

Concours Atlas Junior Anglais 2018

Meet me at the museum est un roman épistolaire de la Britannique Anne Youngson qui signe ici son premier livre.

Il s'agit d'une correspondance entre une Anglaise, Tina, et un Danois, Anders, conservateur du musée archéologique de la ville de Silkeborg. Tina lui écrit initialement en pensant s'adresser à un savant, le professeur Glob, qui avait participé, dans les années cinquante, à l'exhumation de « l'homme de Tollund » (une dépouille humaine conservée presque intacte dans la tourbe danoise pendant deux mille ans) et y avait ensuite consacré un ouvrage qu'il avait dédié à un groupe d'écolières parmi lesquelles se trouvait la jeune Tina. En s'affranchissant, par ses lettres, des centaines de kilomètres qui la séparent du musée de Silkeborg où est conservé l'homme de Tollund, Tina cherche également à remonter le temps, celui de sa propre vie et de la vie de cet homme qui, figée pour toujours dans l'éternité, symbolise l'humanité tout entière.

L'extrait à traduire est la première lettre du roman, que Tina Hopgood adresse au professeur Glob.

*Bury St Edmunds
22nd November*

Dear Professor Glob,

Although we have never met, you dedicated a book to me once; to me, thirteen of my schoolmates, and your daughter. This was more than fifty years ago, when I was young. And now I am not. This business, of being no longer young, is occupying much of my mind these days and I am writing to you to see if you can help me make sense of some of the thoughts that occur to me. Or maybe I am hoping that just writing will make sense of them, because I have little expectation that you will reply. For all I know, you may be dead.

One of these thoughts is about plans never fulfilled. You know what I mean – if you are still alive you must be a very old man by now and it must have occurred to you that what you thought would happen, when you were young, never did. For example, you might have promised yourself you would try a sport or a hobby or an art or a craft. And now you find you have lost the physical dexterity or stamina to take it up. There will be reasons why you never did but none of them is good enough. None of them is the clincher. You cannot say: I planned to take up oil painting but I couldn't because I turned out to be allergic to a chemical in the paint. It is just that life goes on from day to day and that one moment never arrives. In my case, I promised myself I would travel to Denmark and visit the Tollund Man. And I have not. I know, from the book you dedicated to me, that only his head is preserved, not his beautiful hands and feet. But his face is enough. (...)

As I pass the mirror in the hall on the way out of the door, I notice myself in profile and I think how like my grandmother I have become. And, being like my grandmother, my face has become the face of the Tollund Man. The same hollowness of cheek, the same beakiness of nose. As if I have been preserved for two thousand years and am still continuing to be. (...)

The truth is, I do want to be special. I want there to be significance in the connection made between you and me in 1964 and links back to the man buried in the bog two thousand years ago. I am not very coherent. Please do not bother to reply if you think I do not justify your time.

Yours sincerely,

T. Hopgood (Mrs)