



Source: Dan Bilefsky, 'Turks embrace novelist's war on EU', *International Herald Tribune online*, 13/10/05.

Tags: [dreams](#), [animals](#), [intimacy](#)

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The library was a crescent moon shape that was joined at each end by another symmetrical moon of classrooms. The home of books smelt like a combination of must and matron, a slightly anaesthetic odour that permeated the air and had always disconcerted Ali. Spaced at tables all around the room were students with their heads bent in concentration, reading from books, typing on their personal computers. The soft clack of hushed learning was becoming louder; the turning of pages, the shuffling of feet, the gentle typing, the occasional whisper and the creak of Mrs. Jardines' trolley were forming an abstract music to Ali's ears. She looked around to see if anyone else had noticed but if anything, the inhabitants of the Patton Hill Institute of Learning—PHIL as it was affectionately known by the students—seemed to be closing down, their senses blunt and rusted like a knife left by the harbour. Ali's seemed to be heightening and the imagined rhythm of disparate sonics seemed to be increasing. She stopped writing notes and stared.

Bay windows all around afforded the view of an expansive green lawn, which, on this early spring day, was full of a large group of people doing a disproportional amount of work. Ali looked out to them and their frolicking came to her, languid, all bare-shouldered and laughing. It looked to her like a super-eight movie from her childhood; dusty, unclear, but yellow and refulgent all at once. Smiles and gestures were coming to her in half time and Ali felt as if she could see degrees of pleasure and pain hidden beneath them; the resolve of her subjects disguising emotions in varying measures. With the morbid satisfaction of picking at a scab she cast her eyes over her peers and imagined their hurts and their triumphs. She saw herself as a huge bird above them, her wingspan casting shadows on their naked bodies as she circled above and over, swooping and diving, coming to rest on a tree branch. Someone pointed to her and smiled. Then so did another and another and suddenly people from all over the lawn were turning to look at her in bird form. But the students touched each other in a new way. As they alerted each other to her presence, they touched parts of the body that were previously covered in clothes. Women touched men on their sternums and stroked from their necks down to their shoulders and tops of their arms. The men's hands softly touched the women's stomachs and the soft and fleshy side that runs from underarm to hip, gently directing their attention. Ali beat her wings and squawked in joy at this new relation, at the openness which she felt she had inspired.

There was an Indian boy named Aleem who had forever sat alone in their school and she had admired him from afar. In the white hot, sun-drenched playground of her mind he sat with another person and she strived to see who it was. Majestically, she rose from the branch and took off to the sounds of oohs and aahs from the crowd although they sounded like distorted errs and uhhhs because sound was still warped as if coming in quarter

time through a sea shell. She struck the air and flew towards him and he smiled a row of white in her direction and then touched the face of the woman sitting with him in order she see the apparition flying towards them. It was then that Ali saw her face, her own naked body and the head atop it staring and smiling. She held a leaf in her hand that she had contentedly been dismembering. Ali the naked waved to Ali the bird and then turned away. She took Aleem's cheek in her hands and kissed him gently and he returned the kiss which became deeper and she pushed his glasses off his eyes and up into his thick and shiny black hair, wrapping her hands around his neck and side holding on to him. Ali the bird then swooped upon them and picked them up in her claws and lifted them up and off the ground. They had been waiting for her and the scratch of her claws didn't bother them.

As they rose into the air the students on the lawn formed a line and started a Vegas style line dance, their arms interlocked, legs kicking wildly in a show of unity. From above, the symmetry of it was immensely pleasing and Ali and Aleem bellowed with laughter. They lay horizontal, entwined in each other, unfazed by the earth growing rapidly smaller beneath them, by the wind in their ears, by the decreasing temperature of the air against their skin. Ensconced like that, they flew for hours over sea and land, through the dusk and night and into the next day, which dawned dewy and bright with a crescent moon on the horizon. The blue purple of night was trying desperately to hold out against the invasion of pink morning and in their war the only victors were the eyes of the two lovers who sat high upon a rock in a distant land with only their bodies and nothing more. They lay and watched the sun come up and spoke of the future, the V where his arm and torso met her pillow, her calves intertwined amidst his thighs.

'Ali?' he said.

'Ali?'

"...'

'Ali?'

She murmured and lifted her head from page 85 of *Global Economics in the Noughties* which was wet from a large patch of drool.

Aleem was standing above her. In his right hand he was holding a brightly coloured bird's feather.

'I'm sorry to wake you up but it's just such a beautiful day outside, I thought you might like to sit on the lawn?'

Ali wiped her mouth surreptitiously and smiled her best 'I just woke up' smile.

'Sure' she said.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Declan Kelly.*