

My personal story

(...)

R: So I'm the youngest after six girls. (...) Between my oldest sister and myself, there are twenty-five years and between myself and my youngest sister, who is older than me anyway, there are ten years. Now one of the narratives that I remember from my childhood, which I remember had annoyed me a lot because I was a boy growing up among six girls was (...) because people think that you are spoiled. But what annoyed me was that my father, and my mother obviously, decided to lock me up in a college, boarder, for the reason that they were afraid that I would become effeminate. What happened was there was a priest, where we lived, who told him 'listen, you have to do something with him because he has too many girls around him'. He locked me up in a college in Malta and I used to leave home in September and return home in December. What used to hurt me a lot was that my parents used to live only half an hour away by car (names) (...) So you can imagine how near it was.

I: What age were you when you entered boarding school?

R: Boarder, year 6.

I: Primary, which means at age ten.

R: It means, from Yr 6 until Form 5 I stayed there, which means about...

I: ...five, six years.

R: Six exactly. (...) Nowadays I appreciate college for the simple reason that I learned how to make my bed, I learned how to cook, the basic things in life, I think that if I had stayed at home with my six sisters and mother, I don't think I would have learned them in full force, so to speak, but this was an experience in my life when I was very angry about the fact that I was the only boy, because I really felt that my parents did not love me. It was not the case, but that's what I thought as a boy. (...) In those days, in the case of my family, given that my siblings are all girls, I used to think that the woman is stronger than the man because I was the only boy. For example, if I want to go out and buy an ice-cream and three of my siblings do not want to buy an ice-cream, the decision was theirs. Maybe not because they were girls, but in those days that's what I used to think in the sense that I thought there was a great imbalance between a man and a woman.

I: Because you were an absolute minority?

R: Definitely. And I never had any say and I can assure you that whoever thinks that because you are a boy amongst six girls you are spoilt to death, it's not the case. (...) Life now has shown now that I am married and I have three children, and the role between myself and my wife changed in the sense that I look after the children and my wife works (...) I think that in my case, boarding helped me become very independent. Maybe if I had stayed at home I would not have developed the character I have today. (...) Independent in the sense that I explained that you are able to do the basic things in life. I mean, if you need to you can sew a button, you know how to cook (...) but I won't send my children to boarding school because (...) I suffered too much. I think that when you compare the things I learned with the suffering I endured, I don't think it was worth it, because the things that I learned, I think one can adapt to the situation anyway. (...) As a boarder you were just a number. We used to sleep forty of us in a hall on top of each other. There wasn't, you're a mother you can understand me, there wasn't the love of one's parents, you understand? I mean the children nowadays (I can understand this because I am a father) children need a point of reference. I mean when they have a problem even a simple thing, I don't know, there was a boy who bullied me because I was small the brother would tell you you gave to grow up with it maybe your father maybe would tell you listen try to deal with it in this way or that other way, because there was no bond (...) and this thing used to hurt me a lot that I never found anyone to talk to (...) I won't send my children because I think it is important that one of the parents is always present for the children I mean if not both parents at least one of them (...)

Maltese

I: Fir-recording kollox anonimu ha jkun (...) tista' tibda

R: Mela jien it-tifel iz-zghir fost sitt ibniet, sorry, bejn ohti l-kbira u jiena hemm hamsa u ghoxrin sena u bejni u ohti z-zghira li tigi ikbar minni xorta hemm ghaxar snin. Issa wahda mir-rakkonti li niftakar ta' meta kont zghir li niftakar li dejqitni hafna ghax kont tifel trabbejt ma' sitt ibniet kienet ghax hafna nies jghidulek ghax tkun imfissed, imma haga li dejqitni li l-papa tieghi, u l-mama ovvjament, iddecidew li jsakkruni go kullegg, boarder, ghar-raguni li bdew jibzghu li se nitla' sissy. Dana kien hemm qassis, fejn noqoghdu l-belt, qallu isma' dana ahjar tara x'se taghmel bih ghax ghandu wisq bniet mad-dawra tieghu. Sakkarni fil-Kullegg (name) Malta u kont nitlaq minn Settembru u mmur lura d-dar f'Dicembru. Li kienet tweggaghni hafna li l-genituri tieghi kienu joqoghdu 'l boghod nofs siegha bil-karozza, ha nghidu hekk, voldieri jien kont qed noqghod il-K (name of town and school) u huma kienu joqoghdu l-B. Allura tista' timmagina, kull ma hemm bahar jaqsam bejn il-K u l-B. u kienet tweggaghni hafna din

I: Kemm kellek zmien meta bdejt boarder?

R: Boarder, year 6

I: Primary jigifieri ta' ghaxar snin

R: jigifieri minn Yr 6 sa Form 5 ghamilt, voldieri xi

I: hames snin sitta hu

R: sitta, ezatt. Li gietni tajjeb, jien kont immur is-S (name of school) qabel, u s-sister li kienet tiehu hsiebna meta bdejt il-boarders kienet l-istess sister li kienet rabbiet, voldieri minn daqshekk dik ghenitni. Imma, meta mort il-kullegg, illum il-gurnata nghid napprezza l-kullegg, ghas-semplici raguni li tghallimt naghmel is-sodda, tghallimt insajjar, affarijiet bazici tal-hajja, nahseb li kieku bqajt id-dar ma' sitt ibniet u mal-mama ma nahsibx li kont se nitghallimhom in full force, ha nghidu hekk. Biss, pero, kienet esperjenza nahseb f'hajti fejn kont vera rrabjat li kont tifel wahdi ghax hassejt li l-genituri tieghi ma kinux ihobbuni. Ma kienx il-kaz, imma ta' tifel li kont taf int, ta' year 6. U l-aghaz li kont nirrabja wkoll ghax pez fil-Christmas stajna mmorru gimghatejn id-dar, u kienu jgibuni gimgha biss id-dar pez ghax il-barranin kienu jhalluhom it-tfal ghas-semplici raguni li kienu jahdmu l-L (name of country) u ghalhekk kienu jibaghtuhom boarders Malta u peress li kienu jahdmu l-L (name) lit-tfal kienu jhalluhom Malta mhux igorruhom il-L (name) allura l-papa tieghi ma setax jifhem li dawn it-tfal kienu jmorru kmieni l-iskola habba dir-raguni allura kien jispicca ghax hu jara dawn it-tfal qeghdin hemm qabel, jien irrid bil-fors nofs il-holidays tieghi rrid immur l-iskola qabel voldieri spiccajt din ir-raguni hemmhekk hija l-mentalita' tagghom kif jirragunaw u ma jirragunawx. Nahseb din l-aktar episodju li niftakar minn ta' meta kont zghir li affettwatni li kelli huti bniet.

I: U bidlitlek forsi b'xi mod l-perspettiva kif thares lejn il-bniet u s-subien?

R: Bhala vantaggi volderi?

I: Vantaggi, zvantaggi, kollox, jekk bidlitlekx il-vizjoni b'xi mod?

R: Li bidlitli l-opinjoni tieghi, fis-sens li nghid il-mara ghandha aktar vantaggi mir-ragel, imma ma narahx li huwa l-kaz mija fil-mija illum fhimt?

I: F'liema sens ghandha aktar vantaggi?

R: Dak iz-zmien fil-kaz tieghi tal-familja peress li huti huma kollha bniet kont nahseb li l-mara hija aktar b'sahhitha mir-ragel ghax peress li kont tifel wahdi, jekk jien pez irrid nohrog u mmur nixtri gelat, u tlieta minn huti ma jridux jixtru gelat, tagghom kienet tghaddi. Imma mhux ghax kienu bniet forsi, imma dak iz-zmien hekk kont nahsibha fis-sens, kont nara zbilanc qawwi bejn ir-ragel u l-mara

I: ghax kont minoranza assoluta

R: u z-zgur qatt ma kelli say ta' xejn u nassigurak li min ghandu l-idea li ghax tkun tifel zghir fost sitt ibniet tkun imfissed hafna eh mhux il-kaz, pez wahda minn huti m'ilux giet tghidli, il-veritá, li din wahda mill-aktar li kienet tghajjarni li speci jiena f'hajti mhux se nkun kapaci naghmel xejn u hafna affarijiet minn dan meta l-hajja illum uriet li jiena illum mizzewweg u ghandi tliet itfal, u r-rwol bejni u bejn il-mara nbidlet, fis-sens jien qed niehu hsieb it-tfal u l-mara qed tahdem jigifieri din ohti giet qaltli, skuzat ruhha, skuzat ruhha fis-sens tajjeb ta mhux fis-sens hazin, li isma' kemm kellna opinjoni hazina li inti mhux se tkun kapaci taghmel xejn fid-dar, meta fir-realtà l-bniedem jadatta hux veru? Dejjem tadatta skont is-sitwazzjoni.

I: Jigifieri skont inti mhux ghax kellek hutek bniet tghallimt tadatta, bil-kontra qisu?

R: ezatt, ezatt to be fair nahseb li l-boarding fil-kaz tieghi ghini nkun hafna indipendenti. Forsi kieku bqajt id-dar kont inkun protett iktar hafna milli hrigt dan il-karattru li ghandi illum, mhux qed nghid li ghandi xi karattru perfett, imma nahseb li kieku bqajt id-dar m'ommi u ma' dawk il-bniet kollha (interrupted by a phone call)

I: Sorry waqqaftek mela, ehe kont qed tghid li kieku bqajt id-dar mal-bniet forsi ma kontx

R: Ma' ommi u mal-bniet forsi ma kontx nitla' daqshekk indipendenti daqs kemm jien illum. Tghidli x'igifieri? Indipendenti fis-sens kif spjegajtlek qabel li taghmel l-affarijiet bazici tal-hajja jigifieri li marritlek buttuna taf thejtha, li taf issajjar, m'hemmx ghalfejn issajjar chef, issajjar affarijiet bazici, taf taghmel il-breakfast u taf tahsel il-hwejjeg. Ovvjament illum ghandna l-washing machines, imma dak iz-zmien ma kienx hawn il-washing machines u hekk. Imma almenu tghallimt naghmilhom

I: Jigifieri meta thares lura illum wara li ghadna hafna zmien kwazi tberikha l-fatt li baghtek boarder?

R: Il-veritá, illum nghid lill-Bambin grazzi hafna. Imma lit-tfal tieghi ma nibghathomx.

I: Ghaliex?

R: Li kieku kelli nerga nghaddi minn din is-sitwazzjoni le ma nibghathomx. Ghax batejt wisq. Nahseb meta inti tikkomperja l-affarijiet li tghallimt u t-tbatija li ghaddejt, ma nahsibx li kienet worth it. Ghax l-affarijiet li tghallimt nahseb xorta l-bniedem jaf jadatta ruhu ghas-sitwazzjoni jigifieri jiena nemmen hafna li bniedem hu min hu dejjem se jadatta ruhu skont ic-cirkostanzi li jsib, jigifieri iva, it's two ways two measures hu jghidu. Fil-kaz tieghi napprezza li kont boarder, imma l-veritá hi lit-tfal tieghi ma nibghathomx boarders xorta ghas-semplici raguni kif qed nghidu li t-tbatija li ghaddejt kienet qawwija wisq

I: U t-tbatija kienet minhabba l-firda mil-familja jigifieri?

R: Firda mill-familja u t-tghajjir tat-tfal lejja

I: It-tghajjir l-ewwel semmjtu. X'kien it-tghajjir?

R: It-tghajjir pez ghax inti l-genituri tieghek ma jhobbukx hadd ma jridek. Kelli hafna problemi fl-iskola pez. fl-istudju kelli bzonn l-ghajnuna, mhux privatijiet ta, li inti tmur ghand persuna, isma' x'inhi l-opinjoni tieghek fuq das-suggett? Li dik ma kellix. Boarder inti kont just a number. Konna norqdu konna erbghin ruh go sala fuq xulxin. Ma kienx hemm, inti omm tifhimni, ma kienx hemm dik l-imhabba tal-genituri fuqi fhimt? Jigifieri inti t-tfal illum li jien missier nifhimha. It-tfal ikollhom bzonn point of reference jigifieri meta jkollhom problema anke haga semplici jien naf, tifel kien jibbuljani hafna ghax kont zghir il-brother kien jghidlek you gave to grow up with it forsi missierek forsi kien jghidlek isma' pproba ddealja magha hekk hekk u hekk, ghaliex ghax hemm izjed bond. Il-brother ovvjament kien ihobbna ta miskin imma ma kienx jaghmel dak l-isforz

I: Naturalment kellu hafna, mhux wiehed jew tnejn, heqq mhux il-missier veru tieghek

R: Ezatti, u dik kienet tweggaghni hafna hafna hafna, li qatt ma sibt ma' min nitkellem pez jiena nemmen li illum hafna mill-problemi ta' skola li kelli illum qed nitghallem mit-tfal tieghi stess, meta nitkellem mal-edukaturi, li forsi jekk dak iz-zmien forsi ttestjawni ghad-dementia mhux dementia hawn x'nghidula?

I: dyslexia

R: ghad-dyslexia forsi, minix dyslexic illum ghax ittestjajt ruhi... Imma forsi kelli bzonn certu ghajnuna, il-problema li ghandi li oggett irrid nitghallmu erba' hames darbiet irrid nistudjah biex jidhol sew fis-sistema tieghi. Dak iz-zmien ma kellix dik l-ghajnuna, l-borther kien jghidlek you are stupid, go at the back of the class.

I: tibqa' biha

R: Illum il-gurnata nara t-tfal tieghi, jekk ghandhom xi problema f'suggett, ghandhom extra lessons, ghandhom l-ghajnuna tat-teacher jippruvaw jaghmlu l-programm biex it-tfal jifhmu voldieri din hija wahda mir-ragunijiet

I: dik is-sofferenza

R: li ma nibghathomx nahseb li huwa importanti li xi hadd mill-genituri dejjem ikun prezenti ghat-tfal voldieri, jekk mhux it-tnejn at least xi hadd.

Metadata

OTHER TOPIC CATEGORIES: EDUCATION, IDENTITY, SOCIETAL CONTEXT

KEY ACTORS: myself, father, school

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: childhood, conflict, family life, housewife/houseman, love, power, roles/role pattern, support, upbringing,

school, (in-) dependence, (un-) happiness, age, weak(-ness), discrimination

Male, 40 Malta

Gender did matter