Cultures: Coexisting, Mixing, or Clashing?

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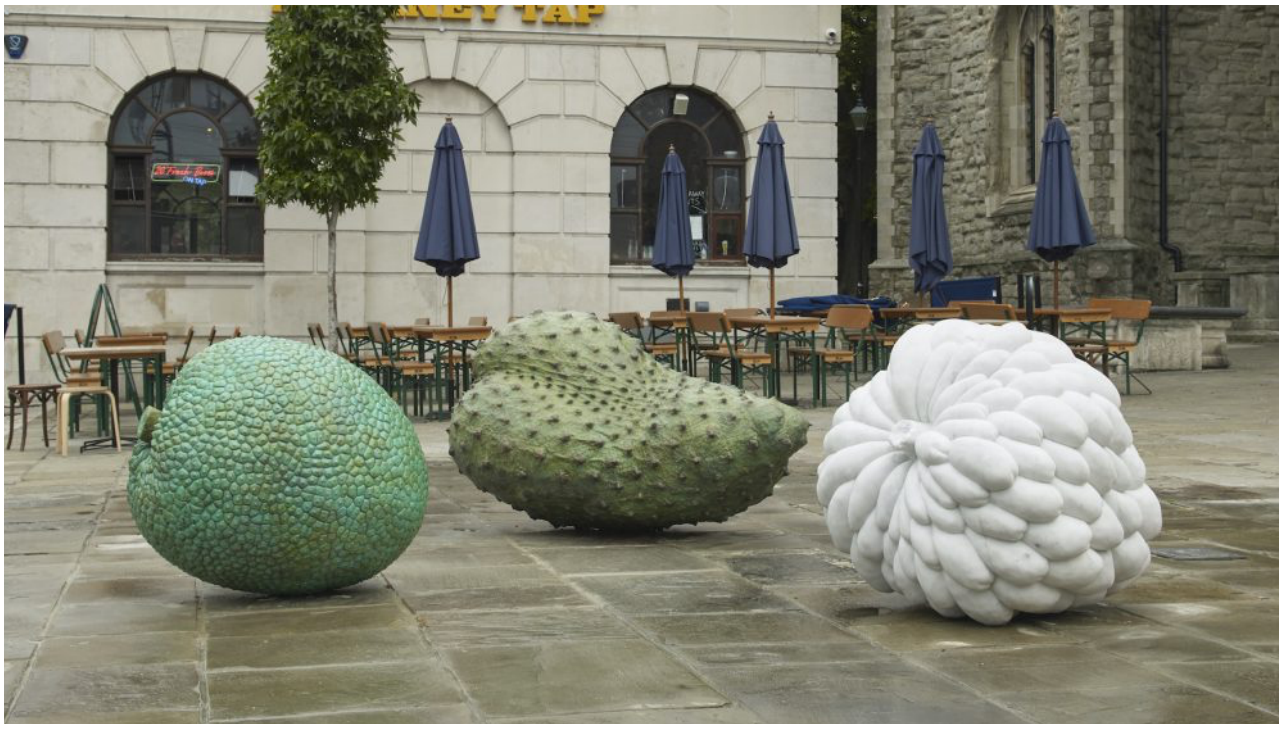

Veronica Ryan (1956-), *Custard Apple (Annonaceae), Breadfruit (Moraceae), and Soursop (Annonaceae)* (2021).

"Veronica Ryan has unveiled her new sculpture in the east London borough of Hackney honouring the Windrush generation of workers who came to the UK from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971."

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The danger of a single story

BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE, 2009

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977 -) was born in Enugu, eastern Nigeria in 1977. She grew up on a university campus, her father being a professor, her mother an administrator. She enjoyed reading and writing stories from an early age. At the age of 19 she went to the USA to go to university. Today she lives in the USA, but returns to Nigeria every year to teach writing workshops.

Adichie is an eloquent speaker and writer. Her best-known works are the three novels, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), besides a collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). In her writings she often includes Igbo terms referring to her ethnic background. She also draws on her childhood experiences of the Biafran-Nigerian civil war 1967-1970.

Adichie has received several literary prizes, e.g. the Orange Prize and the US National Book Critics Circle prize. In 2013 *Half of a Yellow Sun* was adapted for the screen.

THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger

crayon (sb) farvekridt
obligate (vb) forpligte
ginger (sb) ingefær

im'pressionable (adj) påvirkelig

vulnerable (adj) sårbar

Chinua Achebe: nigeriansk forfatter, 1930-2013

Camara Laye: forfatter fra Guinea, 1928-1980

per'ception (sb) opfattelse

kinky (adj) kruset

do'mestic help (sb) hushjælp

raffia (sb) bast

startle (vb) forbløffe

Mariah Carey: amerikansk sanger og skuespiller, f. 1970

default po'sition (sb) standardholdning

patronizing (adj) formynderisk

beer was. And for many years afterwards, I would have a desperate desire to taste ginger beer. But that is another story.

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So the year I turned eight we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S. I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S. whenever Africa came up people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African. Although I still get quite irritable when Africa is referred to as a country, the most recent example being my otherwise wonderful flight from Lagos two days ago, in which there was an announcement on the Virgin flight about the charity work in "India, Africa and other countries."

So after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family.

This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Locke, who sailed to West Africa in 1561 and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Locke. But what is important about his writing is that it represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West: A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."

And so I began to realize that my American roommate must have throughout her life seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not "authentically African." Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places, but I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing.

em'brace (vb) antage
incompre'hensible (adj) ubegribelig
voyage (sb) lang sørejse
Sub-Saharan (adj) syd for Sahara
Rudyard Kipling: britisk forfatter, 1865-1936
au'thentically (adv) autentisk, ægte
con'tend (vb) anføre
fleece (vb) udplyndre

i'mmerse (vb) indhylle

abject (adj) ynkelig, uværdig

de'finitive (adj) afgørende, endelig

dispo'ssess (vb) fortrænge

Anne Tyler: amerikansk forfatter, f. 1941

John Updike: amerikansk forfatter, 1932-2009

John Steinbeck: amerikansk forfatter, 1902-1968

Mary Gaitskill: amerikansk forfatter, f. 1954

adequate (adj) tilstrækkelig

re'pressive (adj) undertrykkende

de'value (vb) nedvurdere

I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself. So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called American Psycho - and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation.

But it would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. This is not because I am a better person than that student, but because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill. I did not have a single story of America.

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done to me. But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our fire trucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with

stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes: There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo and depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe, and it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Mukta Bakaray, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them.

Shortly after he published my first novel I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview, and a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, "I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen ..." And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Fumi Onda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music, talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers. What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds, films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce? What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

job vacancy (sb) ledig stilling

con'ventional (adj) vedtagen

a'ffordable (adj) som man har råd til; økonomisk mulig

sequel (sb) fortsættelse

justified (adj) berettiget

Pidgin (sb) pidgin engelsk (se FactBox s. 128)

Igbo, Yoruba og Ijo (sb) etniske sprog

Jay-Z: amerikansk rapper, f. 1969

Fela Kuti: nigeriansk musiker og politisk aktivist, 1938-1997

Bob Marley: musiker fra Jamaica, 1945-1981

odds (sb) her: udfordringer

hair braider (sb)

hårfletter, frisør

re'silience (sb) ukuelighed

thrive (vb) trives, blomstre

re'furbish (vb) forbedre

ma'lign (vb) tale ondt om

Alice Walker: amerikansk forfatter, f. 1944

re'gain (vb) genvinde

re'ject (vb) forkaste

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government, but also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer, and it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories.

My Nigerian publisher and I have just started a non-profit called Farafina Trust, and we have big dreams of building libraries and refurbishing libraries that already exist and providing books for state schools that don't have anything in their libraries, and also of organizing lots and lots of workshops, in reading and writing, for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories. Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind: "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained." I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise. Thank you.

Peter Goldsworthy
One of My Best Friends
(Australia, 1994)

People used to whisper that Willy had a touch of the tar-brush in him. That he was half boong.

I guess I should have known it was true – the accusation always drove him into a frenzy. And if I'd looked carefully enough, the evidence was there to convict him – the flattened nose, the brow jutting like a sun visor, the legs thin as spinifex. He had a good strong set of teeth, too – as abos were supposed to have in the days when they were treated like horses. Unreliable horses.

When I first met him, though, he was white. Or no colour – like the rest of us. As kids, we couldn't care less.

It was my first day at school – a day everyone remembers, but me more than most. My old man was in the Force, and forever being posted from town to town – so I had a lot of first days, in a lot of different schools. And being the son of a cop didn't make them any easier.

I always seemed to be wearing the wrong school uniform, or the wrong haircut. Or had a mouthful of the wrong slang. I'd arrive with a kitbag instead of a satchel, or a satchel instead of a shoulder-bag … Christ! I could fill a whole library with a catalogue of different school fashions.

And as I stood there among the stares and sniggers, the first to befriend me would always be the other loners. The dunces, the stammerers and stutterers, the fatsos – all the professional schoolyard victims. And I always befriended them in return at first, for they were useful to break the ice with. Although I often had to turn on them later as I settled in, and took my rightful place further up the pecking order.

Anyway, that's how it was with Willy that first morning. I guess he was just starved for human contact, and realised I wouldn't know who he was. Or what he was – an untouchable. He followed me around all that day – remembering it now, I could almost swear he was wagging a tail.

And of course, we were put at the same desk after the class filed in for the first lesson. There's a natural law about such things, a strange gravity that binds victims and bullies together.

It took a week or two to establish my position in the schoolyard hierarchy. A few bruises, a few bloodied noses, and a stage of

tar-brush tjærekost
boong australneger
accu'sation beskyldning
frenzy raseri
con'vict domfælde
brow bryn
jut rage frem
visor kasketskygge
spinifex australsk græsart
abo australneger
unre'liable upålidelig
Force politistyrken
kitbag rejsetaske
satchel skoletaske
snigger fnisen
loner enegænger
dunce dumrian
stammerer, stutterer en der stammer
fatso tyksak
be'friend hjælpe
turn on at slås med
pecking order hakkeorden
un'touchable paria
wag logre med
file in gå ind i rækker
gravity tyngdekraft
bully voldsmand
e'stablish befæste
hierarchy rangfølge
bruise skramme
stage niveau

equilibrium was reached. The bullies left me alone, and so did the victims.

Somehow though, I couldn't bring myself to jettison Willy. Maybe pity had something to do with it – there was certainly a lot about him that was pitiful. He could almost make me weep with stories about his life – the booze, the beatings, the foster homes, the good behaviour bonds. Even if half of it was bullshit, who could blame him for turning into such a miserable sneak. Any self-respecting social worker would have thrown herself on his flick-knife out of guilt. Or invited him home for a larceny, at the very least.

I remember one weekend we were out rabbiting – camped in the middle of a vast paddock somewhere. Just the two of us, and a thousand rabbit holes. We'd both got a bit pissed that night on a bottle of my old man's sherry I'd borrowed, and a bit giddy on his cigars, when Willy, for no reason, suddenly started to blubber. Snivelling about his parents, the police, the boy's home – the whole grim Fairy Tale.

'You're me only friend,' he whimpered. 'The only one who listens …'

Lucky for me, a trap went off just then, and the rabbit started whimpering too. It was Willy's turn to do the gutting, and when he got back I was asleep.

Or looked as if I was.

Still, I like to think I helped him. Hanging around with me, he learnt to stick up for himself more. Or maybe the other kids just left him alone more.

He was always around at our place on weekends, and would stay the night whenever my mother let him. And sometimes even when she didn't – I remember discovering him one morning curled up on the front porch. He'd been there all night – anything was better than returning to the home.

He used to come to tea every Friday night, and my old man would take us both to the Club – the Police Boys Club. That's where Willy first learnt to box – we spent a lot of time with our gloves on. My old man said he was a natural – all he needed was a bit more weight. We taught him to kick a football, too – and both of us played every week in the Police Boys team.

I guess it was one of the happiest times in his life – some recognition for his achievements, a bit of affection, growing self-confidence. My parents were even talking of legally adopting him, when he got pinched for illegal use, and sent up to the city for a year. Maybe he'd been too happy, and it blew some kind of fuse.

equi'librium ligevægt
jettison kaste over bord
booze alkohol
foster home plejehjem
bonds bånd
sneak luskepeter
flick-knife springkniv
larceny tyveri
rabbit jage kaniner
vast uhyre stor
paddock vænge
pissed pissefuld
giddy svimmel
blubber tude
snivel flæbe
whimper klynke
trap fælde
gut tage indvoldene ud
porch veranda
a natural et naturtalent
recog'nition anerkendelse
a'chievement præstation
af'fection kærlighed
self-'confidence selvsikkerhed
pinch anholde
il'legal ulovlig
the city opdragelsesanstalt
fuse sikring

As though he didn't somehow deserve it, or the guilt in him couldn't adjust.

'Once a boong, always a boong!' my old man said. He was really upset.

We were transferred again the next year, and though I wrote to the reform school Willy didn't answer. I knew he was ashamed of his kindergarten handwriting, and put it down to that. Then I settled into my new school, made new friends and new enemies, and slowly forgot about him. Although occasionally my old man jogged my memory with things he'd heard on the boxing grapevine. That Willy had left school, and was travelling the country shows with a fight troupe – and making a bit of a name for himself.

My life wandered on from weekend to weekend, through those endless adolescent days, those summers that seemed to last for ever. Then suddenly I found that I'd left school, and was married. A graduate from the Police Academy, being posted back to the same country towns I'd grown up in.

The inevitable transfer came just before my thirtieth birthday. We were reasonably settled where we were – a house and garden, a couple of kids – but it was worth an extra stripe to move. And I didn't plan on being a constable for ever.

Besides, I was curious to see the place.

I might never have left.

Country people never forget you – if only because they don't have a lot of other things to remember. But whatever the reason, they hadn't forgotten me. And I quickly found that I hadn't forgotten them.

The faces were all the same, if worn a little rougher with time. And life was still much as my parents had lived it – the same rounds of work, pub, and church. And footy on Saturdays, of course.

My wife liked to tell me I was too old for it at thirty – especially when the lawn needed mowing. She used to say there was nothing more pathetic than someone who wouldn't face up to their age. Maybe – but what I'd lost in speed, I made up for in enthusiasm. There was still nothing quite so releasing as putting foot to ball on a sunny afternoon. Or even on a wet one, for that matter.

And Willy must have felt the same – because that's where I first saw him again. He was playing for an abo team – the first year they'd had one in the local competition. The league didn't

a'djust tilpasse sig
up'set rystet
re'form school opdragelsesanstalt
jog sby's memory opfriske ens hukommelse
grapevine jungletelegraf
troupe gruppe
ado'lescent halvvoksen
graduate person, der har taget afgangseksamen
in'evitable uundgåelig
transfer forflyttelse
reasonably nogenlunde
settle falde til
an extra stripe en forfremmelse
constable politibetjent
footy football
lawn græsplæne
mow slå græs
pa'thetic ynkelig
face up to se i øjnene
en'thusiasm begejstring
re'leasing frigørende
compe'tition konkurrence
league (fodbold)liga

really want them – but some new discrimination law had been passed in the city, and they were stuck with them.

Not that the league was prejudiced – but every time the abos played people seemed to end up leaving the field by ambulance.

So maybe the league *was* prejudiced – against violence.

Of course, I didn't know all this that particular Saturday – no one had bothered to warn me. I guess it was part of the entertainment – see how long it takes the new guernsey to get his nose broken. And no doubt the fact I was a cop made it even more interesting.

I should have realised what was going on from the start. I'd never seen so many grudges settled, so much niggling behind the play, so many crippling tackles.

The first time I was felled, I put down to bad luck – but not the second. Or the third, or the fourth. Finally, half-strangled by a kick in the neck, I hit back. My old man used to say that abos have glass jaws, and the owner of this jaw was certainly an abo. He flipped over like a shot rabbit.

It was a crazy thing to do, but football does crazy things to you. I've heard TV experts arguing that team sports are a sort of safety valve, an emotional release – but that's bullshit. Football's where you *learn* aggro, not get rid of it. I didn't use to be a loudmouth, in fact I'm still not – except when I'm wearing a guernsey. Or driving my car, of course.

Anyway, as soon as I hit him, it was on for young and old. All over the field the boots were going in, the scores being settled. Something hit me from behind, I turned around, and next thing I knew I was squaring up to Willy. A whole crowd of the bastards was after my blood, but luckily some kind of chivalry seemed to operate – and he was first in line.

We recognised each other at the same time – after the first couple of punches. You never forget the combinations that hurt. He'd got blacker over the years, his nose flatter, and it came as a bit of a shock – I'd never thought of him as an abo. He was faster too, but after I'd stung him a couple of times he knew that whoever won, we were both going to be sore.

That's when he dropped his fists, and turned to the rest of the crowd.

'This bloke's a mate of mine – a good feller. Let's forget it, get on with the game.'

There were a few dissenting mutters, but Willy obviously had the authority – or the fists to back it up with.

I'd been forgiven, and that rush of affection reprieved victims feel for their persecutors welled up in me. I knew how lucky I'd

prejudiced forudindtaget
guernsey football jersey (bluse) worn by football players in Australian Rules. Australian Rules is a game played by teams of eighteen with an oval ball
settle a grudge hævne en forsmædelse
niggling smålighed
crippling lemlæstende
fell fælde
strangle kvæle
safety valve sikkerhedsventil
release frakobling
aggro aggression
loudmouth skrålhals
to be on at lukke op for en slåskamp
settle a score gøre et regnskab op
square up to stå overfor parat til at slås
chivalry ridderlighed
combi'nation slagserie
sore øm
dis'senting uenig
rush bølge
af'fection hengivenhed
re'prieved benådet
victim offer
persecutor forfølger
well up vælde frem

been – there were bottles all around the ground just waiting to be broken and ground into my face. Suddenly I loved them all – Jesus, *nobody* knew their troubles like I did. Their brother.

I dropped my fists – and that's when Willy king-hit me.

I know what they say. That violence begets violence, that a punch in the face is nothing compared to a hundred years of genocide. That Willy didn't have a chance from the day he was born, that his options were nil in a world dedicated more to charity than equality. I heard all that from the social workers at the Police Academy and maybe it's true.

But it's also false – the blame's got to stop somewhere. Otherwise we'd *all* be guilty.

I used to think that people could be meded like any other machine. Pumped up with a little kindness like a flat tyre. But now I know better.

Every time I clean my lower plate, or my jaw aches in the cold, I know.

Black or white, Willy was a boong, and always will be.

Just like my old man said.

grind tvære
king-hit slå ud
be'get avle
genocide folkedrab
option valgmulighed
nil nul
dedicate vie
charity godgørenhed
e'quality lighed
social worker socialrådgiver
mend reparere
tyre dæk
plate tandprotese

My Son the Fanatic (1997)

Hanif Kureishi

Surreptitiously the father began going into his son's bedroom. He would sit there for hours, rousing himself only to seek clues. What bewildered him was that Ali was getting tidier. Instead of the usual tangle of clothes, books, cricket bats, video games, the room was becoming neat and ordered; spaces began appearing where before there had been only mess.

Initially Parvez had been pleased: his son was outgrowing his teenage attitudes. But one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books and fashionable clothes the boy had bought just a few months before. Also without explanation, Ali had parted from the English girlfriend who used to come often to the house. His old friends had stopped ringing.

For reasons he didn't himself understand, Parvez wasn't able to bring up the subject of Ali's unusual behaviour. He was aware that he had become slightly afraid of his son, who, alongside his silences, was developing a sharp tongue. One remark Parvez did make, 'You don't play your guitar any more,' elicited the mysterious but conclusive reply, 'There are more important things to be done.'

Yet Parvez felt his son's eccentricity as an injustice. He had always been aware of the pitfalls which other men's sons had fallen into in England. And so, for Ali, he had worked long hours and spent a lot of money paying for his education as an accountant. He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And now the boy was throwing his possessions out!

The TV, video and sound system followed the guitar. Soon the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed.

Parvez couldn't sleep; he went more to the whisky bottle, even when he was at work. He realised it was imperative to discuss the matter with someone sympathetic.

Parvez has been a taxi driver for twenty years. Half that time he'd worked for the same firm. Like him, most of the other drivers were Punjabis. They preferred to work at night, the roads were clearer and the money better. They slept during the day, avoiding their wives. Together they led almost a boy's life in the cabbies' office, playing cards and practical jokes, exchanging lewd stories, eating together and discussing politics and their problems.

But Parvez had been unable to bring this subject up with his friends. He was too ashamed. And he was afraid, too, that they would blame him for the wrong turning his boy had taken, just as

surrep'titiously i al hemmelighed
rouse oneself tage sig sammen
clue spor, forklaring
bewilder forvirre
tangle rod
i'nitially til at begynde med
torn itureven
alongside ved siden af
e'licit fremkalde
con'clusive afgørende
her: sætter en stopper for yderligere diskussion
eccen'tricity særhed
pitfall faldgrube
a'ccountant revisor
suit sæt tøj
re'quire have brug for.
im'perative bydende nødvendigt
Pun'jabi pakistaner
sympa'thetic medfølende
cabby taxichauffør
lewd sjofel
take the wrong turning komme på afveje

Hanif Kureishi (1954-) was born in Bromley, Kent in 1954 the son of a Pakistani father and an English mother. He has published novels and short stories. The Buddha of Suburbia (1990) and My Beautiful Launderette (1997), for which he also wrote the screenplay, are some of his novels, as is Gabriel's Gift (2001,). He has published multiple collections of short stories including Love in a Blue Time (including My Son the Fanatic) 1997, The Black Album (1998), and Intimacy (2003).

he had blamed other fathers whose sons had taken to running around with bad girls, truanting from school and joining gangs.

For years Parvez had boasted to the other men about how Ali excelled at cricket, swimming and football, and how attentive a scholar he was, getting straight 'A's in most subjects. Was it asking too much for Ali to get a good job now, marry the right girl and start a family? Once this happened, Parvez would be happy. His dreams of doing well in England would have come true. Where had he gone wrong?

But one night, sitting in the taxi office on busted chairs with his two closest friends watching a Sylvester Stallone film, he broke his silence.

'I can't understand it!' he burst out. 'Everything is going from his room. And I can't talk to him any more. We were not father and son – we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me!'

And Parvez put his head in his hands.

Even as he poured out his account the men shook their heads and gave one another knowing glances. From their grave looks Parvez realised they understood the situation.

'Tell me what is happening!' he demanded.

The reply was almost triumphant. They had guessed something was going wrong. Now it was clear. Ali was taking drugs and selling his possessions to pay for them. That was why his bedroom was emptying.

'What must I do then?'

Parvez's friends instructed him to watch Ali scrupulously and then be severe with him, before the boy went mad, overdosed or murdered someone.

Parvez staggered out into the early morning air, terrified they were right. His boy – the drug addict killer!

To his relief he found Bettina sitting in his car.

Usually the last customers of the night were local 'brasses' or prostitutes. The taxi drivers knew them well, often driving them to liaisons. At the end of the girls' shifts, the men would ferry them home, though sometimes the women would join them for a drinking session in the office. Occasionally the drivers would go with the girls. 'A ride in exchange for a ride,' it was called.

Bettina had known Parvez for three years. She lived outside the town and on the long drive home, where she sat not in the passenger seat but beside him, Parvez had talked to her about his life and hopes, just as she talked about hers. They saw each other most nights.

take to begynde at
ˈtruant pjække
exˈcell udmærke sig
aˈttentive påpasselig
scholar *her:* studerende
straight A's topkarakterer
busted vakkelvorn
pour out udøse
aˈccount beretning
grave alvorlig
ˈscrupulous meget omhyggelig
seˈvere streng
stagger vakle
brass luder
liˈaison forbindelse, kunde
shift skift
ferry *her:* transportere
oˈccasionally af og til

He could talk to her about things he'd never be able to discuss with his own wife. Bettina, in turn, always reported on her night's activities. He liked to know where she was and with whom. Once he had rescued her from a violent client, and since then they had come to care for one another.

Though Bettina had never met the boy, she heard about Ali continually. That late night, when he told Bettina that he suspected Ali was on drugs, she judged neither the boy nor his father, but became businesslike and told him what to watch for.

'It's all in the eyes,' she said. They might be bloodshot; the pupils might be dilated, he might look tired. He could be liable to sweats, or sudden mood changes. 'Okay?'

Parvez began his vigil gratefully. Now he knew what the problem might be, he felt better. And surely, he figured, things couldn't have gone too far? With Bettina's help he would soon sort it out.

He watched each mouthful the boy took. He sat beside him at every opportunity and looked into his eyes. When he could he took the boy's hand, checking his temperature. If the boy wasn't at home Parvez was active, looking under the carpet, in his drawers, behind the empty wardrobe, sniffing, inspecting, probing. He knew what to look for: Bettina had drawn pictures of capsules, syringes, pills, powders, rocks.

Every night she waited to hear news of what he'd witnessed.

After a few days of constant observation, Parvez was able to report that although the boy had given up sports, he seemed healthy, with clear eyes. He didn't, as his father expected, flinch guiltily from his gaze. In fact the boy's mood was alert and steady in this sense: as well as being sullen, he was very watchful. He returned his father's long looks with more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even, so much so that Parvez began to feel that it was he who was in the wrong, and not the boy!

'And there's nothing else physically different?' Bettina asked.

'No!' Parvez thought for a moment. 'But he is growing a beard.'

One night, after sitting with Bettina in an all-night coffee shop, Parvez came home particularly late. Reluctantly he and Bettina had abandoned their only explanation, the drug theory, for Parvez had found nothing resembling any drug in Ali's room. Besides, Ali wasn't selling his belongings. He threw them out, gave them away or donated them to charity shops.

Standing in the hall, Parvez heard his boy's alarm clock go off. Parvez hurried into his bedroom where his wife was still awake, sewing in bed. He ordered her to sit down and keep quiet, though she had neither stood up nor said a word. From this post, and with

'rescue redde
sus'pect have en mistanke om
di'late udvide
be 'liable to være tilbøjelig til
sweat svedetur
'vigil overvågning
grateful taknemmelig
probe undersøge
'capsule pille, kapsel
'syringe sprøjte
rock krystaller (kokain)
witness være vidne til, se
flinch from prøve at undgå
gaze blik
a'lert årvågen, kvik
sullen mut, indesluttet
re'proach bebrejdelse
re'luctant modstræbende
a'bandon opgive
re'semble ligne
do'nate forære
'charity velgørenheds…

her watching him curiously, he observed his son through the crack in the door.

The boy went into the bathroom to wash. When he returned to his room Parvez sprang across the hall and set his ear at Ali's door. A muttering sound came from within. Parvez was puzzled but relieved.

Once this clue had been established, Parvez watched him at other times. The boy was praying. Without fail, when he was at home, he prayed five times a day.

Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught the Koran. To stop him falling asleep when he studied, the Moulvi had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez's hair, so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions. Not that the other taxi drivers had more respect. In fact they made jokes about the local mullahs walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live, while their eyes roved over the boys and girls in their care.

Parvez described to Bettina what he had discovered. He informed the men in the taxi office. The friends, who had been so curious before, now became oddly silent. They could hardly condemn the boy for his devotions.

Parvez decided to take a night off and go out with the boy. They could talk things over. He wanted to hear how things were going at college; he wanted to tell him stories about their family in Pakistan. More than anything he yearned to understand how Ali had discovered the 'spiritual dimension', as Bettina described it.

To Parvez's surprise, the boy refused to accompany him. He claimed he had an appointment. Parvez had to insist that no appointment could be more important than that of a son with his father.

The next day, Parvez went immediately to the street where Bettina stood in the rain wearing high heels, a short skirt and a long mac on top, which she would open hopefully at passing cars.

'Get in, get in!' he said.

They drove out across the moors and parked at the spot where on better days, with a view unimpeded for many miles by nothing but wild deer and horses, they'd lie back, with their eyes half closed, saying 'This is the life.' This time Parvez was trembling. Bettina put her arms around him.

'What's happened?'

'I've just had the worst experience of my life.'

As Bettina rubbed his head Parvez told her that the previous evening he and Ali had gone to a restaurant. As they studied the

curious nysgerrig
crack sprække
mutter mumle
puzzled rådvild
without fail helt bestemt
Lahore den største by i Pakistan
Moulvi religiøs lærer
string snor
instantly øjeblikkeligt
in'dignity nedværdigende behandling
mullah islamisk lærd
rove over glide hen over
de'votions andagtsøvelser
yearn længes inderligt efter
'spiritual åndelig
claim hævde, påstå
mac = mackintosh regnfrakke
moor hede
unim'peded *her:* frit, uforstyrret
'previous foregående

menu, the waiter, whom Parvez knew, brought him his usual whisky and water. Parvez had been so nervous he had even prepared a question. He was going to ask Ali if he was worried about his imminent exams. But first, wanting to relax, he loosened his tie, crunched a popadom and took a long drink.

Before Parvez could speak, Ali made a face.

'Don't you know it's wrong to drink alcohol?' he said.

'He spoke to me very harshly,' Parvez told Bettina. 'I was about to castigate the boy for being insolent, but managed to control myself.'

He had explained patiently to Ali that for years he had worked more than ten hours a day, that he had few enjoyments or hobbies and never went on holiday. Surely it wasn't a crime to have a drink when he wanted one?

'But it is forbidden,' the boy said.

Parvez shrugged. 'I know.'

'And so is gambling, isn't it?'

'Yes. But surely we are only human?'

Each time Parvez took a drink, the boy winced, or made a fastidious face as an accompaniment. This made Parvez drink more quickly. The waiter, wanting to please his friend, brought another glass of whisky. Parvez knew he was getting drunk, but he couldn't stop himself. Ali had a horrible look on his face, full of disgust and censure. It was as if he hated his father.

Halfway through the meal Parvez suddenly lost his temper and threw a plate on the floor. He had felt like ripping the cloth from the table, but the waiters and other customers were staring at him. Yet he wouldn't stand for his own son telling him the difference between right and wrong. He knew he wasn't a bad man. He had a conscience. There were a few things of which he was ashamed, but on the whole he had lived a decent life.

'When have I had time to be wicked?' he asked Ali.

In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran.

'For instance?' Parvez demanded.

Ali hadn't needed time to think. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he asked his father if he didn't relish pork pies?

'Well …'

Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with mushrooms and mustard and sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for breakfast every morning.

Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook port sausages, saying to her, 'You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!'

'imminent nært forestående
popadom tyndt og sprødt indisk brød
harsh skarp
'castigate revse, straffe
'insolent uforskammet
shrug trække på skulderen
wince krympe sig
fa'stidious kritisk
a'ccompaniment akkompagnement, ledsagelse
dis'gust afsky
'censure fordømmelse
cloth dug
'decent anstændig
wicked slet, syndig
mo'notonous ensformig
relish kunne lide
pork svinekød
smothered with dækket af
mushroom champignon
mustard sennep

Parvez was so annoyed and perplexed by this attack that he called for more drink.

'The problem is this,' the boy said. He leaned across the table. For the first time that night his eyes were alive. 'You are too implicated in Western civilisation.'

Parvez burped; he thought he was going to choke. 'Implicated!' he said. 'But we live here!'

'The Western materialists hate us,' Ali said. 'Papa, how can you love something which hates you?'

'What is the answer then?' Parvez said miserably. 'According to you.'

Ali addressed his father fluently, as if Parvez were a rowdy crowd that had to be quelled and convinced. The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed. The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes.

As Ali talked, Parvez looked out of the window as if to check that they were still in London.

'My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop there will be *jihad*. I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause.'

'But why, why?' Parvez said.

'For us the reward will be in paradise.'

'Paradise!'

Finally, as Parvez's eyes filled with tears, the boy urged him to mend his ways.

'How is that possible?' Parvez asked.

'Pray,' Ali said. 'Pray beside me.'

Parvez called for the bill and ushered his boy out of the restaurant as soon as he was able. He couldn't take any more. Ali sounded as if he'd swallowed someone else's voice.

On the way home the boy sat in the back of the taxi, as if he were a customer.

'What has made you like this?' Parvez asked him, afraid that somehow he was to blame for all this. 'Is there a particular event which has influenced you?'

'Living in this country.'

'But I love England,' Parvez said, watching his boy in the mirror. 'They let you do almost anything here.'

'That is the problem,' he replied.

For the first time in years Parvez couldn't see straight. He knocked the side of the car against a lorry, ripping off the wing mirror. They were lucky not to have been stopped by the police: Parvez would have lost his licence and therefore his job.

per'plexed forvirret
'implicate indblande
burp bøvse, ræbe
choke kvæles
'miserable ulykkelig
fluent flydende, veltalende
rowdy uregerlig
quell dæmpe, slå ned
'infidel vantro
Christers = Christians
rout jage på flugt
sink sump
'hypocrite hykler
a'dulterer ægteskabsbryder
perse'cution forfølgelse
ji'had hellig krig
cause sag
urge bede indtrængende
to mend one's ways forbedre sig (moralsk)
usher føre
e'vent begivenhed

Getting out of the car back at the house, Parvez stumbled and fell in the road, scraping his hands and ripping his trousers. He managed to haul himself up. The boy didn't even offer him his hand.

Parvez told Bettina he was now willing to pray, if that was what the boy wanted, if that would dislodge the pitiless look from his eyes.

'But what I object to,' he said, 'is being told by my own son that I am going to hell!'

What finished Parvez off was that the boy had said he was giving up accountancy. When Parvez had asked why, Ali had said sarcastically that it was obvious.

'Western education cultivates an anti-religious attitude.'

And, according to Ali, in the world of accountants it was usual to meet women, drink alcohol and practise usury.

'But it's well-paid work,' Parvez argued. 'For years you've been preparing!'

Ali said he was going to begin to work in prisons, with poor Muslims who were struggling to maintain their purity in the face of corruption. Finally, at the end of the evening, as Ali was going to bed, he had asked his father why he didn't have a beard, or at least a moustache.

'I feel as if I've lost my son,' Parvez told Bettina. 'I can't bear to be looked at as if I'm a criminal. I've decided what to do.'

'What is it?'

'I'm going to tell him to pick up his prayer mat and get out of my house. It will be the hardest thing I've ever done, but tonight I'm going to do it.'

'But you mustn't give up on him,' said Bettina. 'Many young people fall into cults and superstitious groups. It doesn't mean they'll always feel the same way.'

She said Parvez had to stick by his boy, giving him support, until he came through.

Parvez was persuaded that she was right, even though he didn't feel like giving his son more love when he had hardly been thanked for all he had already given.

Nevertheless, Parvez tried to endure his son's looks and reproaches. He attempted to make conversation about his beliefs. But if Parvez ventured any criticism, Ali always had a brusque reply. On one occasion Ali accused Parvez of 'grovelling' to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not 'inferior'; there was more to the world than the West, though the West always thought it was best.

'How is it you know that?' Parvez said, 'seeing as you've never left England?'

stumble snuble
haul hive
dis'lodge fjerne
'pitiless ubarmhjertig, nådeløs
a'ccountancy revision, revisoruddannelse
'cultivate udvikle
'usury ågerforretning
main'tain bevare
'purity renhed
super'stitious overtroisk
su'pport støtte
en'dure udholde
re'proach bebrejdelse
'venture vove
brusque brysk, affærdigende
grovel krybe, ligge på maven
in'ferior mindreværdig

Ali replied with a look of contempt.

One night, having ensured there was no alcohol on his breath, Parvez sat down at the kitchen table with Ali. He hoped Ali would compliment him on the beard he was growing but Ali didn't appear to notice.

The previous day Parvez had been telling Bettina that he thought people in the West sometimes felt inwardly empty and that people needed a philosophy to live by.

'Yes,' said Bettina. 'That's the answer. You must tell him what your philosophy of life is. Then he will understand that there are other beliefs.'

After some fatiguing consideration, Parvez was ready to begin. The boy watched him as if he expected nothing.

Haltingly Parvez said that people had to treat one another with respect, particularly children their parents. This did seem, for a moment, to affect the boy. Heartened, Parvez continued. In his view this life was all there was and when you died you rotted in the earth. 'Grass and flowers will grow out of me, but something of me will live on –'

'How?'

'In other people. I will continue – in you.' At this the boy appeared a little distressed. 'And your grandchildren,' Parvez added for good measure. 'But while I am here on earth I want to make the best of it. And I want you to, as well!'

'What d'you mean by "make the best of it"? asked the boy.

'Well,' said Parvez. 'For a start … you should enjoy yourself. Yes. Enjoy yourself without hurting others.'

Ali said that enjoyment was a 'bottomless pit'.

'But I don't mean enjoyment like that!' said Parvez. 'I mean the beauty of living!'

'All over the world our people are oppressed,' was the boy's reply.

'I know,' Parvez replied, not entirely sure who 'our people' were, 'but still – life is for living!'

Ali said, 'Real morality has existed for hundreds of years. Around the world millions and millions of people share my beliefs. Are you saying you are right and they are all wrong?'

Ali looked at his father with such aggressive confidence that Parvez could say no more.

One evening Bettina was sitting in Parvez's car, after visiting a client, when they passed a boy on the street.

'That's my son' Parvez said suddenly. They were on the other side of town, in a poor district, where there were two mosques.

con'tempt foragt
en'sure sikre sig
'previous foregående
fa'tiguing udmattende
halting stammende
heartened opmuntret
di'stressed ulykkelig, beklemt
for good measure oveni
pit afgrund
o'ppressed undertrykt
'confidence selvsikkerhed

Parvez set his face hard.

Bettina turned to watch him. 'Slow down then, slow down!' She said, 'He's good-looking. Reminds me of you. But with a more determined face. Please, can't we stop?'

'What for?'

'I'd like to talk to him.'

Parvez turned the cab round and stopped beside the boy.

'Coming home?' Parvez asked. 'It's quite a way.'

The sullen boy shrugged and got into the back seat. Bettina sat in the front. Parvez became aware of Bettina's short skirt, gaudy rings and ice-blue eyeshadow. He became conscious that the smell of her perfume, which he loved, filled the cab. He opened the window.

While Parvez drove as fast as he could, Bettina said gently to Ali, 'Where have you been?'

'The mosque,' he said.

'And how are you getting on at college? Are you working hard?'

'Who are you to ask me these questions?' he said, looking out of the window. Then they hit bad traffic and the car came to a standstill.

By now Bettina had inadvertently laid her hand on Parvez's shoulder. She said, 'Your father, who is a good man, is very worried about you. You know he loves you more than his own life.'

'You say he loves me,' the boy said.

'Yes!' said Bettina.

Then why is he letting a woman like you touch him like that?'

If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with twice as much cold fury.

She said, 'What kind of woman am I that deserves to be spoken to like that?'

'You know,' he said. 'Now let me out.'

'Never,' Parvez replied.

'Don't worry. I'm getting out,' Bettina said.

'No, don't!' said Parvez. But even as the car moved she opened the door, threw herself out and ran away across the road. Parvez shouted after her several times, but she had gone.

Parvez took Ali back to the house, saying nothing more to him. Ali went straight to his room. Parvez was unable to read the paper, watch television or even sit down. He kept pouring himself drinks.

At last he went upstairs and paced up and down outside Ali's room. When, finally, he opened the door, Ali was praying. The boy didn't even glance his way.

de'termined beslutsom
sullen mut, sur
shrug trække på skulderen
gaudy prangende
'conscious bevidst
inad'vertently uforvarende, uden at tænke over det
fury raseri
pace up and down gå frem og tilbage
glance kaste et blik

Parvez kicked him over. Then he dragged the boy up by his shirt and hit him. The boy fell back. Parvez hit him again. The boy's face was bloody. Parvez was panting. He knew that the boy was unreachable, but he struck him nonetheless. The boy neither covered himself nor retaliated; there was no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: 'So who's the fanatic now?'

1997

pant gispe, stønne
re'taliate gøre gengæld, "slå igen"
split flække

LAURA SMITH: MIXED RACE IN THE UK: AM I THE FUTURE FACE OF THIS COUNTRY? (2014)

With 'mixed race' now the fastest-growing ethnic minority in the country, prejudice should be a thing of the past – but as one writer reveals, we've still got a long way to go

1 Where I grew up, a mixed-race family was something of an anomaly*. Families, according to our neighbours – and the pictures on cereal boxes, board games and holiday brochures – meant a white mother and a white father and two children, preferably a boy and a girl, ideally blonde. The father went to work in a suit; the mother stayed home and sang along to Radio 1* while doing the housework.

2 My family wasn't like that. My mother was from Guyana and wore her hair in a short Afro. She liked jumpsuits and jewellery and, shockingly, worked full-time. My father was from Scotland and wore embarrassing checked jackets from the 1960s (he was in his forties when my brother and I were born). Neither had heard of Radio 1.

3 My childhood memories of growing up in a mainly white, expensively heeled* north London suburb include the following ...

4 I am six years old and talking over the garden fence to my next-door neighbour and two sisters from across the street and one of them calls me "Poo*" and they all laugh and run away. I am eight and a classmate stops me in the corridor and asks, "What's it like to be black?" and I can't think of an answer so I ask her what it's like to be white. I am 10 and a boy from the Scouts asks me to play Uhura* in their production of Star Trek and I'm so pleased and it's only much later that I realise I am the only person in the room who could do it.

5 It is not always like this. Other things happen in between, lots of them good. But that's the thing about memory: only the strongest cling on.

6 Nearly 30 years on I have a husband and two young children. We live in a much more "mixed" neighbourhood than where I grew up so that, as a mixed family, we're far from unusual. In fact, all but two families in our street are visibly mixed in some way (it's a small street, but still). Unlike my parents, my husband and I do not stand out. Unlike my brother and me, my children will not be the only mixed-race children in their classroom.

7 Of course, we live in famously diverse London, but there are now 1.2 million people across Britain who describe themselves as "mixed", making mixed race the third-largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group. Widely reported predictions*

anomaly sb. anomali, afvigelse fra det normale • **Radio 1** BBC kanal, der spiller de nyeste hits • **heeled** adj. velhavende • **poo** sb. lort • **Uhura** sort karakter i serien Star Trek • **prediction** sb. forudsigelse, prognose

that mixed will be the single largest ethnic minority group by the end of this decade are disputed* by academics, but it is clear that a major demographic shift is under way.

8 Reaction to this social change has been contradictory*, and peppered with* hyperbole*. On the one hand, the rise of "beige Britain" is eulogised* as evidence of an open, tolerant country that's moved beyond outdated notions of race and racism. It has become fashionable to shrug and say, "Well, we'll all be brown soon." On the other, it is not unusual to see alarmist* articles about white people becoming the minority (two recent stories predicting that so-called "indigenous* white children" would be "outnumbered" in state schools by 2037 were illustrated with images of mixed children), while in the black press there are reports about the disappearance of the Caribbean presence as increasing numbers "marry out".

9 Reactions to Danny Boyle's casting of a mixed family in the London Olympics opening ceremony encapsulated* these frictions*: while some celebrated this very modern take on* British life, the Daily Mail* called its depiction of a white mother and black father living happily in a suburban home "absurdly unrealistic".

10 Underpinning* all this remains an obsession with our physicality: we can't get beyond a basic fascination with what happens when two people with different-coloured skin have a child. A tiny recent study by the University of Cardiff on the attractiveness of mixed-race people received disproportionate* media coverage, while a black radio presenter recently told me, "Everyone wants to look like you." More than one older white mother has revealed to me her yearning for a mixed child, a la Edina in Ab Fab*, and well-meaning people frequently tell me how "cool" my two-year-old son looks.

11 Ludi Simpson, a professor of population studies at the University of Manchester, says people have become less ethnically segregated over the past decade as newer immigrants become settled and move into more prosperous* areas, like those before them. "It's not that people don't have fears or that there isn't discrimination and barriers to housing and jobs," he says. "But the evidence shows that, on the whole, people are moving in the direction they want to be."

12 And as people's lives become more intertwined*, they inevitably* couple up – and have children. According to a new report from the Office of National Statistics, 12

dispute vb. diskutere, strides om • **contradictory** adj. modstridende • **pepper with** vb. fig. krydre med • **hyperbole** sb. overdrivelse • **eulogise** vb. lovprise • **alarmist** adj. alarmistisk (male fanden på væggen) • **indigenous** adj. indfødt • **encapsulate** vb. sammenfatte, indkapsle • **friction** sb. gnidning • **take on** sb. bud på • **Daily Mail** britisk avis • **underpin** vb. understøtte • **disproportionate** adj. uforholdsmæssig • **Edina in Ab Fab** karakter i den britiske tv-sitcom Absolutely Fabulous • **prosperous** adj. velstående • **intertwined** adj. filtret ind i hinanden, sammenflettet • **inevitably** adv. uundgåeligt

per cent of households with at least two people have partners or household members of different ethnic groups (black and, unsurprisingly, mixed people are the most likely to mix; whites the least).

13 There have been black and brown people in Britain since the Roman era*, but the mixed population has never been this sizeable*. One in 50 Brits now considers her or himself mixed race, and nearly one in 16 children under five is mixed race – rising to one in eight under-fives in London. Although those with one black and one white parent still form the largest group, mixing has become much more complex as migration becomes truly global.

14 And just as it has always been somewhat meaningless to talk of a black or Asian "community", so the notion of a mixed community is misleading. But that's not to say there aren't shared experiences. "It's that sense of constantly having to explain yourself to people," says Chamion Caballero, senior research fellow at South Bank University's Weeks Centre.

15 "You might have a different mix to another mixed person, but you've all had to deal with other people's stereotypes of you, and that constant 'What are you?' question." The other version of that question is, "Where are you from?" and, in my experience, "north London" doesn't cut it.

16 It wasn't until the 2001 national census* that we were counted at all: before then only black, white, Asian and "other" categories existed, leaving a gaping* hole in this snapshot of the country's make-up*. Even now, the fact that we still view people as either one thing or another leaves those of us who don't fit into neat boxes battling with others' preconceptions*.

17 "If you have a black and a white parent and you live in a world where these constructed identities are supposed to be in friction*, you viscerally* have this question of, 'What does that make me?"' says Minna Salami, the award-winning blogger also known as Ms Afropolitan. "Many mixed-race people suffer some trauma from having to battle with these ideological conflicts not created by them."

18 Bradley Lincoln, whose organisation Mix-d has worked with hundreds of mixed young people across Britain, agrees that it's often others who find it hard to accept mixed identities. "If you ask a mixed person whether they see themselves as black or white, it removes the possibility that mixed race is a healthy identity in itself." He adds that young mixed people overwhelmingly prefer "mixed race" as a descriptor* – it's seen as less "wordy" than "multiple*" or "dual heritage*". Unfotunately, the hated "halfcaste" has been joined by other inventively* abusive terms includ-

Roman era sb. den romerske era (c. 43-410) • **sizeable** adj. stor • **census** sb. folketælling • **gaping** adj. gabende • **make-up** sb. sammensætning • **preconception** sb. forudfattet holdning • **friction** sb. gnidning • **viscerally** adv. intuitivt • **descriptor** sb. betegnelse, benævnelse • **multiple** adj. multible, mange forskellige • **dual heritage** sb. dobbelt kulturarv • **inventively** adv. opfindsomt

ing "confused.com", "Hovis best of both*", "pick 'n' mix" and "mutt*", used by the rapper Kanye West (who, incidentally, now has a mixed-race daughter).

19 Negative ideas around racial mixing have a long history. In Britain, concern about interracial unions reached a peak* in the first half of the 20th century, when mixed neighbourhoods such as Toxteth and Tiger Bay were portrayed as immoral and dangerous, mixed children as tragic outcasts. Marie Stopes*, then a prominent eugenicist*, called for all "half-castes" to be "sterilised at birth". Caballero says this notion of mixed people as divided and confused – the "marginal man" of early social science – remains. "When I started in this area I got sick of reading about how we were all psychologically traumatised and about all these broken relationships when my own parents have been together for 30 years," she says.

20 Academia* has moved on. Researchers are now looking at the lives of mixed people themselves, and the picture that emerges is that, at least for the people concerned, mixing is far more everyday than officialdom* has so far recognised*. Contrary to* stereotypes, mixed families are overwhelmingly middle class, with most educated to degree level or higher; most mixed children have married or cohabiting* parents; and, far from being concentrated in poor, inner-city areas, mixed families span the country from larger cities to prosperous* suburbs and small towns.

21 Despite this reality, Chuka Umunna, the shadow business secretary* and one of a handful of mixed-race MPs*, says attitudes in politics have some way to go. "When I first arrived [in Westminster*], people presumed I grew up on a social housing project* in Brixton Hill*," he says. "The fact that I am mixed race and middle class is something that some have struggled with."

22 Where politicians and commentators do recognise* Britain's mixed population, they tend to use it as evidence of a "rainbow nation" at ease with its diversity. I think this makes people feel good, but I don't think it's true. Yes, more people are mixing. And yes, attitudes towards mixing have relaxed. A recent report by the think tank British Future found that 15 per cent of the public are opposed to interracial marriages, compared with 50 per cent in the 1980s.

23 But that still depends on where you live – and how rich you are. Even within one city, there will be variation. Mixed families in multicultural neighbourhoods may

Hovis best of both brødprodukt der blander fuldkorn og hvede • **mutt** sb. gadekryds, bastard • **peak** sb. højdepunkt • **Marie Stopes** britisk forfatter og kvinderetsforkæmper (1880-1958) • **eugenicist** sb. eugeniker, forsker i racehygiejne • **Academia** sb. den akademiske verden • **officialdom** sb. offentlige autoriteter • **recognise** vb. anerkende • **contrary to** adv. i modstrid med • **cohabiting** adj. samboende, samlevende • **prosperous** adj. velstående • **shadow business secretary** sb. oppositionspartiets modstykke til regeringens erhvervsminister • **MP** sb. Member of Parliament • **Westminster** regeringsområde i London, hvor også parlamentsbygningen ligger • **housing project** sb. socialt boligbyggeri • **Brixton Hill** multikulturelt område af London med mange sociale problemer

feel unremarkable*; those in poor or prosperous* white areas might feel more exposed*. "I've heard tales of dog s– being pushed through the door [of mixed-race families]," says Caballero. "In wealthier areas the racism is still there but it's all very polite and middle class." Growing up in a wealthy suburb made my own brother a target for police attention: they simply could not believe that he belonged there. A mixed teenage girl living in South Wales told me she was called "Paki" almost every day at school.

24 Those of us who are not white know all too well that there is still plenty of discrimination based on skin colour, while in May the British Social Attitudes survey found the numbers of people admitting to being racially prejudiced has increased in the past decade. There can be a tendency to use the success of some mixed-race individuals to paper over* these realities; in fact, the trend for mixed actors, models or television presenters to be deployed as the unthreatening faces of "diversity" can squeeze out* other people of colour.

25 "When an advert uses a mixed-race woman it's meant to say, 'We are multicultural' – but it's a complete lie," says Salami. "The desire of the company is to reflect that they are open-minded, yet they would not feature a darker-skinned woman." These things impact on how we all see ourselves. The Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o, for example, recently said that as a child she prayed to God to "wake up lighter skinned".

26 My daughter is four years old. She has blue eyes and her father's blond-ish hair and to some people probably doesn't look like she has a black grandmother. Heartbreakingly for me (I spent years praying at the altar* of swishy*, straight, brushable* hair), she has already started wishing away her curls. My son has my brown eyes and complexion*, and the curls. How will life be for them?

27 Salami says her own mixedness has enriched her life: "Even to have to grapple with* the difficulty of it is something that ultimately feels like a gift," she told me. Umunna, too, says the versatility* of a mixed identity makes him feel "very lucky". I tend to agree, and I hope this will also be the case for my children. Sometimes, though, I wish it didn't have to be quite so complicated.

Laura Smith: Mixed race in the UK: am I the future face of this country? The Telegraph, 2014.

unremarkable adj. almindelig • **prosperous** adj. velstående • **exposed** adj. udsat, synlig • **paper over** vb. skjule • **squeeze out** vb. presse ud • **altar** sb. alter • **swishy** adj. susende • **brushable** adj. som kan børstes • **complexion** sb. hudfarve • **grapple with** vb. kæmpe med, slås med • **versatility** sb. alsidighed

Listen Mr Oxford Don

John Agard, 1985

Me not no Oxford don
me a simple immigrant
from Clapham Common
I didn't graduate
I immigrate

But listen Mr. Oxford don
I'm a man on de run
and a man on de run
is a dangerous one

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging de Queen's English
is the story of my life

I don't need no axe
to split/ up yu syntax
I don't need no hammer
to mash up yu grammar
I warning you Mr Oxford don

I'm a wanted man
and a wanted man
is a dangerous one

Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary
imagine a concise peaceful man like me
dem want me to serve time
for inciting rhyme to riot
but I tekking it quiet
down here in Clapham Common

I'm not violent man Mr. Oxford don
I only armed wit mih human breath
but human breath
is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word after me
I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self-defence
I bashing future wit present tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen's English accessory
to my offence

Oxford don underviser på Oxford universitet
Clapham Common arbejderkvarter i London SW4
graduate bestå universitetseksamen
mug overfalde, røve
Queens English pænt standard English, svarer til rigsdansk
syntax syntaks, sætningsopbygning
mash up mose i stykker
assault overfalde
concise koncis, sammenfattende (jf. Concise Oxford Dictionary)
serve time afsone fængselsstraf
incite tilskynde, ophidse til
slash snitte, skære af
suffix (grammatisk) afledningsendelse i ord
bash slå
accessory medskyldig
offence forbrydelse

John Agard was born in 1949 in the colony British Guiana (Guyana since 1966). In 1977 he moved to England where he has made his career as playwright, poet and short-story writer. In some of his poetry, he writes in Caribbean Creole, which is the vernacular in his home country. Agard is a performer-poet and sound is always very important in his poems, where apart from the sounds of the spoken word, he is inspired by African rhythms, jazz, rap and song. Some of his poetry is characterized by a playful and mischievous voice.

JOHN AGARD: REPORTING FROM THE FRONTLINE OF THE GREAT DICTIONARY DISASTER (2006)

Why has the English dictionary grown so thin?
Why is it weeping between its covers?
Because today is the day
all words of foreign origin
return to their native borders.
Linguists* are rioting in the streets.
Crossword lovers are on hunger strike.
But words are voting with their feet*
and familiar objects across the British Isles
have staged a mass evacuation.

Anoraks
have been seen flying off backs
remaking their Innuit tracks.

Bananas
hands forming a queue
are now bound for a Bantu* rendezvous.

Hammocks*
leave bodies in mid-swing
and billow* back to a Carib* beginning.

Pyjamas
without regard to size or age
take off on a Hindu pilgrimage.

Sofas
huddle* themselves into caravans,
their destination – the Arabian sands.

Even Baguettes
(as we speak) grab the chance
to jump the channel for the south of France.

linguist sb. lingvist (sprogforsker) • **voting with one's feet** vb. vise sin utilfredshed ved at gå • **Bantu** adj. fællesbetegnelse for sorte kulturer og sprog i Afrika • **hammock** sb. hængekøje • **billow** vb. bølge, blafre • **Carib** adj. caribisk • **huddle** vb. krybe sammen

My Father in English

Richard Blanco (2019, The New Yorker)

First half of his life lived in Spanish: the long syntax
of *las montañas* that lined his village, the rhyme
of *sol* with his soul—a Cuban *alma*—that swayed
with *las palmas*, the sharp rhythm of his *machete*
cutting through *caña*, the syllables of his *canarios*
that sung into *la brisa* of the island home he left
to spell out the second half of his life in English—
the vernacular of New York City sleet, neon, glass—
and the brick factory where he learned to polish
steel twelve hours a day. Enough to save enough
to buy a used Spanish-English dictionary he kept
bedside like a bible—studied fifteen new words
after his prayers each night, then practiced them
on us the next day: *Buenos días, indeed, my family.*
Indeed más coffee. Have a good day today, indeed—
and again in the evening: *Gracias to my bella wife,*
indeed, for dinner. Hicistes tu homework, indeed?
La vida is indeed difícil. Indeed did indeed become
his favorite word, which, like the rest of his new life,
he never quite grasped: overused and misused often
to my embarrassment. Yet the word I most learned
to love and know him through: *indeed*, the exile who
tried to master the language he chose to master him,
indeed, the husband who refused to say *I love you*
in English to my mother, the man who died without
true translation. *Indeed*, meaning: in fact/*en efecto*,
meaning: in reality/*de hecho*, meaning to say now
what I always meant to tell him in both languages:
thank you/*gracias* for surrendering the past tense
of your life so that I might conjugate myself here
in the present of this country, in truth/*así es, indeed.*

Richard Blanco (1968-) is an American poet, public speaker and author. He is the first immigrant, the first Latino, the first openly gay person and at the time the youngest person to be the U.S. inaugural poet.

Vernacular lokal dialekt
Sleet slud
Indeed bestemt, netop
Grasped forstå, begribe
Conjugate konjugere (bøje i tid)
Surrendering (her) overdrage

Foreign Parts

By Huma Qureshi, 2021

Spots of damp perspiration pop through Mark's shirt as he swallows the smoggy night's heat, clutching a paper bag that Amina asked him to hold tightly to his chest in order to give his clammy hands something to do.

He stands behind her, patient yet awkward, while Amina argues with the shop seller. The shop seller, plump and short, is showing her several thin shawls spun of wool as fine as silk, which fall weightlessly like the paper wings of dead moths as he shakes them out, but Amina is argumentative in her mother tongue. Mark does not know what she is saying but he hears a sarcasm in her laugh that he has not heard before, a ring of clipped spite that chimes her class, her confidence and her self-assured status before this man, who merely sells shawls. Amina is not like this in London, he silently observes.

Mark is not like this either. In Lahore, he lacks purpose. There is little for him to do so he stands behind Amina, holding her shopping or one of the numerous handbags she has suddenly acquired, feeling passive and uncomprehending and of no real use. Lahore is not like their week in Rome, when Mark read to Amina aloud from their guidebook every morning over cappuccinos and cornetti, affecting an Italian accent to make her laugh, her lips flicking flakes of sweet pastry everywhere. It is not like their weekend in Paris, when Amina reached out for Mark's hand and he led her over the Pont de Sully, deftly shunning the Left Bank for the Right, winding her this way and that through quiet, unpopulated streets with the expertise he'd so proudly gleaned in his gap year so many years ago. It is not like the time they walked through the Lake District one damp autumn, their route studiously plotted by Mark the night before while Amina soaked in a pedestal tub in their luxury bed and breakfast. Lahore is not like that at all, he thinks. He has shown her many places and many cities, holding them open and unfolded for her in the palm of his hand like a pop-up greeting card for her to stroll about in next to him, both of them side by side. But Mark does not know Lahore. He cannot place himself in it like a cardboard cut-out. He can show her nothing here and he waits for her instead, to lead him and talk for him in an unknown tongue he cannot decipher. Only she does not.

She is at ease here, in the city where she was born and brought up. She does not look to Mark for directions and nor does her hand slip into his the way it usually always does in London or wherever they have been, where they loop arms or her fingers search for his inside his pocket as if inside their own little magnetic field. It is not because they are careful with their affection in this different city, this different place; on the contrary there are couples, hand in hand, everywhere.

It is because Amina is different here. Sometimes Mark thinks she has simply forgotten he is there.

*

'Chalo,' Amina says abruptly, her hair a straight dark sheet swinging at her shoulders. 'Let's go,' she orders, stepping straight-backed and empty-handed towards the door. Mark follows.

It is dark outside, but her sunglasses still push back her hair. The shop seller is scooping up his fine, feathery shawls one by one. Now he must fold them all again. He shakes his head with a sorry smile and a chubby shrug to Mark as if to say, Women. Mark nods and presses his lips inwards together by way of a wordless reply, following Amina out the door, the paper bag holding the beaded flat shoes she bargained half an hour for, even though the original price was one she could more than easily afford, still clutched to his chest.

Outside, the humidity rises all around him, bursting in his face like an overfilled balloon, and it hits him once more, a sudden, tight ache binding his entire body. He is relieved when Amina tells her driver to take them home. In the backseat of the car, she curls her legs underneath her and rests her head on Mark's shoulder, but it is too hot for him still and her knees press into his uncomfortably. He shifts. She looks across at him and sits upright instead.

In Lahore, Mark reads gestures, not guidebooks. He reads privilege in the nonchalance of Amina's family's casual stance as they lounge on their sofas every afternoon wearing thin, cool linens when the tea trolley, wheeled by the kitchen boy, comes out like clockwork. He reads expectations in Amina's father, as he invites Mark into his study for a sip of bootlegged wine to chat about how much a deposit for a house in London might cost. He reads stiffness in the driver and the maids who never quite meet his gaze. He has nothing to do, and he reads the unspoken words around him and wonders why he is here at all.

Most of all, he reads Amina. She is a new edition in Lahore, a volume untouched. She smells new. She is shinier and more polished here in her family house, with its immaculate lawns behind high gates, than she is in their small, rented two-bedroom fiat in west London. There, they casually brunch on weekends, eating toast without plates in crumpled nightclothes covered in crumbs. Here, Mark observes, she is always pristine, her face poised and made up, while she waits impatiently for the maid to fill her china cup with weak English breakfast tea. They spend every day together, but she is further away from him here than she has ever been. There is a self-importance that Amina carries, along with the designer handbags that she has suddenly rediscovered in the walk-in closet of her teenage bedroom, that Mark has not seen in her before and it bristles against him uncomfortably.

It was Amina's idea to come to Lahore. There were people she said she wanted Mark to meet, relatives and friends, and places she wanted him to see before their wedding. But when they met her old college friends at the Gymkhana members' club for tea, she left him aside, launching into high-speed conversation in a voice he had never heard her use before. It was only after he jostled her elbow and gave an awkward laugh that she took him by the arm like a child and brought him forward to introduce him, but even then he felt ignored. At numerous family dinners hosted by her rich relatives in honour of their engagement, where he has worn stiff, starched kurtas that itch at his neck, he has stood shifting on his feet, unsure of who to speak to while Amina laughs loudly over some comment some guest makes instead.

Mark wanted to see the Pakistan of the photospreads in his *National Geographic* magazines but he has seen it only from the backseat through the car window as the driver takes them from markets to shopping malls and back home again. He has seen street children in torn clothes peer in, leaving marks on the window where their hot breath and their raw fingertips have been. He has seen old

withered men polishing shoes at roundabouts, faded Afghani turbans wrapped around their heads. He has seen tailors hanging dyed silks out to dry in oranges and pinks and reds to make clothes for new brides. He has seen glimpses of all of these people and all of these things from his place on the backseat but when he poised his camera ready to capture them, Amina laughed at him and sneered and said, 'Honestly Mark. What is there to see? They are so dirty. I would not want pictures of them.'

*

In Lahore, Amina is changed. In London, they stay up late watching Newsnight and Question Time and listening in earnest to debates about social change. He had thought these things mattered to Amina as they did to him, for at home they share the Sunday papers and listen to Radio 4. But now he has seen the house where she grew up, grand and gated with its marble floors and mod cons, and he has watched, faintly disgusted as though swallowing a resurfacing aftertaste, as she scolds the maid for not ironing the crinkles out of her silk clothes or for making her tea too weak, and he feels as if he does not know her at all, under the layers of privilege that, he assumes, she must have missed greatly, for she has taken to it all so effortlessly. He wonders whether she is really happy in their tiny rented flat back in London. He wonders which Amina he will marry. This one, or the one he left behind.

Mark and Amina have planned a small wedding in London for early next spring. Mark was proudly

prepared to pay for it all, budgeting carefully and creatively. Amina talks about the wedding most afternoons with her mother and her mother's friends and her old friends from school, but she never mentions to them the things she had discussed with Mark before.

Instead she talks about venues, fancy hotels and exclusive social clubs that he has never heard of at all. He overhears Amina suddenly considering expensively draped marquees, illuminated and airy, laid out across immense grounds, and sees her flick through glossy magazines pointing at thin pouting models wearing elaborate designer Pakistani gowns. This is entirely new to him. Amina is entirely new to him, spoilt and demanding like a child with an ungentle mouth. 'Maybe,' she says, mulling over a bridal spread in a magazine on their last night in Lahore while Mark repacks their suitcase, 'maybe we should marry here, Mark, in Lahore, instead.'

It is not what they agreed. Mark says nothing for a moment and hesitates before saying he had thought she had wanted to marry back home in London, and what about their plans for that? 'Your home, or mine?' swipes Amina, standing square as if to pummel him, a speck of spit shining on her lower lip like a fleck of sugar or salt. Mark is not prepared for this. He is not prepared for a fight, for it happens so rarely. They have always agreed on everything before.

Amina is in tears now. She is shouting at him, about not understanding her and not making an effort with her family and her friends. She is shouting at him about how now he must know how it feels to be her when they are in England, left on the outside looking in. She is shouting at him about how ridiculous he has been, waiting for people to talk to him, when he should have spoken to them first. She tells him, spitefully, that people have laughed at him in Urdu; her poor, aimless English fiancé lost in Lahore. She tells him he has embarrassed her, just sitting there, saying

nothing to no one at all. She tells him to look around and to notice all of the things that she has here, all of the things she has given up to stay in London with him instead.

Mark has never heard her say anything like this before. It had never occurred to him that she might feel as self-conscious in London as he has been here in Lahore, and he wonders whether it could possibly be true. He wonders whether to say something, about how she has been changed here, how he has found her hurtful and haughty and cold, only he does not know how. He is weary of the heat and of the humidity and of the effort being here requires, even though, really, with all the maids and the drivers there is no effort required at all, and he is ready, so ready, to go back home.

So he sits on the bed, with their unpacked suitcase at his feet, and he lets Amina shout and he lets her cry for he knows that tomorrow they will finally leave. It has been a long fortnight, he consoles himself silently in his head, and later, when they finally fall asleep, he tells himself it is only these foreign parts that have disjointed them, and nothing else. He tells himself Amina did not mean what she said. He tells himself that she was just tired, and he thinks of how when they land in London, she will reach out for his hand and they will slot back together once again.

On the flight, which they sit through mostly in silence, Mark flicks through the few photographs he took. No, he thinks. Lahore was not like their week in Rome or their weekend in Paris, and he deletes the photos, one by one.

Foreign Parts, Huma Qureshi, Hodder & Stoughton, 2022 (first printed 2021), p.89-96