

Title: The Way She Walked Along

Writer: Yejin Jin

From the place as hot as my breath
Till coming to the outside with only arid coldness,
Until the straight road on which a three thousand step walk finds
only soil
turned to winding roads as four had diverged from two, and eight
from four.

My child, the road has too many stones,
the road, too far-off and rugged, has no place for you to take a rest.
Mother, I have grown so tall,
even high, high peaks are seen below my eyes.

Sitting on the dusty soil ground, I pull pebbles out of my knees.
By the time the wound heals, I fall over again.
Red and blue flowers all over my body and the asphalt road at the
end.
It has neither cloud of dust nor pebbles, and no soil hills, either.
The road is so flat, hard, and cold that flowers cannot bloom.

Mother, I just have been walking along my road, but how come it
has no end.
Why my knees ache whenever I step on the stone-free road.
Mother, even the ground of the third world that I met seems cold.
Once falling over on such road, I can't rise to my feet as my arms
are smarting.
But mother, I will eventually walk this road,
counting your footprints and missing the earthy smell lingering
over my nose.
As you have tilled roads with your own hands and sweat, I will
draw this road in the same way.
I must walk this empty road.
I will walk this road where fresh sprouts will shot up soon,
Following your way.

Title: When Silk met Greece

Writer: Maria Georgousi

Although it is a fact that mind works coherently upon the objects it contemplates, it is always peculiar to find yourself occupied with thoughts that turn into real diachronic truths in a state of great absentmindedness as you are surrounded by images that the natural landscape evokes. That was the realization I got on a windy day of May when reading my book amidst the garden of my village in Greece I was caught by the most astounding view that my eyes had ever encountered. A series of mulberries were stretching themselves vehemently in the far distance intersecting among the olive oils in such a gossamer mosaic that gave the impression of a huge spider moving its legs in all directions aiming to weave the most resplendent textile. In its beauty the eyes opened wide but its sublimity did not lie in its unique magnificence but in the realization that this beauty stemmed from a bicultural amalgam of natural wealth, a wealth that unites under a harmonious integrity Asia with Eastern Europe. Pondering over this view it came upon me the memory of my grandfather narrating a story of long times ago about how the silk roads reached my country, something that always reminds me of the fact that Greece shares not only a historical but also a cultural past with the countries of East .

The story goes back in ancient Greece in the year of 3C B.C. when the very cunning king of Macedonia called by the name of Alexander the Great starts his military expeditions in Asia. His incomparable strategic wisdom leads him to great military expeditions beyond Greece to far unknown countries never traced before by any other Greek king; but wherever he goes and whatever his conquests are, Alexander is never complacent with his achievements. Deep in the bottom of his heart there lives a secret, incomprehensible passion that flushes his body and agitates his mind with a firing uneasiness that confounds him more than ever in moments of rest and sleep as a reminder of something that has remained unfixed. Every night he rises from his bed and like a crazy somnambulist walks up and down along the corridors of his palace running after the same vivid illusion. Each illusion is impregnated with the apparition of his beloved father Philip the II who shouts at him with a sonorous voice: "There is a road that you have not taken yet, a road of ineffable beauty, a road inconceivable in its economic power, a road where silks parade and textiles wave proudly as flags raised up after an inglorious battle." Astounded for a moment by the sudden presence of his father and perplexed by the insinuations of such a magnificent road Alexander half asleep and half awake asks in a desperate voice: "Where is this road my father?" "From where I should start my long journey to this land of paradise" but Philip never answers to his inquiries but like an ethereal ghost dissolves in the air awakening him from his sleep. After this weird encounter with his father Alexander dives more desperately into his contemplative mood. The image he creates of the road haunts his mind and his only aspiration is

to find it and behold with his own eyes all those enterprises mentioned by his dead father. His restlessness prompts him to visit the Delphi oracle and there he asks about the whereabouts of this road but no clear answer is given to him. However disappointed he may be he decides to start a new journey with the aim of conquering East unafraid of the dangers and defeats he may have to face. His vision turns to be victorious. After passing through Asia Minor he conquers Persia, Syria and from there achieves a series of victories in Palestine and Egypt until he finally reaches India. In many of the countries he reaches he erects temples in commemoration to the Greek gods and in Egypt people welcome him as their divine savior from the Persian occupation and crown him Pharaoh. Thereafter, Alexander achieves in the Middle East the aspiration that has for so long inundated his dreams. From the people he meets there he gets to know the notorious art of silk and impressed by what can be made from the exploitation of silkworms and the developed silk roads that unite China and others countries of Asia with those of Middle East, he gets fervent with the desire to bring this art in his own country as a way of culturally merging the two countries under the production of such a precious textile. So enthusiastic he is by this idea that he doesn't eat and sleep for days. His sleep is encompassed by nightmares of silkworms encroaching upon his bed ready to gorge on him with their tiny trenchant teeth and leave him without flesh. Under this constant terror and resolute more than ever that the only way to absolve himself from the hideousness of his nightmares is the discovery of the secrets of the silk art, that is being so long kept confidential among the great Asian courts and palaces, he sends to his teacher Aristotle silk cocoons to analyze them and observe the processes by which they can produce the silk fiber. After days of incessant observation and study upon many books Aristotle at last finds the great secret and immediately informs Alexander. For Alexander the Great this day signifies a great victory even greater than the untying of the Gordian knot. The conquering of Middle East and the adoption of a culture so long based on the production of silk is for him a new opening of Greece into new trade routes, able to rise Macedonia not only as a great economical power but also as a pole of attraction from many different countries leading to the recognition and adoption of the Greek culture and customs by diverse Asian cultures. His enthusiasm is so overwhelming that he immediately organizes feasts in the provinces to celebrate the expansion of the trade market while aspiring at the same time the increase of the economic power of his empire beyond the borders of Greece. The feast assumes a majestic, colorful aspect; women are dressed in silks of every kind dancing and leaping around as if exalted by the trance of freedom and femininity that the soft and silky textiles arouse in them. They are not common women anymore, they have become attractions by many male admirers as the delicacy and analogy of their bodies is greatly shown by the way the silky textiles leak their alabaster bodies. Among these younger beauties dressed in the most resplendent manner is Olympiad, the mother of Alexander. Her charm cannot be compared even with the most beautiful young girl in the palace. Her powerful personality along with her high self esteem as a queen and the mother of the Great Alexander is now enhanced by the immeasurable prestige and poise her silky dress provides her with. She is the queen of the queens and the most capable of enchanting anyone

with her beauty. The proudest mother of all the preceded kings and queens, Olympiad boasts about her son's achievement and shows her silky dress collection to all of her female acquaintances promising to dress them all with the most expensive textiles of Asia decorated with ornamental frills and arachnoids embroideries. This is how the days elapse in the kingdom of Macedonia where wealth gives place to a high aesthetic quality of decoration, for the silk with its intense glistening and glimmering quality not only does it lighten the skins of women making even the dark-colored Persian ones like fireballs in the night but also exudes a luxurious and romantic air from all of them regardless of their social class status. And since everything is settled under the silky veil of a glorious beauty and women with their long soft dresses leave their sensuous trails in every step they take Alexander is get rid of his terrible nightmares and in the place of the ugly silkworms his sleep is now surrounded by emerging Chinese butterflies that look more like artificial handicrafts than real species of nature. In the delusion of his dreams and in the unconscious production of them in pits deep into his mind real truths revealed themselves and these truths inaugurated an age of great financial and cultural prosperity, for the silk roads do not only constitute a trade system between the Far East and the Middle East but on account of Alexander's ambitious spirit silk roads are stretched through the Mediterranean to Greece through which not only silk but also religion, culture, philosophy, technology and science are exchanged between the two countries. However the good days will not hold for long. Greece preserves for many years this monopoly in the trade enterprise with East and the Hellenistic world forces its stamp on the silk roads, until the all growing Roman force conquers the whole world taking in its own hands this precious business. No matter the outcome of the historical events Alexander's business pandemonium proves that the exchange of products, tradition and culture between countries can only be seen as a movement towards progress and a civil collaboration of cultures, that by joining forces can create global masterpieces and open the gate of fertilized distributions so that the world can be strewn with the precious seeds of mutual peace, love and respect. Besides, humanity should know only one thing: the things that unite us cannot separate us.