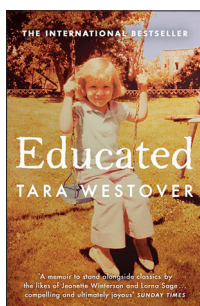


Educated Tara Westover

Hutchinson, 2018, PB, 400pp, £8.19, 978-0099511021



'OUR MOUNTAIN, OUR VALLEY'

The projector clicks. An image of a man, stood before a concrete wall in a faded hat and overcoat, paints the wall at the front of the university classroom. Tara turns the pages of her textbook until she finds the same image. Below it is a brief description with a word Tara has never seen or heard before. She raises her hand, and asks, 'I don't know this word, what does it mean?' A stunned silence resonates. 'Thanks for that', the professor replies. Tara stares at her shoes for the remainder of the lecture, feeling the sting on her skin from the eyes of her classmates. The bell eventually rings, and Tara runs to a computer to look up the word 'Holocaust'.

Before university, Tara never went to school. Instead, her mother taught her in their isolated home at the base of a mountain, limited solely to the study of the Bible and a book of mathematical questions, the latter of which came with no supervision or assistance. Her family are strict Mormons; her father, when not commanding his four sons and two daughters to jeopardise their lives working in his deadly junkyard, prepares his family for the inevitable apocalypse, ordering his children to stockpile weapons and fill hundreds of jars with preserved food in order to survive the hordes of starving sinners that will breach the doors of the believers during the end of times.

Although as far from reality as this may sound to most of us, *Educated* is not fiction, it is memoir.

As Westover notes at the beginning of her memoir, however, this is not a story about Mormonism, nor any form of religious belief — this is the story of real people, real relationships; flawed and dangerous, impressionable and vulnerable. *Educated* explores, via the seemingly infinite number of shocking and disturbing childhood events Tara experienced first-hand, the vast complexities

of family life, connection, abandonment, and how abuse can be misconstrued or distorted by the self to be viewed as love, support, or security. A surreal, dense, and unforgettable memoir, *Educated* never feels exploitative of a devout religious culture. Rather, it is an autopsy of the ambiguity of morality when individuals are educated under differing spheres of ideology — how, to one person, an action or belief is rooted in righteousness, while, to another, that same action or belief is unethical or obscene. It is a study on perspective, power, and fear, with a major focus on themes such as institutionalised sexism, conflict with the self and others, and ultimately faith; in yourself, your family, your future, and how often that resolve will be broken.

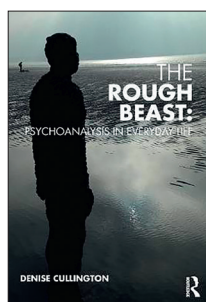
But, I suppose, and arguably most importantly (though it may be immoral to write this), *Educated* is devastatingly entertaining. Morbidly fascinating, *Educated* is, without doubt, an essential read.

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The Rough Beast: Psychoanalysis in Everyday Life Denise Cullington

Routledge, 2018, PB, 188pp, £19.74, 978-1782203674



DIGGING DEEP

How many psychoanalysts does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but the lightbulb has to be willing to change. Do any of us want to change? Can we change? Psychoanalysts believe so; certainly the author, Denise Cullington, does. The premise of this book is that psychoanalysis works. Not only that it works, but also that it is phenomenally effective. I suspect that you would only read this book if you were already an enthusiast.

Snapping at the children or partner at

home, the tension in our shoulders on the drive to work, losing our patience with the receptionist or nurse: these are all the 'rough beast' of the title. The anxiety, panic, and rage we all carry beneath the carapace of professionalism. The rough beast lurks in us all and can trip us up unexpectedly. We all need an outlet for our rough beast: it used to be the consultant who barks at his juniors on a ward round or the GP who took to drinking a bottle of (good) red each evening. Now we tend to exorcise our rough beast in a more subtle way: yoga, pilates, long walks at the weekend. Or at least that's the idea.

The author is unashamedly a Freudian. Expect long rambling paragraphs about how a baby resents its father and wishes to rescue its mother; how a father wishes to reclaim his wife from his children; and, of course, plenty about penis envy. If this isn't for you, feel free to speed read these chapters.

If you manage to sieve out these exasperating lengthy nods to Freud you can find a treasure trove of gems in this book. Cullington writes how 'defences are established for a good reason: the hope is to stay pain-free and protected'. We see this every day in patients who present to us with psychosomatic symptoms, but I also see it in colleagues. When we get home and are asked 'How was your day?', we reply 'Not bad, fine' when really we mean 'I feel totally overwhelmed, I don't know how I can go on, but I don't know how to admit it.'

Yet Cullington also points out:

'it is only if you no longer have a job that you can realise what you did not appreciate at the time: how the income earned as a result of your efforts, the companionship, a sense of achievement and of structuring time are all important parts of self-esteem.'

Consider that as you plan to take early retirement.

While I consider Eric Berne's *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* to be essential reading for any GP with a modicum of psychoanalytical thought,¹ be warned: *The Rough Beast* is for the specialist reader.

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1. Starr O. Books: A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis. *Br J Gen Pract* 2017; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp17X690341>.