

Lester Gómez Medina

The Three Lessons

First Lesson

Adaptation

The first time I crossed a line it was on foot,

I didn't know it was a border I was crossing,

I didn't know the other side belonged to someone.

My mother was with me, holding my hand

I didn't feel alone.

When I was a young boy, I moved to Costa Rica with my family. We travelled from León in Nicaragua to San José where we settled. This first migration meant a lesson of adaptation to a different culture and dynamic of life, a different conception about who *I was*, or *who I was supposed to be*, from the locals' perspective. From that moment on, circumstances started to train me on this

principle: 'Having to leave where one comes from, is learning to live where one goes to.' And we all are always heading somewhere.

Second Lesson

The chat

Anything you do in life is going to have consequences ...

When I was 16 years old, my mother asked her boss (doña Betsy) to have a chat with me. Of course, I didn't want to meet my mother's employer. At the time I used to believe I knew better than my mother. 'Who does my mother think she is?' So whatever my mother wanted to achieve by asking that lady to talk to me, it wasn't of any interest. But I was wrong.

One evening, after agreeing to meet doña Betsy, I went to visit her with my mother opening the gate for me, and then the door.

I sat in the sitting room and waited.

I do not remember anything from that moment, nothing, except for two things – the way she looked into my eyes, through her glasses; and her voice speaking to me in Spanish, a second language to her. She said, '*Cualquier cosa que usted haga en la vida, va a tener consecuencias para usted y para otras personas, incluso si usted decide no hacer nada.*'

'Anything you do in life is going to have consequences for you and other people, including if you decide to do nothing.'

So, doing poetry seems to confirm those words.

Third Lesson

Who have you become?

I used to believe I found poetry.

I used to believe I write poetry.

Now I know: Poetry writes me.

Poetry found me.

When I first came to the UK, I was carrying so many things with me, but so little in my suitcase. I was carrying two countries left behind, two national flowers, the *sacuanjoche* and the *guaria morada*, a tropical warm February.

The pilot announced through the speaker, 'Welcome to London Heathrow... It's a lovely eight degrees.' 'Lovely,' yes, especially for a Central American.

After a decade of life in the UK, I have reached a conclusion: that night in February, it was not the rain that welcomed me first, nor the cold of winter, it was not the leafless trees nor the pilot, but an alien culture and its eternal partner – language, English language.

Lester Gómez Medina was born in Nicaragua, and is also a Costa Rican national. He came to the United Kingdom in 2014 and developed a keen interest in short story

writing and poetry. In 2018, he completed an MA in Audiovisual Translation and took part in Invisible Presence, a project to nurture and develop writers of Latin American background. His first (short) poetry collection *The Riddle Of The Cashew* (2021) was published by Exiled Writers Ink.

A recording of this text can be found at writersmosaic.org.uk

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