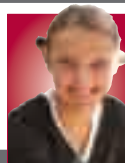


Musings



with Marta Kaminska

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Books that have shaken me

The word 'shaken' in the title is probably a little too dramatic, but I had to introduce a little drama to this topic. Today I want to share with you my personal experience after reading a few books. At different times in our lives we can be found with different books in our hand. Usually, they're there because of the recommendation of a good friend. Anyway, I have discovered that certain kinds of stories or poems can change our thinking about the world and also later, they can even change our character. It was like that with me, but let's start at the beginning.

The first book I had in my hands I got for my second birthday from my favourite aunt and I ate it. Of course, I'm referring to the book, not my aunt. My mom was telling me that afterwards I got really sick and had stomach problems for a few days. This experience taught me a lot. First of all, that books are not good to eat. Of course, I took this new lesson to heart and like a good two-year-old girl, I decided that it would be better to read them.

Unfortunately at the time I didn't know how to read so I drove everybody around me to distraction asking them to read to me. Usually, my favourite aunt was the person I picked on. Maybe it was because she felt bad after I got sick on the first book she bought me, or maybe she just enjoyed it. Anyway, almost every evening she read me a story about a bunny that jumps out of a mirror. After a few months, when I knew the story intimately, I had a dream about the bunny. He was really scary. He had huge teeth, dirty fur and the face of my aunt. It was my first nightmare and after that I was scared of mirrors, bunnies

and unfortunately, my aunt. After that I didn't ask anyone to read to me and I started to listen to stories on the gramophone.

After a few years I learned how to read and probably discovered the difference between fiction and fantasy. I write 'probably' because I'm not sure. When I was 15, my friend recommended that I read 'White Knights' by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. This book really shook me. I remember the story very well. It was about unrequited love and the story has really stayed with me. After that, for a long time, instead of being a normal teenager dreaming about a beautiful prince, I was waiting for a handsome, older Russian man who would break my heart and I would be unhappy forever. It took me a long time to get over this weird obsession and I probably missed out on a lot of important stuff because instead of dancing with boys at the disco, I was sitting alone in the forest with Russian poetry, waiting... and no one came.

Later, I had a fascination with crime, especially the stories of Hercule Poirot. In this case my fascination helped me a lot. I didn't solve any crimes but a few of the detective's methods have been used by me in the intervening years to find my keys or mobile phone.

Now we are in different times. Before our lives were changed by reading books, now our personality is shaped by films. But this is a completely different story. One conclusion from my writing is that it is a fact that some of the books should come with a huge warning, 'Don't eat' and others should be branded 'Not for naive teenagers'.



Fyodor Dostoyevsky

PS. Argentina won their first game and I'm deeply in love with Diego Maradona, who promised that if his team wins the World Cup, he would appear naked in a public place!

Książki, które wstrząsnęły mną!

Prawdopodobnie słowo „wstrząsnęły” w tytule jest określeniem nieco na wyrost, jednak uznałam, że doda trochę dramatyzmu do tematu. Dziś bowiem chcę się z wami podzielić osobistymi przeżyciami jakich doświadczyłam po przeczytaniu kilku książek. Jakoś tak się w życiu zdarza, że

w różnych jego okresach trafiają do naszych rąk pewne książki. Zazwyczaj jest tak, że polecają je znajomi, z których zdaniem się bardzo liczymy. Tak czy owak zauważyłam, że te przeczytane kiedyś powieści czy tomiki z wierszami wywierają często duży wpływ na nasze postrzeganie świata a także przekładają się to również na później „wyrastające” w nas cechy charakteru. Tak to było i ze mną, ale zaczynajmy od początku...

Pierwszą książkę, która trafiła mi w ręce dostałam na drugie urodziny od ulubionej ciotki i ją zjadłam. Oczywiście książkę, nie ciotkę. Mama opowiadała mi kiedyś, że po tej lekturze ciężko trawiłam zawartość książki i przez parę dni miałam dość poważne kłopoty żołądkowe. Oprócz skutków zdrowotnych lektura ta nauczyła mnie, że książki nie służą do jedzenia. Oczywiście wzięłam sobie tę naukę do serca i już jako dwulatka postanowiłam, że lepiej będzie czytać książki niż je zjadać. Niestety w tym czasie nie znalazłam jeszcze literkę, więc męczyłam wciąż wszystkich naokoło, by mi poczytali. Zazwyczaj czytywała mi do snu „ta” właśnie ciotka. Może miała wyrzuty sumienia, a może po prostu to lubiła. W każdym razie prawie co wieczór czytywała mi bajkę o zajączku, który wyłaniał się z lusterka. Po paru miesiącach, kiedy znalazłam już tę historię na pamięć, pewnej nocy przysnił mi się właśnie taki lustrzany zając. Był okropny- miał wielkie zęby, brudne futro i miał twarz ciotki. Był to mój pierwszy koszmarny sen jaki pamiętam i od tamtej pory unikałam luster, zająców i bogu ducha winnej ciotki. Nie nękałam już nikogo prośbą o czytanie i zaczęłam słuchać bajek z gramofonu. Z biegiem lat nauczyłam się czytać i chyba

odróżniać fikcję od fantazji. Piszę „chyba” bo nie jestem tego pewna. Kiedy miałam piętnaście lat, za namową przyjaciółki przeczytałam „Białe noce” Fiodora Dostojewskiego. Książka ta miała na mnie ogromny wpływ. Przedstawiona tam historia niespełnionej, nieszczęśliwej miłości odcisnęła się na mnie dość głęboko. Przez dłuższy czas zamiast, jak przystało na zwykłą nastolatka, marzyć o pięknym księciu z bajki, ja czekałam z utęsknieniem na przystojnego, dojrzałego Rosjanina, który mi złamie serce i przez którego utknę w miłosnych cierpieniach na zawsze. Długo leczyłam się z tej dziwnej obsesji i pewnie wiele mnie wtedy ominęło. Bo zamiast hulać z chłopakami na potańcówkach, ja siadywałam samotnie na łące z tomikiem rosyjskiej poezji i czekałam... i jakoś nigdy się niczego nie doczekałam.

Później była fascynacja kryminałami, szczególnie przyciągnęła mnie Herkulesa Poirota. I to przynajmniej muszę wiele razy mi pomogło. Nie rozwiązywałam wprawdzie żadnej zagadki kryminalnej, ale wykorzystując metody detektywa często znajdowałam zapodżądane klucze czy telefon. Czas się jednak zmienił. Tak jak kiedyś na nasze życie duży wpływ miały przeczytane książki, tak teraz naszą osobowość w dużej mierze kształtują obejrzone filmy. Ale to zupełnie inna historia. Jedno co wynika z tego mojego pisania to fakt, że niektóre książki powinny być opatrzone ostrzeżeniem „nie zjadać” a inne, nie dla naiwnych nastolatek!

PS Argentyna wygrała pierwszy mecz! A ja zakochałam się w Diego Maratonie, który obiecał, że gdy jego drużyna zdobędzie tytuł on pokaże się nago w miejscu publicznym!

Could Leitrim be beaten by a vuvuzela attack?

'Great Expectations' was the name of a Charles Dickens novel, and it was with great expectations that I sat down on Saturday morning to watch what I foolishly thought might be the first-ever Irish victory over the All Blacks, in a rugby international, after many previous unsuccessful attempts.

As it happened I was going to work, so my plan was to watch the first 15 minutes and see how we were getting on! I would tape the rest of the game, and enjoy watching our victorious celebrations when I got home later in the day. Sadly we all know, by now, that things didn't work out exactly as I had planned.

By the time I was sitting in the driver's seat in the trusty old Volvo (just thought I'd give it a mention as I've not written about it for a while), we had given away two terrible scores, and Jamie Heaslip had committed one of the most stupid acts of violence I've seen on a rugby pitch in many a long day. What possessed him to propel his knee with such force into a ruck, in a seemingly vain attempt to nobble All Black captain Ritchie McCaw, we'll never know, but as I took my seat in the Volvo, he was also taking his seat in the stands, having got a deserved straight red card from English referee, Wayne Barnes.

Now the All Black supporters were not happy with Barnes' appointment as referee, but this time he didn't funk his duty, and made the only decision that he could have made. However in doing so he was definitely also ending any chance our Irish team had of getting anything out of the game. In the end we didn't do too badly: as I left Creggs I thought we might be looking at a 100-point drubbing, so to get out in a 66-28 scoreline wasn't a total disaster.

My young lad was at the game and as I settled into the day's work he was heading off to the Irish team's after-match party. Maybe 'party' might be a bit strong of a word, as he rang yesterday and told us that the players were a bit down in themselves, and didn't hang around for too long - however, even though the team had gone, the Irish supporters carried on, and by all accounts had their own successful night's partying.

As for the rugby, George Hook was making the very valid point that the Irish players are

totally wrecked after a long, hard season, and so I wouldn't read too much into what happens on this mini-tour. I believe, however, that they won't make such basic errors again and may get a decent result against the Aussies. Regardless of that, our record of one draw and 22 losses against the All Blacks is still there to be shot at, and wouldn't it be great to put it right in next year's World Cup Final? Dream on!

For all of us folks who are big into sport it has been some week. The soccer World Cup has kicked off in South Africa and so far the Germans have looked the most impressive of all the teams we've seen. However, even though England's goalkeeper, Robert Green, did his best to grab all the headlines by letting in an absolute joke of a goal against the USA, it's the emergence of a couple of million vuvuzelas that has captured the imagination of the whole world.

To all of you who have no idea what I'm talking about, a vuvuzela is a large plastic horn which makes a loud droning noise - when you get thousands of them being blown together in a stadium, it is reminiscent of a huge swarm of bees and an awful lot of people think they are ruining the whole tournament. I must admit that I find them fairly annoying, and would think we'd be better off without them, however, Noel thinks we should flood the Hyde with them on Sunday and try to blow Leitrim off the field and out of the Connacht Championship. It might be the best way to beat them.

Talking of GAA, what an extraordinary weekend in the football when three of the four matches ended in draws. As usual, with my lack of gambling success, while I often have small bets on draws this time I didn't do anything at all. I think, unless the vuvuzelas work, we might have another one on Sunday (in the Hyde), and I will have a small punt on it - don't follow me, however, as my success as a gambler is about the same as the Kilkenny footballers' success rate. Neither of us can remember our last win.

I watched Kerry and Dublin gain success after extra-time victories, and while the Kingdom were extremely impressive, the opposite must be said about the Dubs. They were awful, but I think that might be the best thing that ever happened

to them. The last few years they looked so good in Leinster, but when they met the big boys they just didn't measure up. Maybe this time expectations will not be so high, and this could be the year they will produce.

I don't know how Laois and Meath looked as I fell asleep while they were on the Sunday Game, but it must have been a rare old battle, and they have to do it all again next weekend.

Fermanagh edged out Cavan on Saturday evening and they are well capable of putting it up to Monaghan in the Ulster semi-final, as well as possibly ending Tommy Carr's term as manager of Cavan.

My overall thought after it all, so far, is that the football (and hurling) championship games are so much more exciting, entertaining and enthralling than the stuff on offer in the World Cup. Maybe when we get to the last 16 it will liven up, but up to now (apart from Germany, Lionel Messi and Robert Green) it's been like watching paint dry.

It looks as if it's going to be nearly all sport this week (I had meant to write about Enda Kenny and Richard Bruton and the HSE and all kinds of other serious things), so I'd now like to tell you how to set about becoming a serious rugby player. Actually 'serious' is the wrong word: It's just about learning all about the various aspects of the game of rugby.

As you all know, Carol's nephew, Peter Bracken, who started his rugby life at a young underage player in Tullamore, went on to represent Ireland at 'A' level, should have got at least a couple of full Irish caps, won a Heineken Cup medal with Wasps, and became a full-time professional rugby player for 10 years.

Peter has decided to put something back into the game, and along with former Irish prop John 'Paco' Fitzgerald, Cory Brown, Otago Highlanders Super 14 utility back, and Alan Quinn, Wasps' fitness coach in 2007 (when they won the Heineken Cup) he is holding rugby summer camps all over the country. Anyone can attend and there are four camps in Connacht - in Ballina, Castlebar, Connemara and Galwegians. If anybody in between 11 and 19 wishes to find out more they can contact Peter at 086-0566806 or

email him at peter@scrumdoctor.com. There is a tremendous range of activities covered in each camp, and if you're at a loose end anytime during the summer it would be well worth your while to get in touch with Peter to find out all the details. Who knows what it might lead to, as if anyone told a young Peter that he would play for Ireland 'A', tour Argentina and New Zealand with the full Irish team, win a Heineken Cup medal with one of Europe's most successful teams, Wasps, do some coaching in North America and make a good living from the game he loved for ten years, he would have said they were mad! Well he did it all and, maybe some day so could you - it's all about getting started.

Finally for this week, Siobhan and Sean Hegarty asked me to thank all who sponsored them in a recent walk in aid of St. Claire's Premature Baby Unit in UCHG. They raised a fantastic €2,500. Well done to all.

'Til next week, bye for now.



Frankly Speaking ...
with Frank Brandon