ESSAY

Your Anger Is Entrusted to Me

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"Blue Zone" by Joykrit Mitra

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Dedicated to Leyla[1], all Leylas, and Ünzile[2], all Ünziles

By growing up around 16 women from both sides, Mom's and Dad's, 10-year-old she already knows where and when her "holy" pureness begins and where and when it ends; when and where women can "speak" and when and where they cannot; therefore, she asks:

10-year-old "she":

— You look tired, are you tired?

25-year-old "she":

— I am!

10-year-old "she":

—Have you become a woman? Did you bleed? Does bleeding make someone a woman?

25-year-old "she":

— Have I become a woman? Did I bleed? Does bleeding make me a woman?

10-year-old "she", with all the enjoyment and excitement:

— Have we become a woman?

25-year-old "she":

—

countless fingers on her throat, some hands covering her mouth, some covering her eyes, countless bodies on her body; so that she cannot talk, so that she cannot see, so that she cannot move, so that she cannot breathe.

10-year-old "she":

— I am scared.

25-year-old "she":

— Me too.

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Today, I am “she”. I have always been “she”; most days, I am still “she”. I was “she” when I was 10 years old. Today, I am “she”, and I am thankful that I am not *Leyla*. I am thankful that I am not *Ünzile*. However, I cannot imagine myself not taking part in their struggle. It has never been an issue what these women's names are, where they come from, or how old they are. I just cannot close my eyes, sit in front of the window, and wait for an ending that is written by this patriarchy.

Every day, all of us, in one way, all of us...

Do you know what “she” means? It means the *most beautiful woman in the world, a bird's nest, a ray of sunshine, a home for a family.* It has several meanings in many different languages; all of them describe a cliche that is imposed on women; however, **do I want to be described in several different languages with several different meanings?**

Which one is me?

Should I be one of them?

Can I be all of them?

Can I be none of them?

Do you know what *Leyla* means? Do you know what *Ünzile* means?

Ünzile and *Leyla*, the laments of women and girls who have had to hide their screams in this geography, in all lands. The noise of the women whose news you read on who knows what page of a newspaper every morning when you wake up. The voice of the anger that never fades inside me. The grief that I have been fighting for from the earliest years that I remember.

Bugün birileri do?urdu- t?pk? birinin geceyi do?urdu?u gibi. Baz? k?zlar karde?lerini do?urdu, baz? k?zlar kendilerini do?urdu, baz? k?zlar bir kad?n? do?urdu. Ve ben a?lad?m, a?lad?m, a?lad?m ta ki can?mdan kad?n?n ç?karana kadar, ta ki ç??l?klar?m bütün ?ehri sizin ba??n?za y?kana kadar, sizinle alt?nda ezilene kadar, sizin erkekli?inizle

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birlikte tüm ?ehrin alt?nda yok olana kadar. "Tonight someone gave birth — just as someone had night, too. Some girls gave birth to their siblings; some girls gave birth to themselves; some girls gave birth to a woman, and I cried, cried, cried until I tore the woman out of my soul, until my screams set the whole city crashing down on your heads, until I was buried beneath it with you, until your manhood was buried with me beneath the ruins of the entire city." (Original text and translation by author)

I cannot remember how many times I held back my tears. I cannot remember how many times I had to silence my laugh. I cannot remember how many times I hid myself in the corners of the bus so no one would stare at me. I cannot remember a night when I did not hear women screaming silently in the hidden places of the streets. Men believe that these little slippery holes are for themselves, so that they can play with their toys as much as they can; they can declare that they own it and make whatever rules they want, and all the Others, women, girls, queers and queens, all of us, try to hug each other to find a way to escape from somewhere, to somewhere we can at least be alive. What a word! What a shame!

Kendi elleriyle, kendi açt?klar? çukurlara, kendi bedenlerini sessizce a??t yakarak, kendini gömen kad?nlara ait topraklar?n üstüne kurulmu? onlar?n ?ehirleri. "Their cities built upon lands that belong to women who dug their own graves with bare hands, who buried their bodies in silence, who mourned themselves into the earth." (Original text and translation by author)

As I grow, grow and change, change and get older, my rage starts to become more uncontrollable. W**hy is everyone saying something? Why is everyone acting as if they have been somewhere they have not, as if they are speaking a language they do not know, and as if they understand the pain they have not felt? Everyone!** Day after day. While we are being told to play with the dolls we have been given since birth, the pink hair clips we have been presented with, they tie all the secrets we should not talk about to our hair, even our blood, and our fluids, which are things that we should not even know about.

All of us.

Without distinguishing any of us.

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Why? Why? Why?

They speak on our behalf; they remain silent on our behalf, and yet we are still struggling to exist somewhere in these cities. Trying to find a way to breathe freely without any hesitation, any fear.

10-year-old “she”:

— I am scared but open your eyes!

25-year-old “she”:

— I am scared, but I open my eyes so that they cannot close them again!

10-year-old “she”:

— I am scared, but shout!

25-year-old “she”:

— I am scared, but I shout so I am not to be silenced again!

10-year-old “she”:

— I am scared but do be silent for me!

25-year-old “she”:

— I am scared, but I am not silent, for you, for her, for all of us!

“A woman's first blood doesn't come from between her legs but from biting her tongue.” (Meggie Royer)[3]

When I was a kid, maybe 10 years old, I remember a girl who is older than me,

No, I am not going to end this sentence. I will not talk about what happened to this girl. But I will talk about the rage that surged within me. I still remember how my face flushed and how heat spread through my body. I cried — a lot. I was scared. I wanted to speak, but I bit my tongue, afraid of shattering my world.

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That day, I promised myself that I would never be part of the system they were trying to force me into. I was going to let the wind carry my hair, I was going to sing my song, and I was going to rebel. Relentlessly. Until my rights were given, until my body was set free, until my sister, both near and far, no longer wept. I was going to rebel.

I was going to look through the windows that women, hidden behind doors opening inward, had carved out of their bodies in madness. I was going to take deep breaths and mourn every woman who had lost herself to the madness. Every lament I sang would turn into a rebellion. I had made a promise to myself and, most of all, to you.

And I have not finished this paper; I have not finished it because neither my anger nor my rebellion has ever ended. Every passing day, I grow even angrier as if every cell in my body is boiling a little more. I am not ashamed; I cry even more every day, and my voice grows louder. I dance more in the streets. We are both peace and revolution!

Indeed, *Wenn ich nicht tanzen kann, ist es nicht meine Revolution.*"If I cannot dance, it is not my revolution."[4]

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[1] Erener, Sertab. "K?z Leyla," *Garajda Live – Ben Yasarim*, Kala, 2022. https://lyricstranslate.com/en/kiz-leyla-girl-leyla.html https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBmZbLCKqJ4

[2] Aksu, Sezen. "Ünzile," *Git*, Fono Muzik, 1986. https://lyricstranslate.com/en/uenzile-uenzile.html https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXpgWAZHVls&list=RDAXpgWAZHVls&start_radio=1 https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cnzile

[3] Royer, Meggie. "The No You Never Listened To," *Words Dance Publishing*, 2015.

[4] This quote is a popular paraphrase of the sentiment in Emma Goldman's book *Living My Life* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1931). See: https://lilith.org/articles/invention-of-a-feminist-sound-

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