

The Place of the Intellectual in the Contemporary World. An Opinion on the Issue Addressed in the Novel „*Mic Dejun la Café de Flore*” [Breakfast at Café de Flore] Authored by Elena Adriana Dobrinoiu

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Abstract: *This article is about an anthropological and philosophical analysis of the novel „Mic Dejun la Café de Flore”, a novel authored by Elena Adriana Dobrinoiu and published at Lumen Publishing in 2024. Our analysis has as its main subject the place of the intellectual and especially of the intellectual engagement in the public space - either in politics or journalism – analysis that is occasioned by the reading of the autobiographical novel by Elena Adriana Dobrinoiu, a novel that was read in the key to a possible answer to the question whether and what place the intellectual has in the contemporary world, at least in the current Western cultural space.*

Keywords: *intellectual, quality content, cultural space.*

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Using the pretext of reading the autobiographical novel *Mic Dejun la Café de Flore* [Breakfast at Café de Flore] by Elena Adriana Dobrinioiu, the analysis we want to carry out has as main subject the place of the intellectual and especially of the intellectual of engagement in public space - either in politics or journalism. The novel was read in the key of a possible answer to the question of whether and what place the intellectual has in the contemporary world, at least in the current Western cultural space.

The author of the novel which was published at Lumen Publishing in 2023, a novel that allowed me to reflect on the followings, is professor of socio-humanistic sciences, civic culture, history and entrepreneurial education and runs Adria Facilities Management Limited in London, an individual enterprise having as object of activity intercultural visits and individual office of mediator. Adriana Dobrinioiu is an author of books, essays, articles in the press and literature magazines, a television producer. She is passionate about writing, philosophy, business and travel. She published the book *Politică și Putere* [Politics and Power] at the publishing Cartea Românească in Bucharest in 2004 and the volume *Jurnal de Călătorie: Paris* [Travel Journal: Paris] at the publishing Scrisul Românesc in Craiova in 2019 and has now published at Lumen the novel entitled *Mic Dejun la Café de Flore*.

This café, Café de Flore, is located in Paris, in the City of Lights - and as such, the author insinuates a return to those literary cafés that have given rise to ideas of social sphere and public sphere, as well as that distinction between public and private sphere. It was precisely through the emergence of those literary cafés that ideas began to become objects of consumption and began to have an impact, an impact that is currently transmitted through influencers, the media, news, television, the Internet, through YouTube. However, we must not forget that the first form of influence that was somehow at the origin of this postmodern society, of this society in which we live, is also based somehow on these *coffee shop discussions*. Here we could also integrate the idea of philosophical café, which, although not the same as a literary café, originates in this one. Literary cafés have also produced philosophical cafés, since public debates are started – that are not intended exclusively for specialists but for the general public, starting from a literary, philosophical, cultural, or artistic text and debating ideas, these cafés where one dares, under the pretext of presenting a book, for example, presenting a manifesto – a political, cultural, artistic, or social one - as Mrs. Dobrinioiu also tries to do in her novel. As such, this volume is not just an autobiographical novel, an action novel, but it is an idea-based novel, based on the interpretation of a position - that the author speaks about, through

her character, Alexa: <<My dream is to change my home country, sad, melancholic, stagnant, to a modern country, says Alexa proudly. To detach myself from the vain reporters who say and promote banalities and negative effects, to avoid being similar to journalists who use more words than are necessary to say more than they know next. >> (Dobrinioiu, 2024).

We have rendered here a very short fragment to challenge you to read this volume, which you can find in Lumen Publishing House partner libraries, including online ones.

We began by questioning the role of the intellectual in modern society. So, the role of the intellectual is, as Alexa says, to change the country, but not to change it in a purely political manner, as Karl Marx once tried to do, launching the manifesto of the Communist Party also in such literary or political cafés of the time - but to change the country through quality information, by combating fake news, by combating such manifestations that lead to lack of culture, proselytism, which lead to the rejection of culture and the absorption of non-values. Of course, the role of the intellectual is to remind the values to the public - and this is not done by writing a lot and badly, but by transmitting, by writing those things that really have a substance, which really have a substrate. But if those things have readers, this is another story - because the media market, especially, is flooded with those images, those words that invite to uncertainty, which invite to casual approach, to a non-cultural approach to existence.

And here again, we make appeal to the text of Elena Dobrinioiu, selecting a few such fragments that we want to bring to your attention. From chapter six – „Book of reportages: The accident”: <<Alexa notes: *I understood to write little. The whole life of a wise man is not enough to write as many sheets as a man can read in a day.*>> And even more, as many libraries as an artificial intelligence can read in seconds, we would add. As such, at the moment, we must be very careful if writing has also such a meaning - to transmit values and not just information. Because, as journalists, especially, as is the case of Alexa from the novel, who works at a famous news agency, we need to know that the information transmitted does not reach the public only through a single channel, which we represent, except possibly as a first source of information. Much more important for an intellectual, especially for *a committed one*, is not just information, but the interpretation of this information and how it is capitalized in the public space and it conveys a message. Beyond the news that the media serves us, those comments, that information is valuable in terms of the fact that we are talking about influencers - and writing remains a way of influencing - even if, as Alexa says in the novel, the visual is currently this modern cultural synthesis, everything

that post-modern culture, in fact, has more seductive, more important from the perspective of public seduction.

Elsewhere in the novel, the same character says: *Writing a book is a matter of courage. Reading it does not mean less.* (Dobrinouiu, 2023)

To read, for many people, today means not only an act of courage, but also an act of will, because more and more people are making a glorious title out of „I have not read anything in recent years or I have never read anything, not a single book. Why would I do it? I can watch TV, I better watch a movie, that's more fun”. And then, what is the place of the writer or of the man of culture in this society? A society that seems to refuse this communication through writing, this self-communication that is not just through video or through films or through movie music, uncomplicated music, easy life styles where we have the opportunity to spend our time as if all the time were free, as if there were no time for self-construction, or as if self-construction no longer required something deeper than everyday banality. *I always read established writers, Alexa tells us, and even if sometimes I want to deviate from others, I return to the former ones again. When I begin to read in a certain way, it is already the beginning of writing. To write is to be alone, totally, to descend into my own cold abyss, to fight against silence. Writing is my own reward.*

Here, some writers tell us, that writing is not just sharing information, it is sharing of self. And sharing with oneself is an auto gratification because it is a struggle against silence. A descent into the cold abyss of one's own. This descent into the abyss of one's own is not necessarily informational, but emotional, intellectual, is one of living, is one in which ideas take shape. The ideas that exist in our minds float, but in an unspoken form, thus take on significance when they become spoken or transposed into writing. *Writing is just a work. There is no secret. But writing is hard work, not magic. Start by deciding why to write and who to write. What is your intention? What do you want the reader to take from it? What do you want out of it? It is also about making a serious commitment in time and making the proposed project* (Dobrinouiu, 2024). Here is a profession of faith of the writer: who you write about, what you write about, when you write, for whom you write, and especially how you write yourself. These are questions that very few writers or very few content creators nowadays ask themselves.

The way you write yourself or speak yourself! If we talk about other environments in which the voice has the same importance as the image or the imagination, we also encounter other fragments that are particularly inspired in this volume and which we set out to bring to your attention. Again about writing - and this time a passage about inspiration: *<<I'm thinking about how to start my essay book. I need inspiration. It's the third day since I*

changed the introduction, says Alexa.>> Some writers still take this introduction, this writing and rewriting seriously, because they take not only themselves seriously but also the public. One of the great problems of reception is that the writer, the content creator does not talk to his audience and does not educate his audience to such an extent that he feels the need for this writing and rewriting, this coming back and coming back again over the text - either of the literary text, of the philosophical, symbolic text, or the complex text or the audio-visual or journalistic hypertext (because Alexa is, after all, a journalist). This need for writing is satisfied through successive rewording, as those ideas that float in the air of our mind, in order to have enough weight to penetrate the reader's consciousness, need formulations, reformulations, and rephrases. As such, Alexa is the model writer who still creates in the sweet classical style, as the writing schools in America or around the world still recommend those professional novelists - to write and rewrite - which is increasingly less worn out. This is because „influencers” not only write, not only convey information or emotions, but often use a lack of sobriety of language (invoking actual topics), especially from the perspective of subcultural language or erotic symbolism - which attracts and brings to attention the precariousness of information and how it is not made to be transmitted - because there is no real content, because there is a missing content in what some content creators convey. And then we talk about the lack of content, the lack of a message - which is sometimes substituted by an aggressive language, worthy of *5 O'clock News*, a language in which violence, less refined eroticism or even language violence bring public, bring readers or listeners or viewers, precisely because it empties the content of this unit of time that we call a second, lived by the receiver, it empties it of content and does not allow to the receiver [the public] to return to themselves - because in the absence of such content that spreads him everywhere, man would be forced to return to a content that questions himself about his position in the world, about his position in relation to himself.

Of course, not only these ideas are important in the novel and not only this perspective is in the attention of Elena Adriana Dobrinoiu, but these are some passages that we have read attentively and with pleasure and which we set out to present to you too.

References

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