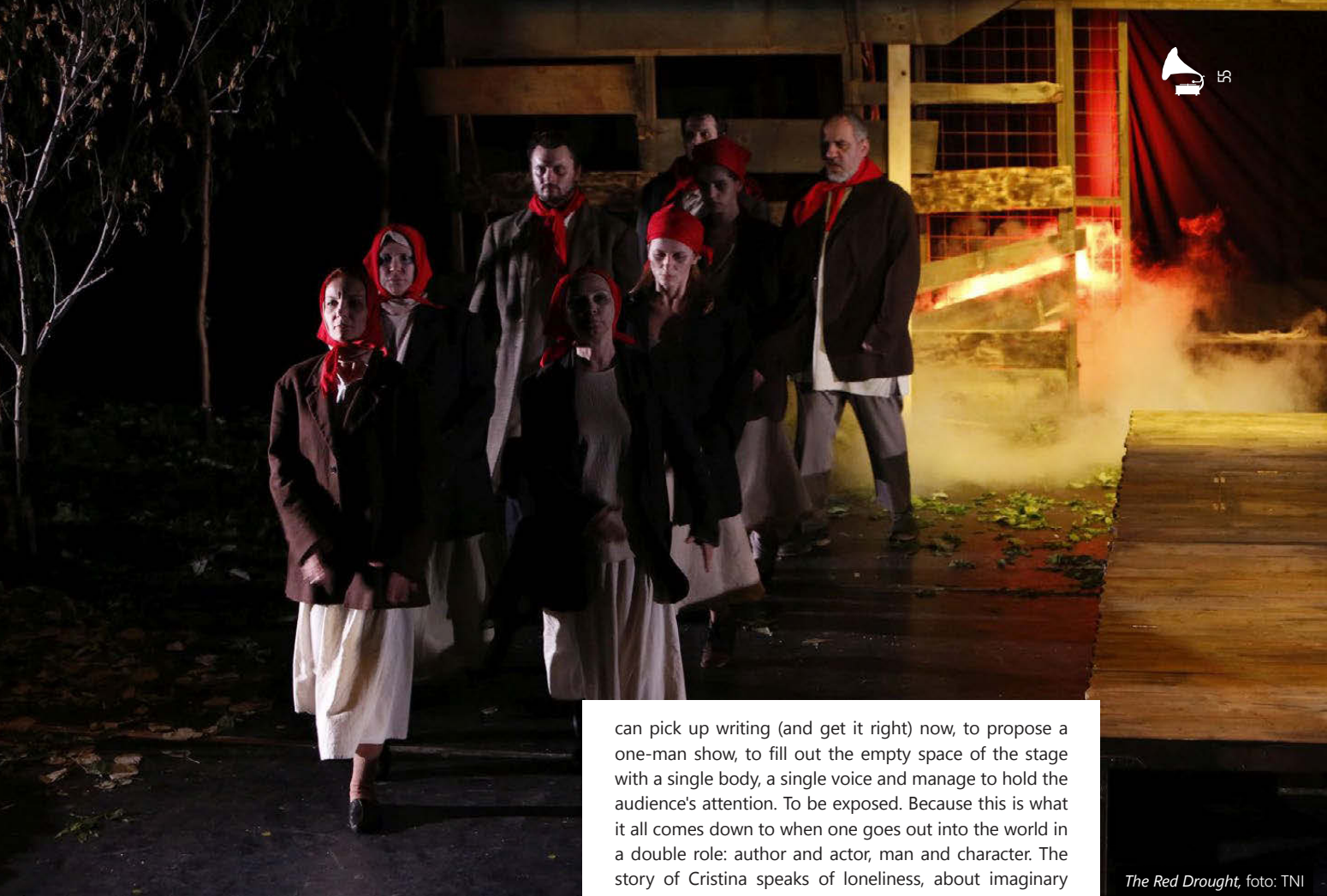
The Red Drought, foto: TNI

moment of a reprise. The transition from the world of the theatre and our world is gradual, through the deepening of meaning, ambiguity, faults which overlap analysing, incising, festering. Goldberg slowly becomes the Man in battle with God, he is Moses and Iona, Mr. Jay's string puppet and the conscience, he is the subject and the gaze, a number tattooed on one's arm, a survivor without illusions and without power, he is Man, son of Man and God, who comes to know his Father. The impression Mihai Măniuțiu's show leaves is like the strike of a whip. It leaves one breathless, yet makes one more alive. Stronger. More lucid. An eye which proposes and one which registers. They partially overlap. Just as life.

THE RED DROUGHT, DIRECTED BY PETRU HADÂRCĂ

A document-like show which filtrates objectively a shattering reality, a truth that has been made a secret and then deformed and still too little known: the drought that killed over 300 000 Romanians in Basarabia in the fifth decade of the most terrible century that humanity has known, under

Father Stalin's impassive gaze. A show that leaves one shaken through the way it transposes this reality. Like a vertigo that chains one through powerlessness, overwhelming. A chronicle of pain and suffering through starvation, of a monstrous time, the representation is of a seriousness that elevates pain beyond any lamentation. Built like the wail of a people thrown into history's garbage bin, speaking of a time in which a piece of bread was worth literally a man's life, it is comprised of a crescendo of memories of moments and experiences that stand on their own, but which gain the power to create an apocalyptic image. To which the sobriety of the background and the movements of the actors fully contribute. Nothing too much, everything in a slow accumulation of almost identical images of beings and situations that make one subhuman, that throw one onto the step of madness or the edge of existence. It is on this redundancy of images (skeletal bodies, visages weakened by suffering – accentuated by the white mask of hunger, the grimace and the black contour of the eyes – , bodies twisted by disease) that the director is counting on to imprint forever on the retina the agony, the villainy, the affliction. The documentary value of the show is unquestion-



onable. Beyond this is left the honesty of a staging which does not favour the overall tonality, but on the contrary, the Brechtian distancing. The only way to avoid the pathetic. Despite confessions that intersect or follow on from each other, despite the strictly personal experiences that living people have lived (the attention to detail, the accuracy of consignment are evidenced through the precision of the dates), the dominant note is impersonal. It belongs to the director's fundamental intuition: the truth is never written in capital letters.

THE STORY OF THE BIRD WITHOUT A NEST (TEXT: ADA LUPU, DIRECTED BY: IRIS SPIRIDON)

I liked Ada Lupu last night as well, because I find what she did in *The Story of the Bird Without a Nest* an act of courage. It is that courage that only a twenty-something yearold can have. Born out of a lot of pride, but also from the need to experiment, to throw oneself in head first in a way. It is a beautiful courage that deserves that you watch. It is the great advantage of the age to believe that one

can pick up writing (and get it right) now, to propose a one-man show, to fill out the empty space of the stage with a single body, a single voice and manage to hold the audience's attention. To be exposed. Because this is what it all comes down to when one goes out into the world in a double role: author and actor, man and character. The story of Cristina speaks of loneliness, about imaginary worlds colliding against the brutality of meeting others, about traumas, abuse, attempts and failure, about fragility. About the fear of being alone, about guilt, about the father's absence and the father's presence, about the search for a mother and the failure as a mother, about lovers, marriage, divorce. About writing. About the relationship with oneself. About a very lonely man. That is, about the story of the bird without a nest, a bird that could not stop flying because it did not have where to, because there was no nest for it anywhere. And then it stays in childhood. And then it is left to invent fragments of reality which will never, not ever, survive the collision with reality, which ends in madness, in solitude, in a renewed illusion. Text and verse, parts sometimes poetic sometimes cynical. Translations from one age to another, from one experience to another. Ada Lupu fights an experience which is not just that of a character. She fights the experience of being an author and the author's character at the same time. The creator and the creation/product. The text being hers, she is in an umbilical relationship with herself. *The Story of the Bird Without a Nest* is an interesting experiment, Ada Lupu deserves all the admiration for this exercise in fingering, for her courage, for her sensitivity.

The Red Drought, foto: TNI



Fearless nights

Electric Castle.

Electric is, as I said, not about music and only music. I don't listen to techo music, I am actually a mild rocker stuck between The Beatles and Green Day so, from this point of view, EC wasn't exactly my place. Electric is about people, about people who seek to live with people and people who are not afraid of the striking differences in tastes

› Ana Tebrean

To my shame, I have to admit that I first attended this festival last year. I made my way as a moderate hipster and probably a vivid teenager. I was 17 and all I wanted was an adult bracelet because, of course, I had to show off my declared maturity in front of my friends. But I chose to give up on such trivial beliefs when I first realized Electric Castle is a unique place, its location being proof of its foremost uniqueness. Located in a complementary field, the festival is amongst the stereotypical Romanian village where it continuously shocks the inhabitants (I have to mention that I did not fail to notice the restless teens of the village treating the guests like creepy astronauts from the future). I realised that this opposition of worlds makes EC more interesting and perverse, with a mild connotation. The passage between a country of agriculturists and Skrillex beats continues to prove that the idea of the apparently crazy entrepreneurs to establish a cultural movement near an abandoned castle, in a lost, remote location, not only came to fruition but is an intelligent marketing initiative.

Coming back to music. Electric is, as I said, not about music and only music. I don't listen to techo music, I am

actually a mild rocker stuck between The Beatles and Green Day so, from this point of view, EC wasn't exactly my place. Electric is about people, about people who seek to live with people and people who are not afraid of the striking differences in tastes. I came back and I'll always come back to Electric Castle for the electric vibes and for the lack of judgement, judgemental looks which tend to separate people into categories from punkists to poets and local peasants. Electric generates a mental acceptance, an acceptance which was originally found in the hippie movements from America in the '60. This festival puts all together fine music, united people and an outstanding technical performance. I definitely shouldn't miss that thing that makes Electric the festival to me: the rain.

ALTHOUGH IT HAS A LOT MORE TO ACCOMPLISH UNTIL THE TECHNICAL QUALITY OF TOMORROWLAND, ELECTRIC HAS THE RAIN. STRIKINGLY, NO MATTER THE DATE, HEAVY SHOWERS ARE THE GUESTS AT THIS FESTIVAL AT THE END OF JUNE AND IN THE MIDDLE OF JULY. BUT, WITHOUT RAIN ELECTRIC WOULDN'T BE



foto: Daria Pop

SO ELECTRIC. WHAT CAN BE MORE INTENSE, MORE SHUDDERING THAN A WILD DANCE IN THE MUD WITH COMPLETELY SOAKED CLOTHES? RAIN BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER.

So as extreme moments teach us, the rain brings us all together. Enslaved by vibes, we dance wearing boots or even barefoot. We get to now tourists in the camp, tourists who are living the time of their lives here, in Romania, not knowing our profound lack in modernity and cultural movements. Romania can generate beauty and can attract beauty.

At the entrance, we were amused by popular memes such as *send nudes* and the colourful trace through the trees were designed for the trippy ones. I was able to design a T-shirt, to dance at silent dance listening a separate song but really feeling it with the others. I was no longer a quintessential girl from Moldova, the ones from Ardeal taught me to pronounce *tulai*, *Doamne* and the foreigners were kind enough to help those with a low budget to take another drink. I read books on EC, I had been waiting in

awful queues but, overall, I felt electric. However this year the rain was mild, I managed to have fun fully loaded with only 3 hours of sleep.

Only after seeing this phenomenon called Electric Castle, you will understand why shy teenagers insist on wearing dirty bracelets for more than a year. Because of the feeling. Electric, it has really been emotional. I can't wait for the bus to take me to Bontida and I can't wait for the heavenly soup made by the local ladies in order to survive those fearless nights.

Electric gives meaning to a person like me, to a girl so sick of the overpopulated clubs. Electric gives meaning to a country still stuck in the medieval age at some points. We have cultural movements, we have beautiful people, amazing teenagers who don't embarrass me. I have only one regret: the damned admission exams from the following year, which will stop me from attending my electric event.

Ana Tebrean is a 12th grade student, attending the Petru Rareș Highschool from Suceava, who obtained the first prize at the Romanian Literature National Olympiad.



F I L M S



MAX'S MORB

Scarred hearts

THE WAY THE SICK TRANSFORM THE PAIN AND HELPLESSNESS IN RESIGNATION AND FURTHER IN JOY OF LIVING IS NOTHING SHORT OF AWE INSPIRING. THIS TIME WE ARE NOT PRESENTED TO THE CLASSICAL IMAGE OF SUFFERING.



› Andreea Petrovici

© Silviu Gheție

foto via observatorcultural.ro

The project was defined by himself as an adaptation through personal interpretation of Blecher's book, and not a one-to-one match. Beyond the advantage of tackling an impactful subject, the movie **Scarred hearts** is rooted in Jude's wish to make Max Blecher, a sanatorium writer, known to the wide audience, as he is more popular in the West and almost obscure in his homeland. With such a noble goal set, an honest comparison between the movie and the book can not be made. I am inclined to say that the movie is an extension to Blecher's work, a sort of tribute, which makes possible keeping this truly remarkable writer in the present.

After Radu Jude won the *Silver Bear* award for the best screenplay at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2015 with the movie *Aferim!* (another masterpiece of Romanian cinematography), in 2016 he comes back with a project even more welcomed than the last one. It is the fourth feature film of Jude, awarded this time at Lucarno.

I have to admit to initially having a certain reluctance to the project's potential. M. Blecher was already among my favorite authors when the movies premiered and, apart from promoting a writer known by too few in my opinion, I can not say that I gave much credit to Radu Jude. *Scarred hearts* is the kind of novel that hits you in full. Bluntly presented, with sparse breaks: the reader facing the sickness - naked, shameless. To this image are added the madness to live outside of the context and an unfathomable thirst for life. The kind of book that tingles your spine and will reside inside you.

BECAUSE OF THIS, SCREENPLAYS OF THIS KIND OF NOVELS START AT A DISADVANTAGE. BOTH THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SUBJECT AND THE INTENSITY OF THE IMAGES ARE HARD TO EQUAL AND HIGH IMPOSSIBLE TO SURPASS IN A MOTION PICTURE ADAPTATION. TO HIS CREDIT, RADU JUDE IS WELL AWARE OF THIS FACT AND COMES WITH A PERSONAL VISION ON THE BOOK, EVEN ENRICHING IT IN SOME PLACES.

The action is focused on Emanuel (Lucian Teodor Rus, at his debut in feature films, successfully represents the new generation of actors in this role), a young Jew from Roman, which came to doctor's Ceafalan (Șerban Pavlu) sanatorium to have confirmed a harsh diagnosis - bone tuberculosis. Emanuel proves to be an alter-ego of the author, Blecher suffering from Pott's Morb, disease which would eventually cause his death. Unlike others whom would have been broken by the diagnosis, Emanuel perseveres because of it: animated because of Ceafalan's enthusiasm, he accepts the treatment and becomes the prisoner of a strangling gypsum corset, bound to spend all of his time laying in the bed.

The way the sick transform the pain and helplessness in resignation and further in joy of living is nothing short of awe inspiring. This time we are not presented to the classical image of suffering. In a setting that we would usually associate with the cancerous pavilion of Soljenițin and which would emanate compassion, people come to terms with their own diagnosis, making in a part of their body, like an extra limb, but also a foreign organ. I never was under the impression of watching dying people dragging their days like dogs of a piece of bread. Accepting the sickness (and even transforming it in a companion) embodies human dignity. The general atmosphere is of empathy towards the main character. Despite this, neither Blecher nor Jude reduce the action to a subjective experience.

The movie is built from fixed frames, most long, all representing objective perspectives-not a single one belonging to the subjective view of Emanuel or any other character. This way, we see the sickness bringing people together. As not any diagnosis surpasses another or is easier to bear. It's like a mass of flesh feeling the same pain, converting it, with an excess of resignation, into a validation of existence.

A significant detail is the way Radu Jude chooses to keep the movie connected to Blecher's books. There are scenes where he copies it as it is, from paper to screen: he selects fragments from the book (not exclusively from *Scarred hearts*, but also from *Adventures in Immediate Unreality* and his sanatorium journal, *The Lit-Up Burrow*), and presents them as intertitles. Their length varies from just a few words to complete, complex phrases. Despite



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foto via observatorcultural.ro

this, especially in the first half of the movie, what is being read does not always depict the last or the next scene, but the technique binds everything together.

The apparition of the young girl Solange (Ivana Mladenovic), a former patient, represents a triggering event for the development of the story, an *awakening to malady*. Pushed from one place to another by caretaker Nelu (Marius Damian), our hero is desperately clinging to the illusion of a normal life, illusion crushed by his own gypsum, as he fails in his try to perform his man duty. Thus, his sexual decrepitude augments the main character's suffering, connects him to the bleak reality in which he struggles.

I consider a real forte of the movie to be the way Emanuel is built. His scholastic references, all of his cultural allusion only increase the quality of the content. The image of the young intellectual is not painted in sober colors, but in a rather witty manner, these information becoming high-value assets in the art of survival. His mocking impressions or advertising idioms ("The devil is black, but not as black as the *Vultur* shoe cream"), become a trademark of the character. Even the name of his illness, "Pott's Morb", inspires him to change – while flirting with

another patient – the slogan to Mott champagne, which he states was written by Arghezi. Literature is a constant source for this kind of banter – he quotes from *Meșterul Manole* to Solange, from *Richard III* to doctor Ceafalan while comparing another doctor (making the transition from literature to the visual art) to the inquisitor of *El Greco*. Emanuel can make a smooth transition between a Chekhov quote ("*Everything has to be beautiful at a man; the face, the body, the gypsum*") to Cioran's antisemitic views, these being major turning points in the making of the youngster's cultural profile. A particularly interesting scene is the one where the name of Geo Bogza can be seen on a book Emanuel is reading, as it is known that Bogza had not only a friendship relationship with Blecher, but also a literary influence.

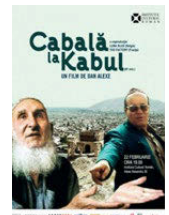
THE MOVIE SCARRED HEARTS IS CRUEL: AN HONEST PRESENTATION OF THE DISEASE, ACCEPTED BECAUSE OF NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE. JUDE DOES NOT DISSAPPOINT THIS TIME EITHER, CREATING A VALUABLE FEATURE FILM FOR ROMANIAN CINEMATOGRAPHY. ASIDE FROM THE OBVIOUS CONTRIBUTION TO CINEMATOGRAPHY, THIS MOVIE IS A REAL TRIBUTE TO MAX BLECHER AND AN INVITATION TO HIS WORK, WHICH CAN ONLY RELISH.

Andreea Petrovici
is a student at "Petru
Rares" National
College Suceava.

CABAL IN KABOUL

THE EYE OF A STRANGER

WITH DUSTY CLOTHES CAUSED BY THE REMAINING RUINS, WITH RED TINTED HANDS FROM ANIMAL BLOOD, WITH THEIR NAMES MISPRONOUNCED BY THE SO-CALLED FRIENDS FROM THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBOURHOODS, WITH THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE JEWS SWALLOWED BY THE BETTER OF THE DISTANT LANDS AND THE PATHETICISM OF THEIR ALIENATION FROM THE SYNAGOGUE AND TORAH, ISAAC AND ZABULON MANAGE TO CREATE BEAUTY FROM THE ABSURDITY SURROUNDING



› Ana-Lucia Dominte

The documentary film **Cabal in Kabul** follows, with intriguing sincerity and simplicity, the life of the last two Jews left in Kabul. Isaac and Zabulon have a precarious livelihood in Afghanistan with its particular old, foul smell, among the ruins of the synagogue whose significance is so different and yet common to both. They live in their own little reality, away from the noise and chaos, but with their souls vibrating from the tension of the tumultuous past. What makes this universe which seems faded, rigid, vibrate are the replicas of the unfortunate destinies of the Jewish soul who struggled to find its place in a desolate space, almost shaven on the face of the earth.

Although they are victims of poverty, they both seem to be the masters of their own world, they are content with what they are given to live and feel, they are content

to eat and work and serve their synagogue and religion unceasingly. In other words, the last two Kabul Jews are aware of their state, but they continue to live on those unfriendly streets, among people with a different religion and culture, among the judging and weighing eyes.

At the same time we are the witnesses of a latent but endless religious conflict between the two Jews and the rest of the Muslims, of a discord without a cure, of a battle of perception of deity. Through Isaac's eyes, at a moment of revelation, we notice a little of this unchanged mentality "Do you know how much they hate us? They hate both Americans and Europeans. For them, we are just heathens. "Dan Alexe, the director of the film, who lived for three years in the heart of the cold and heavy Kabul just to produce the documentary, buries the true nature of the conflict, stating in the film that "the Taliban leave them alone, they do not force the two to give up Judaism or to convert to Islam, because, in their theoretical logic they know that Jews and Christians are tolerated in the Quran."

The rivalry between Isaac and Zebulun is real yet artificial, a construct due to the division of space. As Dan Alexe states, "their rivalry is similar to the one of a couple





› Sabina Condurache

which is generated between two people who have been in the same space for a long time. It does not matter what they say, perhaps even they do not even believe what they're saying". In other words, what appears to be a disagreement between the two - the words they throw at one another, the pejorative appellatives - are the mark of a lasting coexistence that makes the gossip, the gestures, even presence, perceived with harshness and abhorrence, of one another unbearable. And all these small, perfectly human miseries are uncensored in "Cabal in Kabul". The documentary, moreover, is organized around the idea that "words are superfluous", therefore the dialogue is not at all vivid or colourful, nor dynamic or electrical, but rather spontaneous and monotonous; the director does not rely on the emotional impact, but on their role to build a "real-time" image of a closed, suffocating space where only daily worries leave a mark on the foreheads of the inhabitants, in which the power of the word is non-existent, being replaced by the intuition of the moment, by empathy, tolerance, or the absence of them altogether.

As far as the frames are concerned, they showcase the reality of the two and are, as the director intended, lacking in cultural explanations, opposed to televised manners. The complete frames, which describe moments as simple as possible, capture perfectly objective the ugliness, the weakness, the tranquillity and the strain – an ugly, silent yet sacred bizarre. Thus, the idea which the producer starts with in the making of the "Cain and Abel" trilogy is his own vision of the presence of the sacred in the day to day life, determined by the question: "How can these people, with such a genuine and active faith, be in their daily lives, people so odious?" Under these circumstances, of course, the authenticity of the faith is not invalidated or questioned, but questions arise as to how we look at this whole process. In other words, perhaps the idea of an absolute eclipses the essence and we are only left to idealize the spiritual ascension of religious nature, associating the divine absolute with human dedication and faith: "When we come into contact with this world of the sacred, we must give up our somewhat baroque ideals which are like a box of candies".

Ana-Lucia

Dominte is a student in 12th grade at "Octav Băncilă" National College of Arts, Iași.

What remains with you when the movie ends is the idea that the sacred represents the power to stay steadfastly in front of your religion, even though in everyday life you wander like a Siddhartha, looking for your place and purpose while making mistakes and being far from perfect.

Misunderstanding. Vanity. Two Jewish men remained, what seemed lost, in a country in which their religion wasn't accepted. Fear. They lived with this felling more than we could imagine - years, months, days and nights, moment by moment. Fear changes people and from here there is only one way ahead to betrayal.

Both of the Jews claim that they have been sold out by the other one, that the other Jew turned down on him and each one is guilty for being beaten up by the Taliban. At the beginning you don't know who to believe. An old Jew that makes amulets for a living or the dark side of the other one. Who do you bet on?

The first instinct is to feel sorry for the older one, Isaac, the one that from the first minutes of the movie is mocked by Zabulov. During the course of the film they end up swearing, to abolish. Each Jew claims that the other one gave up on their Jewish religion and that also the other one betrayed him by selling him to the Taliban, reason that they both had to suffer. It is true that Isaac seems innocent, but you get to think and be intrigued when more than one confirmed that he really wanted to convert. You start to think, what if this image of an overdone old man, is actually a mask that hides a character. Or maybe he really is a good man, but he wants to forget what he did years ago. In the Afghan world he doesn't live a comfortable life, being otherwise abandoned by his family. Although his son returns after a very long time, he brings nothing but disappointment to his father. Let's take a look at Zabulov's profile. He cuts chickens. He learned how to cut chickens. And he eats them alone. Without sharing not a single piece with Isaac. He speaks dirty, disrespectful. He gossips and swears the other one. Always the other one.

From outside of the story we can understand why they ended up in this situation, Zabulov and Isaac. They both suffered. They were forced to create a shield to protect themselves, to survive and the first thing at their reach was to blame each other. You can't judge them. After all, the human being is a species that is born with the mechanism of defense in their blood, and who ever would be in their position, would probably transform the same. If you were in their situation, would you have done something different?

Leaving aside their constant conflict, behind their dialog and interplay, you discover an unknown universe. And it's





foto via cinepub.ro

impossible not to be intrigued by the strange world they are living in. Kaboul, Afghanistan. For every Jew is better to avoid it. And usually is a very dangerous place for anyone, where your life could be taken anytime. This is the image that Afghanistan shows for many years now.

But as there are people who are brave enough to stomp, to penetrate and live in such a hostile world, we can enjoy these impressive images today and we are able to have an idea of how they are living isolated, in communities that are impossible to visit.

Simplicity. Some are content with it, but most have to accept it. Many gaps. Hygiene. There is no question of thinking about that. Safety. You cannot even rely on it. Food is not always on the table, and very few can enjoy it. And another interesting fact that captivated me throughout the movie. Language. Afghan is really a fascinating language and you come to wonder how some can understand, talk, enjoy her music.

About the cinematic language, I can say that all the sacrifices made by the author to get so real images is surprising. Despite the fact that the picture is not always sharp and focus, the filming is done most of the time handheld, sometimes frames are stolen to capture every detail of the story. The film surprises you by describing a unique, unknown, inaccessible space, in a manner in which these images are delivered to the audience. The filmmaker was actually compelled to be the only witness of the story, being probably the only person accepted in the intimacy of people who became his characters and in the community they were living in. An act of courage.

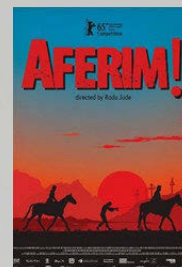
The documentary movie by Dan Alexe surprises in vibrant, profoundly human imagery almost all the glitches of a world and creates a truly moving story - the story of the last two remaining Jews in Afghanistan that ironically do not understand each other. It's a movie in which you discover how much faith changes you. In fact, the only thing no one can take it from us. No one.

Sabina Condurache is a student in 9th grade at "Octav Băncilă" National College of Arts, Iași.



Aferim

AWARDED THE SILVER BEAR FOR BEST DIRECTOR AT THE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN BERLIN 2015, AFERIM! RECANTS THE PATTERNS OF THE POST-DECEMBER CLICHÉ, LEAVING THE IMMEDIATE REALITY AND THE RECOUNTINGS OF THE RECENT PAST TO TELEPORT ITS SPECTATORS BACK TO THE 19TH CENTURY, IN THE PICTURESQUE LANDS OF THE ROMANIAN COUNTRYSIDE

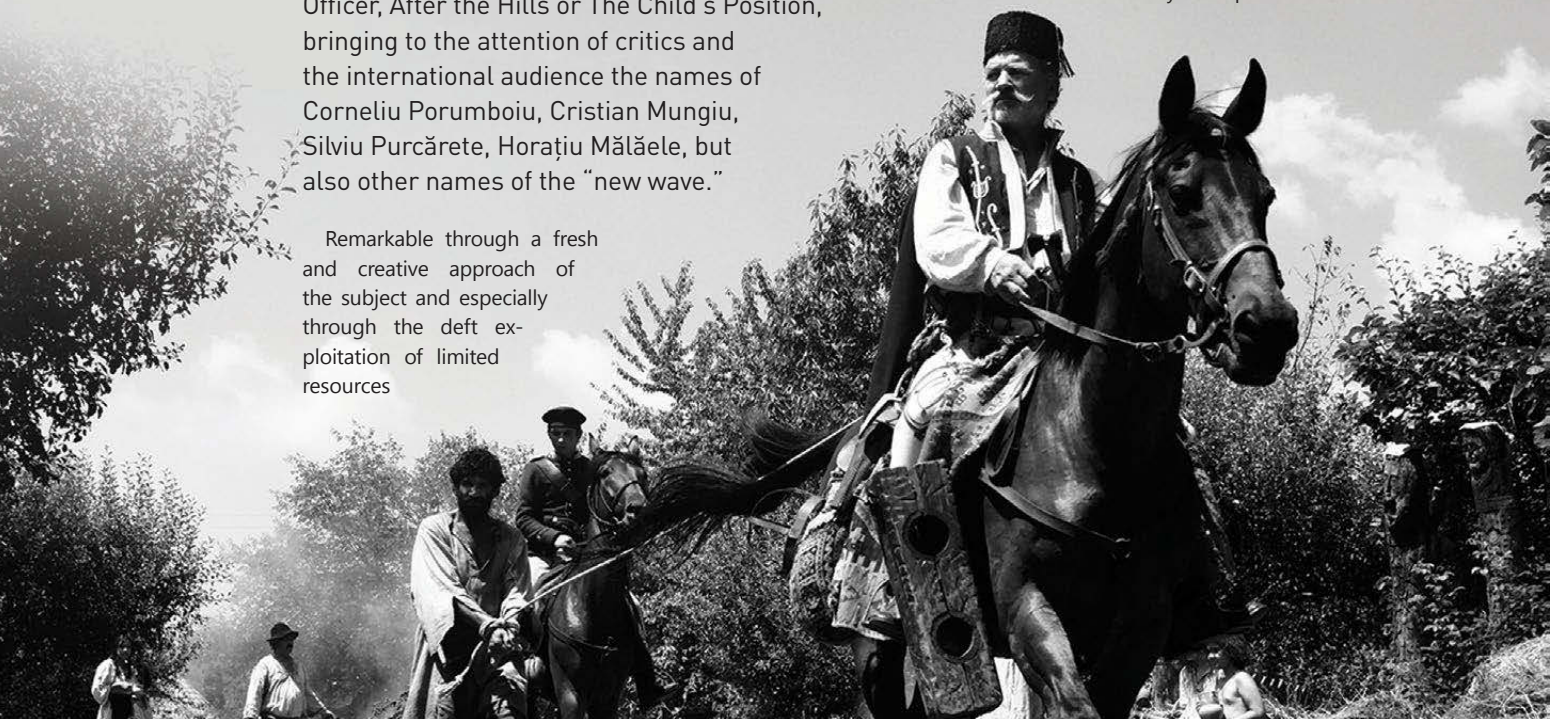


› Ioana Lionte

Incontestable and at the same time extremely interesting the gradual legitimization of the Romanian cinematography of the last decade! This transgression of national limits has pivoted around films such as 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days, Mute Wedding, Memories from the Golden Epoch, Adjective Officer, After the Hills or The Child's Position, bringing to the attention of critics and the international audience the names of Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristian Mungiu, Silviu Purcărete, Horațiu Mălăele, but also other names of the "new wave."

Remarkable through a fresh and creative approach of the subject and especially through the deft exploitation of limited resources

so that the quality of the product stayed intact, these productions contradict ever more pronouncedly a cultural crisis which seems to paralyze the post-December Romanian space. The latter has kept, even within the context of an ever more extended cultural uniformisation, the insular character which offers Romanian films the status of confessions of unique exotism, isolated by the massive block of Hollywood productions.



Awarded the Silver Bear for best director at the International Film Festival in Berlin 2015, **Aferim!** recants the patterns of the post-December cliché, leaving the immediate reality and the recounting of the recent past to teleport its spectators back to the 19th century, in the picturesque lands of the Romanian Country. Thus, *Aferim!* directed by Radu Jude gravitates around several strong points which attest above all a well implemented mechanic, a seductive articulation between sound, image, language, characters and not least the ideational centres of a novel account. This amalgamation of the above mentioned elements offers the illusion of a fairy-tale transposed in picturesque cadres, black-and-white (the director's choice for the purpose of conferring an epic feel to the cinematography), sustained throughout the action by a mosaic-like dialogue, reminiscent of well-known writings such as those of Creangă, Budai-Deleanu or even Chekhov.

Having behind a solid documentation of the 19th-century Romanian space, the production initiates the spectator into a world two centuries away. Thus become apparent aspects of the social sphere, from clothing and language to the hierarchic relationships within the Wallachian space. *Aferim!* conquers through the clever merging of a little explored subject with the finely crafted dynamic of the characters. Strongly outlined, the latter bring forth in a tragicomic light a landholder devoted to the boyar, who, occasionally preoccupied by his own imminent end, sets out with his son, Ioniță, who could be considered the "subject" of an initiation. Landholder Constandin could be projected somewhere in the middle of a hierarchic chain at the upper end of which is the boyar, the bottom end being represented by the Gypsy slave, Carfin. Having fled the boyar's court after having sexual relations with the master's wife, the latter is caught by the pair and returned to the court, where he suffers the consequences of his own social status rather than those of his actions.

THIS IS HOW RADU JUDE'S FILM DEVELOPS AS POINT OF INTEREST NOT ONLY AN ANIMATED NARRATIVE THAT GAINS IN PLACES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AMERICAN WESTERN, BUT ALSO THE ISSUES OF CERTAIN SOCIAL DYNAMICS CHARACTERISTIC TO THE 19TH CENTURY.

Starting from the boyar's status in his role of ruler, the story brings forward, one at a time, his wife, also in possession of a privileged status but at the same time subject to her husband's authority, the landholder motivated as much by a sense of duty towards his master as his own financial issues, his son, subject to an initiation and "trained" to become courageous as well as to take his father's place, and not least the two Gypsy slaves, who have escaped for

fear of retaliation. The issues the film is counting on also came up in the questions after the viewing and brought up elements such as language, the translation degree of the script and the director's intentions regarding the approach of the social status of the characters of Roma ethnicity.

Although according to Teodor Corban the nature of the language sparked certain difficulties with regards to orality, the intertextual and therefore literary character of the lines constitutes a point of interest of the film, impressive through the candor, natural and refreshing qualities of a rich verbal repertory. The potential vulgarity, brought into discussion also within the dialogue afterwards, does not disturb or offend the viewer, it is part of a colorful language, without feeling forced, out of a freedom of expression specific to the time and space circumstances of the diegesis. As for the specificity of the language, one note the high degree of difficulty as much in finding the equivalent in other languages due to the large percentage of dialect specific phrases, as with regards to the Romanian audience's ability to decipher a language classified as archaic.

The discussion was enlightening also with regards to the director's assumed intention to bring to the fore the status and living conditions of the Roma communities in the 19th century, to thus effect a kind of awareness of the public with regards to actual issues within the social frame. Although an important part of the cinematographic content, the offsetting element of the action and the pretext for the pair's journey, the question of Roma slaves does not presume to be a central aspect of the film in the sense of a social manifesto, but simply an element which attests to the veracity of the account. The film's producers have aimed to bring to the public's awareness the 19th century "as it was," without taking on the role of a pleading.

Filmed in only 25 days and on a limited budget, *Aferim!* thus joins the other quality products of the Romanian cinema, evidencing an extraordinary mobilization of the production team who managed to utilize their limited resources without taking away anything from the value and impact of the film.

Radu Jude's film is ultimately a film with Roma and about Romanians, about their habits, customs, fears and beliefs, a film which does not have the racial issue as its main theme, but uses it as a pretext to show Romanians as they are today their ancestors as they were in the 19th century.





THE MORAL CRISIS, OUR EVERY DAY CRISIS

Baccalaureate

RELEASED IN 2016 AND AWARDED THE SAME YEAR AT THE AT THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL, BACCALAUREATE, DIRECTED BY CRISTIAN MUNGIU, BRINGS TO LIGHT MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE IN A ROMANIA THAT IS STILL SEVERELY AFFECTED MORALLY.



› Ionuț Porcescu

The film offers the audience the possibility to project themselves into the X-rayed universe without too much difficulty as an observer that is on one hand detached from the story and on the other profoundly involved, as they recognize situations that are commonplace in life, which even if they have not lived directly, they may well have. We (re) discover a community in which the spirit of correctness has been abolished and which progressively breaks the rules of honesty in order to get what they want or believe is rightfully theirs. The interesting idea brought into discussion by Cristian Mungiu is the one of a collective effect that living in an unsettled society presents, as the characters seem to have a proper mentality which fits into certain boundaries of self-respect and respect for

those around, but this appearance dissipates gradually with the unfolding of events that turn upside down this carefully constructed existence. Because of the faulty manner of dealing with issues within the extended group in which they live, the characters resort to a series of immoral actions to sort out their problems and end up convincing themselves that ultimately, it is rather frequent that one resorts to fraud, deceit, lies and since others do it also, they become free to use the same means for their own ends.

The movie presents the rather tangled life story of a doctor (Romeo, played by Adrian Titieni), who goes over countless ups and downs, eventually managing to overcome them only at the cost of compromise. Firstly, his daughter (Eliza - Maria Drăguș) is raped right next to the high school where she studies days before her baccalau-



foto via bacalaureat2016.com

MATURITY WHICH IS HARD TO LEARN

The film proposes a view not only of the adults' universe, but also of the young generation, the teenagers who face the high school graduation exam and the decisions this entails. The young people are influenced by numerous temptations which may have serious consequences. On top of the fact that family can constitute an unstable environment, as any child will be visibly affected by tensions between the parents, they are exposed to the temptation of fraud, drugs, alcohol, smoking, neglecting their study out of a desire to be accepted by their entourage.

reate exam. The girl is traumatized, but the father makes use of all his influence to ensure that she will graduate, so that she may access a scholarship to one of the most prestigious universities in England. As the story unfolds, there are countless disagreements and problems between the father, wife, lover, and the daughter's boyfriend and, of course, the girl who is indecisive with regards to going abroad, aware that the boy she loves cannot follow. In the end, things tend to reach *normality*, a normality that cannot ignore the prior decisions and events: the doctor chooses to end any relationship with his former wife, preferring to stay with his mistress. The resolution is unclear, intentionally left open: one does not find out the girl's baccalaureate result, nor whether she will choose to stay with her boyfriend or leave abroad for study. The tension persists, as does the state of induced irritation, because above what takes place is the way in which the impulses, desires and decisions they generate transform into assumed actions, but outside the conscience of good and morals (although the characters seem to act in the name of good up to a certain point).

The unfolding of perfectly realistic images evidences their emotional vulnerability and instability. Aggression in its most brutal forms is a fact of life and the scene of the rape in the middle of the street is but the exacerbation of these violent manifestations, these impulses. Moreover, at one point, the father considers an ultimate complicity of the girl's boyfriend in the act of harassment, as the latter, although he sees from a distance what is happening, hesitates to intervene. Mirrored are, on one hand the future and possibilities of a young person who has learned constantly and who now, in order to pass the baccalaureate needs outside interference and her father's influence, thus cancelling her prior efforts because she has not overcome the trauma incurred, and on the other, the trajectory of someone who has since an early age neglected his study but finishes a sports-orientated high school, where one can copy in the baccalaureate exam even though there is no pressure over grades. The film also brings into discussion another issue just as delicate: the tense relationship between teenagers and their parents. Taking into account the fact that the only one who understands her is her boy-



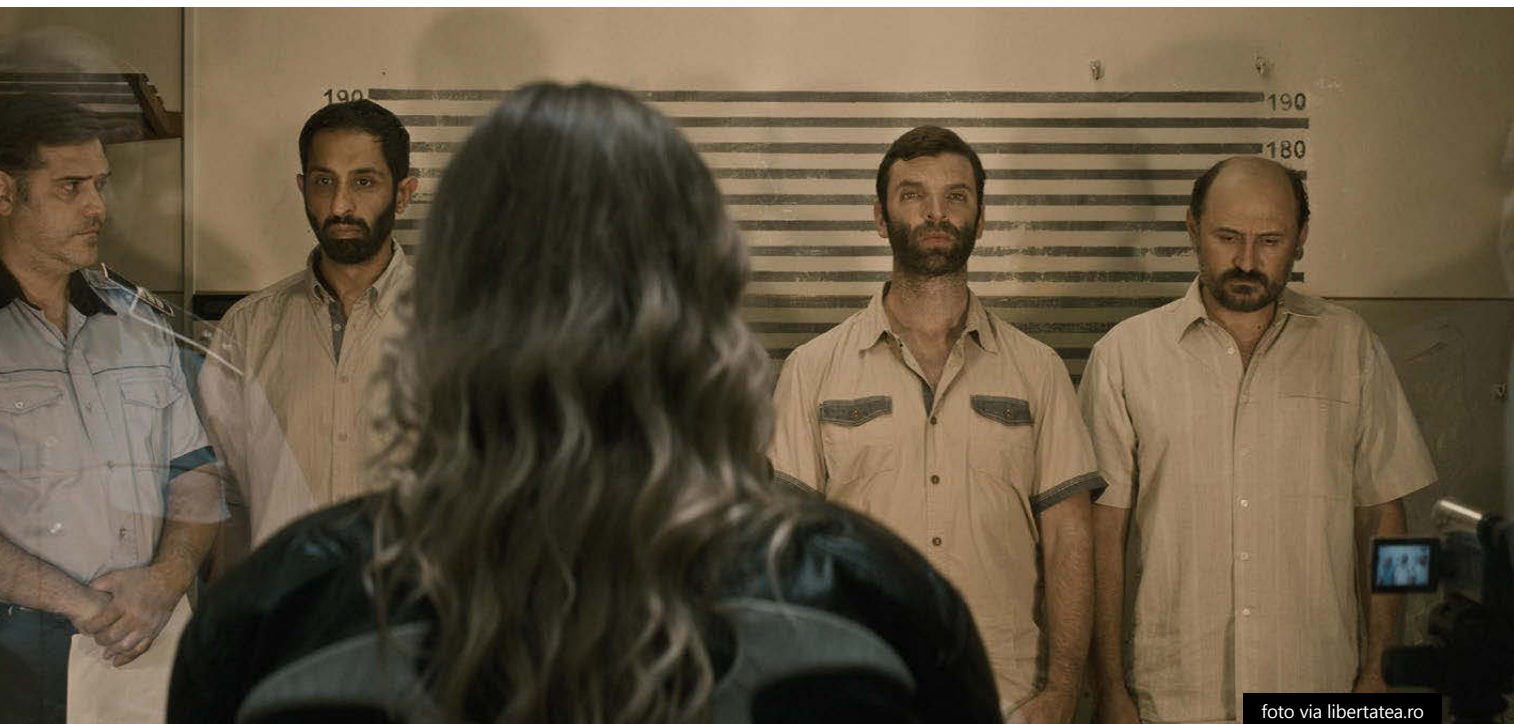


foto via libertatea.ro

friend, Eliza does not acknowledge the efforts her parents make, trying to resolve on her own what is impossible to resolve, answering her father that she never asked him to help her with the difficulties encountered in the test of maturity. It is on one hand the girl's perspective, who considers herself mature and independent and on the other hand that of her parents, who cannot remain indifferent to what is going on with their child, even if this entails a major moral compromise.

GROWN-UPS RAVAGED BY PROBLEMS

The film X-rays in the same clear-sighted strokes the grown-ups' world as well, the perspective of those who perpetually fight for a better living together with their children. Romeo Adrea chose to stay in the country with his wife in the 90s, believing that he would build a life without worries and problems, but is confronted with the reality of a society in which one is successful easier and more securely through deceit, lying, theft, corruption, and ends up regretting his choice of having stayed in the country. The doctor's moment of crisis is when he bursts into tears in the forest by the road, acknowledging the impossible situation that life placed him in. He tries his hardest to please everybody, and even ends up sacrificing his status to ensure that his daughter will pass the baccalaureate, and furthermore, is on the verge of being investigated for

the fraud he has committed. What appears at first the life of a fulfilled man turns out to be an existence in which unsolvable problems pile up and prior decisions which need to be taken at present crack through the doctor's personality. He lives an agitated life and ultimately is forced to accept that he can no longer deal with all the problems, choosing to end any ties to his wife, too ravaged to be able to deal with the obstacles that he himself has erected in their lives. But what he has previously lived leaves its mark on his current decisions and the father's insistence in asking his daughter to put her study first and give up love proves hypocritical when related to the double life he himself has led.

Without dramatic overtones, without aiming for anything but presenting an overview of the contemporary Romanian society starting from a specific event, but raising issues and emphasizing dilemmas together with the situations in which the characters find themselves, Cristian Mungiu's film does not allow one to remain indifferent. You watch the succession of the frames, open your eyes wide at what is around you and cannot help but ask yourself in the end, *Where do I stand in all of this?*, *What would I have done if?*, *What about my parents?*. You know the answers and yet you pray for a moment that you will never be in a position to choose.



SIERANEVADA

BLACK COMEDY THROUGH THE EYES OF THE DEAD

IF YOU EVER WONDER HOW TO ORGANISE A WAKE AND CHOP IT UP IN A 3 HOUR MOTION PICTURE CRISTI PUIU'S FILM IS THE TRUE ANSWER FOR THE ROMANIAN-ORTHODOX VARIANT WITH UNIVERSAL IMPLICATIONS



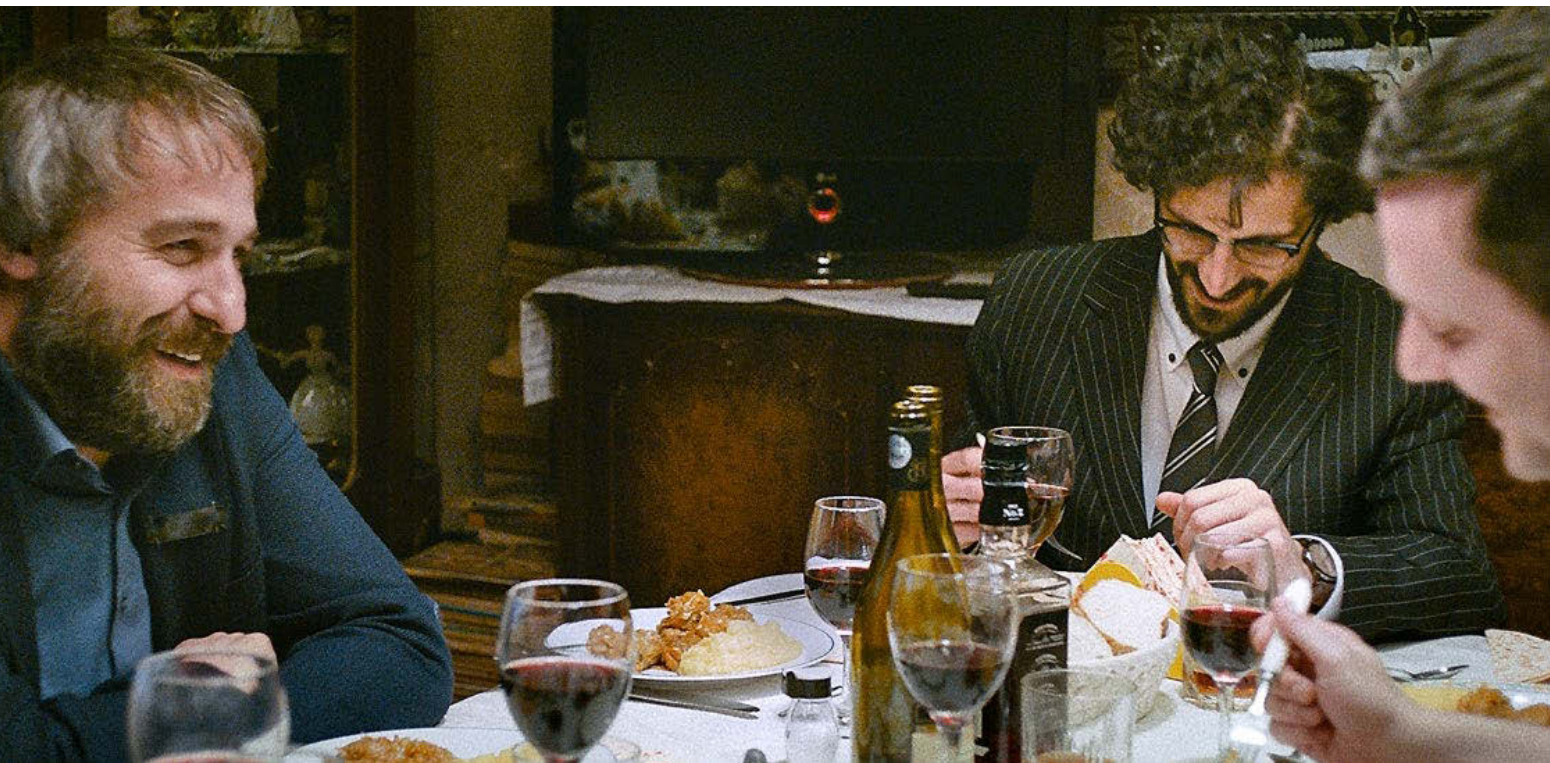
› Tudor Berbinschi

Sieranevada is a 100% Romanian picture: who else but Cristi Puiu could have produced a three-hour wake in which the characters chatter almost schizophrenically in the intense rhythm of personal dramas? All this minimalist action, raised to a universal scale, takes place in a single apartment in Colentina, between doors and complaints, where nobody has in fact gathered for the wake or to honour the deceased, but to flex and tense their own ego in front of everyone else. These are the elements that gave the film the necessary breath to obtain the Cannes nomination for the Palm d'Or and 6 Gopo awards.

Everyone has to meet up at the wake on a January day. The people in the film meet up to honour the dead father of Emil, the neighbour in the block of flats in Colentina, but they continue to live within the illusion of their own existential crisis, unable to come together to hold the mass

as tradition would have it, obtaining in fact a miniature representation of the human nature in its embarrassing splendour.

The film does actually start with a stupid argument in the car and not any car, a BMW X3, between Lary (Mimi Brănescu) and his wife about Disney outfits and unsuitable little shoes for their daughter's ballet show. It is obvious that the problem is not in fact the girl's dissatisfaction or the stereotype, but the fact that the little girl cannot wear the same dress as a classmate in the same show. With the exception of this scene and Lary's lamentation in the car, the entire film takes place in the flat of Emil's father, the deceased, in Colentina, where doors are opened and closed deliriously (like the dialogue) while waiting for the priest to officiate the mass and begin the feast. We wait with them for nearly two hours full of continuous dialogue for the priest to show up to officiate the mass – it is probably a recovery of sorts of what was missing in *Aurora*. The camera is stubbornly stuck in the flat's hallway, behind the doors, surprising through a cold and dry filter the absurd of the situations. This is where a sort of empathic connection is made to the raisonneur protagonist, the doctor played by Mimi Brănescu (a kind of continuity with *The Death of Mr.* →



Lăzărescu), through the detachment and alienation of the image. A note of the familiar, almost anthological, is also created.

CRISTI PUIU STAGES EMBLEMATIC IMAGES SUCH AS THE DARK HALLWAY AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BLOCK OF FLATS WHERE THE TENANTS PARADE TO READ THEIR RENT COSTS – A HANDWRITTEN PAPER UNDER A GLASS BILLBOARD, THE STEREOTYPICAL LIBRARY WITH DRAWERS AND SHOWCASE, THE POT OF CABBAGE ROLLS (“SARMALE”), THE TELEENCYCLOPEDIA ETC.

Even the radio in the kitchen or the car which occasionally spits out in the background a jingle or Ace of Base's *All That She Wants* brings into relief the contrast between the people's reality and the spirituality they present to the world. An extraordinary irony which the viewer feels through Lary's persiflagistic air.

On the discussions level, however, things are slightly different, as all those present at the “eternal remembrance” are under the same sign. Puiu's characters are allowed to talk freely, they no longer have any sense of what the wake was supposed to represent, but feel acutely the immediate drama only, are preoccupied by the moment. In a way it is a representation of our daily lives.

By wake with wake. And a collision of all the typologies that may attend such an event: Lary – the placid – and his acid wife who takes her leave to satisfy her whims, his brother, the soldier, who reveals that “fear is the engine of human action” and lives only in it, Gabi and Sandra, his wife, the deceased's daughter, peevish and sensitive, and their newborn baby who wakes up the very moment mass has finished, Emil's wife, the mother, melancholic and absent for the better part of the film, auntie Evelina, with a fur hat, who preaches Ceaușescu's regime, the deceased's brother-in-law, a kind of neighbourhood sleaze, who cheats on his wife and whom she exposes in front of everyone present, with tears streaming down her face, giving details far too intimate, “If I hadn't had a vibrator he would've left me a long time ago, that's what he told me.” The children of the cheater Tony the Mexican: Cami, a young woman in the rebellious stage who brings along to the wake a drunk Croatian and Sebi, the slim guy with the glasses, having barely discovered the internet and the stranger parts of YouTube in search for the truth believes himself a Christopher Columbo (yes, the detective) of the events of 9/11 or Charlie Hebdo. The priest mimes interest out of reflex and throws about parables about the second coming of Christ speaking to a cabbie. Only one couple is relatively calm during the whole conflict: the husband is a Mathematics teacher who self-proclaims to be “equidis-



tant" during the debate on September 11, and his wife - an almost mute character, with a leather hat, teary eyes and handkerchief.

EVERYONE, BUT ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE, LIVES A DEEP EXISTENTIAL CRISIS FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, WHICH THEY FEEL THE NEED TO EXPRESS, AND THE WAKE IS OPPORTUNITY FOR THE MEETING AND SELF COMMUNICATION. IT IS A COPY, A CONTRAFACUM OF THE DIALOGUE, PEOPLE WALK AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE FLAT LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO BEFORE THE WAKE WHICH IS DELAYED OR DENYING THE DRAMA THAT TOOK PLACE 40 DAYS PRIOR.

The living-room is the space where the main festivity is held with springs and trumpets: the exposing of the cheater, but the family's kitchen remains the direction chamber. The food which is delayed, the characters' parades to smoke, the setting up of the reconciliation - the kitchen is the only place where the characters engage in dialogue, aside from that they chase their own tail.

Underneath, Cristi Puiu also hides comedic language "in order to" enhance the absurdity and embarrassment of the situation. Stereotypical phrases, "Educate yourself!", "Look it up online," "Americans may be retarded, but...",

the culinary art invaded by Thai soups, "Tom Yum" and "Tom Kha Gai" etc. sink the characters' dialogue in the same absurdity and falsehood that mark their entire behaviour. Thus is outlined, like in the big films, an anthology of confessions of what the wake or perhaps any such gathering means.

The only ones to come out victorious from this wake saga are Lary and Relu, his brother - those who know the truth and situate themselves above the other characters through the detachment and irony they possess, likely a sort of reference also to the father's perspective towards what is presented.

They, the two men, are likely the ones who save *Sieranevada* from being a sort of documentary of family drama turned social drama of non-communication through the strength of staying away from the avalanche of absurdity before them - or perhaps even cathartic humour - which makes this film a voyage which functions patiently.

In all this delirium, with a family and shaky relationships with the immediate reality, but steady in remembrance and spirit, Nuşa, Emil's wife, must finish a ritual for the one who cheated on her her whole life. Now that's stoicism.





ENQUIRY

EXPECTATIONS, HIDDEN WISHES AND FEARS OF WRITERS/ READERS

ARGUMENT

Dragoş Pătraşcu

Every meeting, no matter its nature, length or immediate purpose, presumes a ceremony in which suspense, desire, preliminary preparation, entrance in estate of being close to the other one and then living the experience again are the steps that differentiate it from the other human experiences. The meeting presumes a gateway which never transforms in enclosure, but diffuses itself in the future by the mark that it leaves in the one who generates or accidentally lives it, or just enjoyed it. Much more, the meeting with a book (followed or prefaced by the meeting with its author) can become an existential deed with founding (and forming) character.



Which are the writer's expectation from a meeting with the young readers? And vice versa

DOINA RUȘTI, WRITER

Every time I am invited to a school, I experience angst and sadness. Teen age is a perfidious area, which accumulates without intention deeds and ideas. A young man, who bears a meeting with the writers as a forcemeat, thinking that after it he is going to miss classes anyways, tramps the streets and the places that his soul likes, is deceiving himself. At this hypocritical age every meeting is like a tattoo: for life. As an adult, wherever you go and whatever you do you carry with yourself the memories from the teen age years and with every word you say, foreign words are mixed, words which entered your mind in innocent times, when you were a part of an overcrowded hall and somewhere, in the fog of that day, the silhouette of a talking writer was floating around. A man who speaks to the young ones, especially a teacher, enters their life forever. In a mysterious way, nobody is conscious of this. Neither the auditory, enveloped by other thought, nor the speaker, pierced by the euphoria of being a speaker. And even so, meeting with a writer is as incautious as entering a tattoo salon. Because of that, before going to a school, I choose the fancy words, all those prideful, spoilt ideas, the demolishing nonconformism and put them all in a box which I discreetly leave in a corner of the room, expecting that one day these students to repay my sacrifice, choosing of their own volition something from the forgotten box.

CĂTĂLIN PAVEL, WRITER & ARCHAEOLOGIST

Being out there on a book tour, or just meeting readers for a Q&A session, is a startling confrontation with the fact that the reader is an actual person with a backpack and an ID card.

Whatever possessed you to think that the reader was this ethereal, pristine gaze, who despite already knowing everything is paradoxically eager to know more, about you? High time to realize that, despite their kabbalistic ability to make sense of the most unfathomable manuscript – and, in the process, of your innermost emotions – this was not the dematerialized eye of some divine reader. This is someone like you, flesh and blood, with their 9-to-5 and their childhood memories. When you write, you are a sort of an anti-Don Quixote, constantly surrounded by imaginary allies. They can only become real when the book itself is published.

Meeting high school readers is more than the usual dialogue with the public. Young readers will always see through you. If you don't manage to dig deep and write about stuff that really matters (whether heart-warming or heart-rending), they will call you on it. No amount of tricks

will redeem you. And this is, to my mind, exactly how it should be. That said, I want to ask young readers to cut writers some slack, that is, to bear in mind that many of us will tend to embed in our writing, as the years go by, a certain amount of cultural sap, given that culture will not let you down (as long as you don't ask of it what it cannot deliver...)

This is not to say that I propose a critical vision, which forgives (and forgets...) everything in a book. We need radical reading, if I may call it that. I salute the readers whose hunger for meaning could never be quenched by stylistic legerdemain or a baroque truckload of sugary metaphors. Such readers, demanding that books live up to, or exceed, the immediacy of real life, will keep us writers on our toes. That is exactly what I hope to derive from a meeting with young readers – to be reminded that literature ought never to be artificial, that its *raison d'être* can never be literature itself, that mannerism is not the way. And I was reminded of that during my trip to Iasi in May 2017: I conferred with people who took reading as seriously as I myself take writing.

The younger you are, the higher the stakes of the reading game. And these readers are priceless because they remind you that human solidarity, on behalf of which you set out to write fiction back in the day, is real.

ALEXANDRA MASGRAS, STUDENT AT UNI. OF GLASGOW

While it is rarely the case that literature is a form of self-confession, writing remains a form of self-expression. Thus, I do think that the author still matters. Of course, once a book is published, its message is no longer in the hands of the author – instead, it navigates its way through a complex web of historical and political circumstances, social milieus, and personal stories. This represents the birth of the reader, at the expense of the “death of the author,” as Barthes famously noted. I believe that, ideally, each reader relies on his or her own experience to make sense of a book, and the book, in turn, adds something to the reader's understanding of the world and of the self. The author does not seem to quite fit in this equation. However, I have always attached great value to meeting an author, to listening to their story.

Writing a book requires drawing upon political, ethical, or spiritual beliefs, previous readings and life experiences. Ultimately, meeting a writer adds to our own experience of their book. I am deliberately using the word “experience,” instead of “understanding.” The purpose of listening to an author discussing their work is not to change our opinion of the work itself, but to engage with it on another level. As far as I am concerned, meeting writers such as Sadie Jones, Gabriela Adameșteanu, David Vann, and Ruxandra Cesereanu, has given me insight into their stories – into how they relate to literature (reading and writing), history, politics, and to more personal experiences, such as friendship, solitude, love, disease, loss. These meetings have showed me how the books that I had previously read alone, with nothing but my own experiences to draw upon, fit into their authors' life experiences, into who they are. I believe it is these personal stories that have enriched my experience of certain books, and, in the most fortunate cases, have made those books memorable.



E S S A Y

Romanian Identity and Cultural Representation within the EU

› Alexandra Masgras

Recently, a new book hit the shelves of Romanian bookshops – *Brave New World*. I am not referring to Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel, but to the catalogue of an exhibition organised by the Romanian Cultural Institute and hosted by the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin between November 2015 and April 2016.¹

The purpose of the exhibition was to highlight a facet of post-communist Romania which resembles, at least according to the organisers, a dystopian worldview – namely the houses built in the countryside by Romanian labourers who have migrated to Western Europe. Everyone knows them: the monumental buildings (in terms of scale) painted with gaudy colours, decorated with conspicuous windows, railings and other ornaments that defy common sense.

Before further analysing the contents of the catalogue, I would like to return to the title of the exhibition, which is itself indicative of the way Romanians represent themselves in Europe. Inspired by Huxley's novel, the title *Brave New World* is daring, rather than justified, and appears to be a facile marketing technique. Since the subject of the exhibition did not seem to have a lot to offer to the German public, the organisers made reference to the canon of world literature in the hope of attracting a large

audience, thus ignoring the fact that there are no concrete links between *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and Romanian culture. Anyhow, it seems to me that, for many Western Europeans, the likening of a post-communist country to a dystopian worldview does not seem entirely implausible. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that such a title undermines the researchers' intention to maintain a neutral tone with regards to their object of study. Although the authors refrain from criticizing the houses they are examining, the title itself suggests that the hopes of Romanian migrants to build "*case făloase*" [proud houses], as they call them in Maramureș, is vain and worthy of scorn.

The catalogue, comprising essays written in English by Romanian researchers (except for four contributions by German and Italian scholars), puts forth a sociological analysis of this phenomenon which has transformed the rural landscape of Romania. For instance, the style of these architectural experiments is described by the authors as "eclectic" – a word which is often used in academic writing, precisely because it does not imply any value judgments. The term "eclectic" is descriptive, not critical. In effect, this is how the entire catalogue aims to be. The essays identify the oppression experienced by Romanians during the communist regime as the origin of this contemporary aesthetics. The authors refer to the curtailments of civil lib-

¹ Raluca Betea and Beate Wild, eds. *Brave New World – Romanian Migrants' Dream Houses*, (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2016).

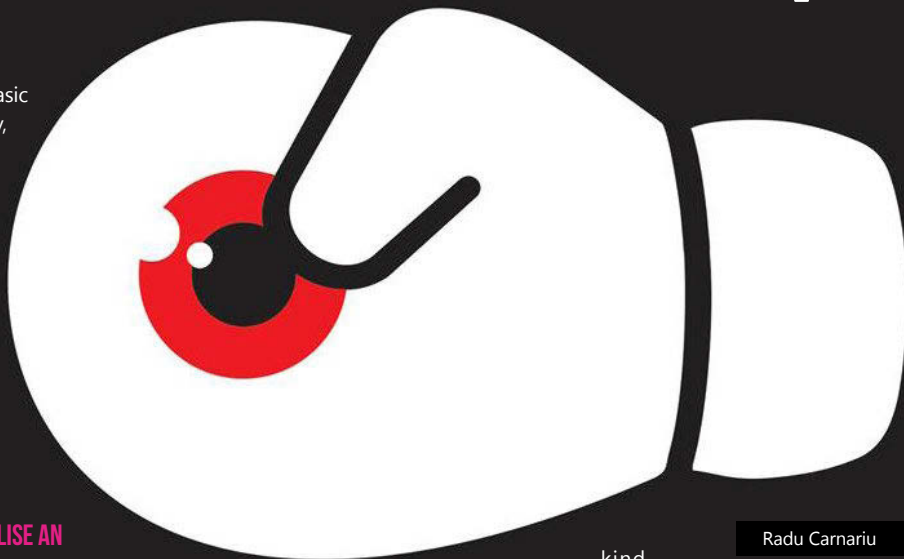
erties and rights, such as the rationalisation of basic goods, the nationalisation of private property, and the ban to travel to capitalist countries. These constraints are presented as the triggers of post-communist consumerism, and of the wish Romanians have to adopt, or at least to imitate, Western culture. Furthermore, several chapters attempt to call attention to systemic social problems whose effects are currently being ignored, such as the fate of the children who have grown up away from their parents, because the latter immigrated to Western countries in the hope of finding better-paid jobs.

THEREFORE, THE AUTHORS AIM TO CONTEXTUALISE AN ISSUE WHICH, AT FIRST, SEEMS TO BEAR EXCLUSIVELY ON RURAL VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE. THE CATALOGUE SKILFULLY DEMONSTRATES THAT THE PROBLEM RAISED BY THE ROMANIAN "PROUD HOUSES" IS NOT MERELY AESTHETIC AND CANNOT BE SIMPLIFIED TO THE NEGATIVE IMPRESSION THESE BUILDINGS LEAVE ON SOME OF US. IT IS TRULY COMMENDABLE THAT THE AUTHORS HAVE STRIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE OWNERS (WHO, IN MOST CASES, ALSO SERVED AS ARCHITECTS), TO ANALYSE HOW THEY RELATE TO THESE BUILDINGS.

These "proud houses," as their evocative designation suggests, were not built for aesthetic, but for social, reasons. They reflect their owners' desire to adopt the *signifiers* of a Western lifestyle, which is sought after by many Romanians, from rural and urban backgrounds alike.

Regardless of whether we want to acknowledge this architectural style or not, the "proud houses" built by migrants have transformed the rural landscape of Romania. They represent a facet of Romanian society that can easily be ignored by the 54 percent of Romanians who live in urban areas.² For those living in the countryside, however, these buildings have come to be part of everyday life and, more importantly, have come to express the aspiration to climb the social ladder. For this very reason, the study of vernacular architecture is more closely related to sociology than to the history and theory of art. Therefore, it is not my intention to criticise the methodology or the conclusions of this catalogue. In fact, a neutral tone, which steers clear of evaluating these buildings from an aesthetic viewpoint, is perhaps the most suitable approach to a subject of this

² Rezultate definitive ale Recensământului Populației și al Locuințelor – 2011, [Definitive results of the Census of Population and Housing – 2011], (Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics, 2011), 1-2.



Radu Carnariu

kind.

The authors' intention is not to parody the owners of the so-called "proud houses" – such a thing would be absurd, considering that they do not act independently, but need to obtain a building permit. The construction of "proud houses" is clearly a case of collective responsibility, and points to a structural flaw in the rural planning system. Therefore, the *Brave New World* project aims to highlight the complexity of this multi-layered social phenomenon. Ultimately, the exhibition catalogue does not propose a critique of Romanian architectural aesthetics, but a critique of Romanian society as a whole. This kind of critique is subtler, but ultimately more scathing, because it makes us realise how little we understand the phenomenon of economic immigration, and, above all, how little we empathise with those directly involved.

Nonetheless, it is worth reiterating that the exhibition *Brave New World* was not put on display in a Romanian museum, but at the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin. This context should change, at least partially, the way we examine the subject of the exhibition and the approach taken by the contributors to the catalogue. I cannot emphasize enough the fact that the show's intended audience was not Romanian, but German (or Western European in general). Thus, the aim of this exhibition was not to promote empathy among different social classes, between the rural and urban population of Romania. Instead, the exhibition represented a persuasive means of confirming the way in which Romanians are perceived in Western Europe – poor, uneducated and willing to relinquish their own cultural identity in order to appear Western. This is how Romanians were portrayed by this research project focussing on vernacular architecture, which, as I have previously mentioned, was organised by the Romanian Cultural Institute. Even though the authors'





intention was not to denigrate Romanian migrants, the exhibition itself seems to confirm the stereotypes about the Romanian diaspora. Largely ignored at home, Romanian migrants are given considerable press coverage in Western countries. In spite of that, European public opinion has not shown much tolerance or empathy for their experiences until now. Under these circumstances, it is surprising that the organisers of the *Brave New World* exhibition chose this particular facet of contemporary Romanian society to showcase in Berlin. Ultimately, they opted to put forth an image of Romania that corresponds entirely with what the Western European audience expected to see: a post-communist country populated by people whose very ambitions are pitiful.

○ **I DO NOT INTEND TO TRIVIALISE THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PEOPLE WHOSE HOMES HAVE BEEN METICULOUSLY SCRUTINISED BY THE RESEARCHERS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT. NOR DO I WANT TO SUGGEST THAT THEIR STORIES SHOULD NOT BE PUBLICISED – ON THE CONTRARY, THE EXHIBITION BRAVE NEW WORLD WOULD HAVE BEEN TRULY EDIFYING, HAD IT BEEN PRESENTED TO THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC.**

A thoughtful, unprejudiced analysis of vernacular architecture can highlight social realities which otherwise remain marginalised in public discourse. The mass immigration of Romanian workers, the socio-economic gap between rural and urban areas, as well as the inefficacy of Romanian cultural institutions to promote the national heritage at home and abroad are some of the systemic problems that have led to the construction of “proud houses” – of these expressions of uprootedness. An exhibition held in Berlin which essentially confirms the Western European perspective on Romania only serves to determine Romanians themselves to adopt the same viewpoint. Of course, it is beneficial to relinquish our national myths and to take a critical look at present-day Romania, as well as to assess our role within the European Union. Nonetheless, I believe that when we are given the opportunity to present our cultural heritage at the *Museum Europäischer Kulturen*, we should opt to explore other aspects of contemporary Romanian society, not the ones that Western Europeans already know and regard with contempt.

Ultimately, the *Brave New World* project can be analysed on multiple levels, but all the interpretations I have identified so far put forth a negative image of Romania.



foto: Ioan Răducea

Firstly, the exhibition focussed on an architectural phenomenon which is widely ridiculed not only in Romania but in the rest of Europe as well. On a subtler note, the project sought to reveal the poignant story of a significant group of people who have not integrated in the countries where they work and have also grown estranged from their own homeland. On another level, the *Brave New World* exhibition is a materialisation of the way in which European public opinion depicts Romanians, thus reinforcing pre-existent stereotypes. What I would like to underscore is that the message of a cultural event does not depend entirely on the organisers' intention. In fact, the context in which the exhibition took place and the public's expectations have impacted the message of the show. For instance, the contributors to the catalogue did not explicitly state their disapproval of the architectural style analysed; their critique was implicit, and – most likely – shared by the audience.

Lastly, this project is symptomatic of another facet of contemporary Romania, namely the fact that most cultural institutions do not promote the aspects of Romanian culture that could easily integrate in the European heritage. Why did the organisers of this exhibition choose to show-

case the so-called "proud houses" instead of showing the Romanian designs that have won awards at international events? The responsibility to introduce Romanian culture to the rest of Europe rests entirely with us, and projects such as *Brave New World* seem to be a missed opportunity. Almost twenty-eight years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but Eastern Europe continues to be too little known in Western countries. Unfortunately, even when we have the chance to tell our own story, we choose to portray ourselves as the post-communist people who are estranged from their own past and strive to emulate, at least superficially, the signifiers of Western prosperity. Is this the only role that Romania can play within the European Union? Are the "proud houses" the only product of the cultural interchanges between Romania and other European countries? These questions prove that a cultural project such as *Brave New World* can shed light not only on social issues that already have international visibility, such as the mass immigration of Eastern European workers, but also on less tangible aspects of contemporary Romanian society, namely our struggle to define and promote our cultural identity at home as well as abroad.

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A walk through Iași: what we (still) know about what once was

› Ioana Lionte

A lot has been said about Iași, city whose name seems to have foretold a destiny tailored for it (if we were to believe those who discovered beyond the name of the medieval burg the etymological kinship with the ancient *lazyges* - 'yash' meaning 'good fame'). And so, slowly, the ink turned to word, vehicle of the soul that has carried its memory, keeping it in the cool crinkles of pages, be they worn by time and reading, warm and freshly out of the printing press, or found on the Internet. But even the words, anchors of memory, were forced to fight the dizzying waves of history and oblivion, some of them reaching the shore, others washed ashore on some dusty shelf of a bookshop or library. However, from time to time, and seemingly more often lately, a nostalgic step, a curious eye venture in search of those stone houses and ink people that a book or a word had mentioned. And then this ancient sleepwalker awakens, shakes the mist of oblivion off his shoulders and seems to invite you to ask him, to discover him, with difficulty at first for he is not easily questioned. And for every step he offers you a word, the wise man, and his mellow voice, travel companion, tells stories that rivers of ink have made immortal and that you have read perhaps, in letters, between the lines or in manuscripts.

He hides his stories well, in his cloak of brick and dust, sometimes so well that you start to wonder how many times you passed by and didn't notice them, crammed in the corners of some house you thought uninteresting.

Truth be told, Iași, this city of 'once upon a time' is a place you have to look at with all of your imagination's strength in order to see, and once you see it, you can go from living in it to loving it. And so you begin, step by step, to read it, to listen to it and to see it, to make out, building by building, road by road, those bricks and those walls that lie ignored, for nobody talks to them or asks them what they have seen, and you begin to understand that in places that no longer are, lie immortal stories. Here, under his solemn glance filled with so much life and History, destinies were born and ended, stories with lilac perfume or scent of sadness were weaved, kept or lost, each by luck, in a word or in a thought. And so did Iași become keeper of the countless lives that have met in a bittersweet mixture, character in a tale and tale of tales, book-city, pantheon-city.

If you ask him, he will answer with the voice of an oracle, and he will teach you not to walk but to stop, and to see, beyond the houses that you absently pass by, the people that lived there, because where there are no people left, the houses keep their memory hidden well, waiting for those curious enough to venture from time to time in search of stories. And from pleasant wanderings such as these, the most beautiful stories are born, such as the story of the Mon Plaisir Villa, also called the Castle with a Keep, by its official name of Mihail Sadoveanu Memorial House. Therefore we can start replacing the image of today's Copou with the image of the wooded hill as it was in 1800, Iași's oxygen tank, the hill that you can almost see,

taken out of a novel and put into our imagination, ready to be told, painted, with its flower fights, vineyards and horse races, with its Jockey Club, project of Asachi, where those passionate about horsemanship could enjoy the culinary mastery of Richard Tuffli and the exquisite dinners in the restaurant of Henry Launay. And if we look ahead, we can see, piercing through the wavy and green horizon of the wooded Copou (back then called the Green Bridge), the tile roof of some grand villa that the cosmopolitan locals named *maison de repos*.

OUR TALE WEAVES ITSELF STEP BY STEP, SLOWLY, UP THE HILL OF COPOU, WHERE ONCE VAST FORESTS –PERFECT FOR HUNTING WITH HOUNDS- WERE SPREAD, REPLACED AS TIME WENT BY WITH THE SUNNY VINEYARDS OF THE ITALIANS AND OF THE MOUNTANEERS, A PLACE WITH WAVY SHADES INVITING TO PARTIES AND PROMENADE. THAT IS WHERE ILIE KOGĂLNICEANU BOUGHT A WOODED PIECE OF LAND, IMAGE OF THE OLD FOREST, UPON WHICH, IN 1842, HIS SON MIHAIL BUILT THE HOUSE THAT WE KNOW TODAY.

Far from the city, in the quietude of Copou, lies a strange villa with a fantasy-like tower from which, in good weather, one could see the mountain Ceahlău, and that communicates, through the cellars of Kogălniceanu, with the Adamachi mansion, today the Experimental Station of the Institute of Agronomy. The parties with games and fireworks that took place almost all the time are famous and have contributed to the charm of the villa that attracted the interest of many, so it is no wonder that, when Kogălniceanu sells it, in 1867, it immediately finds a buyer. And that is how, from owner to owner, the Castle with a Keep ends up tying its destiny to that of the philanthropist banker Jacob von Neuschotz, under whose protection the fantasy-like villa of Kogălniceanu becomes the Mon Plaisir Villa. There is much to be said about this immortal character of Iași's tale, who, born in 1817, close to Dorohoi, in a poor Jewish family, arrives in Iași where he lives for a long time in his palace located on one of the ends of the old Golia street, the current Hotel Select. His name is linked to countless charity acts in the service of the Iași culture, and to the construction of the Beth-Iacob temple in Iași, a Jewish prayer hall, placed, after the refusal of the mayors to let it be built elsewhere, in the courtyard of his palace. In his final years, Neuschotz retired to the green silence of Copou that enveloped Kogălniceanu's villa, where our philanthropic banker lived his last moments, and on his death in 1888, the villa passes into the care of Adelaide von Neuschotz, his wife.

As time flowed by, constantly weaving destinies in which life threaded with memory, the Mon Plaisir Villa, widowed by yet another master, awaited new tenants to write its story. And so, this house of writers and great people ends up having as a tenant none other than George Enescu, who, at the time of World War I, lived here, in the mystery of Copou and in the sight of many, during his relationship with Maruca (Maria) Cantacuzino, who will later become his wife. In those years, Time and History had ceased their slow development, overflowing into this city, somehow orphaned ever since the Union, with all the rage of the war. This is how Iași found itself Capital again, unfortunate shelter of the exodus. It was also then, in the first year of turmoil, that Maria Cantacuzino let the villa whose appearance seemed to mirror all the misery that had descended upon the city, while her husband at the time, Mihail Cantacuzino, became again Minister of Justice in the government of I.C. Brătianu. This is how the memory has put into word the details of the relationship between Maruca and her husband, who settled down somewhere in Păcurari, while the Castle with a Keep on the wooded hill was witness to another bitter love story between the Princess and the Composer. Enescu's presence in the Kogălniceanu-Neuschotz Villa blessed the place with the sublime harmonies of his own compositions, enlivening it through the impromptu visits from which a musical-literary salon was born, with important guests, including Cella Delavrancea, Florica Muzicescu, Matila Ghyka, Take Ionescu, and especially Queen Mary and her Royal Family.

Also then, another thread was weaved by the skillful hands of fate, and the Castle with a Keep came to host the story of yet another life that it tied by word and for eternity to itself. The mysterious house of the Copou's green hideaways thus passed under the protection of another illustrious master, and stopped calling itself the Mon Plaisir Villa, or the Castle with a Keep, but the Sadoveanu Villa, or the house with memories. This is how we know it today, and we can imagine it in 1918, freshly bought by the Sadoveanu brothers, Vasile engineer, and Mihail, director since 1909 of the beautiful National Theater of Iași. The spring of 1919 sees Sadoveanu permanently moved to the house that will inherit and devotedly carry his name, preserving it in honor, sheltered by the trees at the edge of the Green Bridge, and that is when Iași was able to see through a small stream of flowing time, three great names living together, Sadoveanu, Enescu and Maria Cantacuzino. The years went by, until 1936, when the writer leaves Copou for the Capital, having been granted the leadership of the newspapers *Adevărul* and *Dimineața*, leaving behind a work, a name and a house that still keeps the memory of the lilac-scented celebrations that once took place. In the years between the move and the depar-



ture, the Sadoveanu Villa was fated, as some Moira had prescribed, to be full of life and culture and its threshold to be passed, when the Composer's musical evenings were replaced by the Writer's lilac celebrations, by the innumerable steps of many of Iași's writers, among which history mentions Otilia Cazimir and George Topârceanu, the Teodoreanu family and Ibraileanu, who enjoyed, in the courtyard of the house, games of chess, bridge or taro. And the house remained a muse in its discreet but welcoming way, for Mihail Sadoveanu conceived an important part of his work here.

STEP BY STEP THE CITY REVEALS ITSELF, AND STARTS REMEMBERING THE STORY OF IONEL HIPOLIT TEODOREANU AND ȘTEFANA VELISAR, A STORY WITH A SOLAR HALO WEAVED BETWEEN TWO HOUSES, OF WHICH ONLY WORDS DEDICATED TO CHILDHOOD AND A CHESTNUT WITH THE NAME OF THE TEODOREANU FAMILY REMAIN. ON THE CHILDHOOD OF IONEL HIPOLIT WE LEARN FROM IAȘUL CARE NU MAI ESTE BY MITICAN, AND FROM THE WORDS THAT OSVALD TEODOREANU AND SOFIA MUSICESCU'S SECONDBORN DEDICATES TO THE BELOVED STREET AND TO THE TWO HOUSES, POLES OF A HAPPY CHILDHOOD. AT NUMBER 7A ON ZLATAUST STREET, A STONE'S THROW FROM THE BEYLIK AND THE ANCIENT ROYAL COURT, THIS PLACE OF STORY UNFOLDS, AS HIPOLIT'S PEN MAKES IT IMMORTAL, AS THE PLACE WHERE THE TEODOREANU FAMILY TREE BEGAN TO GROW WITH ROOTS TWO BY TWO, FIRST OF ALL THE GRANDPARENTS - ALEXANDRU T. TEODOREANU, COUNSELOR, MAYOR, PROSECUTOR AND LAWYER, MARRIED WITH ELENCU, MOTHER OF THREE SONS, OSVALD TEODOREANU, FATHER OF PĂSTOREL AND IONEL, MARRIED IN TURN TO THE TALENTED DAUGHTER OF GAVRIIL MUSICESCU, SOFIA.

And so, the three sons of the Teodoreanu family take their first steps into childhood here, in the shade of the grandparents' house, enveloped by the fragrance of gingerbread and happiness, under their grandfather's blue eyes, with their grandmother's apricot jam, with their mother's piano songs, in the happy moments when Osvald, their father, a "man of great kindness and gentleness of soul," celebrated the triumphs in Court with sweets from Ermacov's grocery store. There is nothing left for the eye that wants to see: neither the houses, nor the lantern,

nor the street, but all is good, for they are immortal in the Zlataust of childhood that Ionel Teodoreanu preserved in his memory as well as in writing, like those houses in snowballs that one buys for Christmas, concealed by the misfortunes of time.

But time, with its incessant stubbornness, goes by, and two more big names met when the Teodoreanu family moved on Kogălniceanu street in a bigger house, happy witness to the love between Lily and Hipolit, crowned with the union between these two symbolic names under that of Teodoreanu. The beginnings of this immortal story are found in the book, *Ursitul*, that the wife of Ionel Teodoreanu publishes under the pseudonym Ștefana Velisar, and then at the end of the poem that Lily dedicates to her lover, *A fost odată Ionel...* It is from here that we find out how Lily, visiting her cousins, the Delavrancea sisters, is convinced by Cella to spend the Eve at the Teodoreanu house, where Hipolit captures her attention, and so begins the love of two souls which Ionel's death in 1954 fails to undo, for Ștefana Velisar's pen will endlessly reimagine that Eve with ripe quince scent in which the two have discovered each other's passion to write, "the same amazements, the same delights, the same things." Meanwhile, the new family moves again, leaving behind a chestnut to remind the occasional passerby of the name of Teodoreanu.

On this map, that only destiny knows, for only he created it, we find two names that have passed the threshold of the Sadoveanu Villa and whose story develops between two houses that time has spared, and that we can see today, each on its street, two houses full of history. This is how we learn the story of Otilia Cazimir and George Topârceanu, her- living in the house on the street that will carry her name, him- on Ralet, in the corner of peace and greenery, in a cottage at the edge of the forest, from where the boyars started their hunt, and where the gamekeeper lived. Topârceanu's house lies near the still charming vestige of the Petit Trianon of Iași, once an impressive palace surrounded by a rich park, whose charm was also emphasized by the ballroom decorated with endless mirrors, and where Ioan Ralet lived, entrusting his name to the street where we find our writer. Topârceanu is enchanted by the seductive tumult of the literary life of Iași, settling in the city though he had a family in the south. Here, the two are meant to love each other, each from their house, separated and outside of any union, until the death of Topârceanu in 1937. What is left of the writer are some manuscripts that Otilia Cazimir cares for, and flowers with which the poet, depending on the season, fills his grave. Story of lilac scent, hidden well in the two houses that the children still

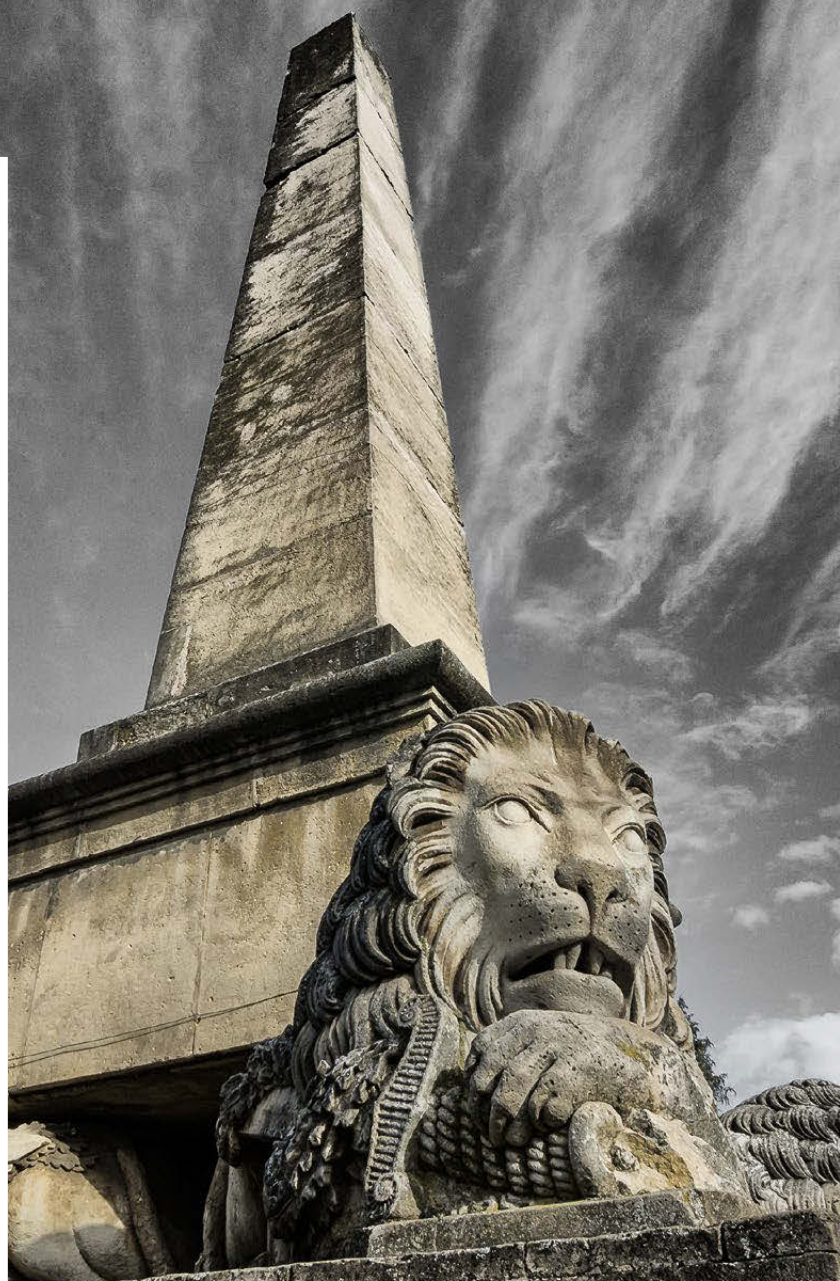


seem to visit, in a ritual that reminds of the days when an inconsolable poet received only children in her home to read to them.

Not far from here, the illustrious Caragiale was living his own amorous deception on the footsteps of Leopoldina Reineke, called Fridolina, in a go-around along Copou, between the Reineke house and the Caudella house. Cousin of the architect and engineer Iulius Reineke, Leopoldina divided her time between his house and the house of Eduard Caudella, whose daughter was a good friend, and Caragiale, on the trail of his beautiful indifferent, missed no opportunity in his visits to Iași to pass by the houses of the composer or architect, to face the same cold gaze of Fridolina, who was enamoured, if we were to believe Mitican, of a major.

This is where we stopped for the moment, always with the thought of the stories that will follow, and we returned to a reality perceived not as a deception but as a preamble. And he, the wise old man, wrapped himself once more in his brick and dust cloak, as if he had never been here, hidden under the increasingly modern garments of a European city, waiting for another step, another curious look that would take him out of the lethargy of time and forgetfulness that threaten to harden him, waiting for those voices that ask him and patiently listen to his stories, be they small, big, of us, of all.

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U N I V E R S I T A R I A

THE FALL OF LITERARY THEORY*

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR: THE BOOK THE FALL OF LITERARY THEORY MAKES A CASE THAT “THEORY” DIDN’T REALLY GO ANYWHERE AND SHOWS NEW WAYS IN WHICH IT COULD BE USED IN LITERARY ANALYSIS. PARTICULARLY, IT AIMS TO SHOW THAT IT IS NOT THEORY THAT IS FALLEN, BUT IDENTITY ITSELF IS PERCEIVED AS FALLEN WHEN WE USE THEORY TO EXAMINE IT. FOR SUCH OFFENSES AGAINST OUR REALITY (AND FOR NOT EVEN BEING SO CLEAR ABOUT IT), THEORY HAS FALLEN, TRUE ENOUGH, IN DISGRACE. THE BOOK MEANDERS THROUGH THE LABYRINTH OF CONCEPTS FROM DERRIDA, LACAN, HEIDEGGER, LEVINAS, AND APPLIES THEM TO WORKS FROM MELVILLE, FAULKNER, PYNCHON, MORRISON AND ANAYA, MAINLY TO SHOW HOW, THROUGH TIME, IDENTITY SEEN AS FALLEN OR IMPERFECT HAS CAUSED A LOT OF VIOLENCE, A PHENOMENON THAT IS REFLECTED IN LITERARY BOOKS SUCH AS THESE.

› Liana Vräjitoru Andreassen

Identity is a territory to be defended. Any territory becomes a signifier and can therefore be appropriated toward identity. Along with the fact that identity is never reached in actuality, identity’s fallenness accounts for the violence of its pursuit. To return to the notion of a territory to be defended, humans have long exceeded the spatial territory as what they need to defend and what gives them security.

As “owning” a territory equals in many ways having an identity, the defense of this territory (which can be land, or a more abstract object) goes beyond purposes of survival. The origins of the desire to defend the territory are not as important as the degree of abstraction exceeding the biological necessities prompting its defense. If, initially, social identity may have been given by the common belonging to a piece of land and carrying out basic activities in a communal setting, the territory on which the community functions is perceived as property and as the place of

social integration only when the *absence* of this territory becomes a possibility or is actualized, by threats from another tribe, another nation, another religion, and so on. As with any concept formation (to follow structuralist and poststructuralist explanations of meaning emerging from opposition or absence), the meaning of territory and the identification with it derive from conceiving of *not* being in its possession, or *not* belonging to it. Migration and conquest are two of the most important factors in making territory abstract and creating the grounds for the formation of the concept of identity as internalized territory.

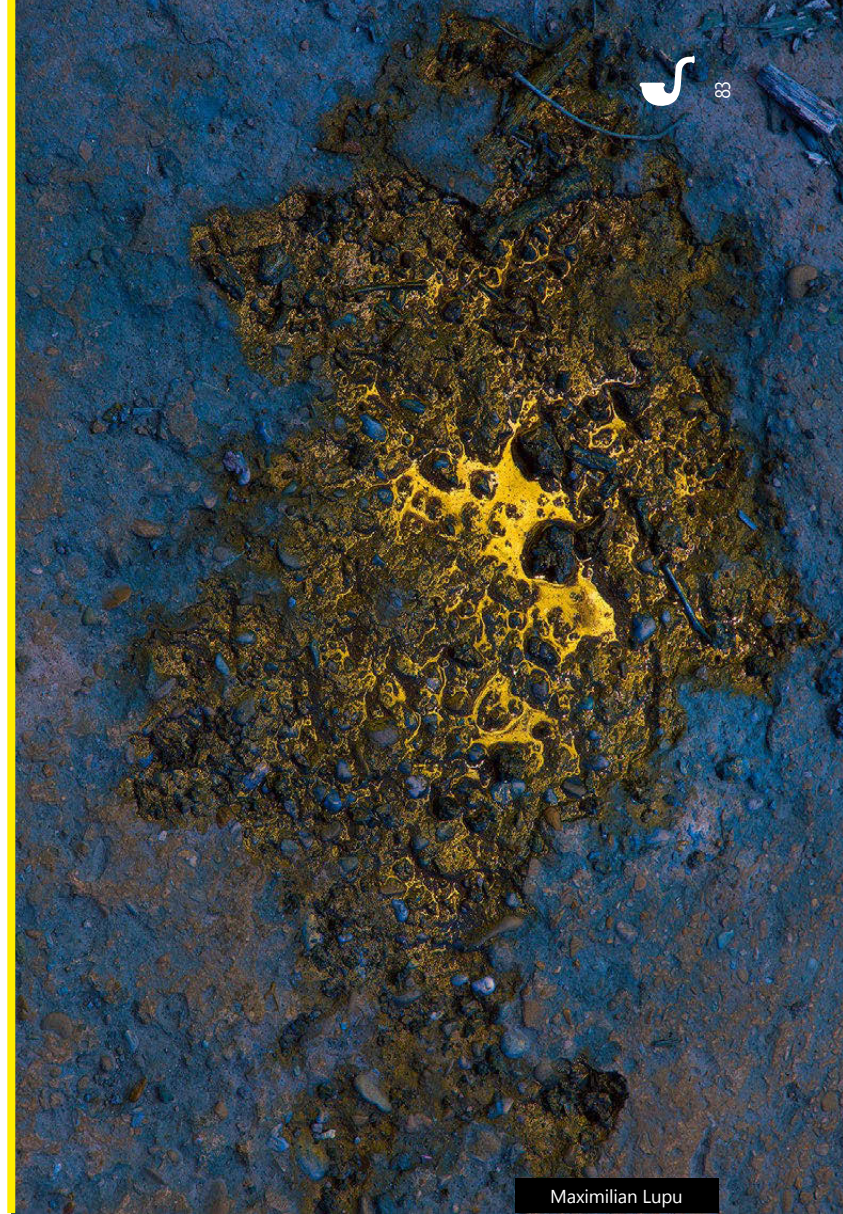
Human communities have evolved in such a way that there is no community that has remained in possession (or in sole possession) of the territory that it remembers as its cradle. It is enough to recall the controversy surrounding the term “African American,” which identifies a community with a concrete territory that they do not physically belong to (Africa). Every community also functions by *remember-*

ing, which makes the concept of identity strictly related to what the community remembers as having lost. The loss is either total, as in the case of entire populations driven away from their land (Jewish people, Native Americans, African slaves), or partial, as in the case of being conquered and occupied by a different community and assimilated into it (Roman infiltrations into other cultures, for instance); also a partial loss is the case of any mixing of nations, religions, or other kinds of communities in one territory due to migration, immigration, or other forms of cultural interaction. This conception of losing a territory to somebody else only matters, in terms of identity, if it is remembered—either through story, or through recorded history.

Given the plasticity of the world, territory has lost its physical importance not only in our age of mass communication and mass transportation, but also from the very beginning of this remembering. From Rousseau's "liberty" to Heidegger's "dwelling" in the home of truth (within language), the notion of territory has reached complex levels of abstraction. It may be that what still connects territory in its initial understanding (as land) to abstract territoriality is the tendency of communities once occupying the same territory to remain somewhat connected to each other and somewhat attached to their initial perception of themselves as identical to each other. Anything they carried with them in the initial loss, or fall from territory, or anything that remains theirs after being invaded, or after accepting others among them, will become a stake in preserving identity.

ONE MIGHT THINK OF PRACTICES THAT BECOME CULTURAL, SUCH AS A COMMON WAY TO MAKE POTTERY, OR THE WEAPONS CERTAIN PEOPLES USE IN KILLING THEIR ENEMIES; IF THESE ARE RECORDED IN ANY WAY, THEY ARE PART OF THE IDENTITY OF THAT COMMUNITY AND BECOME THEIR CULTURAL BAGGAGE.

As history advances, these tokens of identity become even more abstract, and turn into ideas and ideologies. The gods embraced by the members of a community, the common fears, their way to perceive food, evil, love, hate, family, and any other concepts, also become tokens of identity. In linguistic terms, signifiers "represent" identity: for instance, the identity of citizens of the United States is represented through the flag, in its number of stars. Yet "real" America is not somewhere in the flag, since an actu-



Maximilian Lupu

al identity behind the signifier is not an actual "presence," as Derrida would say.

The struggle to purify the identity of a community is always doomed to failure: nobody will eliminate all foreigners from a country, or all pagans from a nation, or retrieve a land that waits for them empty. Faced with such circumstances, communities in this day and age have to decide what it is that *can* still be brought back from what is supposed to have been lost. According to this logic, if not the land, at least freedom could be brought back, the freedom associated with not having somebody else dictate the social order of that community (as in the case of diverse America still finding unity in the concept of freedom: the freedom to shop, the freedom to be fashionable, the freedom to react to threats, or any other freedom). If not complete unity against foreign elements, these



* The book *The Fall of Literary Theory* will be published by the end of 2017 by Universal Publishers.



communities will seek at least unity around a God, a social organization, or the history that unifies them.

Even self-identity is a territory to defend, because the individual who creates meaning through “authentic” signifiers will still defend those signifiers as if they were his/her property, such as the “original” work of an artist. Meaninglessness or floating signifiers are also potential property or territory for those who circulate them in a decentralized market. As long as something “sells”, even an idea, it is a territory and it can be defended because it can be part of the process of identification. Even though postmodern identity appears as the attempt to divorce identity from territory, given that territory is already language, identity in this case still cannot become any less a stake in language, so that the same set of identity problems are maintained.

I see identity as either fallen from the social system, fallen from authenticity, or fallen from meaning. The starting assumption for the three modes of identity is that there is no subject outside of the system of language that defines territoriality, since it is the remainder of the initially lost reality at the origin of signification.

THERE IS NO CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH SUBJECT, LANGUAGE, AND MEANING CAN BE TAKEN APART OR DEFINE THEMSELVES IN ANY WAY DIVORCED FROM EACH OTHER. THE INSTABILITY OF ONE TRIGGERS THE QUESTIONING OF THE OTHERS IN SUCH A WAY THAT, IF THERE IS NO SOCIAL SPACE IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SEARCHES FOR MEANING, WHETHER BY IDENTIFICATION OR REJECTION, THERE IS ALSO NO SUBJECT AND NO MEANING BECAUSE THERE IS NO FRAMEWORK IN WHICH TO ENGAGE IN IDENTITY DEFINITION. IF THERE IS NO SUBJECTHOOD, ANY GIVEN SOCIAL SYSTEM HAS NOTHING TO SUSTAIN THE POWER DYNAMICS THAT ESTABLISHES ITS MEANING, OR ITS TERRITORY. THEREFORE, ANY SYSTEM OF MEANING DRAWS STABILITY FROM THREATENING THE IDENTITY OF ITS SUBJECTS IN ORDER TO KEEP THEM INTERESTED IN PRESERVING THIS TERRITORY.

I will focus on some of the constituents of identity (linguistic, historical, psychoanalytic, and so on) to explain first and foremost why identity is perceived as flawed—*fallen*—and why this perception delivers some form of violence to individuals who pursue a *reversal* of this fall. The pursuit of this reversal is a dangerous task in that, among other detrimental consequences, it estranges individuals from those with whom they come into contact. This estrangement (call it lack or loss of communication) in turn creates tension and conflicts within and between different societies. The retrieval of a lost identity translates into the fight for a *territory*.



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foto: Bogdan Onofrei



SHOULD A JUDGE READ LITERATURE?

I BELIEVE THAT JUDGES WHO READ LITERATURE ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO SOLVE CONFLICTS BROUGHT TO COURT. I DON'T THINK THAT ETHICS AND MORALS ARE GENETICALLY TRANSMITTED AND THAT SOLVING CONFLICTS IS SIMPLE IF ONE KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS THE LAW.

› Marius Galan



I once asked this friend, an occasional member of an examination commission for the accession to the National Institute of Magistrates, what is it that the examiners are looking for in an interview exam, what are the questions the candidates are being asked, given that this test doesn't tend to verify their knowledge of law.

I was pleasantly surprised to find out that one of their favorite questions was "What book/books, other than specialty ones have been read within the last year?" Depending on the answer and the examiners' knowledge on the topic, this could even lead to a short foray into the subject. And I was equally surprised when my friend reproduced a candidate's answer, "I've focused on this exam and have not read anything else" - mentioning that no member of the commission was touched by such abnegation in knowing the law, the candidate in question being eventually rejected (of course, I don't know how much of his answer to that particular question mattered in the final grade, but I would like to think that it mattered).

The judgment on Earth is a judgment of earthlings made by earthlings. And to judge, before applying a text of law, means understanding the facts and, not occasionally, understanding people or typologies of people you have never met, their reactions to circumstances you never found yourself in. Of course, I have just made the introduction to the theme of the essay "Why should judges read literature". And before continuing, I will allow myself a statistical license, how many judges read literature constantly? Of course, I have not conducted any scientific





research in the matter and the numbers I am about to put forth are far from certain, but I would say that it is just about the same as in a high school class. Everybody reads a bit, some stop completely at the latest after university, some read sporadically and the fewest read almost passionately their whole lives. From the judges I personally know, I'd say about a fifth read literature constantly (a fifth where the soft sex is rather the stronger), but I have to make an important note, that I don't get to really know those who are only interested in the profession.

BOOKS ARE NOT ALWAYS FRIENDLY.

Some gave birth or fed ideologies that were disastrous for the humanity, others gave birth to criminals, and there are books that have led people to suicide. Books talk about thoughts and experiences common to many people but also about individual experiences, sometimes incomprehensible. And this way they introduce you to worlds whose existence you ignore or suspect, accept or refuse, worlds from which you can, however, glean some knowledge, sense nuances which would not have been otherwise accessible.

Stepping into the concrete, I would note that what for a judge is a professional obligation that of reservation, will by nature affect his direct knowledge of certain aspects of life which he will later be called to judge. Likewise, the respect given to the profession and the person that the judge represents acts in the sense that the magistrate will be rarely placed in the situation of being bullied in his interactions with the authorities. The judge has a withdrawn public life. He is or should be seen as an example of calm, balance and moderation. But he often must judge precisely that which constitutes exceptions to such behaviors. In family matters (where things are most delicate and the belligerents very passionate), in matters of physical violence, in the rapport of privates and the administration, in commercial or political disputes. And this can be overcome by the wide perspective that literature offers, the place where events from real life, told with talent and/or laughter make the inventory of hundreds of different reactions in similar circumstances, shows the positioning of participants against different points of reference (people, prejudice, priorities, space, time) and spectators (relatives, friends, strangers involved by chance) against facts or stories born out of facts.

On the edge of respecting my obligation of reservation, I sometimes walk to the village shop (which serves beer and alcoholic beverages by the glass, probably without license), I buy something I had forgotten when I left the city (if you recall, I live in a residential area – Liteni village,

a residence with a pool, 12 rooms out of which 7 for the view, with secular trees soon to turn a decade old) and, if I see someone familiar, I have a beer, two, three and I listen or take part in the conversation. At the village pub it is even more tempting to listen. I do not think it will surprise you to find out how big and nuanced the circle of liars is, compared to the given audience. Depending on the political sympathies and the people who sit at the table at the same time, the discourse is so different that by the time we left (towards midnight) I no longer knew who was for the mayor, who needed the mayor, who wanted to be the mayor, I didn't even know if the mayor existed or was merely a concept for the good functioning of the shop business (it is still possible it was because of the beer). But I admit that nothing there surprised me. Because they talked the same as in Iocan's Glade and the characters which populated the place were comparable. So I could have, in fact, reread the fragment. Of course it would have lasted less and I wouldn't have had a headache.

LITERATURE MEANS JOY AND RICHNESS.

And even if seduced by words like those of Borges, "I imagine paradise as a library," or those of Amos Oz, "when I was little I thought I was a book", I sometimes give too much consideration to literature as an instrument of being shaped as a human, even if I cannot be considered objective when speaking about the importance of literature in a person's life, given the fact that I declared myself to be or was declared to be a passionate reader (a flattering presentation by the ALECART editorial in the pages of the magazine), I admit I do not understand how one can live nicely, how the world can be imagined outside of literature (of music, of painting, of the arts in general).

My mother is a confectioner, my father is an electrician, that is how I would present my parents' professions when, in the days of old, at the end of the catalogue, the teacher and later the class masters would take down their professions. And even if I did not find the great writings of literature in their library, which comprised over two hundred books, I do remember that we read at home. And I remember that their reply when I wanted to go somewhere, to go out to play, when I told them that I was bored at home, was "Go read a book." And I read and discovered that the world is complicated and that life is generous even when everything seems useless, petty, and small. My last love (you are wondering already what this has to do with the title of the essay) was also born around books (as did, in fact, most others). A colleague of mine, not a great reader, saw in my bookcase Pessoa's writing, *The Book of Disquiet* and told me that it was funny, but a



Maximilian Lupu

few days earlier he had seen A., a colleague of ours (today, my life partner and mother of my second child) holding a stack of books and struggling to open the office door. The books fell and he glimpsed among them the volume I mentioned. I instantly viewed the image and a large part of what followed is within the brackets that have just been closed. And Tuesday (today is Sunday), I will cook duck with oranges with my good friend Achilles, the most miraculous encounter with a man in literary matters (Achilles is a lawyer and worked for a long time as professor of Roman law). Together with A., they are two great experts in the lives of the Caesars, a world in which I recently stepped in, as a child learning his first words.

Being characterized by a certain (hah!) sense of justice, I have to add that two other friends of mine, with whom I have sparkling and at times deep discussions, have almost no connection to literature (I initially wrote reality). One is a judge and an amateur mountaineer, the other a lawyer and my partner at painting the fence (we did it like Tom Sawyer with his friends. If a year goes by and I don't call him, he will ask, "Godfather, when are we painting the fence?") and we spend evenings of great intellectual breathing (it could be our impression, given that we all

have a special relationship with good wine). Without joking this time, I was surprised by remarks betraying an understanding of the world, life relationships, the reasons behind bizarre behaviors which I felt could only come from a friendship with the great world literature (and the wine, it goes without saying). It seems it can be otherwise, too.

I BELIEVE WITHOUT RESERVATIONS THAT EDUCATED PEOPLE ARE BETTER.

I believe that judges who read literature are better equipped to solve conflicts brought to court. I don't think that ethics and morals are genetically transmitted and that solving conflicts is simple if one knows and understands the law. I think that the obligation of reservation imposed on the magistrate, which places limits on his direct knowledge, can be compensated through the running of the mind over the more fertile fields of literature. Do you remember Gavin Stevens? He is my favorite judge, prosecutor and lawyer. As his spiritual parent, the sole master and owner of the entire Yoknapatawpha, where, evidently, the water flows slowly over the wide field.

My friend says that I have missed the theme of the essay, but that she likes the digression. And that since I got here, it would be more fitting to talk about my other loves and the one in which (I state that) I am (you will remember perhaps that I wrote somewhere that, in books, a writer should ignore his civil status). With the assent of the editorial, I am thinking that the space I receive in the magazine should next time be hers. Being aware that I might break forever my alleged literary flight.



Marius Galan is a judge from Suceava. He is a passionate reader. So: justice & literature.

LITERATURE AND BEING FEMININE INSIDE IT

SEX CHANGE OPERATION IN WRITING

› Roxana Dumitrache

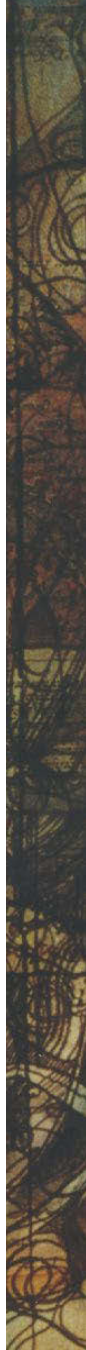
Two centuries ago, the philosopher George Lewes was reading a short prose signed by George Eliot to a bunch of very close friends. George Henry Lewes was the husband of George Eliot, and that's what happened in the plain Victorian era, so we cannot assume the existence of any kind of proto-sexual release that would have allowed the two Georgians to openly live their love. The truth is that George Eliot was, in fact Mary Ann Evans, a brilliant and talented writer who had undergone a literary sex change operation and, protected by a male criptonyme, had become George Eliot. , British writer quite in vogue for that the time. Lewes has invited his guests, with the great voluptuousness of boredom and complicity, to guess a little about the prose writer; we would say now - socio-demographic data - including its sex. We can easily imagine that live chat of that little gang, the British humorous assumptions, and all the projections that broke down all sorts of scenarios. Most likely, the author was an educated man, probably a pastor, definitely married and absolutely sure a father. However, Charles Dickens was also taking part to that at the eccentric literary *rendez-vous*. My jubilant banter makes me imagine precise moment: Dickens, immersed in an armchair in the room smelling like heavy furniture and fruit tea, in the amber like light of a British afternoon, wakes up in the midst of an endless virtual post-reading conversation, just say that the prose can still be written by a woman. Obviously, Dickens assumption turned him into a laughing matter and the discussion ended soon. Mary Ann Evans continues to write using the pseudonym, George Eliot, to the contemporary

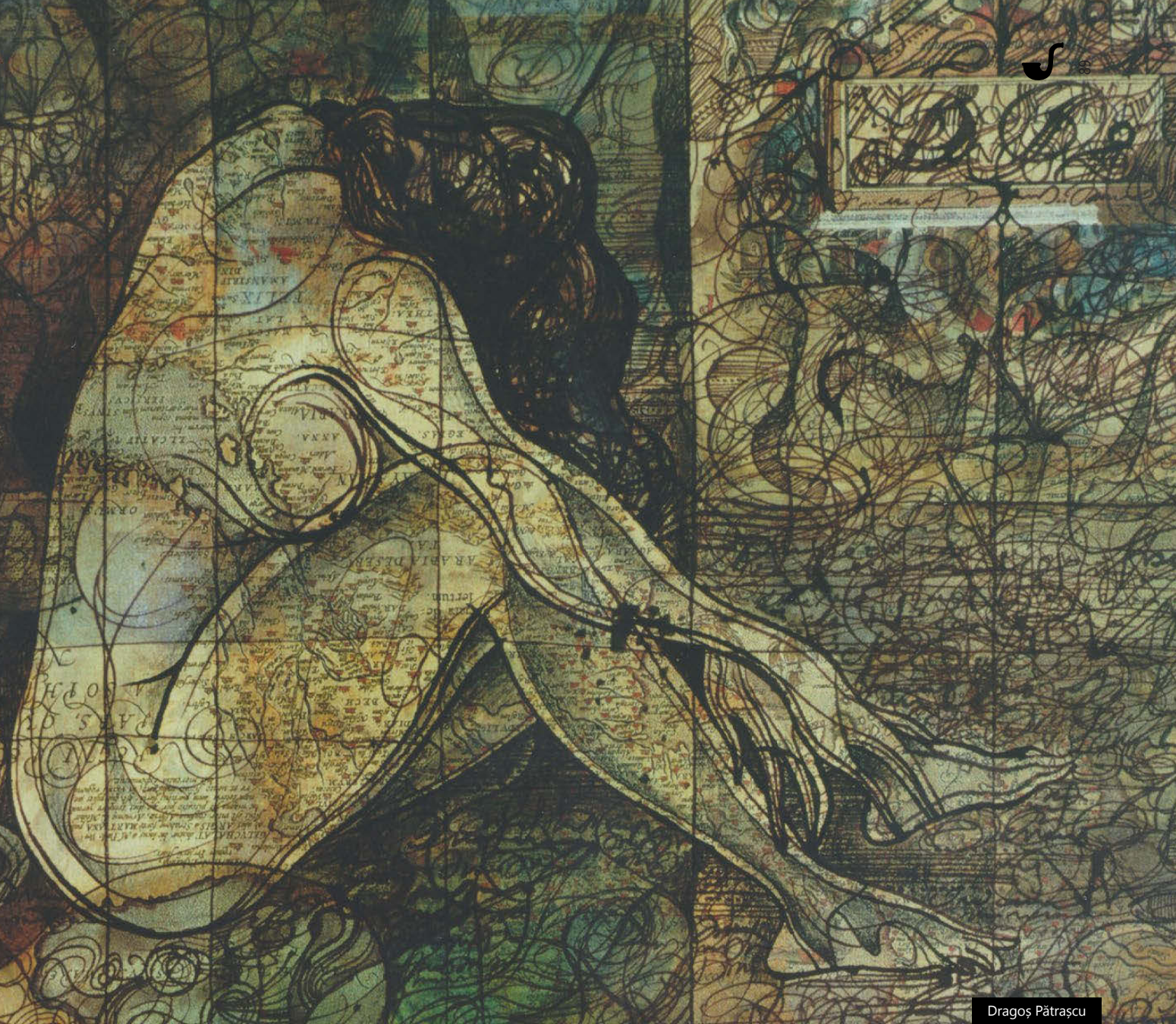
desolation of several feminists from the literary departments of the major universities.

Never did Mary say in a flaubertian fashion, *George Eliot c'est moi!*, but she did create strong and passionate female characters. Fully independent character, and this is probably a bungee-jumping of a great writer: to release their characters, to set them free from corsets and to let them loose in the world. For that, Mary can even forgive even the boldest form of cowardice: to write as a George instead of as Mary.

Is Eliot a female writer or a male writer? It matters more than we might suspect as while talking about feminine literature and masculine literature still hides, very often, in a patriarchal latency, a hierarchical reflex. Or at least an instinctive antagonism. Like the syntax: major and minor literature. In a history that had as a constant an intellectual minority that women were forced to internalize, it is no wonder that we still witness a perpetual fight with such reflexes. Literature is genderless and I would have the courage to wear this on an engraved shirt if it were not for a world full of people who are wearing their most intimate and scandalous thoughts on their clothes. At supra-morphological rigor, literature is feminine, like the noun, but perhaps it is a huge lack of consideration for literature itself to regard it like this.

Perfection is terrible /it cannot have children
(Sylvia Plath)





Dragoș Pătrașcu

THE METAPHOR OF MATERNITY IN WRITING

I do not know if it all started with Sylvia Plath, but female writers often use maternity metaphors. Their poems are children-like, the work of the novel resembles a period of labor, working at a novel is often to be followed by a post-partum depression, the unfinished works are, as Plath puts it "Unborn babies". Writing, like birth, is accompanied by an entire cohort of fears. The mother-writer exists even in writers who give birth (only) to literature. But I do not know any case of male writer who has paternally reported to his own writing.

And it's neither a failure, nor a merit, it's just a fact. How could we imagine Hemingway in his letter exchange with Fitzgerald to write this: *"Dear Scott, today I became father for the third timer. I have just finished 'The Old Man and the Sea.'"*

I would not know if paternity is an equal literary experience with maternity or whether the sex of the author is decisive in his emotional reporting to the text. Perhaps every writer is the hidden Pater of his own text: sometimes tender and caring, piloting his characters through fine tuning, in a co-directional author-text parity and at times, a despotic and hysterical one that makes you feel



like slamming the door in his face. Or maybe within every writer there is a mother for the text, but he is too afraid to admit it clearly for fear he might be ridiculed by his classmates in the school yard.

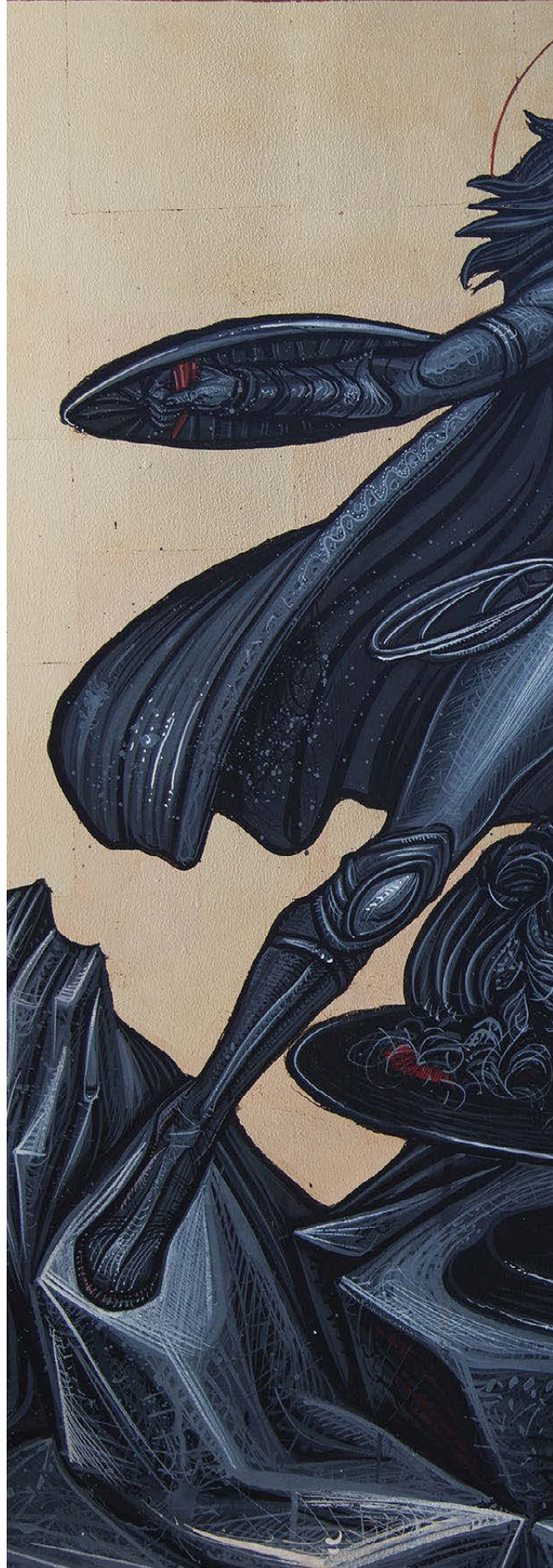
A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that a woman would not have had a way to write Shakespeare's pieces. She creates an imaginary character, William's sister named Judith, and puts forward a series of assumptions: Judith is as talented as her brother or even more talented than him, but she does not have the luxury of writing because all the duties assigned to her gender role: she is a mother, a wife, plunges every day in all kinds of time-consuming household chores, thus she cannot find any time for writing. Within every woman who writes, states Virginia Woolf, lives Shakespeare's sister. This sister is real, but she did not write, she "lives in us, in me and in many other women who are not with us tonight," writes Woolf. And this excerpt should, I think, be tattooed on the facades of schools, lyceums, faculties of letters, libraries, and hysterically repeated to those who, in genuine metaphysical wonder, cannot yet explain why women did not write as much (and as consistent) as men did. Well, we can answer to them with statistical data that simply illustrates the degree of illiteracy which has lasted for centuries among women in a man-led world. Because- a truism as it is- in order to write literature, you have to know, though, to write.

The concept of a separate room (originally *A Room of One's Own*) is demanding some nuances. Although I simply love Radu Paraschivescu's translation, I think because "separately" indicates not only the reclusion, but the segregation, which was contradictory to Woolf's desire. All what she wanted was a room of her own and 500 pounds to survive and write, not an exit from the world. Although she seemed to succeeded in both.

MISOGYNY, THE RED BULLET IN LITERATURE.

For a long time, I related to misogyny as to a kind of red bullet. And the red bullet is the end of literature for me. Or the quake of literature to be precise. The red bullet was misogyny. Which, in my splendid naivety, is being delivered through many forms beyond evidence: from writers who have their partners (Sofia Andreeva, Tolstoy's wife kept the *War and Peace* notes in order and whilst Tolstoy was what we could easily call an abusive husband), to





Adrian Gorea, *Wonder Woman + Holy Head + Baby Puddy Tat*, Wood panel painting with egg tempera and Gold Leaf, 40x40, 2017

writers who have plagiarized their partners from time to time (Fitzgerald is quite insistently inspired by Zelda's writing, as she confesses), to writer who have unfairly treated femininity by constructing female, uninspiring, absolutely stupid, odd in some cases (and indeed the list is very long) or to contemporary writers who have announced in interviews that women have play tiny roles in literature or politics and are unable to create literature or govern.

The exercise of literary purge has costed me emotionally enough, because no matter how scandalous it would sound, I remained without much of the writers I used to read with teenage lust during my adolescence or with mature admiration a bit later. I have turned my favorite authors from good guys into bad guys as if they were characters of Western movies. It took some time before I dropped the red bullet mania and it happened differently than I would have ever imagined. In a way, I do not even know if it's good to tell the episode because of its sad shallowness. In short, the Gender Studies Center of my faculty was carrying out all sorts of weekly debates on feminist and trans-feminist themes. At one of them, after complaining about first Sylvia Plath's first scholarship-which was not a scholarship for writing, but a scholarship for a nanny in that could have permitted her to have the space and time to write, we came to discuss with an intellectual morgue, if Minnie Mouse was the victim of Mickey Mouse's domestic violence. We were talking about Walt Disney characters. And then, only then did I realize that misogyny is the red bullet polluting all my reading. And, with all my educated and self-educated feminism, I realized I was transforming myself into the reader I would normally hate.

At times, I still surprise myself counting misogynistic writers before going to sleep. Usually, people count sheep or butterflies when they fight insomnia, but I always had bizarre sleep habits. And counting misogynistic writers takes some time, actually. But lets just pretend this is happening because I have a sensitive sleep.



Roxana Dumitrache has graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Faculty of Political Sciences of SNSPA București, as a valedictorian. At this moment she is the project coordinator at the International Affairs Office of the Romanian Cultural Institute.



BACK &
FORTH

What we were before wanting to be

Starting off with the too frequently asked question: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I propose we all spend a moment to remember what we were before being asked what we want to be.

› Raluca Anisie

Shifting the attention from the school and university education, I will focus a defining stepping stone to our educational life that is too little discussed, the pre-school and early childhood. I want all of us to do an imagination exercise and forget everything we think we know about this subject. Sometimes this is the most precious if not the only way of truly learning something new.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ADULT AND A CHILD IS ONE OF PERSPECTIVE.

How does the world look like through the eyes of a child? A new life, a complete impartial mind and sense of observation, in front of an overwhelmingly rich and diverse reality, nonetheless not at all intimidating. The children are not fully developed emotionally up to a certain age (there are plenty of theories), thus they see only what it is, the objective reality. They dedicate all of their energies towards



Maximilian Lupu

discovery with a curiosity and a focus that few maintain in their adult life. The focus of their attention is not an obstacle, not a singular problem and the quest doesn't have a punctual objective, nor a need for resolution, but it is the most natural way of existing, purely contemplative. The difference between an adult and a child is one of perspective. Perspectives are not hierarchical, but only different, depicting another point of view of the same reality. The more perspectives one can grasp, the more complete its reality becomes. Adults have a hard time thinking outside of their established thoughts patterns that proved to be practical and fruitful – and thus are considered beneficial – or are not even consciously acknowledged. Most of the times, we give our children what we think we would like if we were them – toys, cartoons, swings, ice-creams - basically the kind of entertainment we enjoy which most of the times comes from a nostalgia of our own childhood. Children don't have a choice; they absorb everything they are exposed to. In time, their needs will start gravitating around what they have been offered and thus the foundation of their universe will start to build up on the things selected by the parents. It is not because of a lack of judgment that children don't distinguish their own independent desires. At their age everything is experiential, they don't judge according to certain patterns, don't anticipate nor project. When you eliminate these mental shortcuts, you will see that the process becomes much slower. Thus, the less biased stimuli they are exposed to, the more time they have to build up their own judgment. Unfortunately, nowadays we have neither the patience nor the time needed to spend this time with our children and most of the times we choose to do things in an efficient manner, which works better for us than for them.

THE MOST DIFFICULT IS NOT TO TEACH SOMEBODY ANYTHING, AND THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT YOU NEED TO DO WITH CHILDREN.

Children don't know what boredom means – not if they are raised in a way that develops their independent spirit of observation and creativity. Our only responsibility is to ensure that they are exposed to a stimulating environment. What does a child see in a toy and for how long will his attention be captivated by it? How long will he struggle to unravel its nature and purpose? At their age everything has a meaning and becomes inherent to the world they are born into. Everything starts making sense, the fundamentals of critical thinking are being built and the first feelings about the nature of life are sprouting. Everything is of cosmic proportions because the attention and capacity of absorption of a child is cosmical.



From a toy a child can learn a color, a sound, a texture, a shape and its interaction with the environment. A toy is a physical materialization of somebody's thought, thus when the child holds it in his hand he is connected with that creative energy and intention. Every physical object, manmade or natural, has a corresponding concept to it. The speed and quality of thought entering the process of creating a teddy bear, a ball or anything similar is limited. The concept of a teddy bear is barren, his existence is purely esthetic. It is "nice" – it lives on a punctual, non-evolutive, non-interactional, purely static and isolated plane of existence. The concept of a ball is slightly more complex, having ampler and deeper interactions with the environment and more imaginative usages. However, in the end it is still the materialization of a barren, unproductive concept. The same goes for most of the toys, movies and objects designed for children today. The world of our children start to take forms without meaning. The children will struggle to make something out of it until they will give up and accept absurdity as a part of life. They will become a bit lazier and gradually more disinterested in what comes in their way. The natural curiosity and the openness of the mind will dampen down. They will start building walls and draw lines to protect themselves from the menacing tentacles of an absurd existence. This is not doomsday scenario; this is a slow process that happens silently. Fortunately, there are also other resources at our disposal.

EVERYTHING THAT BELONGS TO THE NATURAL WORLD REPRESENTS THE MATERIALIZATION OF A CONCEPT OF AN UNCONCEIVABLE COMPLEXITY FOR A HUMAN MIND.

Natural processes and phenomena, the mere existence of life on earth and of an ecosystem that feeds and perpetuates itself, encompassing elements intertwined so deeply and fundamentally, is still a mystery for humanity. Nature has no redundant components, the consequence of an unceasing evolutionary selection. The only way people can understand the natural world is by dissecting it and conceptualizing its elements one by one. Everything that has been conceptualized to some extent has been a major scientific discovery (the telescope that mimics the function of the eye, the magnetic, electric field, the nature of light and gravity etc.) However, none of these elements were fully conceptualized due to their deep rooted entanglement with the whole system.

Nature is an organism, an ecosystem that can only be fully conceptualized if one has the full picture of it. The

logic of the mind tends to dissect and by doing this the elements are segregated into singularities which cannot be consolidated.

Being exposed to such an immense conceptual structure, to such an inexhaustible resource, the children will always be stimulated, training his logic and imagination unceasingly. They will not know boredom, nor senselessness, nor the anguish spurred by resentments towards humanity and oneself. His potential will be manifolds increased because he will be free to see and tireless to discover. The majority of people make a pact at some point with their ignorance: they accept their incapacity to understand and fulfill their imperative existential quests. They accept to limit their existence to what they know, what they can control and understand because they haven't developed the right approach to handle it and they have suffered too many defeats which made them emotionally vulnerable and helpless. If you don't have a weapon you cannot win the fight, and the mind is the only real tool we have - and it's not an easy one to use nor does it come with any instruction manual attached to it. The most important thing is to learn how to use it. But this is not something that we can teach our children since it's not a transfer of information, it's the experience of analyzing, investigating, understanding and being able to choose by oneself. The negligence and frustration of the teenager comes precisely from the difficulty of seeing the value in what he has been offered.

New alternative educational programs started to spur as a reaction to the excessive consumerist environment the children are brought up in. It is not about a rejection of the modern world, a regress to an obsolete life style. Now we have the possibility to consciously choose and create a premise within reality that is conducive to mental and spiritual growth.

NEW EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS

In many countries as Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Switzerland new educational concepts as the "forest kindergartens" started to sprout. In Switzerland it is structured as a two years' program in which kids between 3 and 5 years old go in the forest, five days per week, and seven hours per day. The kids go every day in the forest, regardless the weather, no exception is made. There children don't learn to read, nor to write or count, they simply play, by themselves most of the time. They climb in the trees, play in the rivers, learn how to do a fire, how to sculpt the wood using knives and other similar activities. They are in no way protected by potential accidents



or dangers, learning to balance the risk of their actions, subtly guided. Having access to a conceptually superior world, the children fuel their curiosity and motivation to learn and discover, gaining confidence and skills. They discover their bodies, their physical limitations and gain control over their environment, which roots their sense of courage and stability.

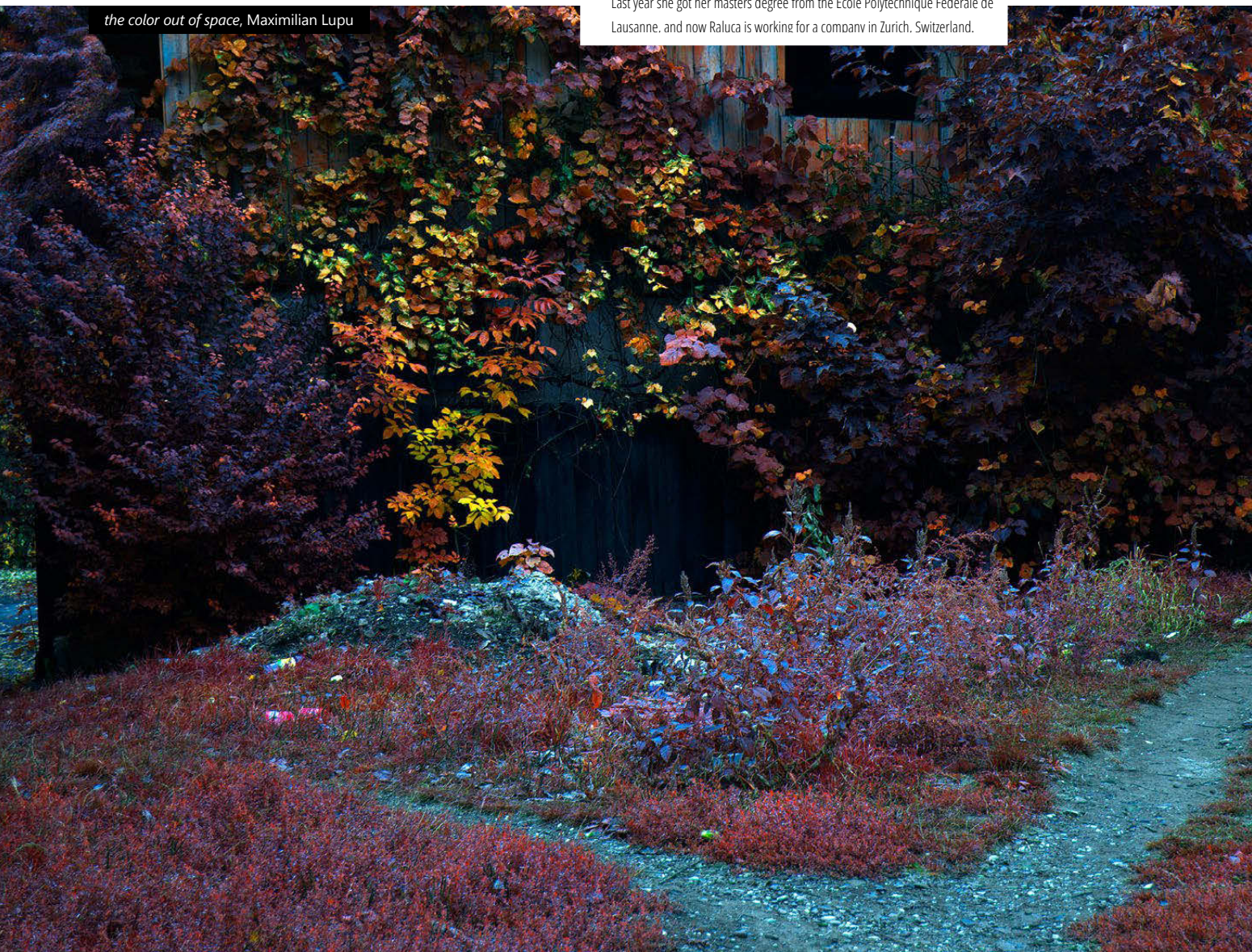
Almost all present laws disincentive the kindergartens to have outdoors playfields which are more natural and less "kids proofed". Children don't need a perfectly safe, concreted playfield, but more than anything they need to understand the nature of this world. The maturing of the mind doesn't bring along enhanced understanding, but the subtle understanding nourished experientially brings along a strong logic, a fine perception and an alert intuition.

Living in a world that offers choices gives us more responsibility. Few generations ahead of us had the access to information and means to enable them to have a real chance of making choices. The technology, the comfort and everything that is at our disposal today are only means and not ends in themselves. Our opportunity is one of developing our awareness to transgress the compulsive action, to own our choices and their influence on us, others and the environment. Until then we are only a bundle of crossed destinies, living our lives enchanted by the promise of our individualities that we haven't yet embraced.



Raluca Anisie has graduated National College Iași with a perfect 10 baccalaureate overall grade and Sheffield University with First Class Distinction. Last year she got her masters degree from the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, and now Raluca is working for a company in Zurich, Switzerland.

the color out of space, Maximilian Lupu





Post-graduation syndrome

On my graduation day, I was haunted by Gaudeamus. It's not sung here at the graduation ceremony, but I think something short circuited in my brain after we sang it in robes 30 times while marching the city when I graduated high school.

› Diana Murguleț

I've been nagged by mixed feelings before the robe day, mostly relief that I survived the dissertation, with a hint of nostalgia in the background. I didn't get the classical "but what do I do now?" moment. The offer for my masters was on the table since December, so was the summer job one. Maybe because I knew that in exactly 3 months it would all start again with exams, lectures and dissertation, graduation didn't feel like an ending.

Yet something smelt different. It was easy until this very moment – we were all going two by two behind each other, same steps to take, same diplomas to gain. Middle school, high school, university – clear, linear path, with an imposed, but not necessarily internalised goal. So now we're out? No one tells you what to do, what to chase, what's the next hoop to jump through. Here's where total freedom hits, the slightly scary one, in which all roads take you somewhere, but where on earth do you want to go? What kind of grown up do you want to be after you've had a good look at the list of people you liked and the ones you'd never want to end up like. Many questions, very few answers. I recently did some projection exercises at a summer school I attended. We were asked "when you'll die, what's the one thing you want people to remember you by?". In my mind I put my hand up – "coach, do we have anything lighter and less morbid, cause my brain hurts a little?". Yet these people are onto something – where do I want to be in 10 years, what do I aim for, what do I

want to build? Because it's easy to continue in this day to day trance with no long-term vision, no tough questions asked. I don't yet have the answers, just a few hints, many open roads and yet another year of being a student.

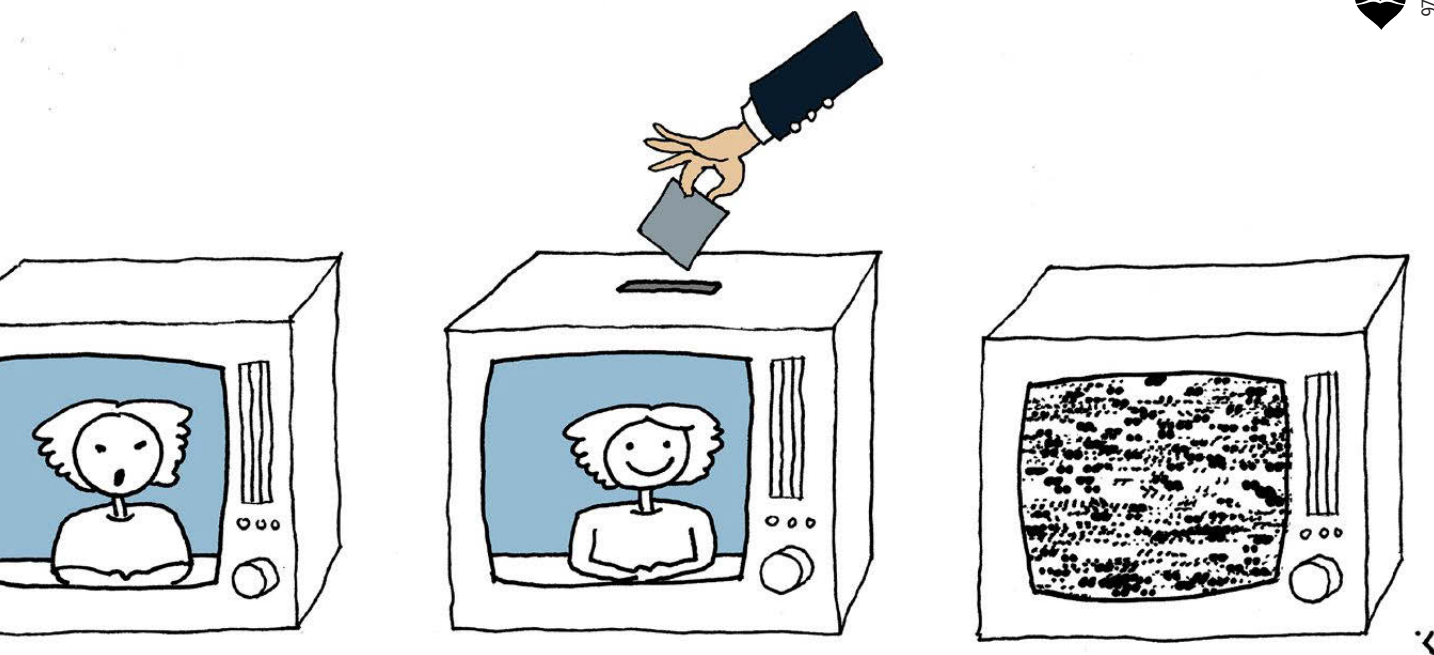
TOWELS AND FRYING PAN

Graduation comes with practical aspects. You probably start earning, money which you decide how to spend or save. My mom still fondly remembers that out of her first salary she bought a record player (which still works). My boyfriend bought new towels, his first grown up acquisition, and my housemate a frying pan. Others are talking about buying flats and starting businesses. And I'm caught somewhere between a graduation and a new start of school year. I am witnessing a domestication (or "settling down") of the friends around me. I have a classmate getting married in a few days and my old desk mate will become a mother in autumn. Yet I feel I can't work with these new definitions, I know these people in other masks and roles, and the musical chairs round is going a bit too fast around me.

SO, ARE YOU RETURNING HOME?

If I was to name the chorus for the last few months (apart from Gaudeamus), it would be the eternal question "soooo, are you thinking of returning home?". What do





you even say to that? That it hasn't even occurred to you yet, that you have a lot more before you can even start thinking about it? Do you tell them you've heard this question at least 5 times before from family, friends and work mates? Yet as repetition is the foundation of education, hearing the same question over and over again starts to bug you. You start wondering if you should be wondering and from that point on things get confusing. England is three quarters home and home is three quarters home and half of me got lost somewhere in-between moving boxes and new words.

EXHAUSTED GRAD LOOKING FOR HOBBIES

Even though I'm not a proper grad yet, I am left with some big questions anyway. During my dissertation and final year, I progressively lost my hobbies. I dropped them one by one because of what I call dissertation guilt – the omnipresent feeling that you should be working on your thesis. Now, having escaped the academic hell, I wonder where to start again. And where I want to get to.

REPARTITIONS AND RECORD PLAYERS

I keep thinking we are leaving university in uncertain times – Trump is redefining the truth on every occasion, Putin is knocking on Europe's doors, Syria is collapsing spilling waves of refugees on the shores of Europe, for which we have no empathy because monthly a lunatic decides to drive over pedestrians in capitals. I won't even bring up the anti-European currents or the neo-Nazis. But

we're not the first generation to step out of school in hard times. My parents left university in '89. They were assigned jobs in a repartition process – a long list of all the jobs available in the country in that field was released. It was all done on merit, the first ones to pick were the ones with the highest grades, yet somehow those that were party members or married had priority. My parents were lucky, but my Romanian literature teacher tells the tale of a colleague who got assigned a village she could only locate using a military map. When she got there the local shepherd warned her not to walk alone at night, since the last teacher got eaten by wolves. Six months after my parents' graduation, the Romanian revolution hit, brining power struggles, economic and social instability,

FORGIVE ME, MADAM, FOR I HAVE SINNED!

I'll end my story on a positive note, as graduation marks the beginning of a new chapter and with it come new mistakes and gaffes worth remembering. Just like my mom won't forget about her record player, I'll never forget my first day on the new team at work in which I knocked down my coffee, in one smooth move, over my manager's phone.

graphics by Ilie Krasovschi

Diana Murguleț has graduated University of Birmingham with a degree in Computer Science and is currently pursuing a masters degree at Imperial College London. Diana's adventures can be found on bisica.wordpress.com



From Romania to Japan

Journey through a Kaleidoscope

Trying to find a definition for the word exotic is a highly subjective matter. And this is due to the very important role that personal background plays in this process; we are defined by the set of daily experiences that we associate our life with, by the continent that we spend more than 300 days per year on, by the shape of the roofs that we keep seeing from our window when we are home.

› Iulia Ștreangă

It is somehow difficult to realise that, for a person living on the other side of the planet, my ordinary is their extraordinary, and vice-versa.

Since I started my undergraduate studies, I learned that taking things step by step, as they come, not worrying about their implications too far into the future, can lead to astonishing results. And I have also learned that sometimes, dreams exist to prove us that reality can be at least partially fueled by them. Last summer, at the end of my first year of undergrad, I started looking for internships or research programs which I could apply to in future years. I saved a web link, about a science internship at the University of Tokyo. This January, a few days before the application deadline, I opened a Word document on my laptop and found the link. I also decided to apply. I dreamed of being selected, but I knew that the program was very competitive. When I got the selection email, at the end of March, I was ecstatic for more than a week, and couldn't imagine that I would actually be going to Japan. They selected 21 future participants from 664 applications.

Now I am back, after six weeks spent in Japan, and countless memories of that country. The expectations that I had when landing on the island were based on my definition of *exotic*, on my perception of Japan and its culture from books that I read – *The Tale of Genji*, Yasunari Kawabata, Haruki Murakami – or illustrations that I've seen. My experience in Japan fulfilled some of these expectations, but for their vast majority, it slipped past them and changed them radically. I perceived it as a puzzle-country, with things which amazed, contradicted, exasperated me, where I did not have enough time to

assimilate all aspects of a lifestyle in Tokyo, but where I noticed my surroundings from the perspective of a tourist, a research student, a future geoscientist, all blended together. And I will write a puzzle-article, with a minimal wish to put order into my approach of Japan, for there were six very intense weeks, and impressions jammed in my mind in a very unordered manner.

I have never travelled so far from home before, all alone. I have never flown for more than about four hours in a row. I arrived in Tokyo quite exhausted, after sixteen hours of flight and about eight spent waiting between flights, in Bucharest and Dubai. When I found myself in my room, opened the door and stepped on the balcony, I couldn't believe my eyes that I was staring at Japanese blocks of flats, at Japanese streets and Japanese trespassers, all vaguely guessed, for it was 8 o'clock in the evening and already very dark (Japan does not switch to summer time). I kept having this surrealistic feeling for the first three weeks of my stay; everything seemed normal at the university, or in the metro, or in the parks – until I suddenly realised that I was in Japan, for the first time outside Europe, all by myself some 9000 kilometers away from Romania.

The first days spent in Tokyo offered me the unique sight of the neighbourhoods drenched in neon lights in the evening, with tens of lit up advertisements hanging on the tall buildings and crowds finishing their work days and hurrying back home. It is the scene that I associate with what Tokyo looks like on post cards, a collection of dazzling effects keeping the bustling metropolis alive. I admired it in the Ueno neighbourhood, the one close to the

University of Tokyo campus and also one of my favourite places in the city. During the next weeks I discovered the beautiful Ueno-koen (Ueno Park), with Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan (The National Museum Tokyo), the largest museum in Japan, with collections depicting Japanese and also other Asian cultures; Kokuritsu Seiyō Bijutsukan (The National Museum of Western Art), with paintings by Monet and Cezanne amongst many others, whose building was projected by Le Corbusier; Shinobazu-no-ike (the Shinobazu pond), with a small Buddhist temple, Bentendo, creating a picturesque, calming landscape – and the entire park offering a chance to escape, for a little while, the throbbing pace of the city life.

For when the fascination gradually begins to dissipate, after a couple of days spent in Tokyo, it is replaced by the will to slow down the intoxicating rhythm of this city. With a population of half that of Romania, Tokyo is the most crowded place I have ever stepped into. It is huge, and full of people. You have to walk quite far from the main neighbourhoods, to leave behind their noise and constant agitation and to finally find a quiet spot. I think this is what made me feel that Tokyo tired me to an extent I have not experienced before. The climax of what the crowded Tokyo looks like is the Shibuya shopping district and the central crossroads. There is no way you can take a good look at the shops you'd like to enter, as a wave of people comes from behind you, surrounding you, cramming into you, and there is no possibility of resisting their push, having to move with them, while trying to escape their dragging force, desperately searching for a way of exiting the flow, ending up in whatever store you happen to enter, for of course there was no time to see the sparkling sign indicating its name, on top of the eighth or tenth floor. And everything repeats once more when you exit that store, and in no time you are squeezed again between hundreds of strangers, crossing the famous Shibuya junction, then you find yourself in the iconic Shibuya 109 shopping mall, one of the fashion landmarks of the district, and at the entrance of each boutique there is a seller crying out extremely loud the discounts of the season, holding big placards in her hands, shouting non-stop the offers for every person entering the store; then when you move on to the next one, part of the same ubiquitous flow of people, another equally energetic seller greets you with the same series of shouts, and your head starts throbbing because of the noise and the heat and the crowd. It was absolutely the most horrific shopping experience I have ever had. The famous Takeshita Dori, the street considered the hotspot of the extreme Japanese teenager fashion and

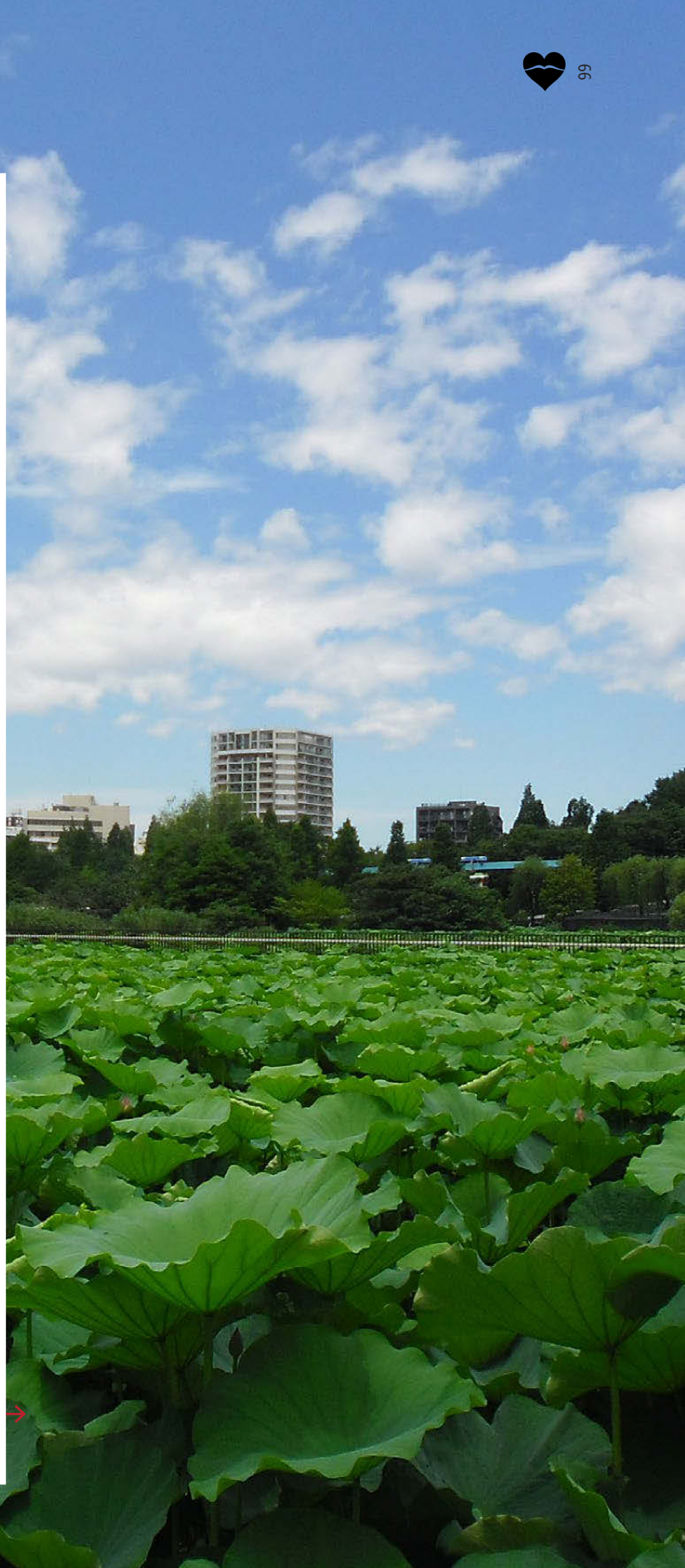




foto: Iulia Ștreangă

situated in the vicinity of Shibuya district, has exactly the same atmosphere, highlighted by loads of exaggerated, nonconformist clothes.

But as with almost everything in the Japanese culture, fashion comes in extremes. On one hand, there is Shibuya, with its crazily colourful teenager fashion, cheap and strange-looking. On the other hand, there are the expensive Ginza and Marunouchi neighbourhoods, the Omotesando boulevard (the latter very close-by Takeshita Dori), aligned with international brands such as Chanel, Dior, Louis Vuitton. The contrast between the most elegant shop windows and the ones mainly filled with kitsch items is startling. The majority of the population is very elegantly dressed. During the week, men and women head for their work places dressed in suits, no matter how hot it is (and summer is usually extremely hot in Japan, due to the vast amount of water vapour in the atmosphere). It gives the impression of a formal society, but at the same time it suggests uniformity among all workers; women dressed in black, knee-long skirts, with white, simple shirts; men dressed in dark suits; all wearing their serviettes and hurrying for the administrative buildings they work in. Every day of the week starts in the same way, with people cramming into the metro stations, half sleeping on the benches during the long underground rides – they gave me the impression of an exhausted society, but a very orderly one at the same time.

Given the extreme agglomeration, discipline is a golden rule; everyone queues to get on the metro and waits for the others to get out; everyone circulates on the right side of the staircase when getting up, to let the others get down on the left side. The only exception is the lack of bicycle lanes, which to me seemed a stringent necessity. Japanese people are very polite with strangers, but at the same time they are very shy. I assume this is due to their lack of confidence when communicating in English, although very few of them actually speak a foreign language. The greatest barrier a stranger has to overcome in Japan is the language; very few people, among the ones that I have met, speak English, and I often communicated with them with signs or by trying to guess the meaning of words. The university offered us a one-week introductory Japanese language course, aiming to teach us some basic phrases, necessary for our daily lives in the city; I was afraid of using them when interacting with locals, just to avoid getting an answer in an advanced Japanese, which I could not have possibly understood. Some words are directly taken from English and are quite easy to catch the meaning of (*biiru* = beer, *koohii* = coffee, *ruumu-kii* = room key). In classes I

often asked myself if those were the actual words, or if the teachers were trying to pronounce them in English. Those classes were usually very funny, because Japanese is a language full of exclamations, interjections and intonation that I sometimes found a bit exaggerated and unnatural. But it is also completely different from any language I have attempted to learn so far, and I have not explored it enough to move beyond these first impressions.

While in Japan, I had the chance of having some truly Japanese experiences, which offered me an insight into the multi-faceted cultural space of the country. The visit to the Shunkaen Bonsai Museum was organised as part of the internship programme; I chose to take part in the ikebana and kimono workshops, and all participants attended a traditional tea ceremony. Being dressed up in a kimono was one of the most fascinating and memorable experiences I have had in Japan. The materials are wonderfully depicted, the process of getting dressed up is long, the simple task of walking while wearing it becomes incredibly challenging, but the result made me feel like an oriental princess and helped me realise how difficult it is, for a Japanese woman, to wear the traditional kimono during summer. Nevertheless, wearing a kimono enriches the feminine appearance with elegance, and in my case, it perfectly matched my definition of *exotic*. During another week, I attended a Rakugo show, which is a traditional form of Japanese storytelling. The master was Katsura Sunshine, a Canadian who is the second non-Japanese teller in the entire 11-century tradition of this form of art. Its specific lies in the amusing character of the monologue conducted by the teller, who has to maintain his sitting position (*seiza*) throughout the performance, and is not allowed to use anything else as props, except for a paper fan (*sensu*) and a handkerchief (*tenugui*). Given that the performance was meant for foreigners, it included explanations of the history of Rakugo and all sorts of small details about Japan and its people. For example, I learned that there are over 50 ways of thanking in Japanese, and the longer the formulation is, the more polite it becomes.

I experienced karaoke on another evening, with a small group of interns. It is a very popular activity in Japan. We rented a small sound-proof room and sang with no inhibitions, for the experience is quite different from the karaoke sessions done in public. I spent one evening in a very narrow bar in Golden Gai, close to the Shinjuku neighbourhood, side by side with people I have not met before and I will probably not ever see again, talking about distant countries which were suddenly so close to me – Hong Kong, Thailand –, about holidays and ascents

of mount Fuji, while sipping *sake* and enjoying the evening after a day of work at university. It is a very popular form of tourism especially among young people, a way of making acquaintances (I cannot say of making friends), one that I do not fully associate with my way of making tourism, but an experience I certainly do not regret.

I had lunch in the Ameyoko market, one of those very crowded and loud spots in Tokyo, which to me seem similar to the Romanian food markets and bazaars; you can find almost everything there, from food to hair clips and camouflage jackets, but this is exactly what transforms the place into a deafening chaos. Squeezed between strangers, trying to get used to chopsticks in my first week-end in Japan, aware of them staring at my fingers – this was only the beginning of the food experience in this country. I soon learned that supermarkets are incredibly expensive, while eating out is twice cheaper than in the UK. I noticed that all portions, except for those of rice and noodles, are half the size of what I am used to, both in food stores and restaurants. I did not have a cultural shock when I landed in Japan, but I did have one when I entered a supermarket for the first time and couldn't understand anything written on packages, for nothing is translated into English. I had to stick to aliments that I was sure I knew how to cook, and I stuffed myself with salads and boiled eggs. Anything imported (cheese, cheddar, sausages) is unbelievably expensive; it was then when I realised the difference between a mostly agricultural country, where I spent my childhood and was used to very cheap food, and this new place, where mountains cover 70% of the land surface and so much food is brought from overseas. The most luxurious item in food stores, judging by their price, are fruits; except for bananas, everything from apples to watermelons and grapes comes at hundreds of yen per piece, which was completely off my European budgeting scale.

But I wanted to taste the traditional Japan, so I ate out quite often, and had the very widely-popular sushi in conveyor-belt restaurants – where they make it in front of your eyes –, I had sashimi – which is only the raw fish, without the rice –, tempura – deep fried shrimp and vegetables, my favourite Japanese dish –, miso soup – made of fermented soy beans –, soba and udon noodles, yuba – the film that forms at the surface of hot soymilk, and which did not really impress me –, ramen, yakitori – skewered chicken –, mochi – the traditional Japanese sweets made of rice, with red beans paste –, onigiri – rice triangles with various fillings, wrapped in seaweed –, unagi – fried eel with rice –, everything washed down with substantial amounts of matcha, the very popular green tea. For the





foto: Iulia Ștreangă

welcome party organised by the laboratory I worked in, I had five different courses of tuna, and sake ice cream as dessert.

Food occupies a major role in the Japanese lifestyle; there are restaurants or small bars and food stores every five meters on the streets. The festivals that I have attended are a collection of food stalls gathered in a park or by a lake side. The vendors defy the specific Japanese shyness and shout out their offers. Smells, aromas, colours, things like cheesecakes wrapped in crepes and light bulbs used as drinking glasses are as identifiable with Tokyo as the electronics and manga neighbourhood, Akihabara, a district I am sure can be seen only in Japan. It was also in supermarkets where I identified some of the issues which surprised the environmental geoscientist in me: the air conditioning is savagely turned on in their buildings; the amount of packaging wrapping food is vexing; and there is no plastic bag tax in the majority of their shops; plastic bags come with everything, and they are not bio-

degradable. Coming from a university which places such much emphasis on the necessity of reducing the plastic consumption and being aware of these environmental aspects from my courses, I was quite shocked to see that the Japanese society does not make any effort in trying to reduce its carbon footprint. I have clearly grown into believing that a self-aware and responsible society should address these energy matters accordingly.

Tokyo is a city where functionality prevails over esthetics. I have seen it in the way their bridges look and in the lack of any architectural ornamentation on office or administrative buildings. Two neighbourhoods of skyscrapers made a powerful impression on me. The first one, Marunouchi, is an elegant area around the Imperial Palace, in the actual center of the city; the Palace, just what can be seen of it from afar, as visitors are not allowed to enter the domains where the Emperor and his family live, and the famous Niju-bashi bridge in front of it are an iconic spot, very pleasant to walk by. The second neighbourhood is



in the breeze of the Pacific and yearned for going to the seaside. I visited Lake Kawaguchiko to take a glimpse of Mount Fuji, but the clouds have been so thick the entire day, that I only saw it on my way back, while randomly looking through the bus window. I visited the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Nikko, the lavishly, impressively decorated Shinto shrine complex dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the last shogunate of Japan. I had a wonderful time travelling, admiring monuments so different from the European ones, but I also think that I missed part of the charm of this experience because I have only regarded the places from the tourist's perspective, with no trace of religiosity.

I am extremely grateful for having had the chance of pursuing my first research project while being in contact with a fascinating culture. The organisers did anything they could to make us always feel welcome and safe during every activity we had, whether it was the fancy reception when we met the sponsors, or the trip to Nikko and the yuba factory. I lived a fulfilling summer and tried to remember and interpret for myself all details, places or customs meaningful to me. I left Japan with the strong determination of coming back during the cherry blossom season and photograph the trees from Kyoto. And maybe, who knows, climb up Mount Fuji and see the sunrise from the top, in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Odaiba, far in the southern part of Tokyo, on the brim of the coast; the Pacific waters come into the bay, and the horizon line, cut by the skyscrapers' rectangular shapes, frames in a distinguished way the replica of the Statue of Liberty, which I caught blushed in the sunset. But I think the beauty of Japan lies outside Tokyo, this highly functional city where the remnants of tradition, mostly temple buildings, are all what is left of old Edo, the village which became one of the most populous places on the planet.

During week-ends I explored places which I could easily reach from Tokyo. I went to Kawagoe to see what the old Edo looked like, admired the wooden roofs with their heavily carved tips turned towards the sky, so characteristic of Japanese traditional architecture, and I rejoiced in spending a few hours far from the maddening rhythm of the capital. I went to Kamakura to see the great Buddha Daibutsu, a 13-metre tall statue, built in the 13th century, and a series of beautiful temples and Shinto shrines. I went to Yokohama on the last week-end spent in Japan and strolled through the biggest Asian Chinatown, took

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INTERVIEW

Doris Mironescu

The reader, especially the young one, wants to be an island, the owner of a singular reading experience. And reading contemporaries, as well as foreign authors, makes that easier.

* Doris Mironescu is a literary critic and professor at the Faculty of Letters of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

foto: personal archive

■ **YOU PUBLISHED A BLECHER CRITICAL ISSUE WHICH SPARKED SOME INTEREST AMONGST THE SPECIALISTS. WE WILL START OFF WITH A QUESTION OUR TEACHERS MIGHT ASK YOU: WHY SHOULD BLECHER BE STUDIED IN HIGH SCHOOL? (CONSIDERING THIS ONLY HAPPENS EVERY NOW AND THEN)**

It might be regrettable that Blecher doesn't figure today's textbooks. The image a teenager gets about Romanian Literature will be incomplete without this exceptional writer from the interwar period. It's true, this writer can not be claimed by the textbooks on some explicit pedagogical basis such as having described a certain sociological or geographical slice of Romanian history, the same way Creanga, Slavici, Sadoveanu, Rebreanu or Preda are. Blecher could only be reduced, with great losses, to a cartographer of the (Moldavian) provincial town. He explores states of consciousness, describes paradoxical experiences which question perceptions, he is interested in the somewhat strange forms of knowledge, which defy logic. The experience Blecher captures is a "poetical" one, as we conventionally call it, even though it doesn't require verses in order to be written. That's why I don't even know how it could be included in the textbooks in order to make sense: under the theme of "childhood"? Under the "fabulous"?

But as teenagers you have to ask yourself this question: is it really necessary for a valuable writer to figure the textbooks in order for his value to be confirmed? Is the literature textbook a compendium of literary history in which aesthetic value is established through national plebiscite definitively and irrevocably? Shouldn't somehow the idea of alternative manuals make the unique history of literature explode and open up student's horizons towards a more complete and complex reading experience?

■ **DO YOU HAVE ANY RECIPE WHICH COULD BRING EMINESCU CLOSER TO THE YOUTH? HOW SHOULD WE READ HIM?**

I don't have any recipe on me. Eminescu, obviously, has to be read and known in order to be appreciated and, eventually, loved. Read as much as many of his writings as you can, read his splendid posthumous poems, sometimes extremely subtle, left in manuscript because of some prosodical quirks which the poet didn't manage to eliminate. But try to especially understand the internal chronology of his writing, the triumphs and the explorations.

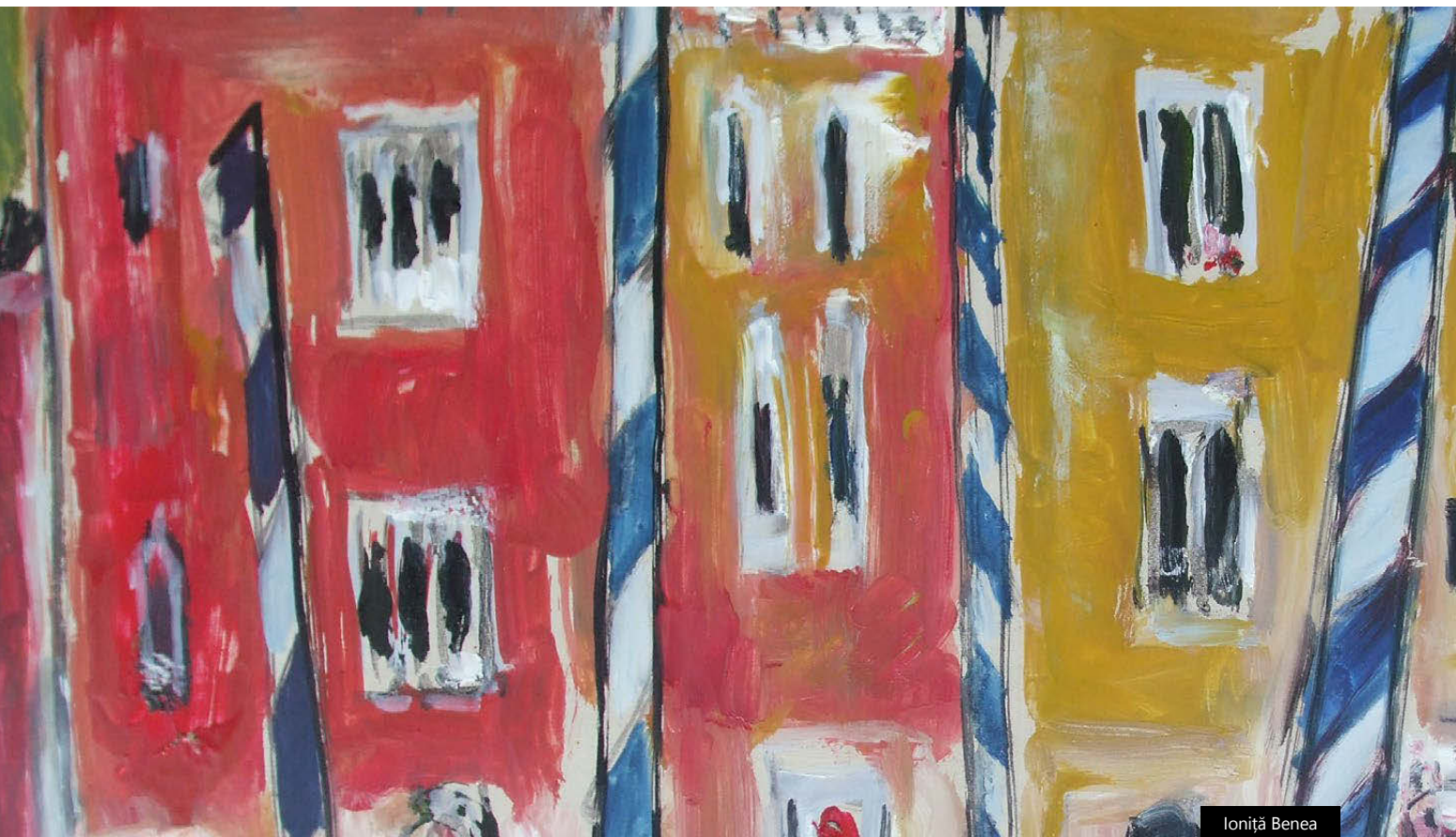
Eminescu's writing is unfinished, the author didn't get to put it in order. He didn't publish much, not enough in comparison with how much he wrote, he was his harshest censor.



This doesn't mean that everything he wrote has the same value, but it doesn't make sense to only read the texts he published himself while alive. Eminescu's writing still needs good monographs and critical readers, very well informed in regards to the poet's readings and the era he wrote in. A historicized perspective, for example, on Eminescu's writing seems to me like the healthiest thing we can do nowadays as readers.

■ **WHY DOES CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE CLICK WITH THE YOUNGER READERS MORE OFTEN THAT THE CANON? CAN WE SAY SCHOOL IS "GUILTY" IN THIS SITUATION?**

Usually there's something antipathetic about the textbook writers, because of the coerciveness of the canonical



Ioniță Benea

declination of their unavoidable value. A while back, when there was only one textbook, grades were handed on the basis of knowing by heart the explanations for the "greatness" of the writers it contained. No matter how great or pleasant the reading experience was, through the textbook filter Eminescu, Caragiale, Camil Petrescu or Marin Preda became bland, boring, they were reduced to a set of critical cliches which curved the aesthetic or semantical potential.

But the reader, especially the young reader, doesn't love taxidermized writers. On the contrary, they prefer illicit, undisclosed, private reading, which allows only them to access something singular, unpredictable, unknown to everyone but a few, who are alike them.

The reader, especially the young one, wants to be an island, the owner of a singular reading experience. And

reading contemporaries, as well as foreign authors, makes that easier. So no, I don't think school is the reason you don't like the canon. You need to put in a little effort to make a textbook writer "yours". But it's worth it.

■ A QUESTION WE ASK ALL OUR GUESTS: HOW WOULD AN IDEAL LITERATURE CLASS LOOK IN YOUR VISION?

Like a good seminary at the Faculty of Letters...

■ HOW TO YOU CHOOSE WHICH BOOKS/ AUTHORS TO WRITE ABOUT? WHAT WERE SOME OF THE REACTIONS YOU GOT AFTER TEARING APART A BOOK?

A few years ago, when I was still writing literary chronicles of contemporary literature, I was choosing the books which had something to tell me, which, in my opinion, deserved to be mentioned. I have always been an adept of a type of chronicle based on analysis and interpretation, not on hierarchy and classification. The book's value was affirmed though by the fact that I considered it good



enough for a critical discussion, because, otherwise, there are many books being published and few deserve attention. I've always been drawn to unique, particular books, which seemed to delineate a singular sensibility. And what I managed to say about them wasn't a celebration of their aesthetic values, but a revelation of a message which had to be passed onto the others. All this being said, there were a few instances when I have been a negative critic, even if, in my opinion, I've done that without any violence. With all the benevolence I've shown (believe me), the patient was recalcitrant. And I understand his point: writing literature exposes you, judgement of your writing seems like judgement of you. But that doesn't mean that literary criticism is useless or has to be practised gently.

■ WHAT ARE SOME ARGUMENTS THAT COULD DETERMINE YOUNG READERS (LIKE US) TO (ALSO) READ RELEASE CRITICISM?

Release criticism should, ideally, announce the apparition of a good book, or, more ambitiously, present a intelligible picture of nowadays Romanian literature. Especially for the second reason, young people should be interested

to read release criticism. The textbook presents a picture of the history of a literature whose present is, in the best case scenario, mapped by the cultural magazine. Sometimes in a better manner than other times, but that's why there are many literary chroniclers working and competing simultaneously. The role of release criticism isn't to advise the reader on which book to spend their money: that's the role of the editor's promotional services and some of them are ferociously efficient! The chronicler sees contemporary literature as a homogenous, continuous field, as a system which is constantly moving and completing itself. Obviously, it's not his job to guess what the future has to offer him, what sort of books will be written and how valuable they will be. But he has to be able to explain why the emergence of a book is a symptom of a positive movement in Romanian literature, why a mediocre book can be worse than a failure, it can be a danger as long as it finds uncritical admirers and imitators.

A critic's durable options have to result in a vision about literature and a rational explanation of the recent development of Romanian literature. From this point, the chronicler's work becomes exciting, a show that's worthy of being followed and a calling that's worth being practised.

Inclusively by young people. And, to be fair, only during the youth you have the energy required by it.

■ DO YOU THINK OF THE LITERARY CRITIC AS A CREATOR?

No, the literary critic isn't and shouldn't be a creator. His work is different from the one of the writer. His occupation isn't literature itself (reading, eventually writing it), it is the *study* of literature. He is interested in the existential possibilities of literature; the writer's interest is "life". For the literary critic which identifies as a chronicler of the present, this aspect might not be so obvious. He participates in the literary life he writes about, for any literary historian, comparatist or literary theoretician things are clear. The critic's relationship with literature is fatally mediated, he is always and fatally systematically situated outside literature in order to be able to judge it efficiently. At the same time, he examines the justification of literature's existence in conjunction with society, with the individual in a psychological, moral or political context, he discusses things tied to the canon, tradition, memory, he studies eras, generalities, directions, the circulation of themes, the persistence of certain constants of the imaginary, the evolution of cer-



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tain techniques. The writer rarely asks these questions and, however, he utilises them as some tools, not as the objects of his study. The literary critic shouldn't consider himself a creator because, if he does, he finds himself in an unsuited position in regards to his topic of study. By this I don't mean it is forbidden to him to "love" literature, in that way unsuccessful writers think about critics. But, if they are to be professional, they have to give up narcissistic illusions and understand their job in their own terms.

■ **WHAT FAULTS DO YOU FIND IN THE CONTEMPORARY CRITIC? WHY DO YOU THINK IT HAS SUCH A LOW IMPACT ON TEENAGERS?**

Literary chronicles, just like the cultural press in general, is currently undergoing a crisis. The media field and the cultural one radically redefine each other, firstly because of the Internet, which leads to many media outlets becoming irrelevant. In chronicles, the discourse changes radically as

well, becomes more transitive, more blunt, more playful. I'm not sure many of the old critics will be able to make it through this change. Older generations won't make it for sure. But young people don't manage it much better, many of them don't even bother with it anymore.

But, if we are talking about literary criticism that isn't made in the newspapers, but in books and scientific publications, then I have many great things to say about nowadays Romanian criticism. We are witnessing switch point and a shift in critical language. Romanian literature starts being studied in conjunction with universal literature. There are some important questions being asked for the first time in the literary field, which tend to make literature more than a hideout from the bad in the world. Literary studies are becoming a force to be reckoned with in the humanities field. Readers, and high school students among them, should take notes.

■ WHAT CONTEMPORARY WRITERS FROM IASI WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

You surely know the available contemporary authors from Iasi, so I'm not losing sleep worrying you haven't already read Emil Brumaru, Constantin Acosmei, Lucian Teodorovici, Florin Lăzărescu, Dan Lungu, which have already been in the picture for decades. It's better if I draw some attention to those you probably don't know as well: the essayist Valeriu Gherghes, whose dissertations of reading and interpretation, filled with charm and spirit like no other, you can find in *Porunca lui rabbi Akiba* and in *Breviarul sceptic*, and poet Matei Hutopila, whose verses in *Copci* and *Tișța* should sound familiar, because they describe the corporatist Iasi and the rural Hinterland the way nobody else has done it.

■ ARE THERE ANY BOOKS YOU MISSED ON DURING HIGH SCHOOL? HOW DID YOU EVENTUALLY FIND THEM?

Even though high school is a time of great accumulations, know that during university you'll have enough time to complete what you didn't manage to yet. I am trying to remember a reading "acquisition" ulterior to high school, which had the same emotional impact as Dostoevski and Bulgakov, Joyce and Kafka. I think during university I read more postmodernists, Kundera, Nabokov, Barnes, Rushdie, which I liked, but they didn't give me the feeling of epistemological urgency of the previous masters. But I think university gave me the occasion to revisit the major realists in more detail, realists which I had skimmed over in high school on the wrong basis of them being quite tenebrous, metaphysical and provocative. My obviously wrong perceptions on Tolstoi, Flaubert, Balzac were set right through a profitable reading and afterwards through passionate re-readings. The moral? There is literature to be read after high school as well!

■ DO YOU SEE YOURSELF MORE AS A PROFESSOR OR AS A LITERARY CRITIC?

I wouldn't say one is above the other. I like being a professor very much, it is something that defines me, including in my professional nomenclature. Maybe it also characterises me, I don't know. On the other hand,

being a literary critic is more of a vocation which needs constant confirmation, from one book to the other.

I know that the job of the critic can be defined as loose and auspicious; it would be easier to accept myself as a critic, as a "person of taste", "called" to give his two cents on books. I prefer to think you aren't born a critic, but you build yourself into one, and that happens with each book, and to be more dramatic, with each page you don't give up on and you don't let yourself slip into a routine.

■ WHAT BOOKS DO YOU CONSIDER ESSENTIAL IN SHAPING A TEENAGER?

None of them/all of them. Everything shapes. If during this time you read nonsense, astrology books or you watch telenovellas, all of these will carry some weight in shaping your future. That's why it can be wise to collaborate with estimable people, verified by hundreds of years, from whom it is supposed you can learn some things: Shakespeare, Tolstoi, Flaubert.

■ WE RECENTLY READ RADU VANCU'S DIARY AND WE'RE CURIOUS - HOW WOULD A LITERARY CRITIC'S DIARY LOOK LIKE☺?

I am afraid I can't help you. I don't keep a diary, I never have. The process of constructing your inner self which a diary documents seems too difficult to me to be recorded in an expressive manner. Those who manage to keep a real diary, and one that had literary value have my disquieted admiration. For me, it is too important to live to care about writing about it.

■ IS THERE ANY TIME WHEN YOUR FRIENDSHIP WITH AN AUTHOR INFLUENCED YOUR OPINION ON THEIR BOOKS? WHAT ARE THE COMPROMISES A LITERARY CRITIC HAS TO MAKE?

G. Calinescu once said that those who pretend they never make compromises don't know what life is. Obviously, there are compromises which compromise, and other, which are more benign. This anxiety regarding the literary critic's ethic seems off to me. You'll encounter ethical problems all your life, in any profession you'll have. It's all about finding a way to solve them without damaging your own moral being.

Quick fire round:

British or American literature? American.

Classics or contemporary authors? Classics.

Poetry or prose? Prose.

Călinescu or Lovinescu? Both.

Nicolae Manolescu or Eugen Simion? Matei Călinescu

☺.

(Translated by Anca-Ioana Șcheul)



SHORT STORIES & POETRY



CRISTINA ALEXANDRESCU

(B. 1993) She studied at "Nicolae Iorga" Technical Highschool from Negrești, Vaslui. Now she studies Letters (Comparative Literatures) at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași. | *When I was younger, I couldn't quite imagine my life without school. I've always knew that I was prepared to take random classes over and over till the end. But you see, life taught me exactly the opposite; I had to abandon studying twice. I've put school on hold for 2 or 3 years. I regret nothing after all. I used that time well enough – reading a lot, writing less. That's how I realized that I'm not really into fiction but that I have a passion for poetry and essays. Hanging on them is all I can do at this very moment.* suport să citesc ficțiune, dar că iubesc poezia și eseurile. Și mă agăț de asta cum pot.

*

If I close my eyes I'll imagine a lot of things
And some of them didn't even happen
But damn

I just can't visualize how I actually looked that evening
When you've been told me that
I'm not harassing you bad enough
We've got a moment right there

In that pale annoying light from your smart tv. I hope that
My shoulders looked pretty & that my hair was firmly styled
There were other moments too but this one is important
Because it all stopped within

*

Balance is when I imagine the moles
on your back being
numbered

that I could draw a cat by simply follow the order

*

The way they've told us from the very beginning
happiness is a pretty repulsive animal
we've got used to the idea & we actually believe it
happiness is a biting animal & you're one of the million things
that could've been happening to me

*

pain is when
I have to
wash up your smell

*

I took a pic
of the traces you let on my body &
I've stared a lot, now I think they're fitting me well

*

I've got SH man's t-shirts & I'm wearing them
as if they've belonged to you
a pointed line and a scissor sketched on my chest
you've got your need
of being strong
the need of someone just like me
but just not me

*

A rubber ball with no life expectancy you`re
throwing me to the ground
& I`m back. Disgusted

There`re people dying on the TV

*

dinner on facebook that is cool. from
a side view
we look happy.

*

at traffic lights
we are looking in all directions and we
pretend that we have a choice.

*

sidewalks made and
destroyed immediately they forgot to repair sewage.

love is made here too
That's why
I'm sick of it

*

like a stupid app our
love
works on levels to go on to the next
press ok
X

Mintz98

I came back yesterday after years
Of crying at the gate of the Leaning Tower of Pisa
Breathing through willow mornings of anxiety
I remembered communism dejecting the cat
But still Mogoşoaia is no Piazza del Duomo
The mirror lake *the tear of life*
The theater class on Thursday and the dementia of the 3rd
floor neighbour
I have wet my blue jeans on the wet meadow
I did (not) cry watching The Titanic more than at the shipwreck
from the Indian Ocean
Grandma's cry – yellow flowers
\latent nadir/damn the agrestic herds
My conscience is a dandelion on which I projected
Memories of us and the sand from the harbour
he loves me, he loves me not I think I saw
A daisy on a bench ; there is no romance here
There are just kisses on the hallway of the pathetic highschool
Everyone is discovering the visitors
There are some amazed molecules (not)
They choked today not on chalk powder
These arcades - horror movies - EMA
Screamed Bloody Mary
Three times in front of the bedroom/not a women
We are sitting at the table / I'm too lazy to breathe
I haven't had coffee/ I'm hungry but
The sun is the best piece of mashed potatoes.

BIANCA MOISE



Always hurt-never because of love

10:52<12:36 at Seneca it doesn't rain
Anticafa is not anti-love
Weber said to me that he also waited for me today
I didn't ask why
I was busy with my guy through Aviatorilor
And this life is cool – is really cool dude
The girls from ASE are hot and my fellow people from
Constanta are saying
you'll change when you get to the capital
My mom wants me to get married here
She says that Kim's dad is some sort of Ion Mincu
Whatever – we are tormented –
not by pain, but by the idea of pain
We have forgotten the cronological order of the 7steps
towards happiness
I walked around 3 times
I laughed once
And we made love out the rest
Between us there was nothing but pillows
And white waterlilies which forgot to grow
In Dorobanti all the smoked cigarettes
With the teachers from CRP & the high level of
frustration
//childhood flashbacks\\
*we don't have any money mom – we don't
The electric bill got more expensive
We are not get any water again
God damn you all*
That was the background music
Of the Association of tenants
{Mușat Milică, thank you & may God forgive you}
I wanted to tell you something else
Listen
romantic compassion full of hope
Some girls are selling their virginity
For a ruby/topaz ring
At ANL in our town, people can't afford to buy food
As Chiriluță says
it's the americans fault.

BIANCA MOISE

The Door (fragment)

Horia David Munteanu

It seemed to have been there forever. Massive, dark, silent. She could not remember a time when things had been different. Sometimes there was complete silence around it. At such moments, it was like a black eye, one that never blinks, one about which you don't know if it is covered with a thick velvet eyelid or it is open but it rejects the light. Other times, the strangest sounds danced around it: from murmurs that were impossible to decipher to screams or hurried steps, quickly isolated by a mysterious silence. It had the ability to take one by surprise. She could never tell what it would do next. This is why she could not define how she felt about it: was it joy knowing that at some point it would open and something new would sneak in, or the paralyzing fear that, without it, that certain something would burst in and nothing she knew would ever be the same.

My life and the mystery door

I was waiting for story hour. In the evening, only he and I sat on the couch and told each other about the adventures of the day. It was still early and I was moving my whiskers slowly, staring at a fixed point, outside. It had been a day heavy with dreariness, though the inside was warm and pleasant. From what I could gather, it was winter now. I moved graciously toward the window. The unknown fascinated me. From the windowsill, a piece of the world would become glued to me. I would have liked to touch it, to sink into the unknown, to feel with my dainty paws, painted like honey, the shapes and the colors, to let myself become surrounded by strange smells, to dart into the bushes, to seek the other creatures like me and then, proud and victorious, to go back and take my place by his side, lay my head on his hand and feel him run his fingers through my soft fur. I pawed at the window, but I knew that was not the way out. Everybody in my world went out through one opening only. I had paid attention (I always did) and I had understood. The door. A seemingly inconspicuous object, to me a mystery that always pulled me toward it but also made the hairs on my back stand on end with fear. Not a day went by that I didn't ask myself what was really hidden behind it. According to my observations, whatever I could see outside the window should also be found behind the door. That, but bigger, more full of life. It's very rarely that I can sneak close to it so I can take a peek at the world beyond it. I look up and a pigeon nest calls my attention. I could grab it easily, hopping onto the roof, if only I could be outside. Other times, two annoying pigeons may be walking nearby, moving their beaks ever so slightly. A toy like no other. Still, most of the time nothing is really happening. My world is closed in, a fortress that my friend has made for me so I can watch everything from a safe distance, away from dangers. I have many questions. I can't say exactly how well I know him, but I trust him. He is my friend. I like to feel his warmth, to allow myself to be petted, pampered. I don't hesitate to take my claws out if I have to; he has never used his. He smells funny, behaves differently, but when I lick the top of the furry part of his head he seems to be just a big kitten. Maybe he is my brother, even if his features are those of a human. Our connection is very special. I am a cat from the dragonustotalus subspecies – he's the one who has decided that and there is no questioning it. That means supreme dragon. I never tire of listening to him. He tells me about my world, but about his world too. He thinks I have a different kingdom somewhere outside his palace, that I have special powers, that I can do things that he can never manage to do, not even in his dreams. I don't tell him otherwise. I speak to him now and then, but I don't think he understands everything I say, so I don't mewl at all about the dream about

the world outside. In the past, I used to look for secret doors leading to the other world, but my attempts were fruitless. I felt every object, I explored every corner, I made myself one with the walls and I crouched. I did everything I could, but to no avail. Only the mystery door remains. My questions increase from one day to the next. Aside from my family, made of three people, sometimes other humans come here. Some bigger, some smaller, but all very different from me. They never stay for good. They come in through that door, they go out through that door. They don't always see me: they do only if I choose to show myself to them, but the door brings them in or takes them out of my world following a will of its own. They come and go through that mysterious door.

I hear a voice that calls my name. It's already been four hours. Time seems to always go by too fast, as I sit curled up with my thoughts. The evening of stories is coming up, my favorite moment of the day. I like David's stories (that is the name of my friend), for two reasons. One, I can doze off as I please while someone else tells me about his tiring day, and second, because without meaning to, David is delivering information to me about the unknown outside, a place that fascinates me so. Almost all his stories are about it. I have divided my mind into compartments and one of them is the Department of Stories. I combine the information he gives me and what I already know; I hope, in time, I will discover the secret of the mystery door. I yawn lazily and I stretch. I wait, basking in a soft mist.

A new mystery door

I am late. I grab my school bag, I bend, but I decide to skip tying my shoes. The school bus is now in front of my house. I say good-bye to my parents and to my cat. I would like to run my fingers through her fluffy fur, but she's sleeping, curled up on the bed, one paw sticking up and perfectly peaceful. I would love to have the kind of life she has. To do only what I please all day long, to relax – in short, to be an

Ira

You are carried by a torment of fire
Which inflames your calm body;
A power to crush bones with bones
A power to silence any peace.

A ring of spines and razors,
But you don't lose a ring that
Raises you up in frenzies,
And melts the century into year.

Your drowning in blood
Gives you a taste of life, but to the death
She recieves the water, and the pain
It is her earth beneath the feet.

In the chair, strangled by silence
The ring chokes your finger, and
You seek silence in fire, but a sea
And a thought is born, and the ring dies in fire.

TUDOR LIȚCANU



Foto: Bogdan Onofrei



Nostalgia

The time is counted with a broken clock
About I know that it will count behind,
It tricks me, it tricks my mind,
The minutes are hours
And the hours are
On my covered skin.

I am losing myself in the concept of present,
And it hurts: cramps in your bed;
And it mends: cramps in our heart;
I have left my ribs with intention
So that my blood can flow beyond the time
In rhythm with a broken clock.

As the tree flows
In a life of a forest,
So as I flow in a quantic flow
So I can put my ribs above my heart
And fix the clock somehow.

Superbia

Crowning yourself with shivers
Of shattered mirrors from your eyes
And they will reflect only you
What is the reflection without light?

You are covered in the gold of your own mouth
And you wear this coat on the streets, believing
That you are light, but the light
Is running away from you.

The pain of the unlimited power
Your pain. You believe that
You can move the mountains
Or you can move the brightest minds
But the only thing you move
Is your shattered crown.

And when the wood ticks on windows
You shine the most, but
For whom it ticks, the crown breaks
And you will carry the mind and not the crown.

TUDOR LIȚCANU

adult. That's pretty much what they do. After you're done with school, you do whatever you please with your life. That is, you have that freedom that childhood cannot grant you.

I have a talk with Victor, my best friend. He thinks it's better to be a child for reasons only he knows. This is one of the few things we don't seem to manage to agree on. Before I go to sleep I imagine I step through the door, past childhood. Many times I wonder when this moment will arrive and when I will find this mystery door and I'll be able to move past it. Eighteen is the official age they have set for it, but I don't understand what can possibly happen between the day before one reaches this age and the moment when people say, "happy birthday, you are no longer a minor!" It's not as if you suddenly move to a different universe and the you that you've always been becomes, in the blink of an eye, someone else whom everyone treats differently. And I also don't think I should tattoo on my forehead the magic number of my freedom. I wonder how (and, on a bad day, if) the limits of the absolute can change for you. I would give almost anything to become an adult faster. To have my own budget and spend my money on anything I want. When I tell my parents about it, they look at me without a worry, just a bit of surprise, and they ask me where my so-called budget will come from. I have no idea. Once I almost said I'd get it from them, but at that very moment a pigeon came close to the window and the cat hopped on the windowsill. I became distracted. Anyway, I have decided I want to be a grown-up and trivial things won't stand in my way.

Today my desire has become even stronger. I received a 6 on my geography test. Generally, I am good at this subject, but I had a bad day, that's all. Had I been an adult, nobody would have minded my failure. Now I'm thinking what explanation to give my parents. So far, nothing comes to mind.

The day has crawled by. It's been a terrible day. I would like to pluck the sadness out of my heart, sadness that has spread like an ink stain on paper that the rain has dampened. I can't wait to tell my cat about what today has been like. She always understands me. Seeing how the shades of color in her eyes keep changing, I am certain she's listening. She listens even when she's asleep. The way her tail twitches signals that to me.

"David!" I heard someone call my name. It was dad, who had been checking my math homework. I'd made mistakes on two exercises. I had known from the start that I was supposed to concentrate, but I couldn't manage it. The feeling of outrage was too strong. I was a captive in its gray-reddish waters, I was pulsating to the rhythm of a heart that was and wasn't mine. And now, the two exercises sat in front of me, reminding me of a time I wanted to forget. I kept going like that until about eleven. Finally, I turned off the light. The cat seemed

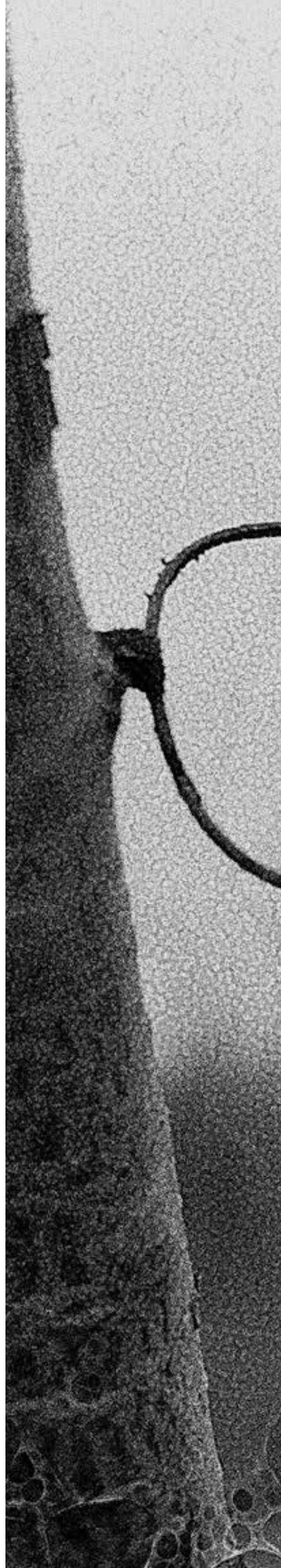




Foto: Bogdan Onofrei

very upset. She moved her whiskers in a new way and seemed to ask me: "Human, what about me? What about my stories?" I reached out to her and petted her. A comforting feeling seeped into my fingers. I was very curious what use she had for my brief stories. What did she find so wonderful in them? I started thinking again of that door leading beyond childhood. How could I get to it and walk through? I closed my eyes. Something warned me that things were not that simple. Later, much later, I would find out that I never truly wanted to go through, never wanted to leave my childhood behind. The sweet swirls of sleep touch my lashes. I sink in, hoping for an easier day tomorrow.

Intoxicated with the bauist red

I regreted that I left the Nille pass
Through fingers without assign it one verse
The lock is my olny mate which remained me
Since the communist time
I think it will not
Betray me like the wine from the puddle or like Daniel
Who told me at twelve grade
That I will never getting married
too much red damage / you'll get metempsychosis
It's clear to me that no one will marry you
Of children we don't even talk
What kind of education can a woman miniature give?
He told me more then: that I have no point/no one lives from
art but
Maybe we can go sometime to take a bath in Snagov
I told him *bye* I go with dad
I'm sinking in this stone and I'm walking on the Boulevard of
Exposition
In the flower market of loneliness I'm singing a ballad
.....
After 20 years
I went down in this darkness I drove away
To the periphery the first May crisis I'm honestly
Better than Daniel and his girlfriend with gazelle legs
She is choking fragile in the love of hers little family
I like the freedom/I always liked it
They look at me from the window (pfff...)
These people don't know to regret me I'm alone here
But I'm not what they predicted
highway woman hmmm I'm helping
The sleep walkers to be better.

BIANCA MOISE



IRINA TEMNEANU

(B. 1998) Irina is a graduate of the Theoretical Highschool "Grigore Moisil" Tulcea and a student in the first year at Aerospace Engineering, Transilvania University of Braşov. | *Saint Vitus - Clear Windowpane.*

alphari: I'm happy and beautiful

when we stumble in mold under the cherry plum tree
 I remember this one time
 I'm 7 and following my dad
 past the embankments I'm swimming
 and he's washing his shoes
 this air smells of rotten flesh
 we know the slaughterhouse is near

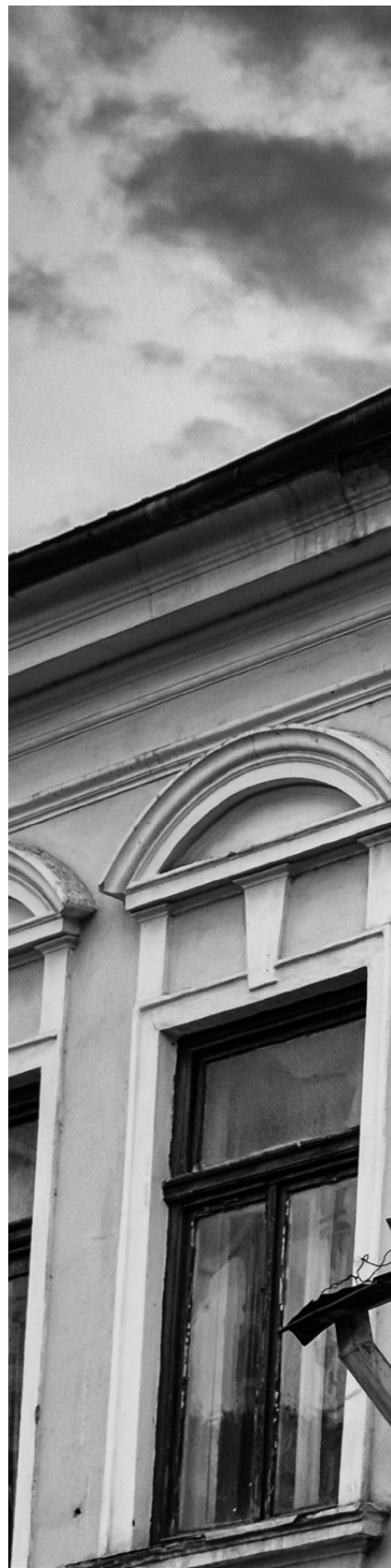
dark small hands emerge out of the fish; yes they tickle my feet
 that's when I can't feel it anymore, the algae between my toes
 I drown under the water, the bulldozers
 and I can see my old man differently
 he's sad with the dragon tattoo swallowing my hair
 and spitting me off on the shore

now he's happy and beautiful my dad under the water
 with purple skin and little worms crawling out of his pupils
 I stare at him like we've found ourselves in a western movie where
 we bury our children under empty bullets and cacti
 that's my dad, the jason statham we never asked for
 but which we desperately need
 to save our princess to leave us here
 in this huge living room with a dacia branded TV
 to pat our foreheads gently
 to remember him with the black hat and a long coat
 our personal capo di tutti capi

13 iunie

today my bro turned 30
 we gathered in the countryside, we ate and we drank
 we danced on manele and we managed to sing
 with marius shaking both his hands and his arse
 with fingers clenched on the plates
 the 2 meter tall cake overflowing with lava
 every guest turned to stone every kid
 with his tongue glued to the window

and me crying, far away from Alba
 from Ghimbav it's simple and I cannot stop
 my brother got old and so did I, is only natural
 and me crying; another birthday our dad couldn't attend
 another birthday where I tell some random chick
 "gawd your dress is marvelous"
 "hm the new gucci" thinking haha what a funny joke m8
 maybe they'll like me
 and maybe summer will come earlier next year.







*perța 2016: feels like is not mine, this skin that's bound to
me*

these bones like fallen branches cannot hold the flesh
magnetic field surrounding calls for the starving animals
inside this body I keep caged these two struggling humans
total opposites of each other, two ferrets pressing on my palms
pulling my lungs with their tiny paws

the railway goes straight through the spine
& sadbois living in the freaking head
making conversation sharing ancient memes
mechanical answers to every fingertap on the table
as I lay on my side with the cat stretching at my feet
a breast crushing on the other & one regret

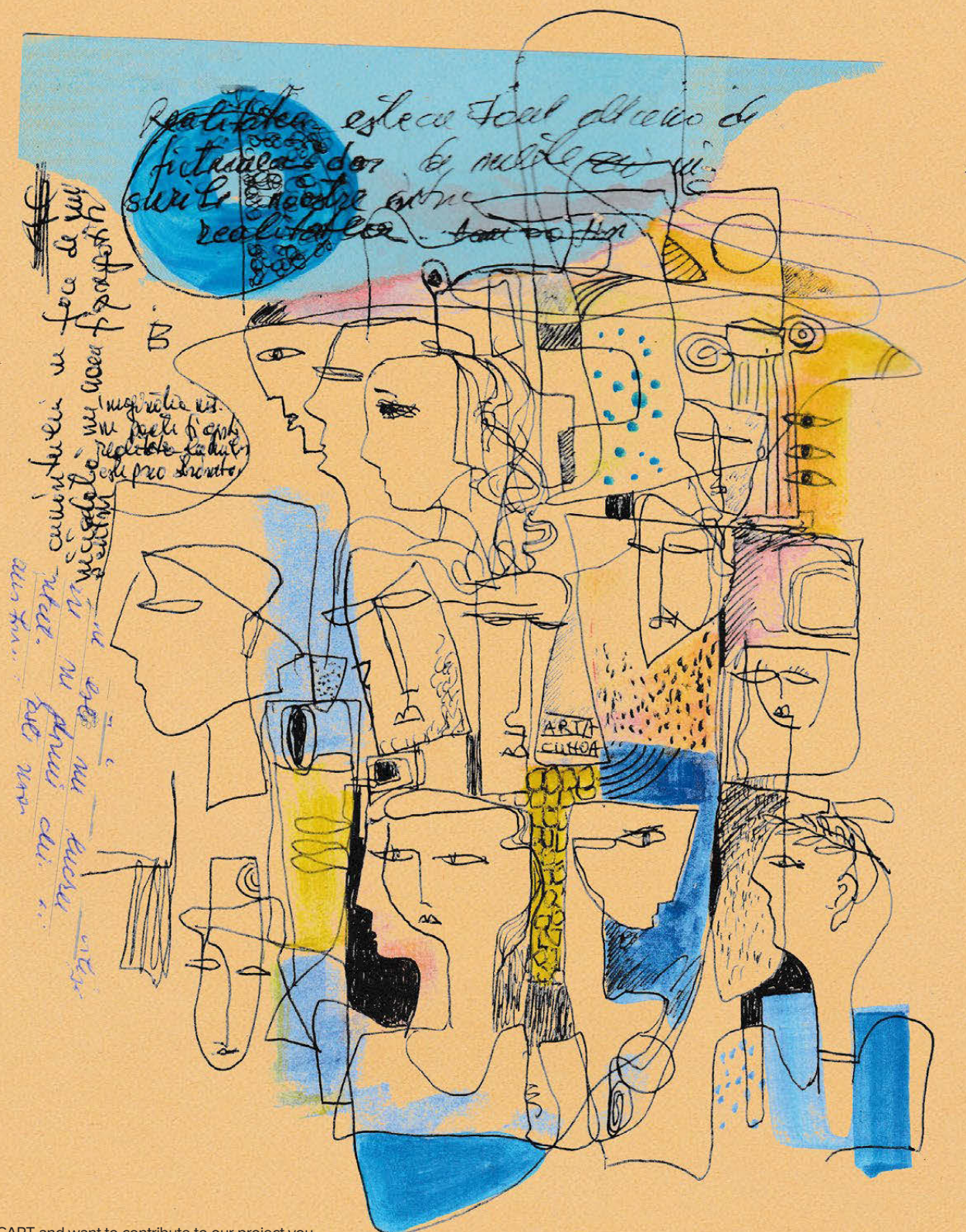
ask mom to stay
to press her hand on my shoulder like that one time
when I were a child & kept stepping on wet grit stone
a slap at the back of my head; the uncertainty of trembling hands
the damned TV frozen on Animal Planet where
a grizzly mama-bear eats her cubs.

IRINA TEMNEANU



PRUNSTAL

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