

2002

Kiran Bhat

Christmas time, in Georgia,
no flowers blooming,
no snow, either.

the landscape is harsh,
scorched earth laid to waste by frost,
crippled trees held hostage by their branches,
prickled grass,
turning upward by the heel,
to greet the conquerors,
and kiss the captives goodbye.

such is the scene,
as me and my mother listen to the radio,
on my way to school,
Christmas anthems,

- Silent Night, Holy Night, All is calm, All is Bright -

they fill my heart with fondness,
warmth,

simple memories,
excitement for a time to come.

I reach school,
where I talk to no one,
where I spend my lunches alone,
imagining myself as characters from anime,
fighting side by side,
unleashing magic and swords,
being unchained from my energy.

To be allowed to be me.

I am seen by all of my classmates to be like a tortoise,
but I secretly imagine myself as the swan.

2010

Kiran Bhat

“You have to try harder,”
my creative writing professor told me
during my internship.

“But I am trying hard.”

“You want to be a writer, right?”

“Yes.”

“Well, your characters are stereotypes.
Your plots make no sense.
Your prose has a lot of energy.
That is good.
But the rest of this is trash.
Why do you want to be a writer?”

At that age
I wanted to be a writer
because it made people respect me,
shine their eyes at me
say I was good at something.

I would have done anything for praise.
writing was one of those things.

“This isn’t a reason to write.
It’s not that you aren’t talented.
You have a lot of talent, in fact.
But you don’t know how to use it yet.”

that was correct.

it was for this reason why we worked together so hard
almost for the entire winter semester
I rewrote so much that I forgot what talent was.
I felt more like a squished pea,
lost under the corner of a bed.

one day I wrote something she thought was good.
she loved it sincerely.
it was about my first time masturbating
and the first time I felt the shame for being myself.
she said writing it was the first time I said something authentic.
she told me to follow these emotions
and write truthfully.

I learnt over the course of my time with her
that it wasn’t that there were stories or emotions
which weren’t written yet
that made writing worth following.
it was because destiny compelled us to create things,
and to be in the full thrust of that creation
to be in the full force of creativity
to be more than a human,
but a human living outside of the human body
and entering everything
was what made art worth reading.

2011

Kiran Bhat

We had traveled from Segovia to Madrid
our NYU exchange group
where I saw aqueducts made of the finest stone
firm in their rigor and strength
and on the other side a cathedral
shaped like an imposing insect
golden-colored
its Gothic arms spread all over the plaza
sustaining itself by leeching onto the city

inside of it
our professor told us the story of the building
and a part of the story of Spain
this building was built during the era of Al-Andalus.
It was made by Christians and Jews and Muslims
a sanctuary for them all.

I imagined inside of this cathedral
all of the races and cultures and religious beliefs of the world
sharing one space
sharing one piece of art
and something inside of me
that part of me that was a global citizen
but didn't know it until then
that part of me was awakening
was thinking differently

and wanted to write
one book with all of the human cultures inside of it
and in order to do that
I needed to travel the world
live all over it
and became truly someone of no nation.

after my two semesters in Spain
I traveled all over Europe
froze my bones off in the blizzards of the Baltics
ate the cheesiest boreks in Serbia
hitchhiked from Romania to Moldova to the Ukraine.
my life didn't feel empty.
it felt its most fulfilled.

what privilege I had
to be rich enough to travel
to meet people from all over the world
to hear pleas of passions in foreign tongues
to be able to reimagine myself
my culture
my identity
to open myself to the world

that visit to the cathedral was where
my life as a globetrotter began
but it resounds to me like a sort of conclusion

the conclusion was this:

to become something between the foreigner and the local
to become an existence without name
to act like the honey fly traveling
from one edge to the other
observing
listening
writing
but never becoming fully one thing or another
becoming fully myself.

2018

Kiran Bhat

I sometimes think about the relationship between human and animal

the testicles of a male dog bounce so wildly

the six tits of a female dog bounce so bubbly

a horse's sexual power isn't exaggerated despite their calm demeanor

elephants give funerals to loved ones

pigs memorize their tracks

monos curse in the midst of their climax

and all of the animals have eyes which can appear

consternated

anticipative

exasperated

just like ours

if we think from the perspective of the Earth

we are all equal

and any personal difference

between individuals

are vaster

compared to the difference between species

so why do we not accept this difference?

because from the perspective of the humanity
we are the only beings of the salt and the sand
and so we belong to the kingdom
of truth and being
no matter how many others deserve to belong

Author's note: these poems were originally written in Spanish and self-translated by the author. The Spanish versions of the poems were compiled in a poetry collection entitled *autobiografía*, published by Letrame Editorial, Madrid, in 2019.