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Aid transports and clothes

Livia Gheorghită

The '90s were an essential period in our lives, right? They represented the awakening, let's say. Consequently, when I saw the theme "Martor" suggested, the 90s, I tried to remember all I could from that period of awakening for me and for others ... And then the thought popped up right before my eyes ... clothes ... clothes ... clothes: a vague feeling of estrangement and a powerful fit of anxiety mixed with frustration and drunken elation ...

At first I wonder why clothing ...?! Can't I relate to something a little more stylish, or at least more picturesque? I'm simply awful! Clothing!!! Then I sit and go down the memory lane back to those awakening years. The 90s meant the Revolution ... Ok, and what happened right after that? Well, I received aid transports! My mother had a friend living in Switzerland. She had been a beautician working in a salon at the ground floor of the block of flats in Tineretului quarters where we used to live ... I had known her all my life, as well as a crazy hairdresser who would always give me a crew cut and would keep talking and talking for hours in a strange and loud voice, saying that she was actually giving me the haircut you would find on the great Parisian boulevards ... Anyway back then she was nothing more than a fruitcake to me! Flori her name was. I haven't heard from her since. But Ruxi, the beautician, we would meet again in the 90s and

she would come to us in the shape of huge packs brought to us, at night, by a whole array of strange and semi-mysterious individuals.

But coming back to the issue of clothing ... Why clothes ...? Because we got huge quantities of them, all tenaciously packed and wrapped in small or big cardboard boxes. Each and every one of them smelled divine. The advantage these boxes presented was not only their arriving by surprise ... like a joy bomb dropped on us, like a cheerful terrorist attack on the safety of our home, but also their arriving not only on holidays but virtually at any time of the year: in summer, in spring ... But they arrived at intervals long enough not to spoil the fun.

For me, it is there, in those big and colourful boxes where various and astonishing treasures lay hidden, that I place the beginning of my 90s smelling of perpetual spring, of Ariel and Persil ... They had been tightly packed, yet they remained incredibly soft, like those in TV ads, and always full of surprises. That was the beginning of a new world ... endless waltzes with my mother as my partner and the house as our dance floor. And there were the endless trial sessions, the splitting of the spoils amongst ourselves, and later, when enthusiasm had sunk, we would notice that we had been the lucky ones again, as my father never got to wear the four shirts he usually received because 2 of them were not his

size and the remaining two were always too colourful for Romanian tastes! And then my heart would shrink and I would do my best to convince dad that he could at least try to wear one or two shirts because I wanted him to share in our joy. But my dad would give me an understanding smile and tell me, “Don’t worry, dear, daddy doesn’t need them!” That feeling of guilt would later stop me from waltzing around because there were still too few clothes that my dad could wear.

In the 90s, clothes helped me form an image of the West and Westerners who not only smelled divine, a state we could never achieve despite the huge quantities of “quality” washing powder we used, but also dressed in more and more peculiar ways. After the adrenaline rush of the first packs, my mom and I noticed that some clothes were not only conspicuously brightly coloured, but some were downright embarrass-

ing to wear! That aspect has remained an unsolved dilemma for us. I still can’t understand how sane women could wear bright-pink overalls which were more or less puffed, or turquoise short and wavy dresses with light violet flowers, spangles and shine stones sewn on them!? How could they wear pullovers made of nets which you could never get the hang of? And I was also under the impression that men were all dressing up like clowns. Anyway, despite this drawback, both my mom and I were always sharply dressed although our outfits were a tinge too large.

But, like in any story, there came a moment when I gave up wearing Ruxi’s gifts, and my mom found herself a good seamstress who turned all her overalls into either skirts or trousers. That’s how we won the battle.

Translated by Alina Popescu

