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We no longer talk

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This project was a partnership between Laundry in the UK, the New Culture Foundation in Bulgaria and the Borderland Foundation in Poland. Over a two year period, the work was structured around creative laboratories, with spaces for interaction and dialogue between different cultural groups using artistic practice. The work is documented at

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" I Don't like People
who Makes judgment about
me Befor they ^{know} anything about
me.





Ways of Listening



We have two ears and one tongue that we may listen more than we speak.

- Diogenes

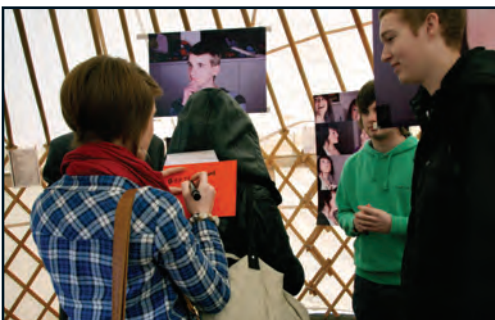
It takes two to tell the truth - one to speak and another to hear.

- Henry David Thoreau

Listen and what do you hear? Over almost two years, a group of artists explored inter-cultural dialogue in local communities in England, Bulgaria, Poland and Crete. In their own voices, these communities spoke of their distinctive traditions, of where they feel they belong, of their unique experiences and of their authentic hopes for the future.

Yet beneath these different voices, behind the expressions of distinctiveness or separateness, we can also hear the deeper resonance of common values, of shared humanity and of universal aspirations. A 70 year old in Bela Rechka spoke of the childhood that shaped her choices and her life. Young people in Yorkshire talked of the defining beliefs and traditions their families brought with them when they came here to live. Members of a long established faith community in Hania talked of how their values today, as much as their history, now shape their aims for the future. Some of these voices can be found in the pages of this book, gathered from a series of 'creative laboratories' – spaces for interaction and dialogue, using the basic tools of the artist.

Roots, memory, family and beliefs – these are the deeper values we all draw on, especially in times of uncertainty or stress. That may be when we move to an unfamiliar place, or when a familiar place is confronted with change. It may be when we encounter those with other traditions, or when others don't understand what we hold most dear. At such times, how we respond depends on the faculties we





use. If we only see, we see difference. If we only speak, we defend. But if we also truly listen, we allow ourselves to learn and connect.

This project has been a conversation. Open workshops, round table debates, public exhibitions, community celebrations and online discussions have all been shaped both by what needs to be said and by the opportunity to reply. Those who found new ways to speak have also sought new ways to listen. Those who came to hear have also contributed directly to what has been said. It has been a conversation across cultures, across generations and across faiths. The quotes you will find in this book are deliberately unattributed. They may equally have been said by members of the community creating a celebration in Sejny or by young people making a video in Birmingham as by an audience member in a gallery or by a visitor to the web page.

Dialogue – to be heard and to listen – reaches beyond difference to affinity. It enables us to discover the shared value we all attach to the roots of our identity, to our family ties and friendships and to our most deeply held beliefs. But more than that, in entering the world of another, dialogue enables us to re-examine and question our own versions of these longstanding convictions and so to begin to grow beyond the confines of our habitual ideas, assumptions and prejudices. This questioning mode has been the starting point at all stages of the project – with each community, with all age groups and in all locations. Simple questions such as “What does home mean to you?” or “What makes you feel you belong?” have prompted immediate and often profound responses. In subsequent workshops or ‘creative laboratories’, participants have then examined these immediate responses in depth. As prompts for deeper dialogue these ideas have led to shared exploration both of differing assumptions and of common ground. As the project has gone on, the dialogue in one place has then become the starting point in the next. In text, in images and online, each community has thus contributed to a continuing conversation. The voices accumulate, they speak in many languages and they have continued to speak to each other.

We talk much about accepting and celebrating diversity. But dialogue needs more. It requires humility, openness and effort. Importantly it demands imagination. To imagine how another might feel, to mould a relationship of genuine trust, and to open yourself to discovery are acts of creative risk. A key aim of this project was therefore to explore how inter-cultural dialogue might be more readily stimulated and facilitated by an artist-led approach. The creative practitioners involved have included those with long experience in participatory arts and others who are relatively new to work with communities. The groups they have worked with have conducted their conversations in a variety of forms and media – in visual and digital arts, in written and spoken forms, in performances, exhibitions and celebrations – enabling maximum flexibility of response to the particular



interests, needs and abilities of participants and to the varying specialisms and experience of both well-established and new practitioners.

Throughout the project, the techniques of creative engagement, creative development and creative presentation have been applied inventively and non-directively as the means to invite dialogue, to deepen dialogue and to extend dialogue. In inviting dialogue, initial involvement has varied from the carefully negotiated creative engagement of specific groups of young people, community groups or schools to direct encounters and participatory activities with the general public on the street or in shopping areas. In deepening dialogue, subsequent creative workshops have enabled participants to explore imaginatively and in depth both their own and other cultures, to make discoveries and to learn to listen as well as to speak. And in extending dialogue, the creative work produced and the presentation, exhibition and celebratory events have been structured to stimulate reciprocating creative responses from wider audiences among peer groups, in communities, or online.

Creativity sharpens all of our faculties and releases the imagination; it opens us to new ways of seeing and understanding. When creativity is participatory and collaborative it also allows for new possibilities in our relationships with others and requires new ways of truly listening. When we see, we see in front of us; when we hear, we hear all around. Hearing is more powerful a faculty than seeing, and listening is more distinctively human. To see is to encounter, to hear is more deeply to know.

Steve Trow

***It is the province of knowledge to speak
and the privilege of wisdom to listen.***

- Oliver Wendell Holmes.





A short conversation in the east suburbs of Birmingham with a group of 13 year olds

- The trouble with this county is the Pakis, isn't it?

Who are the Pakis?

- People with brown skin.

- Yeah, from Asia.

Do you think it's ok to call them Pakis?

- It's normal, isn't it? I mean, that's what my Mom and Dad call them.

Well, I think it might be used as an insult.

- But Paki is short for Pakistan. That's where they're from.

*They might not be from Pakistan. What if they come from India or Bangladesh.
Or somewhere else. People are quite brown in Spain.*

- They're all Pakis and there's more and more immigrants and they're taking our jobs.

Would that be the jobs in the late night fast food places around here?

- They're taking over our country. It's like what it said on that web site where they said that going up Birmingham centre is a case of Spot the White Man.

- They call themselves Pakis anyway. You hear it all the time up in Birmingham. Like black people call themselves Niggers.

- But we don't mind black people.

- So would it be alright to just call them Pakistani's ?

If they're from Pakistan, I guess so. A racist remark is when you say something to be deliberately insulting.

- Them Asian lads are always asking you to go out with them. We don't like going up Birmingham on a Saturday cos you get hassled by them all the time. They insult you and call you 'Whore.'

Which Asian lads? Any in particular?

- Well, we mean the Paki's, the Pakistani's.

When my family came over here in the Thirties, they were called Paddys. It wasn't meant as a compliment. It was used as a derogatory term.

- What's derogatory mean?

To be insulting, to denigrate something. To make you feel small.

- You mean like Yam Yam, about people from the Black Country? I mean, it means they're stupid doesn't it, from the way they talk? 'Yam gonna do this, yam alright, mate?' You yam yam!

- Is Brummie an insult then?





Wolverhampton

out of darkness, cometh light

Once upon a time there was a talented politician who gave a contentious speech. Within days, he was both excoriated, sacked from his ministerial position, and hailed as a hero by workers who took strike action in their thousands, calling for his reinstatement.

Enoch Powell was Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West from 1950 to 1974. Born in Birmingham in 1912, he became a Professor of Greek and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, producing four books on Herodotus alone. During his military service in the Second World War, he enlisted as a Private and rose to the rank of Brigadier, one of the youngest holding this post at that time. Fluent in several languages, including Urdu and Hindi, he has been variously described as “scholar, soldier, statesman, arch-rebel, philosopher, poet” – one newspaper obituary used the headline “an enigma of awkward passions”. Today, over a decade since his death, he remains a divisive figure, mostly remembered for the speech he gave on April 20th, 1968, often appearing these days – in memoriam – as a figure of admiration on far right web sites.

On that particular day, at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham, he stood up in front of an audience of fellow Conservatives and called for an end to immigration and the beginning of repatriation, igniting a controversy that echoes to this day. He said: “Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.” He also quoted Virgil: “As I look ahead, I am filled with



foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood.” Thus it became popularly known as the Rivers of Blood speech. “The effect of his speech,” in the words of writer Paul Foot, “was to unblock a racist sewer and send it swirling freely through public life.”



His views were not singular – they were held by many others. In the 1964 general election, in the nearby town of Smethwick, the Conservative candidate Peter Griffiths, led his successful 1964 election campaign with the slogan “If you want a Nigger for a Neighbour, Vote Labour” – which prompted Malcom X to visit the town. It was not uncommon to see signs in windows for rented accommodation that stated “No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs.” A hundred years before, an anti-Catholic speech by the self-styled Baron De Camin at Wolverhampton Corn Exchange had caused days of protest and rioting by thousands of Irish labourers.



The local newspaper, the Express and Star, reporting on Powell's speech, used the headline “Powder Keg”, and printed much of the detail of his text. Their editorial, while generally acceding to his points, concluded with: “It is always possible to damage a cause by overstatement, and this in our opinion is what Mr. Powell has done.” The same evening, Powell attended an event organised by Wolverhampton Italian Association at the Wulfrun Hall, where he gave a less inflammatory speech entirely in Italian and seemed in good spirits. The following day, a Sunday, a service held at St. Peter's church with a mixed congregation was dedicated to the recently assassinated Martin Luther King. At the same time, a dispute at North Wolverhampton Working Men's Club came to a head. Some weeks before, the club had refused entry to a “coloured entertainer” from Manchester, Miss Ruth Saxon, who had to sit outside in her car while her white friend performed his “strong





“I wouldn’t say I was a radical kind of young person, but I was a person who knew where I was coming from and knew a bit about my own history. A few of us used to get together and read our books together, read up on who were the great Kings and Queens of Africa, and from the Caribbean. The attitude of people here didn’t bother us to be honest. What Powell was saying was usually kept under the carpet. He was speaking for a lot of people who wouldn’t speak for themselves. He was just a spokesman.”

man act” for club members inside. She complained to Equity, describing the situation as “a disgrace”. Almost coinciding with Powell’s contentious speech, the club voted overwhelmingly to retain the colour bar, which had been put in place several years earlier. The Express & Star reported: “15 minutes and 800 outstretched hands give a resounding vote of confidence to a Wolverhampton club’s move to ban all coloured people from entry...” The former Mayor of the town, Frank Smith, abstained from voting but was quoted in the newspaper as saying: “I would at the present time agree that our coloured friends need a little educating in our ways.” At the Grand Theatre, advertisements were unveiled for the forthcoming performances of *Not Now Darling* starring Donald Sinden and Bernard Cribbins. At the ABC cinema you could see the Hammer film *Vengeance of She* or at the Odeon a double-bill of *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Diabolical Doctor Z*. And this particular week, Britain’s losing Eurovision entry by Cliff Richard – *Congratulations* – was to be overtaken at the number 1 spot in the singles chart by Louis Armstrong singing *What a Wonderful World*.

Powell was promptly dismissed from the Conservative Shadow Cabinet for his speech, and remained a backbencher until his resignation as an MP in February 1974, just prior to a General Election, expressing his vehement opposition to membership of the European Economic Union. Only days before the election, Powell spoke at Mecca Dance Hall in the Bull Ring, Birmingham to an audience of 1,500 (with some press reports estimating that 7,000 had to be turned away), warning of the dangers of a European Superstate, and telling people to vote Labour. He ended his political career as a Member of Parliament for the Ulster Unionist party in Northern Ireland.

Blakenhall was part of his Wolverhampton constituency. Bounded by the town centre to the north,

“We don’t talk about how multicultural we all are around here. I don’t understand what this is. The people who talk about multicultural don’t live in the multicultural area. They’re always from the outskirts.”

“I believe I’m quite a tolerant person, but this ends when people create oppressive situations.”





"People are more wealthy, but on the moral level of daily relationships, things have got worse. The other part of it is greed and selfishness. Years back, you've got one black and white television in the whole street and people come round and watch. I used to go to my Auntie after work to watch 'The Man from U.N.C.L.E.'. We all sat there and watched it. But after a while people got their own bank account, they have their own car and everything, and people start to drift. Yes, people got richer, but it takes away from that togetherness from everybody."

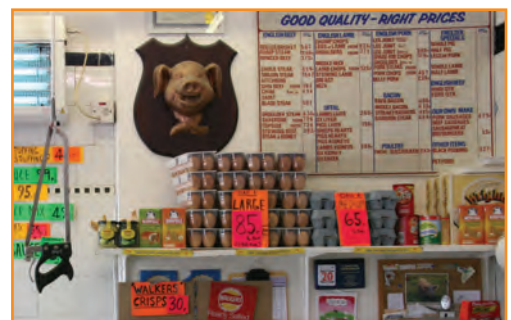
"I know the situation with the English people because I'm British, but I'm not English! What did Mr. Powell say? You could be British but not English. I had him in the house with me a few times, in my house, and I got on all right with him, and when I asked him the question he said to me: 'I have nothing against you and your friends. I mean it when I say you can be British but you will never be English.' Which is quite correct. You cannot be English when you were born in another country and you then come to this country."



“When you come here, or to Birmingham or to Bradford, you find a very narrow vision or perception or interpretation of Islam. It’s rootlessness. When you come from a different country, you feel rootless because you don’t belong to that society. In your head you are a different person, you have a different mindset, and so you adhere to whatever the old system you were following there. It’s hard to adapt.”

Dudley Road to the east, Penn Road to the west, and Goldthorn Hill to the south, it is an area of late 19th century terraced housing, some inter-war housing and a concentration of light engineering factories and small businesses on former sites of bicycle and motorcycle factories – Sunbeam, Villiers and AJS. Redevelopment in the Sixties led to several high-rise tower blocks, most of which have been demolished in a recent regeneration scheme. Several Victorian buildings still stand, such as the 1865 Nippon Works on Villiers Street, which once manufactured tin trunks, tinware and japanned goods. However, it is the diversity of the Dudley Road which provides an antidote to Powell’s unsettling vision of future Britain. Here you will find the Divine Onkar Mission charity and the Ek Niwas Universal Divine Temple alongside the old school buildings dating from 1875, which now house both a community centre and a Multi-Agency youth project. Along this road, you will find a Sikh Temple, part of which used to house a Corona bottling factory, a dry cleaners called Kamal, a Chinese takeaway called Golden Wonder, a driving school, several jewelers and Asian sweet centres, alongside travel agencies (*‘Fly to Kurdistan. Luton. Erbil. Stockholm’*), barbers, pharmacies, nail and beauty parlours, fashion and fabric shops, insurance brokers, food stores and mini-markets, a marriage bureau (*‘tent hire a speciality’*), builders’ merchants, as well as a shop named after the Indian Goddess of health and wealth and a pizza shop named after a famous leaning tower.

Over several years, the area has been the focus of a regeneration scheme – ABCD New Deal for Communities – with a new primary school, neighbourhood centre and workspaces, eco-friendly houses, and improvements to green spaces and roads. At the junction at Fighting Cocks, there has been a traditional English butcher for the last ninety





years. It is one of the few original shops remaining along the road, along with Brewer's Sewing Machines. For the owner of this butcher shop, Paul Levett, the diversity in the area has a value. "In the last thirty one years I've seen the changes on the Dudley Road, but which area hasn't changed? They were all English shops all the way, three quarters of a mile from here, to the ring road. As the supermarkets came into being, a lot of the shops closed down and the Asian community came in. In a lot of ways it's good the Asian community did come in, otherwise these would all be lying derelict and there'd be no trade. I don't think there's an empty shop between here and town, which in the present climate is not bad at all. Along here, you could get everything then, and you can now."

Back in July 1973, I heard Enoch Powell speak, in the audience of pupils from local schools. He shared a platform with Renee Short, the other local Member of Parliament (Labour) for Wolverhampton North-East. I remember his starched shirt and cufflinks, a vision from a previous world, and his speaking without the aid of a microphone, projecting his voice to all corners of the ancient hall. He talked about civic duty and virtue. Of course, he quoted the classics, but mostly he focused on the topic of whom we are governed by. We pupils were more concerned with the fate of Slade drummer Don Powell, critically ill in hospital after car smash on the Penn Road, in which his girlfriend died. Slade were a local band with the current number one hit *Skweeze Me, Pleeze Me*. This was a pop group whose linguistic grasp Powell would have not approved of – other hit song titles included *Cum on Feel the Noize*, *Gudbuy T'Jane* and *Mama Weer All Crazee Now*. Meanwhile, there was a fad in our school for the Lüscher Colour Test, the "Remarkable Test That Reveals Your Personality

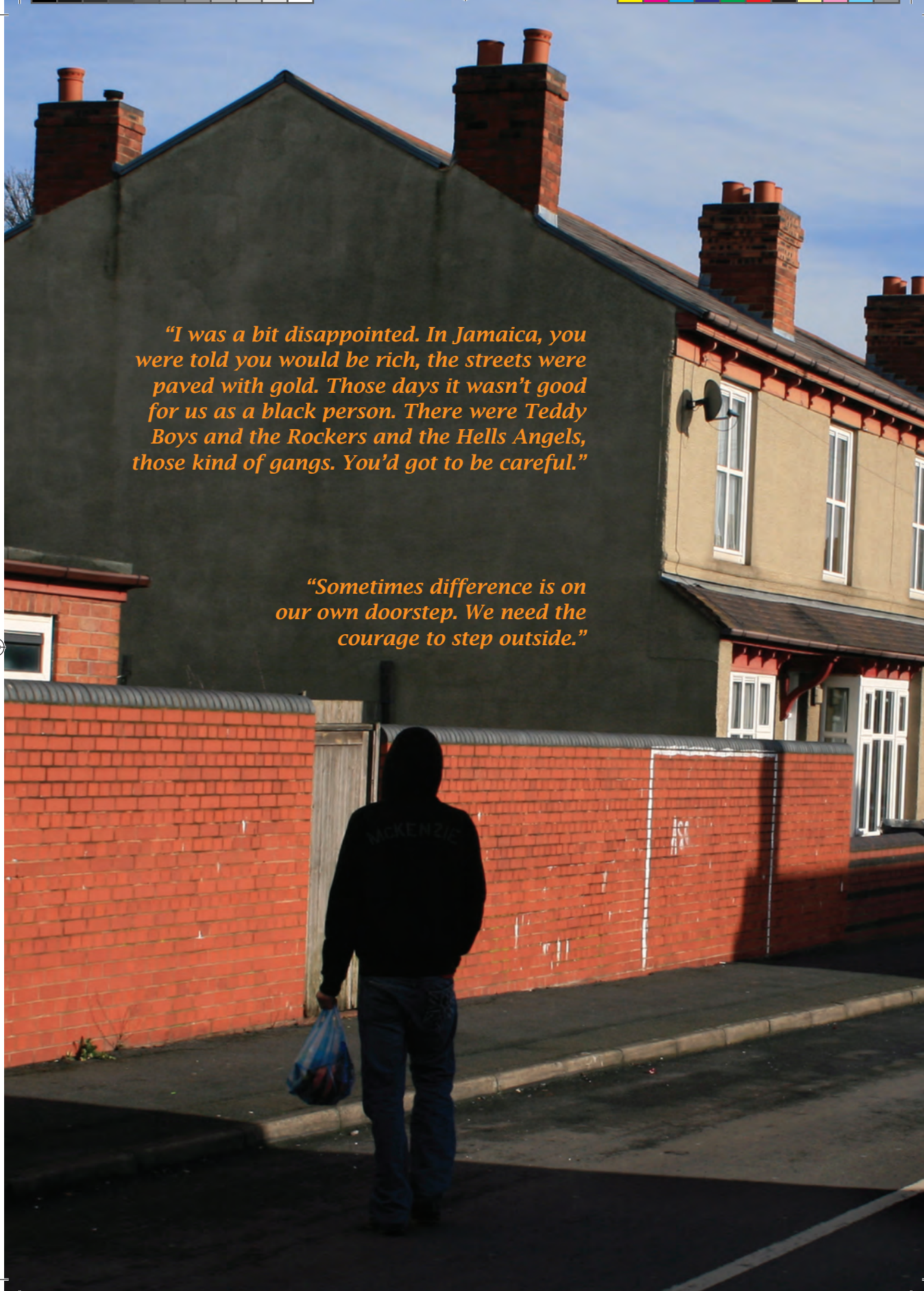
"It's natural to have differences. We all are different, but we have to accept that difference."

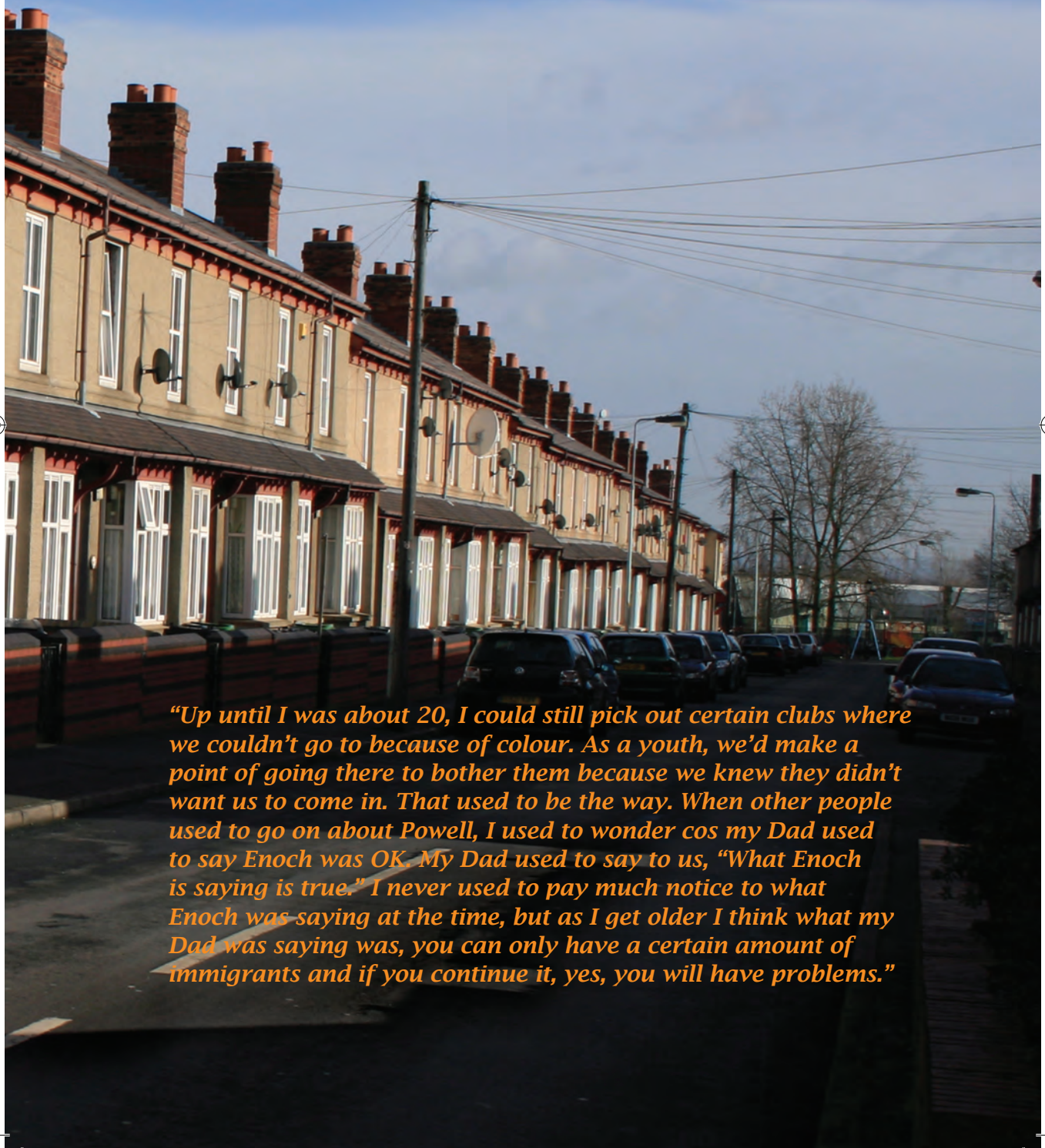
"Now racism is subtler. Before it was obvious on the street. I used to prefer it the way it was, before all this race and equality, because at least I knew if you liked me and it wasn't a case of you pretending to like me."



"I was a bit disappointed. In Jamaica, you were told you would be rich, the streets were paved with gold. Those days it wasn't good for us as a black person. There were Teddy Boys and the Rockers and the Hells Angels, those kind of gangs. You'd got to be careful."

"Sometimes difference is on our own doorstep. We need the courage to step outside."



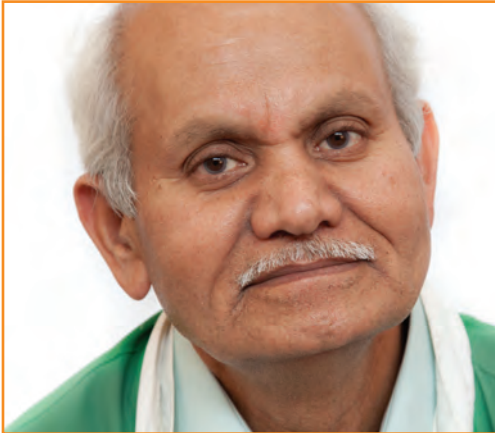


"Up until I was about 20, I could still pick out certain clubs where we couldn't go to because of colour. As a youth, we'd make a point of going there to bother them because we knew they didn't want us to come in. That used to be the way. When other people used to go on about Powell, I used to wonder cos my Dad used to say Enoch was OK. My Dad used to say to us, "What Enoch is saying is true." I never used to pay much notice to what Enoch was saying at the time, but as I get older I think what my Dad was saying was, you can only have a certain amount of immigrants and if you continue it, yes, you will have problems."





“When I went to school, back in the day, and I got racial abuse, then all of a sudden colour became something completely different. I don’t think you’re naturally racist. You’ll be curious, because somebody is different, but you haven’t got anything against someone because they are different. It’s what you’re taught and are familiar with.”



Through Color” and some pupils tried to test this out on Enoch afterwards, but he would have none of this kind of modern nonsense. One arch look was enough to send this pack of silly schoolboys running.

The effect of his views linger. You can still find it all too readily today, from the corridors of political power to the comments sections of web sites, expressing fear and confusion of new faces, languages and cultures. Sofia Haider, from ABCD, says, “A lot of what people talk about with this area is stereotypes. It was what was happening twenty, thirty years ago. It’s completely different now. It’s hard to change the perceptions though. People don’t like change.”



This is a place that has always drawn migrants to it, from the Irish in the 1830’s to the post-communist Poles in the 1990’s, who came here for different reasons, to seek work, to escape prejudice or oppression, or to fill a huge economic hole in unskilled labour during the 1950’s. The British Nationality Act of 1948 gave full status of British citizenship to all Commonwealth subjects, some 800 million people, recognising their right to work and settle in the UK and to bring their families with them (something later amended, particularly by the Immigration Act of 1971, which restricted ‘right of abode’). This is both a point of arrival and a zone of transit. Vince, a local community worker, describes it this way: “The area changed after World War Two, that’s the impression I get. There was a need after the war. We didn’t rush over here, we were asked to come. We were invited. We were begged to come.” Often the men came at first, many intending to save and return home, but later were followed by wives and families.

“It’s a very diverse community, very close to the city centre, a stone’s throw away really,” says Sam Henry, from the Multi-Agency project. “It doesn’t always have a good image. Media has such a large





“The best way forward is to create opportunities to bring people from different areas together. As long as we remain locked in our local postcode, we reinforce the notion that young people can’t be together because they’re from a different area.”

effect on the conditioning of young people. As youth workers, we are battling with these forces all the time. Young people don’t see education as a means to success, because there is always this image of quick money.” Alongside the larger regeneration schemes are small grass roots initiatives such as Shape the Vision. For Sam, this came from a couple of individuals they were working with, talking about their concern about the increase in gun crime and gang culture and the way they, as young people, were portrayed. “As young people, they felt they wanted to do something positive, when there is so much negative media focusing on young people. They wanted to show that young people are not involved in gun crime and that it is a minority of young people that get an area labelled as a bad area. Young people do stay in school, do their best to overcome obstacles, and are career minded. You see so little of this in the media. A lot of young people I’ve met in Blakenhall have not had the chance to get out and see a different part of Britain. People might travel on holiday but I have met young people for whom going into Birmingham is a new thing. We need to encourage dialogue between people, to experience difference.” Near to where we speak, there is a street shrine commemorating a teenager from the youth club, who died in a road accident at this spot, some years ago. Flowers, candles, mementoes, photographs, hand written messages and drawings attest to the memory of this one individual from friends and family, adorning the wall of an empty clothing manufacturers. There are fresh red roses and carnations, which suggest that not all young people are “wannabe gangsters, chavs, hoodies and general scruffs”. In an online poll, Lonely Planet named Wolverhampton the fifth worst place in the world. Fortunately, there are people prepared to challenge this image, and recall that the city’s motto is “Out of darkness, cometh light”.









"I certainly think that we can have a dialogue with people other than our own culture. It's about an attitude. I was very staunch in my beliefs – you want to cross me, you go ahead and try, that kind of attitude. Everyone is a human being and the colour of someone's skin should not make a difference. At a base level, yes, there are different cultures and those are vastly different but everyone has something in common. End of story."





"I do think dialogue happens already amongst cultures. It wont be a big splash in the paper, it could be with a neighbour, someone you meet on the street, someone at a bus stop or in the local corner shop. You might have been going there for the last 20 years and having a dialogue without even realising. I also think that people who may not be objective towards people are being made to feel that they should be - they read something in the paper and it's made out to be the usual thing that people are getting ahead before them, but it's also about levels of poverty. People who have been here a long time, people who were born here do feel left out, but then that's a different issue about poverty and they way that is looked upon here in this country."









"When we first came to Wolverhampton we found it was full of people from different cultures. When you're growing up together, you learn about different cultures, both the good things and the bad things. The best place for this to happen is in school. If you have separate schools then you have divisions. Different cultures have to meet together in schools, so integration starts from the beginning."

"I believe dialogue is about listening. Real listening. It's very difficult to learn how to listen to people to speak a different language, but that's what a dialogue is really about."





A short conversation from Wolverhampton

We spoke in a bar in the old United Services club. He told us that everyone assumed he was Polish because of his accent, but he was born in Transylvania, on the old frontier between Romania and Hungary. When the Russians came, his Catholic grammar school was closed down and the manager of his basketball team got him a job in a shoe factory in Bucharest, where he also worked at a theatre. He came to England in 1948.

"There were two Romanian actors there who wanted to get out to the West. I got talking to them. They couldn't speak Hungarian and they asked me to lead them through Hungary. I was fed up with the communist system, because every so often we had to go out marching on the streets protesting about this and that. You had no choice, they lined you up in the factory and you had to march and protest. We crossed the frontier through a potato field and went to Budapest. I kept on going to Austria. I had a good pair of boots and a little money I'd been saving. I got to Linz and had to cross a bridge to the American sector. I had no papers. There was some trouble with people in the back of a lorry and the Russian guards were distracted, so I just flashed my wallet at them and walked past. I went to a refugee camp in the French sector and signed up to work in the army in Innsbruck, looking after polo horses. Then I applied to come to Britain, doing agricultural work in Kent. Beautiful summer, terrible winter and blizzards, digging vegetables out the frozen ground with pickaxes. I met two girls at a fair in Folkestone and that's how I picked up the language. I couldn't speak a word of it. The girls taught me. When we came out, you haven't got the foggiest idea what the situation was in Eastern Europe or that part of the world because the way the Russians started the communist system and the way the Yanks and the West started pumping the Russians. We thought, another two or three years there'd be another war and we'd go home. If you said there'd never be another war, that wouldn't be realistic - in two or three years there would be another war - that was the people's attitude. Then we would go home, but in the end we didn't."





Beeston

it's not the end of the world

We climb up the moor bank to where the new cable-stayed bridge crosses the motorway. On the other side, we can see sports fields and a Morrison's superstore, and beyond the six lane highway, the centre of Leeds. The high banks here are spoil from construction of the motorway in the 70's. Below us, a long patch of grass, where men are working to erect a travelling funfair. *"Thurs-Fri, til late, Great Day Out!"* There are parts of gallopers, waltzers, a ghost train and arcade games lying about in puzzling combinations. Only the dodgems are partly completed, and the kids pose for photographs in them. "We don't really play around here," they say, "Our parents don't like us coming over here, at least not on our own." There aren't that many places to play. The rows of back-to-back terraces only have a small space at the front, mostly paved and hung with washing. And the traffic is busy. In the distance, Elland Road, home of Leeds United, "The Mighty Whites". One fan tells us, "We're still in the third division. We've still got a long way to go, three leagues away from where we should be. But, in one word, improving." In a way, this might sum up feelings about this area.

In the aftermath of the 2005 London tube bombings, the world's media descended on these streets in search of the story behind the "Beeston, cradle of the 7/7 bombers". It was described in the New York Times as "a grim Northern neighbourhood". This was not at all the image that the city council wanted – they would rather refer to Leeds as the "Barcelona of the North", as one of the fastest growing cities in England, with a booming retail and property sector and vast investment in the redevelopment of the city centre. Leeds, in the mid-20th century, was described by one writer deliberately following in the





footsteps of Daniel Defoe as having an “a briskness in the air, an alertness, an ebullient confidence”. It was, he wrote, always hatching out new schemes. He concluded: “...of course, Leeds is not Yorkshire. It is Leeds. Its vast ready-made clothing industry which turns out smartly a large part of the British nation – a greater social leveler perhaps than any scheme of income redistribution by itself could ever be – its large Jewish population, its general cosmopolitanism, give it a special character”.

In search of this cosmopolitanism, we walk in the direction of Beeston Hill, passing older and bigger Victorian terraces. One is now home to a Pakistani mosque. In the old Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society building, we find the Kashmir Muslim Welfare Association, a building which – along with a Sikh Gurdwara and Anglican church – is part of a recently promoted “Faith Trail” to encourage people to get to know about different beliefs. The kids are our guides, themselves of different faiths and origins. They are keen to show us where they worship, where they shop, their front doors, a Chinese take-away, a flower shop, a Polish shop, back alleys and short cuts, and their classrooms. In many ways, the school is the focus of their pride, a key social space, a place to dream and to shape aspirations.

“On a sunny day, it looks nice round here,” says one girl. “And the people are friendly.” Her family are recent refugees from Africa. This traditional Yorkshire friendliness is evident in the corner café, who cheerfully serve hot bacon, tomato and mushroom sandwiches (actually on a big fluffy bread roll), from the early morning. There are some dustbins along the street painted with St. George crosses, just opposite the school. It is one of the less prosperous areas of the city, indeed of the country, where many of the jobs in manufacturing and fabrications disappeared from



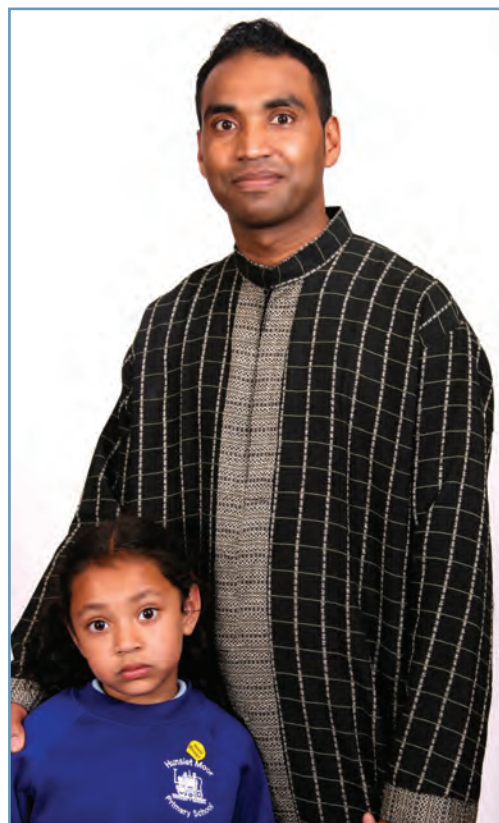


“There’s still a community spirit. Not as major as what it was, but it is still there. It’s quite a caring area. It was annoying, just that small percentage of people that had obviously done something really bad, but then the media tried to stereotype that it was everyone. Mud sticks sometimes, and it’s difficult to get rid of that. It made it appear as though people didn’t care what happened. And we did care what happened. It was a bad thing that happened. But it was that one group of people, not Beeston.”

the 1970’s onwards, and former mills and foundries were left empty. The area has some Objective 2 European funds, for 700 new private and housing association dwellings, with some refurbishment of older stock. Objective 2 is for areas suffering from industrial decline or urban problems.

“The demographics of the place has completely changed in the time I’ve been here,” says Dave, a retired deputy head teacher. “We’ve got some children who are third generation migrants and some who are first. It’s become a more transient area, in the sense there are a lot more private lets and there are more refugee and asylum seeker children. For many of them they get settled and then they’re whisked off somewhere else. The area has become so much more busy than before, and getting busier by the minute.” After our street exploration, we set up a photographic portrait studio with the kids. They photograph each other and make a small exhibition for an Open Day. As part of this they imagine what a Museum of Beeston would look like, and what personal objects would be in the collection. They write short texts which describes the area through their eyes, and poems which consider human rights issues and what it is like to be a migrant or a refugee, what is it like to walk in someone else’s shoes. For some of them, it comes from personal experience.

We talk about how, as an English speaker, I have a grasp of one language. A language common throughout the world of course, the language of the internet, and often business and commerce. Others here speak two, maybe three languages as a matter of course. I feel somehow diminished, lacking this ability to think in a different way. Learning another language gives an appreciation of a different culture, of a different way of expressing yourself, of describing love, gratitude, affection, anger,







"It was a nice place to live in. I've been in the same street for 42 years. We're like a close-knit family. You can't leave your milk out on the doorstep anymore. But it will get better. After the bombers we got a lot of racist remarks. If you say you live in Beeston, you get a look. My husband's from back home. His English was not very good when he came here and he got a lot of racist remarks. He's been a taxi driver for 18 years and 16-odd years as a market trader. I don't know where he's from, Punjab side. When he first came here, he thought, 'What have I let myself into?' Now he loves it. He gets out and about."





“I remember going to a Boy’s Club. There were these classes after school, with volunteers baking flapjacks and making peppermint sweets. I really remember everything to do with that short time of doing something really fun. It goes to show how a small thing can make an impact on a child’s life. I think we need more things like that, getting the kids out of the house, communicating more with each other and being more active.”

frustration. English itself is a hybrid, with words originating from the Celts, the Jutes, Saxons and Angles, the Norse, the Normans, borrowings from French, Latin and Greek, from trading with Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands, and from countries colonised. But without a common language, you have to rely on other visual ways to communicate – gestures, smiles, nodding or shaking your head. Children communicate naturally – it is only later they learn to fear differences.

In some cities diversity is considered a boon not a burden, a bonus rather than an indicator of deprivation. In other places it may seem like a noose around the neck. There are those vibrant cosmopolitan cities where different ethnicities and nationalities intermingle in a creative and energetic environment, others where they grudgingly rub shoulders and keep to their own separate ways, unwilling to experience the “other”. Nationalism, a particular development of the 19th century, looks towards a pure and undiluted identity, a single culture, and is re-emerging. In many areas, we find “an acute crisis of identity”, not confined to the migrant populations. Ironically, research polls reveal that ethnic minorities are more likely to see themselves as British than whites. We ask of ourselves: who are we and where are we going to? What do we choose to accept and what to reject? And how do we propose to move forward, to resolve our conflicting attitudes?







"You get the feeling that people are not racist because it's not allowed by law to speak out in this way, but in their heart they are. It's just a curtain, a polite curtain, what's behind it is different. At work, I'll hear them going 'Foreigner this and foreigner that', and I say 'Hello", and they say, 'No, no, we don't mean you'. The people they discriminate against they don't really know. They don't understand that these foreigners have participated in making this country big. They were brought across here to do the jobs that were vacant and that no-one else wanted to do. Now with recession, they're competing for the same jobs suddenly."

"It's a friendly multicultural area. There's a lot of different cultures moved in the last 20 years. A lot of property was council, then sold off, and when people couldn't keep up with the mortgage, they went into private ownership and rented out. People took pride in their houses and gardens back then. They don't now. When we were growing up, there was just my Dad working and Mom looking after the house and kids. They had pride at the end of the day. They took care. Now, they're just not bothered. It's not a priority. More people are working, far more men working in the evening, and Mom working in the day time, swopping childcare basically. And if you're in a short term let, you won't take care of it."

"It's pretty messy. It's a shock, not exactly a culture shock. I don't think there's a lot of culture."

"I were born and bred in England, my Mom and Dad were from Pakistan. I can stick up for myself. I didn't used to, I used to stay in and lock the door, but not now. I say, 'If you've got equal rights, so have I. I've been brought up in this country.' My friend said, 'Well, I wouldn't classify you as proper Muslim'. I said, 'What do you mean, I'm not a proper Muslim? Course I'm a Muslim'. She says, 'Well, you are, but you're more like us, more westernised'. You've got to be though. It can't be religion all the time. There's loads of different sorts of Muslims, but they all get classified as one."





Multicultural
gives chance to know
everybody



Beeston is friendly
its a same some parts are
in a State.

Nice area

close
Community

Multicultural
not just white
people

~~Bad area~~
Bad area

Nice place to live
in. People are friendly
and all the shops are
local.

I have lived in Beeston all
my life.
I think it is not as nice
a place to live as it used
to be.



*"The place is really
interesting.
Beeston has
lots of fun places
you can visit."*



*"There are
many people
in Beeston,
lots of shops
and takeaways,
some fights,
lots of dogs,
lots of toys."*

*"I live near
a park and
it is fun to play in.
It is loud at day
and night.
There is a lot of
fighting and a lot
of police around."*

*"People are kind.
I live in a
back terrace.
It's safe."*



*"Peaceful,
slow cars,
lots of grass."*



*"Lots of cars.
I live on a hill,
on a busy street."*





*"Wonderful.
Calm.
Colourful."*

*"It's peaceful.
It's beautiful.
And some fights
on the streets.
It's not all
that good,
because
bad things are
happening here."*



*"There's no
bullying around
and no fights.
I really like
my area."*

*"Quiet.
Old people.
Crashes."*



*"Friends,
back to back
houses,
supermarket."*









I got my special object, because I am taking clarinet lessons, and I am good. I got it at Christmas off my Grandma. It was a very big shock to me. I didn't expect it. My favourite tune is Pink Panther, even though I am not very good at that tune. I can play lots of tunes.

 *Imaginary Museum
of Beeston* 



I got my special object when I was 5, because Harry Kewell kicked one of my favourite footballs over the wall and I was sad. So to make up for it he got a little football with all the Leeds footballers signatures on it and I'm 10 now.

 *Imaginary Museum
of Beeston* 





This object is a sweet dancing musical teddy bear jewellery box, which was given to me when I was three by my mum's friend, who has now passed away.

 *Imaginary Museum of Beeston* 

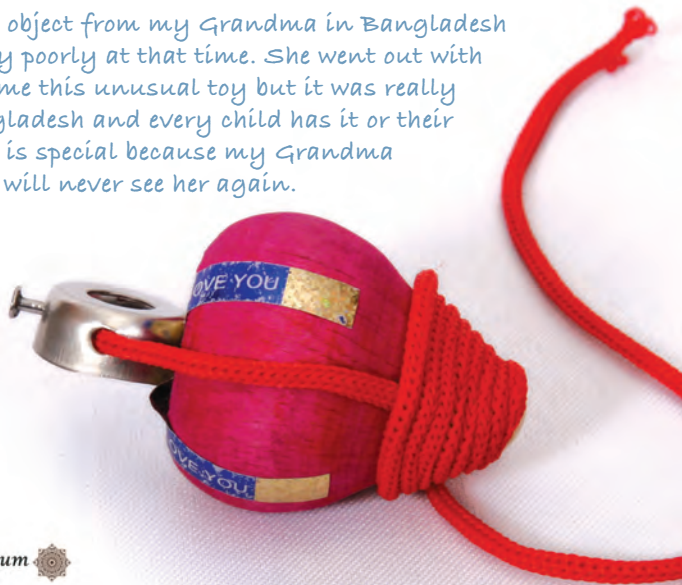


When my brother was born, we went shopping with him. This was the first object he held. Also he gave it to me. So my Mum said, This is a gift from him to you.

 *Imaginary Museum of Beeston* 



I got my special object from my Grandma in Bangladesh and she was very poorly at that time. She went out with me and bought me this unusual toy but it was really popular in Bangladesh and every child has it or their brother has it. It is special because my Grandma might die and I will never see her again.



Imaginary Museum
of Beeston

I got my special object from my Mum after I was in a football tournament because I had the world's most rubbish team and we came last. I was the only person who scored. And I scored 22 goals.



Imaginary Museum
of Beeston







 *Imaginary Museum
of Beeston*



I met a famous
footballer called
Emre Belasolu who
played for
Newcastle and now
plays for Fenerbahçe,
and he signed this
shirt for me.



*What does dialogue
mean to you?*

"Dialogue is not just about listening, but also trying to understand someone's point of view, someone's problems."

"It's easy to promote dialogue amongst people who share the same values."

"I believe that dialogue is about listening, real listening. It is very difficult to learn how to listen to people who speak a different language other than your own - but that is what dialogue is really about!"

"I have the right to live and have access to education. I have the right to have freedom of speech."

"Listening - only listening doesn't create a dialogue."

"I'm a happy go lucky kind of person. Hmm, I'm not sure what that really means. I'm easy to talk to, I think, and I'm funny."

"We no longer talk about religion, politics, or global affairs. We can't manage a conversation anymore. We're afraid it will lead to conflict. We need dialogue."

"Dialogue - how to join Unity and Diversity?"



***What does the
word tolerance
mean to you?***

"Tolerance should mean being open minded - live and let live. But often it has a negative connotation, like 'putting up with' something. Maybe we need a new word? I think of understanding, acceptance, openness. I think of knowing that not everyone thinks like you. We are diverse creatures, and that's not just OK, that's amazing!"

"Tolerating intolerance is a sin, so tolerating can be a sin, in some cases."

"Tolerance for me is to hear stories and to think about meanings of them, not only accept different points of view, but hear and understand them."

"Tolerance is a sin. Sometimes tolerance is quite oppressive."

"When someone bullies me, I lose my tolerance."

"I have to say I used to feel I was a very tolerant person. I was able to respect, love, share, but war destroyed that side of me, being displaced here and adapting to a new way of life with most people not seeming to care as I'm just another immigrant trying to take their jobs. I suppose putting up with it is a part of tolerance but there is only so much one can take."

"Tolerance means to me... to be tolerant of people regardless of their religion race and colour. Respect my opinion please!"

"We need tolerance, we need to learn how to disagree creatively and kindly."

"It's important not to confuse tolerance with indifference."

"How can you be tolerant when somebody else don't tolerate you?"



JANUARY														FEBRUARY											
30	31													1	2	3	4	5							
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27	28	29	30	31																					





Gorna Bela Rechka

a place of memory

Bulgaria entered the European Union in 2007, along with Romania. There was not a huge influx of Bulgarians to the UK, due to legislative restrictions placed on migrant workers. Bulgaria is still on the periphery for many in the west – though it is popular with birdwatchers – an ornithological paradise, no less, and there is an influx of English buying cheap second homes near to the Black Sea holiday resorts. In an old junior schoolbook which is gathering dust, all it has to say about this part of the world is: “CAUSES OF THE LACK OF UNITY AMONG THE BALKAN STATES 1. Relief: the isolated ‘city states’ and the ‘cross-grained’ folds of the mountain ranges make land communication very difficult. 2. In the thirteenth century the Christian Church was split into two parts: Constantinople was the headquarters of the Eastern Orthodox, and Rome the headquarters of the Western or Roman Catholic.” There are three illustrative photographs, showing the gathering of rosebuds which are taken by bullock to a distillery to be made into the perfume, attar of roses.

In 2008, a group of friends of the New Culture Foundation remade a stolen bell in the village of Gorna Bela Rechka and built a new bell tower. For several years, the foundation has run a festival in this village of 80 inhabitants and 100 goats, focused on the traditional village sabor (celebration) in May, something that had all but died out after the fall of communism. In 1946, before the collectivisation of lands under the Soviets, 646 people used to live here. Outward migration has been a feature of life here for so many years. Indeed, members of the group have family roots in the village from past generations whose children and grandchildren moved to the city for work. Based in the old village





hall, at the foot of the hill where the restored bell tower stands, they organise projects focusing on personal memories and collective memory - and so here, in the mountains of Northwestern Bulgaria, with its hospitality, goatmilk and walnut trees, you may encounter innovative and new approaches from many countries in the field of community identity and new culture. Here you may find a belly dancing workshop organised by Turkish musicians in one room, and in another a presentation by a documentary film director or a sound installation about the missing bell. In another room, once used by a local Doctor, old mementoes remain on the wall, photographs of his former heroes - Georgi Dimitrov, Bulgarian Communist Party leader, alongside Jesus, Karl Marx, Stalin, Lenin and Dimitar Blagoev, the socialist movement founder - as freshly baked food is laid out for workshop participants.

And here we may meet Gregor D. Mirwa, an occupational health physician in Berlin. He used to organise a festival – Le Week-end – in the German-Polish border town Guben/Gubin. With a continuing interest in intercultural projects, he traveled to the Goatmilk festival for the first time in 2009, and these are his notes and thoughts.





“Do electric goats dream of europeanoids?”

To Sofia, station to station

I was told to call when I would arrive in Sofia airport. My plane plunged into Vazhdebna in time but when I checked my phone for new messages I read: hi gregor, I get difficulty to pick you up from Sofia. I'll try to find Diana. There will be some one else to transport you to Bela Recka... have a nice traveling! – Vessela.

I checked through the gates for Schengen citizens, realising that this idea of being one Europe has been labeled by a small Luxembourgian town. In 1985, the Schengen Agreement provided for the removal of systematic border controls for their member states, now extended to 28 countries. Gee, that's what I am here for, bound for a festival in the Vracanska Planina where people from not-only-Europe, from north to south, from Britain to Iran, will meet, discuss, dance and drink sweet, pure goat milk – and maybe some rakia.

Will I take the train, the bus, the thumb, my feet? While contemplating the varieties of nice travelling, a card board was held against my nose, saying: gregor. The card was held up by Boris while Vessela talked passionately to someone on her cell-phone. Hell, how did they make it to the airport, anyway? This was my first lesson in Bulgaria: expect the unexpected.

When we were outside, it was warm. I could feel the beginning of summer immediately, thick with humidity, long evenings, honking cars and people on the streets cheering with glasses of frozen goatmilkaritas. Vessela and Boris, as friends and colleagues of Diana and Mariana, frequent guests of the festival brought me to the train station, next to the bus station. Buses of different makes from all over the country were heading from different booths run by different companies back into different directions. The train station was a haven of socialist grandezza and serenity but slightly out of focus – especially for a guy whose experience with cyrillic letters is remote. There were armies of sandwiches crammed into the glass cases of dozens of kiosks and illuminated by orange light.

The idea was for me to meet the country as a travelling train man, while the young duo would





*"I was born in Varna
I was a nurse
My husband had a family connection
With the village"*



pick up a mother with her kid and go north by car the curvy way up the hills. Fine with me. The running time to Gara Lakatnik, the station where they would meet and pick me up again, is 1 hour 21 minutes. Boris was so sweet to steer me through the ticketing process, shaking his head about the exact timing, adding: I wonder why they bother about it, they'll never make it in time... Hey, and watch out whether it's a Siemens train or not. You know the used but better-off Siemens trains are much more economic because they do not need so much personal maintenance... See you in Lakatnik... Lets say in about 2 hours or so... Don't go anywhere... Just stay in the station... Safe travel... See you... Don't go anywhere...

Blues at expresso-train to Lakatnik

The Balkan adventure continues. Summer is here. Pace all slowing down since Berlin's hecticism. Now there is dust next to abandoned industrial sites - with rails running into a greener north. A lady embarks the expresso train alone with a lily. An elderly countrysider in a dark blue mao jacket licks at a popsicle. The completely occupied four seat compartments in our wagon rustle with newspaper. Half the passengers are standing - they have nothing to rustle. I am tired but cannot sleep. The blue girls next to me don't fuss about it. After checking their latest short messages they bow their heads in the direction of the engine, a Siemens. The train is emptying since Svoge, a small town which seems to be preparing for a huge wedding party, people carrying flowers and throwing kisses and hugs around. The expresso takes 1 hour 25 minutes. Before I leave the train I can see bleached out maps of the railway system around Dresden pinned to the plastic walls separating the compartments.

Cool Lakatnik

The least thing I expected was a wrought-iron stove in the waiting room in Gara Lakatnik. The air outside was flushed with mossy heat and this kind of occasional mountain breeze that is slightly cooler than the warm static air. As soon as I stepped down the expresso-train I entered the tiny one-table bar, shortly before the lady who runs it that afternoon





*“One grandson is in Vienna
The other is in Sofia
Our grand-daughter is in
Washington D.C.”*

closed for a break. An ice cream, a chocolate bar, a beer, the nice traveller's meal. The woman was angry at me because I opened the freezer myself to pick the ice but she accepted my donation. I sat in the shade respecting Boris' command not going anywhere. I didn't go anywhere. Ice, bar, beer - all gone. Shortly after that my legs went crazy. So, I let them loose and they entered the waiting room. It was much cooler than outside. The stove rested there, completely polished, no fluffy stuff around, no grains of dust, no sound, no nothing. Just the stove. Like an object from a fairy tale, a sleeping beauty in a cool place.

Lakatnik Heat

Outside the station was a little bench under a cedar. I lay my head down. There were birds in the trees on the other side of the railways. They flutter and twitter. Three young men walked by from the opposite, laughing and laughing, their shirtless bodies bending forward. They couldn't stop laughing. One train came to a halt, another was rushing further north. I felt so comfortable. Nearby a river murmured the litany of stones and sweet water. Are there cedars in Bulgaria?

Cheers to Boyan

You will be staying at the end of the village, said Diana. She drove me there. This is Boyan. His smile was charming and shrewd, a man on his own. A man with his own garden, in his own right. He waved his hand for me to come closer. A giant, almost purple peony was looming into the narrow concrete path to his one-storied house. Outside wood, inside wood. A tiny kitchen, the door to the room behind it he kept always locked. The kitchen was so small that I decided to wait outside for the coffee Boyan was about to brew. In his wooden cabinet were calenders, one starring Saint George, the other one with slightly clothed women posing in front of brilliant European city sights. He was a printer before he moved back to Bela Rechka. I don't know how we figured out this melange of bulgaritalianenglishgerman, a puzzle of words and pieces that were not from the same box. It happens when people are willing to do both: talk and wait.





*“Life in the village is hard
There is no doctor
No school
Nothing
Only old people”*



When coffee was ready, his and mine, because he could do only one after the other, we went inside nodding, smiling, drinking and staring outside into the dark green mountains rolling softly along Bela Rechka river. His smile was intense. Spring onions lay on the table, neck & neck.

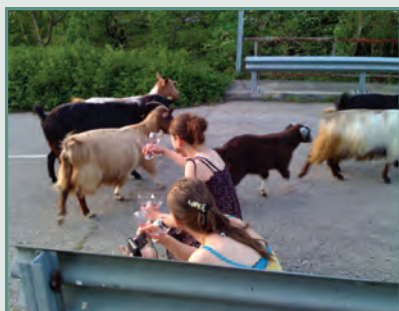
Pilgrimage

Aah, the bell. A bunch of colours and people were waiting by the old school when suddenly but adagio ma non troppo the procession began. My heart jumped up a bit. It happens when you see in person the one whom you have only seen depicted in a photograph. It happens when you can see and listen to the symbol of the whole thing: the bell in her house.

While I listened to my heart beat a memo shot through my synapses: Eisenstein's fragmentary film *Que Viva Mexico*, the zig-zagging of the pilgrims up to Mount Calvary, re-enacting the way of the cross... Only that Bela Rechka was guarded by nut trees and a welcoming red wine, Mexico was greeting with agaves and pulque instead. The cross is a house, the body is the bell – and Magdalena is a young lady who played violin from Bach to Pancho Vladigerov.

The Belles

Amongst the visitors were three girls from Norway. After the concert we were carrying the wine glasses like little bells to Diana's house. Two handfuls each. On the road we were met by a flock of goats heading for their own music. Sofie, Anna Elise and Brita were invited by Diana and Mariana because of a funny coincidence: they were organisers of a goat-cheese festival at the beautiful but remote Aurlandsfjord. Boom! This is another closing of another circle. In 1997, I took the post boat from Bergen up to Aurland doing research on a German writer, Hans Henny Jahnn, who emigrated to Aurland in 1915 during WW1. Years later he wrote his major work *Fluß ohne Ufer* located largely in this pristine and raw fjord landscape, a novel which has never been completed. The first part has been translated into Norwegian as *Treskipet*, *The Wooden Ship*. Now, wait a minute, a ship? Let's not get lost in the mountains.





*"Now for the village
The savor is very important
It brings things to life
Otherwise it's boring
Only old people, no children"*

Soon she will sing

In the village women and men seem to move in different orbits. They mix rarely in public. You see ladies sitting and chatting together. You see gentleman standing one by one cupping their chins over wooden sticks, which can be used to muster their goats. One of the ladies fascinated me particularly. I heard her name is Deshka. Or Dilja. It is a bit mysterious. She was one of the village ladies but appeared to have a unique air of independence. Her hair, for example, was carefully combed and her posture was rather that of a baroness. After the concert of Milena Karadzkhova she climbed the stage. The air was full of sound. She told us the story of one particular song she used to sing. When her husband heard her singing it on the other side of the mountains he would leave his goats and ran down and up to sink into her arms. Then she sang this song for us again.

Early morning goat

The window from my room opened into the green, away from the road. Thicket, bushes, a wall of vegetation. Behind that are: a meadow, footpaths, another meadow, trees, mountains further down south. Sleep was little these days but sun did not enter the curtainless room before mid-day.

One morning I heard somebody wailing. It sounded like an infant crying. The adjacent house to Boyan's is abandoned, his next neighbour is yards away. I didn't open my eyes. Maybe I was dreaming. It was a high-pitched voice. Could it be an animal? I dozed off again. After a short while it came up once more. Nervous, weak, animally. Maybe trapped somewhere. Or just born. And silence. Light was slowly filling the room. I got up, I opened the window. Birds were singing their songs. When I came to the balcony I realised the place where Boyan has parked his Lada was empty. A man with a wide-brimmed straw hat was bending over the calm, headless body of a black goat, skinning it.

Breakfast at Galina's diner

One of things not be missed is food. No supermercados around. A small spot, Tzecka's





*"In Soviet Socialist time
I was the Mayor of the village
We made roads and
I lead water to the village
Previously people had to go far to
Get their water"*



shop, opens from 6 till 9 on working mornings. I never met anyone who made it in time. But there is Galina Ivanova – and her friends. In the morning, at lunch, in the evenings... feta-cheese, bread, tomatoes, sweet cakes, carrots, water. Simple, delicious. That's all it is. That's all you need. And maybe some rakia.

Simon is here...

There were men with hats around. Some were without hats. One guy, Simon Walker, was never seen without his stetson. Simon and his colleague Sandra Hall from the British Midlands came here as artists to work with participants and villagers mapping Bela Rechka, mapping the future. This was done by writing and drawing personal biographical lines, including life changing or inspiring moments. One of the central points could have been the year 1989. Trauma or miracle? That's how Diana and Mariana subtitled this year's festival topic. Simon and Sandra were seen all over the area armed with pens and paper and people drawing and discussing their maps. Sandra was never tired to talk to almost everyone, a very attentive kind of communicado wizard. She came up with the idea to placing small tags with messages, wishes and thank-you's in different languages to the benches within the village range. Plastic roses, too.



Before lecture, 20 years after the turnaround

Tea conversation with Zlatko Enev. 1989 – seen from Berlin and the transition, emigration and more. Antina Zlatkova from Montana and I should have been moderators. Unfortunately Zlatko, editor of the electronic journal 'Liberal Review', had to withdraw his presence due to personal reason. All of the sudden I had to jump into the role of an eye-witness, recollecting my personal news reel from Berlin before/after the wall came down. One thing had to be put up in the beginning: I was not liberated, I was not revolutionary, I was not shouting "we are the people" like the Leipzig Monday marchers or "we are here" like protesters in Sofia. I had been a 28 year old Catholic boy from the West. One night we woke up in the middle of events and we could smell the two-stroke fuel. Trabbi cars were there,





*"I was a teacher
I paid close attention
To my children's education
And my grandchildren
Especially learning a foreign language
This is very important"*

the East opened their gates, decentralised politics (& politicians) were stumbling onto the global stage. I think in the West - even as close to the East as in Berlin - we had a different attitude and conscience towards the political situation and the impacts of it. It was a strange occurrence, slightly unexpected and - in a certain westernist way - void of political necessity. We heard it coming, but it was rather news than revolte.

Gates, yards and caps

In between sessions, music and talks was time to stroll around. One of the places to go is Valery's public house. It is run by his father, a grim looking man whom nobody has ever seen laughing. There are no people who never laugh. So, I guess he will smile only at special occasions or places. Nevermind, he handled the bottles in a perfect way: opening them and dumping the caps into the bin with one singular move.

Kids for fountain, web for junkies

Sometimes miracles. A mobile internet station was installed. Since then net junkies were walking around the village with big smiles. It is been amazingly few years that web, browsing, reception or mail, have received additional significance. Our lives have been enriched by and made dependent on new information technologies. It is a mind-blowing set of revolutionary banality. Incidentally or not, the switch decade 1980/90 provided us with the invention of the World Wide Web. Tim Berners-Lee, a computer scientist at the research center CERN, closed the bag combining electronic protocols and services, just one day before the one year anniversary of Nicolae Ceausescu's liquidation.

There were happier meetings between wo/man and goat by the bridge that crosses Bela Rechka river since internet access was established. A stone's throw away, kids were playing with water rising from the fountain at the edge of the old school. They were drinking it out of their hands and hunting insects with a mouthful. While inside lectures and discussions went on, festival mothers were observing drawings of their children in the silent green corner. Outside reception signals varied.





*“When I was young
There were about 800 people
Now there are maybe 60 left
Only old people”*



The drums of Murat

Finally, rakia. Not that we were drinking it out of the bongos and djembés. Adem Murat from Turkey held his drumming workshop under the parasols by the open bar near the rakia distillery. Experienced sessionists, twins, film-makers and dilettantes like me were invited to participate – first of all to listen. A simple rhythm... daba-dabadaa... pause... daba-dabadaa... pause. Listen. Follow. Now you, Murat motioned to the other side of the circle, Can you do dab-dabba-da-da... dab-dabba-da-da? We formed groups now trying to stick to each common rhythm. Hands were warming up. Smiles exchanged. Eyes closed. We finally made it to the stage in the old school doing a long get-out dance after the Folk Jazz concert in the evening. Our hands became small power stations, our hearts grown wild and mellow. We were all one throbbing forward. Will it ever end?

Cosmic brass

One day they were there. Silent men. Chequered men. With big golden instruments. They moved around like a smiling ballet. Serious. Their faces centred. They sat on the platform in front of the festival hall. They stood up. Then they sat again and on it went. A storm of brass. Dances after dance. The audience shook their bodies, laughed, started to dance. They formed circles. You can't help it, can you? You shake, jump or dance. It lasted. The men were blowing their horns into the mountain air. People were assembling on the little square, on both sides of the river. Nobody would hold still. The brass was going potty until it stopped. Nobody wanted to go. The musicians needed a pause. This day was savor. People from the village gathered. Family members arrived with their cars, occupied the gardens, the yards, the houses, the little dusty square where the brass band from Varshetz was playing. Even goats came by and looked and chewed.

The other night a DJ was ruling the platform and the square. The Norwegian belles, Deshka, her friends, youths from the area, expatriates from Germany and California were listening to the beats





*“I don’t need much to live
I am happy to have bread
I have enough”*

that pulsed from the system, raving to the sound of DJ Dosju Amudzhiev. Vessela was there and all the others. She came by and said like a princess who knows all about the secret, You know, this is my husband. We are married for just two weeks. A young woman appeared from the dark, both arms were wheeling the firepois freely. Although the BPM were on eurotechnoid speed, I couldn’t help thinking of Dylan’s ‘Girl of the North Country’... if you’re travellin’ in the north country fair, where the winds hit heavy on the borderline, remember me to one who lives there... she once was a true love of mine...

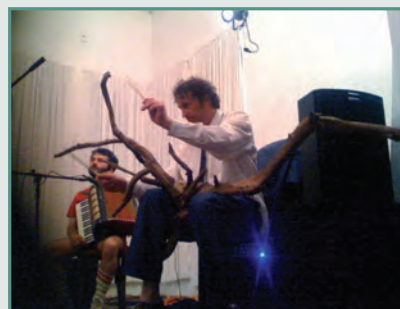
Alphabet, a song contest for europrophets

Was it a play, a deconstructive jump into a box of letters, a gymnastics exercise, was it a religious service, a parody on immigration affairs, a chart show - and who the heck are the brothers Methodus and Cyril? My mind is still blurred from the acrobatic speed and compactness of the Mamapapa performance. We were in the old school’s festival hall, placed in rows like in a fashion show. But what we’ve got was neither Prêt à porter, neither Haute-Couture, but what else?

Tomas Zizka and his colleagues, dedicated actors and excellent musicians from all sorts of countries, are on a grand tour through the Balkans... they are the Mamas & Papas of an “alphabetization campaign” which is equally teaching and learning from the places and people they stop over. (And who said that a tree makes music? Tomas plays the upturned roots of a tree trunk, which is miked up as a percussive instrument.)

Buttercups Listen

There is a lot missing in this report. There was Chris Baldwin from Spiral, Spain, who began together with Mariana Assenova a workshop with students from surrounding high schools - in order to install a “personal library of communism.” For example, Evgeny Mihajlov, a cameraman, was showing and commenting on so far unseen exceptional footage of the 1989 events in Sofia - for some a bit vaguely edited, though. There was Babak Salari, Iranian-born photographer, introducing his





*"I used to live here all the time
But now I stay with my children
In Sofia in a block of flats
So I look after my grandchildren
And I only come back here at weekends"*



book about the war in Afghanistan - a report of despair, a journey into the reverse side of light. And we enjoyed Miroslava Kazarova and her band Eko - one of the most amazing jazz concerts I ever came across. There was a conversation between Boyan Znepolski, Yuriy Valkovski (both from Sofia University) and Agnieszka Cwielag (from Polish-German Krzyzowa Foundation) about "How to talk on 1989 today?" - which contemplated about the aftermath of the political changes and, actually, the missing enthusiasm to complete the change process towards a civil society...

But that's how it is, our perception is ravishingly selective.

Black & Blue, eyes wide open

Two things I will never forget.

One. A few meters away from the gate to Valery's public house runs the murmuring river. A small bridge leads you to a tiny rest area with a spring of fresh water. People sat there occasionally, chatting, bantering, drinking. This afternoon an elderly gentleman came along, long wooden stick, blue shirt, black trousers, straw hat. He smiled and nodded at me. He said something into my direction while I was sitting on a stone bench. I tried to respond in personal esperanto. He smiled and pointed at the stone. I stood up to offer him my place. Maybe that was his traditional seat? He shook his head and waved his free hand in adverse. Then he bowed down pointing at his right knee, saying Kaputt. Sure, I thought, he wants to sit down. I offered him my seat again. He came closer, limping to the stone seat and stroking the long leaves of wild grass which were next to it with few tender moves towards the seating surface keeping them down. He took my arm and gradually pushed me forward to sit. He moved his hand downward. When I finally sat on the grassy pad he leaned against his stick and nodded.

Two. The carefulness of Boyan, the old printer. Tomatoes, cucumber, spring onions, oil, sweet vinegar, bread, water - maybe some rakia. The way he prepared one afternoon a salad for us. He was





*"I brought up two sons
And I am proud of them
They turned into righteous people
They live in the city
They do not visit often
I don't believe they will come back
To live here one day"*

interrupted three times and continued just at the point where he had to pause. I sat at his table, my restlessness gone. I watched him cutting the onions. A breeze was going along the road. It took him quite a while. As if preparing a silk screen. Reds, greens. Just hit the mark. The light was changing.

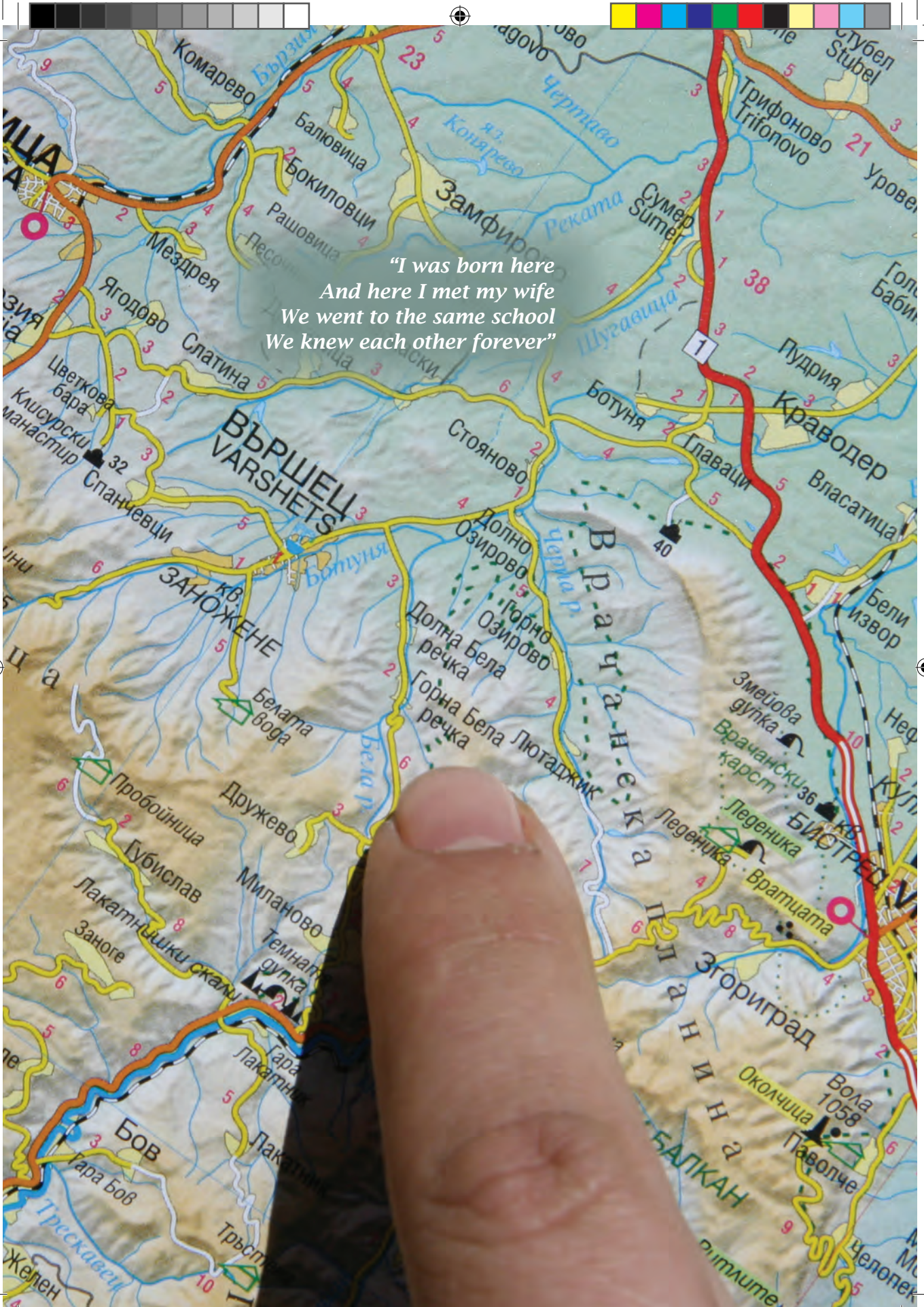
From Gorna to Dolna via Varshetz to Sofia till Berlin

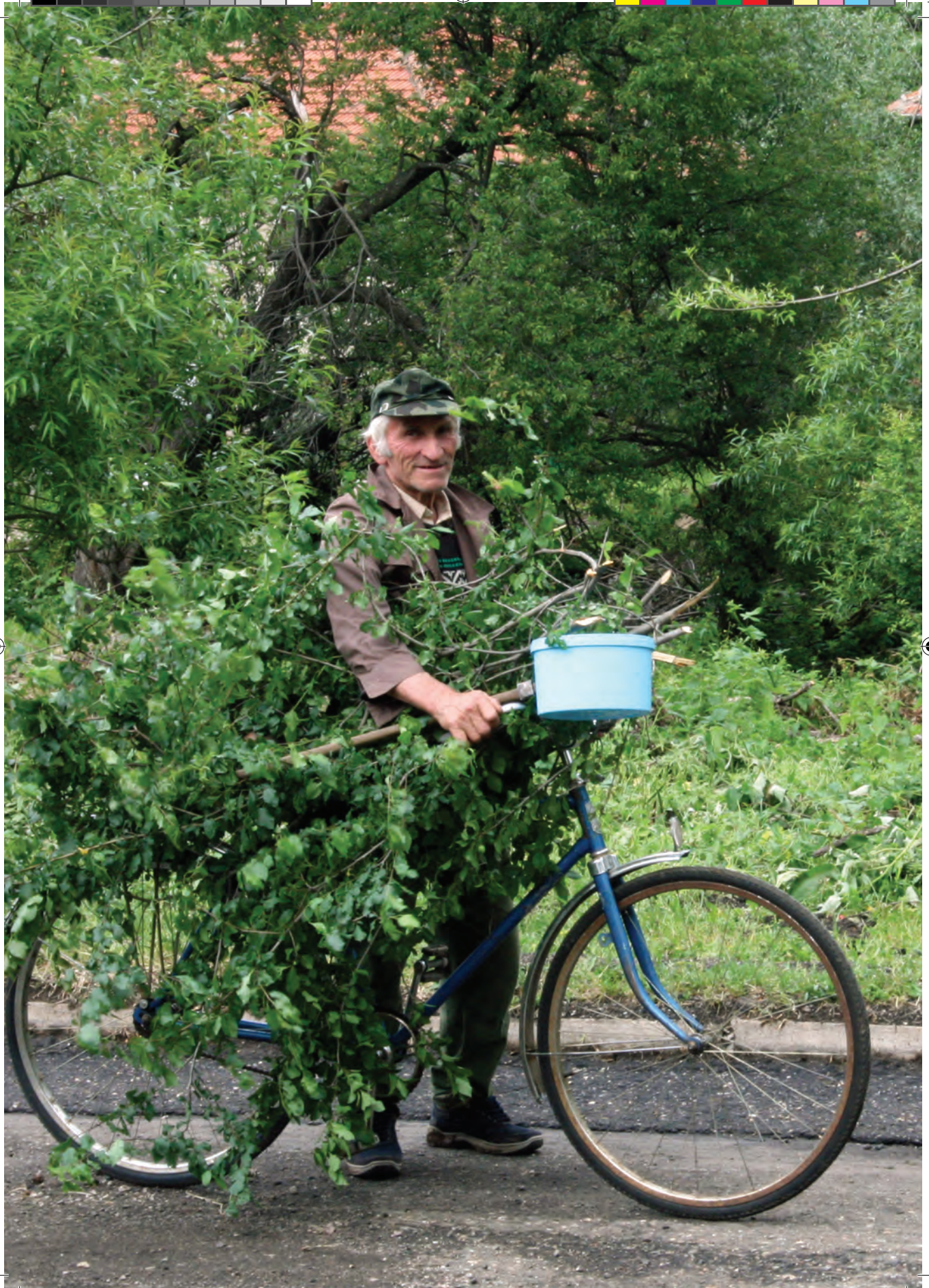
One of the reasons for Diana and Mariana to invent Goat Milk Festival was the rumor about the local bell stolen by a Roma. Yet Roma do live in the neighborhood sometimes having nothing else than their hands sometimes a rackwaggon or a horse. On the way back to Sofia Airport I had a dispute with Yuriy, the moderator of the "How to talk on 1989" - about how to find the right approach to live together with a stigmatised, distrustful ethnic minority. We agreed finally that whoever the host (country), whatever the cultural mindset (language, ethnics, law, rituals, convictions) of the society might be, these principles need to be communicated and should, by all means, being set as a standard to respect. On the other side, a good and open-minded host will express a desire to know more about the unknown, s/he might even learn techniques (music, healing, small trade) from them. This might sound a bit peculiar, especially when you regard the recent brutal serial arsons and murder in Hungary, killing lately a Rom and his child when he was trying to save it from the house that was set on fire.

When I returned we were having an actual Roma situation in Berlin! About 50 people from a small Romanian town after having been banned from camping in a public park were invited by former squatters to share the place they had squatted few months ago, a spacious culture center in Kreuzberg. They accepted. Subsequently, local authorities pitch-forked them into a bureaucratic odyssey. Finally they were paid 250 Euro each, i.e. a one-way-ticket to Bucharest, and they disappeared. The German way to do intercultural studies, you may say. A reporter was sent to their hometown, Roşiori de Vede, and talked to the locals. Gypsies in Berlin? So, *what's so special?* was their answer, *We are all over the place.*



*"I was born here
And here I met my wife
We went to the same school
We knew each other forever"*











A short conversation from Bela Rechka

You were born in 1939. And since you were born, you remember the bell that was here?

Oh yeah, then, much later it was stolen. We were in Sofia maybe.

And did you go to this bell, did you go closer to it?

I did.

What was the occasion?

We were playing. We were having a chase as children.

And who tolled the bell?

There was one Granny Bona, she tolled the bell. She was also a herbalist, being a more progressive Granny. We were playing there. And the bell was so very beautiful, it was hanging up there like a sheep-bell, but still it was rather big. And when they tolled it, we could hear it here.

Do you remember what colours it had?

It seems it was in grey and white. How is this colour called? It's not copper, it was more to the bronze, white... but I was a child. I think it was mounted, it was like on four uplifted tree-trunks, with a roof, and it rocked so, when it rang, and it tolled. It was beautiful. See how many things have been ruined?

Did you touch it? Did you come close to it?

I didn't, because I was small and it was hung high up. No, never. We were, so to say, moral children. We weren't like today's children who try out everything. There was a tiny rope in the middle. Never a child dared to toll the bell without permission. It was locked, that's how I remember it, with small planks. You cannot see from the road, you can only see that there is something. And otherwise, when you get inside, one could enter from the upper side, not from the road...

What do you remember most clearly about the bell?

In Gorna Rechka, on the side of the bell, the first house above the road, there was one Granny Igluka, she was a seamstress. She wanted so much to adopt





me, now when I see those for adoption... and I feel like crying at times, because she started telling me: "I will make you a new dress." There were a lot of people. "I will buy you new shoes. I will take care of you better than your mother." And my mother said: "If she wants you, take her." She adopted later one girl, they all died and she died, too. Now there are houses, but no people. It always stays closed. When a man dies here, the house is locked up, and no one comes. I was standing in front of her while she was promising to buy me this and that, and as soon as my mother left, I ran away... What a thing! Let her have more, let her promise me, I will go where I've grown up... And today I thought - once your childhood is over, it's not easy to shake it off. I have been later to other places, I've had the opportunity, but in my consciousness there is only this - my childhood. It's very important how the child lives up to a certain age. So we are without luck.

Why without luck?

Because we were left without a father. I got married very young. And I got married in three days. Because I had no father, my mother was very poor, my classmates went to Varshets to study, and I didn't have this opportunity, because there was no one to support me. It was necessity to take wood, to pay for rent, textbooks, clothes. And so I stayed. And I went to one village, a neighbouring one to see some acquaintances, and I went back and my husband caught up with me and told me directly let's get married. And I thought that this was the way out.

Hadn't you met before that?

No, I didn't know him. I was trying to enrol there was one school for machines and tractors. I love driving a car, but there wasn't the guy to enrol me, and so I didn't manage, and I came back desperate because all went to school, and this was at state expense. It was nothing, at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, you become a tractor-driver or something. I wanted him, I loved him, but it didn't go into my head what this meant for a woman, I was young, 15 years old. I said to myself: 'Let's, my salvation has come.' And we got married in three days. I didn't have full 16 years. Like Gypsies. And it wasn't easy, but there was nowhere to go.









A short conversation from Skopje

In a tiny dark shop, full of home made leather shoes and slippers, we drank mountain tea he brewed and looked at old albums full of photographs and metal pin badges.

"We are a small people. We don't make bad things for other people. Back then I travelled all over Yugoslavia, doing business, making and selling. You couldn't kick a man in the street, you would go to prison, be punished. This was Tito's rule. Harsh justice, but justice. Our people work in the villages, make fruit, food of every kind, much milk. When we were in Yugoslavia we can make milk, but never enough, for Slovenia, for Croatia, for Austria. They all want this milk. We make many products from milk. The vegetables are good because of the water and the sun. The earth here gives the best things. When the food is good, you make beautiful children. But then other people want to take your country, take these things from you, make trouble. After the war in Serbia, a lot of Albanian people moved here - nearly one third of the people. Young people don't cross the bridge anymore, so they have a separate life, maybe a parallel life. This is the word, yes?"

A short conversation from Solihull

We overheard her talking to her friends about the schools they used to go to and the schools they now worked in. We struck up a conversation. Around us was a huge housing estate undergoing regeneration, green fields built for overspill to Birmingham's ever growing population in the early 1950s.

"I was born in Pakistan but I see myself as British. I was educated in a school near to the border with Afghanistan, by nuns, but it was education first and religion second. They were strict and disciplinarian. We were there to learn, to be educated, to aspire to something. When I first came here I was aged sixteen. I was shocked by the lower educational standards. I thought, could this really be England? No one aspires to be a neuroscientist or a physicist or an academic. It's all about celebrity. There's a tunnel vision. Not seeing the bigger world outside. When I first came to England, I thought I had stepped back in time. The community here was so traditional, and not at all like at home. It wasn't the modern country I had been brought up to expect. The people here were living like they did thirty years ago in Pakistan, their ways and customs. That was hard to adjust to. There's been a lot of changes. It was pretty run down then, but I wonder how much of it is cosmetic? I don't know if people's attitudes or aspirations have changed. When you come from somewhere else you have a different perspective, perhaps you are more objective."





A short conversation from Birmingham

She lived in Winson Green, opposite the prison. She was born in London, though her family was from Ireland and she lived back there for a time. After that she was in Leamington Spa with her Grandmother.

"When you come to another country, it's really horrible. I mean lots of things are frightening to you. When I first moved here we had all the IRA bombings. My mother was spat at. The first thing I learnt to do was lose my accent straight away as soon as I could. I was broad Irish when I got here, they couldn't understand a word I said. My parents weren't traditionally Irish, they didn't go any Irish clubs or anything like that. We were on our own, not part of a bigger thing. I remember, when I was young, campaigning about something or another. Years ago people would put up a fight for what they believed in but now people seem to cower away. They don't put their head above anything or very few do and they are looked upon a bit like freaks or they are the odd bods. I think people almost feel it's not worth doing anymore. You can pay a pound a month to Amnesty or donate to a charity that you want to and it's not about making a difference. There may be racist attacks or bad things happening in your neighborhood but people are too afraid or just turn the other way saying I don't want to get involved. The problem I see, and it's been there in the last ten years, is that people are afraid to say anything, if they say anything it may be the wrong thing. It's the whole PC thing. They're afraid to say anything in case they offend someone or they will be seen as stupid because they don't know about another culture. And sometimes the way people talk is actually in a derogatory way. I don't always think it's meant that way. I'm not saying people are out and out racists, not everyone's perfect in any culture. I think it's perfectly ok to say to someone Black, White or Asian, that if they're an arsehole they're an arsehole. But I think people think they can't say that."







Hania

fire and water

Hania dates back to Minoan times. It has seen the passage of many peoples from the time of the occupation of the Crete Island by the Mycenaean and Dorian Greeks between 1400 and 1200 BC, to the period of rule by the Venetians and the Ottoman Empire, until the end of the 19th century. Hania sits on the north-west coast of Crete, the largest of the Greek islands, strategically placed between the old empires of Rome and Alexandria, Venice and Constantinople.

The Old City, encircled partially still by the Byzantine and Venetian walls, is a maze of narrow streets and surprises. Look carefully and here you will find traces of these former residents alongside the henna tattoos and designer sunglasses offered to the contemporary globetrotter. Cretan culture is a vast mosaic made up of the different cultures and ethnicities that established themselves on the island over the centuries as well as those that the local people had contact with through maritime commerce. The current population for the Prefecture of Hania is about 150,387 people (2001 census). Of those approximately 10% are non Greek immigrants, many more of which have arrived in Greece in the last 10 years. Of these, Albanians, Bulgarians and Georgians make up the top three. There are also many new migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. Among the harbour side restaurants you will hear many languages, the voices of Australians or Macedonians working for the summer season Americans from the large naval base at Souda Bay, tourists from all over Europe (as the population of the island more than triples), along with Chinese street hawkers who sell a bizarre collection of watches, clockwork toys and confectionaries.

While people extol the picture-postcard beauty of the harbour, we explore what other stories there are to be found here. We create our own postcards



“Hania is like every beautiful woman... She draws you in with a glance, and unspoken promises of what might be. Then if you are lucky enough to get to know her better, you see that there is even more to her behind the surface and you fall in love. But as time goes on you start to see the cracks, when the light is just right; and the imperfections and her capricious nature, and realise that you are not her first lover, or her last, and she breaks your heart. But she has drawn you in and you will never be able to let go!”

and missives. One postcard, showing the open sea, might conjure up the memory of Saba's grandfather, Ibrahim Yarmakamakis, whose family were Cretan for many generations, who took a boat bound for Anatolia with what possessions he could carry, leaving his homeland at the age of 48, never to return. The Cretan Muslims and Turks left in 1923, part of an enforced population exchange following the Greco-Turkish War, as hundreds of thousands of Greeks were displaced from Turkish territory and vice versa.

Another postcard might portray Sali, the last of the Sudanese domestic servants whose photograph remains from 1972. In the Ottoman marketplace, there was a slave market and most treasured of all were Nubian slaves. Auction books of the time record their favoured qualities – soft voices, they sang beautifully, good with children, skins cool in the summer and warm in the winter. These domestic servants, some 1500 in number, were left behind after the deportation of the Turkish households they served. Many did not survive long, put to work on the roads and living in the outdoors in rough work camps, unused to hard labour.

We might recall the testimony of Katina Syngelakis, who wrote about the arrest of the last members of the Jewish community, rounded up by the Wehrmacht and put on a requisitioned commercial steamer called the Tanais, bound for the death camps in the heart of Europe. “I cannot describe to you the tragic sight of our farewell. We had all lived for so many years together. Perhaps this was going to be the last time that we would see them and the grief was sharper because their lives were going to be so bitter now.” A British submarine sent the Tanais to the bottom of the sea, with its cargo of 265 Jews and 500 or so Greek and Italian prisoners of war at 3am on the morning of June 9th, 1944.

In a sleepy courtyard, we may encounter Yannis, a painter who lives in Paris because “it is grey and rainy, like your Manchester”. He paints mostly





“I married a woman from Belgium. I made a mistake and came back here. She loves the sunshine and I hate the sunshine. She goes to the beach and I go to the bar.”

seascapes. He says if he still lived here, it would be impossible to work, all he would want to do all day is eat and drink, with nap in the afternoon. “But I carry the light of Crete with me always.”

A more contemporary image might portray the significant amount of graffiti that can be seen adorning both the old and new town. Commenting on this, several people say that the graffiti increased after the serious rioting that broke out across Greece in December 2008, following the killing of a 15-year-old in Athens by a police-officer.

There are many hidden stories here, behind every facade. Koubes marked the eastern entrance to Hania, housing the tombs of Gazi Osman Barbour – a French convert to Islam, who died during the capture of the city in 1645 – and also of Hamid Beizade. Muslims entering and leaving Hania made special prayers on this spot. After the ‘exchange of populations’ in 1923, Koubes was turned into shops and still carries the name though it is now used as a Souvlaki restaurant and a hairdresser’s shop. The owner of the restaurant put a historic photograph of Koubes on a wall in the seating area of the restaurant where today customers eat their souvlakia - at the exact spot where there used to be Beizade’s grave. But if there is one building in Hania that exemplifies the multi-cultural past of the city it might be St. Nicholas, which was the church of the Dominican monastery before it was converted into Ibrahim Sultan Camisi, the Imperial Mosque. Here was housed the scimitar of the Turkish dervish who was the first to enter the city, a sacred and miraculous relic to the Turks. A minaret was added to the church, which still can be seen today. These are “ghostly reminders of pluralism”, in the words of Nicholas Stavroulakis, who was responsible for the restoration of the Etz-Hayyim Synagogue located in what was once the old Jewish Quarter.

15th century in origin, Etz Hayyim is the only surviving Jewish monument on the island after the Second World War. For decades it lay as a kind of









“Even though people are brought up on politics here, from the crib, it’s very conservative and for young people there’s nothing really. They want change. You can see this in the recent events and protests.”

‘silent witness’, mostly abandoned or used as a rubbish tip, in an ever-growing state of dereliction. Having been listed as one of the 100 most endangered sites in the world for immediate conservation by the World Monuments Fund, it was painstakingly restored in the 90’s and re-dedicated in 1999 as “a house of prayer, recollection and reconciliation”. At a time when Judaism, Christianity and Islam come into direct conflict, this ancient place was restored to represent a common vocabulary and common practices, espousing values that unite rather than divide.

Here you might find, behind the quiet cobblestone courtyard with its two friendly cats, lemon and palm trees, a poetry reading, a choral evening, a talk on archeology or the history of different religions, a creative laboratory with young people, artists and local historians, peeling back the layers of hidden history. Or a talk from Nicholas himself, about Cretan cooking, telling how the Greek Anatolians brought with them red peppers, pepperoni, dill, yoghurt, donner kebabs, souvlaki, and how one learns a great deal about people from their culinary habits. He shares his recipes for Beyaz Pilav, a classic formal rice preparation, somewhat akin to what Wedding rice is to Hania and Western Crete, or Yufkali Pilav, a chicken pie.

The restoration of this place must begin again. In January, 2010 the Synagogue was broken into on two occasions and set alight. The intruders set fire to a reconstructed ezrat nashim (women’s section), which was used as a library and office. The stairs were destroyed along with some 1,800 books. Smoke and fire debris got into the main synagogue building, staining the walls and woodwork. The alarm was raised by an Albanian and a Moroccan, while most of the neighbourhood slept. Within days, after cleaning and repairing from a host of volunteers, the building was attacked again. This time an extension by the courtyard, with library and office, was gutted. The flames destroyed many precious historical books,





"It's quiet here. People really want to live in bigger cities where you have everything. You don't have everything you need here. If you want something, they don't have it, or it's expensive to get. There isn't the choice available. This is also true of intellectual stimulation. Here everyone is talking all the time, but no-one is listening."

computers and the entire archives of the synagogue. The arsons were the latest of several incidents of anti-semitic vandalism across the country, including attacks on synagogues and cemeteries in Larissa, Volos, Thessaloniki, Ioannina and Athens.

In ancient Greek mythology, Zeus gave the Titan Prometheus the task of forming man from water and earth. Prometheus became particularly fond of his creation, disobeying Zeus, stole fire from heaven and brought it to earth for human use. Zeus wanted to prevent men from having power, especially over fire. Prometheus was horribly punished, chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where a great eagle eats his liver, which each night grows back so it can be eaten again the next day. In connection with the fires, two British and two American nightclub waiters were arrested along with a Greek man. It is unlikely they will suffer the same fate of the Titan.

I find myself thinking back to the creative laboratory held here, when some of the young people explored the antithesis of fire, looking into the significance of water in religious and cultural rituals, visiting different places of worship, going to the Catholic Church, looking at the mikvah, and searching for the Well of the Turk. As a planet, we have water in abundance, and yet it is a scarce commodity. Less than one hundredth of one per cent of the world's water is both drinkable and renewed by precipitation. The great rivers of the world are contested sites, and the management of water is an increasing source of social and political conflict. An average human being can only survive 3 days without water and we have an ancient urge to live near it; for sustenance, cleansing, for healing. We begin life as water borne creatures, suspended in the rich amniotic fluid of the womb. Our bodies are primarily water. "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water", wrote anthropologist and philosopher Loren Eiseley. Water cleanses. Water washes away impurities and pollutants. Water extinguishes fires.





"I honestly can't recall my first impressions of Hania, since my attachment with the place started at a very young age. It is where my grandparents were from, and I would come and visit as a child. Actually my first trip to Hania was at the age of 9 months! Although I haven't grown up in Hania, it has always been the place where I feel I belong. For me its home."





"It's a little world in its own. It's really a border region, not quite West and not quite East. In some ways, it seems to develop again into a multi-faith town that it was till the early 20th century. So it's an interesting place to be and observe the on-the-ground effects of events in recent history, like the end of the Cold War and the increased migration it has brought about."





"It's a place where you cannot escape the past. For all its modern problems Hania and the people here cannot escape the provincial routine of the place. They still dress up and go for a walk around the harbour on Sundays, just like their grandparents did 90 years ago, when their parents would take their teenage kids out after church to be seen by potential mates. Although the reasons for the walks have evolved, the traditions still remain. In this way Hania is not much different from other Mediterranean towns in Italy or Spain, but without the lustre, and in this way it feels more real."







“When I first came here, what impressed me was going for a swim in the sea while the top of the White Mountains were still covered in snow. It has been contrasts like this that Hania has meant to me. A beautiful old town and, on the other hand, excessive and rather tasteless catering to tourism, considerable local pride but countless flags of the European Union all across the town.”











"...Guns are a big thing in Greek culture. Guns are very cheap; using fake I.D you can buy them from many shops. Have you ever seen a Cretan marriage?... well if you go to a Cretan marriage you better get a metal umbrella, because they empty guns into the air..."



"... 'I wonder how you see me?' he looked at me and said, 'OK come,' and he walked me down some streets and let me into a very small courtyard; full of flowers, and greens, and a fountain, and there was a beautiful statue of Aphrodite in the middle. He said to me, 'This is how I see you'..."



"...Even though both my parents are Greek and I was born in Greece, and I'm fluent with the language, it still took a while for people to accept me. I was still the foreign guy; Greek/American maybe... something like that. That made it hard..."



"...It's a wonderful place, if you meet the people half-way, as it were. They are incredibly generous. It's sometimes embarrassing how generous they are. It's a really wonderful place. But I don't say it too loudly to English people because I don't want them to come!..."

"...I don't know how much you know about the Gulag system, but the Gulag was basically the central administration for all the camps set up all over Russia. It was where they sent 'the enemies of the people', so to speak..."



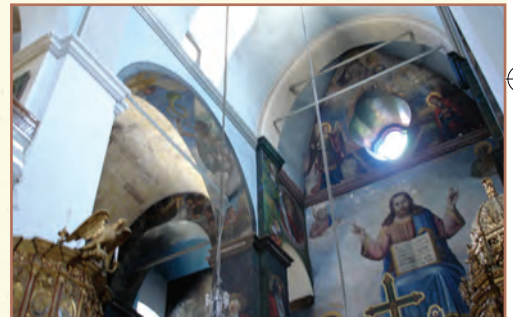


"...so I'm stuck in a place that I don't want to be. There's nothing holding me here anymore. The only reason I stayed, was because of my dad. My dad retired here, he was from here. I grew up in Canada, but we were coming here every summer. It's just that my dad passed away three years ago..."

"...I am going to try and take him away from his herd, try and separate him from the others and try and see if he's got an individual behaviour. If he's got an individual behaviour, this theory that I have been reading about could be true. And I could have an inter-communication with a fish like this. He's beautiful. He is green, with blue stripes, surrounded by bronze stripes; very, very flashy..."

"...Living in Chania what we really miss is our relatives, especially our grandparents, and our friends, and we really miss our church. We have a beautiful catholic church in our town in Albania..."

"...At this time, the first people to be bringing the Iron to the Mediterranean were the Hittites from Armenia, located around the Caspian Sea. The story behind this, it is a forbidden God. I cannot tell you where or how I got it, but I can tell you that it was a forbidden God five centuries before Christ. He is called Muloch ba'al, the God of fertility by fire..."





*If you could choose
to be of another culture
which would you
choose and why?*

"I'd choose Spain
because I like very
much the language.
I know it is only from
films but... the way of life.
Besides, I love the climate
...lots of sunshine"

"I would like to be an
American because it's
made me proud to see
an African American being
elected as president.
This has made me believe
I can be whatever I want
in the future."

"I would like to be of
a culture to the East
because I thrive off
differences."

"If I could be any other
nationality, I would be
Kryptonian...
like Superman."

"Chinese,
I wanna be
Chinese.
(To friend:) What are
you laughing at?
Or maybe Japanese.
I'd like to live in Toyko.
I want to live in one
of those huts with the
sliding doors." Friend: "It's
not a hut, it's a house."

"I'd be Australian. I love
their cricket team. Sydney is
one of the places I want
to go in my lifetime."

"I'd be Italian. Italian culture is
very relaxed and there's a calm
atmosphere. And they've got
a very sexy language."

"I wanna be Welsh because
I love their accent and I love
the Welsh national anthem."

"I would like to be French
because they have
elevated surliness to a
national pastime."

"I would like to be
Swedish because all
the Swedish people
I've met have been
lovely and boys love
Swedish girls."





***What makes
you feel safe?***

"I feel safe covered
in a warm blanket."

"I feel safe in my
conscious mind in
a friendly talk."

"I feel safe in my bed."

"Amongst people
who I know well
and like a lot."

"I feel safe at home."

"Amongst people
who wish me well,
who are pleasant,
who accept."

"In Hungary."

"I feel safe in
my own bed in my
messy little room
on the 10th floor."

"In my parents home."

"In the arms of the
person with whom I am
very close."

"Well, generally I feel
safe amongst
other people."

"I feel safe at home
with my family and
friends and the place
that I know."





A Bosnian House

homelands

From its very beginnings as an industrial centre, migrants have populated Birmingham. At first, they came from rural areas such as Cheshire or from Wales, Ireland and Scotland, when people came to work in the burgeoning new factories of the Industrial Revolution. Many came from other countries, fleeing religious or political persecution. In the 1800's, you could find Jews from Tsarist Russia; in the 1940's, after the partition of Poland between Hitler and Stalin, Poles ended up here; in the 1960's and 1970's, East African Asians arrived, after expulsion from Uganda and Kenya. There were Kurds displaced by the 1991 Gulf War, and exiles from contemporary conflicts and oppression in Iran, Africa and Afghanistan.

Within walking distance from Warwick Road and Stratford Road, at the end of a line of terraced houses, is a meeting place for the Bosnian community, refugees from the Balkan wars of the 1990's. To the north, you can see the minaret of Ghamkol Shariff Masjid, a Sunni Muslim mosque, one of the largest in Western Europe, able to accommodate 5000 worshippers at a time. It stands opposite Small Heath railway station, originally opened in 1863 to service the British Small Arms factory on Armoury Road. "A mechanised steam-powered factory, three storey's high in Italianate style", this factory made rifles for the British Army, later diversifying to also produce bicycles and cars, as well as machine guns and rockets. After 1945, BSA was the city's largest employer with a workforce of 28,000. Some parts of the buildings remain in operation. To the south, the multi-lingual district of Sparkbrook and Sparkhill, and the edge of the "Balti Triangle", a concentration of some 50 restaurants and takeaways. It is "a melting pot of cultures, traditions, tastes and flavours".





“I still feel at home back home, but we’ve made a life here for now, before I gave birth you think about raising kids and stuff, and we went back home in Spring time. I was looking at the kids of my in-laws; they are so carefree, got loads of freedom and a proper childhood, so many positive aspects. Back home is home. However, whether I would go back there now, I don’t know. As I said, we have made a kind of a life here.”

This area, by the early 20th century, was entirely built up mostly with long rows of terraced houses. If these houses could speak, perhaps they would tell us of some families from the Ukraine, fleeing the convulsions of the Bolshevik Revolution and the hardship and terrible famines, making a living here and learning the English language, perhaps working in the local foundry or the motorcycle factory, saving money, then moving further west, to the Canadian prairies. Or of earlier Irish migrants, who worked in the clay pits and brickworks in Victorian times, creating the raw materials for the expansion of the city, who raucously celebrated St. Patrick’s Day each year. Or perhaps we might learn the story of how the Pakistani and Kashmiri families invented the now famous balti curry in a small kitchen here, sometime in the 1970’s, naming it after the two handled flat-bottomed dish it is cooked in.

Now one end of terrace house is the office for the Bosnia and Herzegovina UK Network, functioning as both a community space and a centre from which to promote trade links and cultural ties between the UK and the Balkan region. Set up in 1996, the Network aimed to provide practical and psychological support for Bosnian refugees in the UK. Birmingham was at this time home to over a thousand Bosnians. It first operated from a room rented from a local church in Bordesley Green for several years, and then fundraised to buy and renovate a derelict corner shop on a backstreet. Each weekend, for almost a year, teams of volunteers gathered to strip back the building to its bare fabric, to reconstruct and rebuild, bringing all the essential skills and tools they needed to the process. “We had about a hundred people helping,” explains Anes Ceric, coordinator of the Network. “We changed everything, doors, walls, windows, toilets, plastering... we made a new extension at the back to make a community space downstairs. We were working here, but enjoying it at





“My experience and my injuries make you value things in life, which you wouldn’t think in ‘normal’ circumstances. First value is my family, and precious things that triggers your memory, like family albums or some dear things that someone gave you for your birthday or your school photo with all your classmates in it. Most of it I lost and I would give anything to have it back.”

the same time. We always had a few people preparing food, especially jagnjetina, traditional whole roast lamb. Everyone is happy we have a space to organise activities. Before we were spread out all over the city. And we are in a position to provide support to other community groups. We had ESOL classes here for some asylum and refugee groups, things like that.” Then there is the Bosnian supplementary school on Saturdays and a folk dancing group, to keep young people in touch with their heritage. Late one Friday, we find Swedish flags bedecking the place, and many plates of rolled burek, awaiting the arrival of a coach carrying a dance group from Gothenburg, who have got lost on the outer ring road. They perform the next night in Highgate Sports Hall, showing no fatigue, with a spectacular celebration of dance from all over the Balkans, with several costume changes representing the different traditions. Now Anes is fixing the satellite dish, so a crowd of people can watch the Bosnian national team play a match. They organise an international football tournament, the Bosnia Diaspora World Cup in five a side, with teams representing sixteen countries. Two years ago, it was played in Birmingham, last year in Linz and this year Luxembourg will be the host. England were beaten 2-1 by Denmark at quarter final stage, a team who went on to lose 3-2 to Belgium in the final match.

Their country of origin is about a third the size of England, a mountainous country near to the Adriatic Sea, to the south of Croatia and west of Serbia, a place where “East meets West, Islam meets Christianity”. Part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878, then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was united with other Slav territories to form the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the First World War. After World War Two, it was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, under the control of Tito, communist leader of the partisans who fought against the Nazis. This was the most ethnically mixed of the six









“I used to dive from a height. I haven’t dived from the Mostar bridge. That’s about 24 metres. I’ve reached 20 metres. This was off a Russian ship in the port of Ploče (Croatia), at the end of the railway line from Sarajevo. Diving into the sea in water is hard. It’s better in a river. In Bosnia, every town has a bridge you can dive from.”

republics that made up Yugoslavia, with a population of 4.5 million – similar in size to that of the West Midlands in England. Muslims, Slavs who had converted to Islam during the centuries of rule under the Ottoman Turks, made up 44% of this population; Serbs, Orthodox Christian Slavs, made up another 31%; Croats, Slavs who speak Serbo-Croat but are Roman Catholics, were 17% of the population. In the 1991 census, the remainder chose to identify themselves simply as Yugoslavs.

Misha Glenny, a journalist, wrote: “Bosnia was perhaps the only true reflection of Yugoslavia. It is both the paradigm of peaceful, communal life in the Balkans and its darkest antithesis. Nowhere else does the local culture resonate with so many sounds which have defined European consciousness in such a fundamental way.” After Tito’s death in 1980, and the recession of communism in subsequent years, this complex federation began to unravel. While opening up a new Europe, it exposed fault lines, and nationalism replaced communism in the Balkans, leading to armed conflict. The wars of 1991-95, in what was once Yugoslavia, killed more than 250,000 (equivalent to the whole population of Walsall or Sandwell) and “ethnic cleansing” displaced millions in Bosnia alone. As a result, some 580,000 Bosnians are spread across the countries of the EU, the “Bosnian Diaspora”.

The first Bosnians came to Birmingham in 1992-93 under a program called “Government 1000”, which brought survivors of concentration camps. A second group were medical evacuees, who were wounded or paralysed during the war and were brought to the UK for medical treatment. Finally there were refugees who escaped and whose homes had been totally destroyed during the conflict. The Bosnians had temporary leave to remain and were not able to travel, but over time most have gained permanent status in Britain. There are several





"I think tolerance is very important, you know, mixing with others and then appreciating other cultures. What has happened is very unfortunate and tragic, we shouldn't forget. Forgiveness is a very difficult issue. I guess you learn to live with it."

established Bosnian associations across the country, with communities in Birmingham, Derby, Manchester, Coventry and London, hosting events, making links with communities across the globe. Like people from other countries, Bosnians in Birmingham have two identities: their traditional culture inherited from their homeland and their status in Britain where they have secured jobs, made friends and created new lives for themselves. "Of course, we go back in the summer, when the weather is beautiful," says Anes, with a little shrug, looking at the rain outside. "I feel like I'm going home, but when I come back off holiday, when you pass over all of Europe to England, I feel like I'm coming home to Birmingham too. So it's like having two homes. But for our children growing up here, with their education here, their friends here, this is their home."



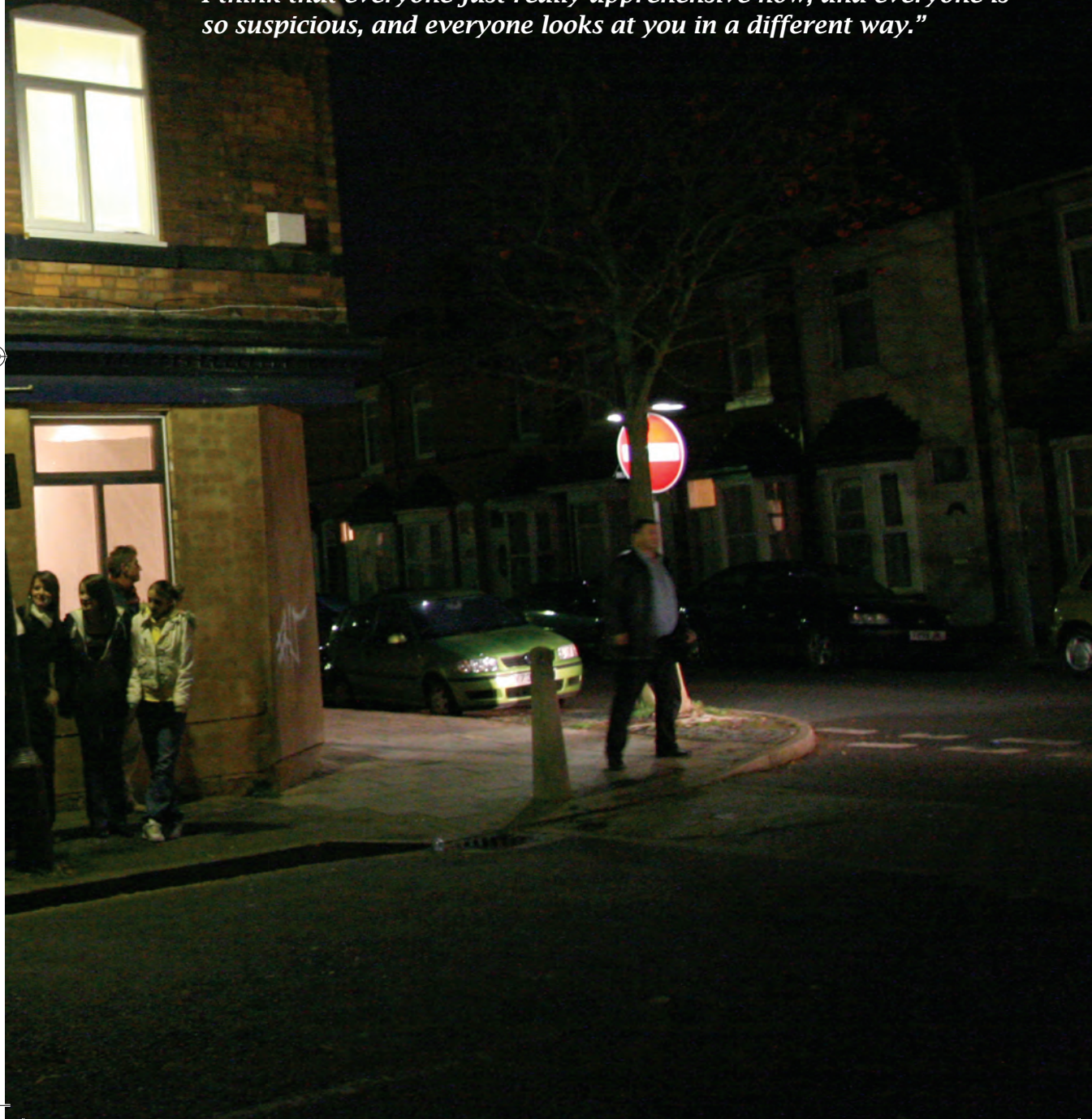


*"Your heart is one place your livelihood is somewhere else.
It is a strange concept when you think about it."*





"We first arrived here in 1993, as people arriving from a different country, as refugees. I am not sure if it is because of this way we came here, because everyone was receptive, quite nice and warm. Now as the time progressed, when there are even more refugees, more asylum seekers, and the government is trying to reduce the numbers. I personally have not had any bad experiences. Occasionally people will ask you, "Where you from?" in that kind of manner to make you feel as though it is not good to be an asylum seeker or a refugee. However, there's definitely more of that now, especially with what's happened in London and Birmingham recently. I think that everyone just really apprehensive now, and everyone is so suspicious, and everyone looks at you in a different way."





"I try not to talk about it and not to think about it, because when I do think about it, it takes me back, and I need time to recover again. So the honest thing is, I try not to talk about it because it takes my strength out of me every time."





"I work at the Café Des Paris, London. It's a job. We have Chelsea players come in here. They're very nice. It's better than being beaten by paramilitary police and militia."





"You know who Tito was? He was a communist but he was a good man. He locked up lots of people, but they were the rich. He did a lot to help poor people. People talk about democracy now but 50 years ago in Yugoslavia there was probably more freedom. You were free to do as you pleased - except speak anti-communist things. If you were drunk and lay asleep in the street, no one could touch you, and if someone kicked you, they'd be taken to prison. What did democracy bring to us? The right for a Catholic or a Muslim or a Christian to get a gun and shoot each other. People talk about money and politicians in this country (England), but there the politicians have all the money and the people who lost an arm or leg in the war, well they really have nothing."



"In Yugoslavia now it's broken up into these tiny baby states, with toy armies and toy economies, not a powerhouse anymore. Poor countries. We were in an ice hockey team back then and we toured Czechoslovakia and Poland and everywhere there was a police check. You can't do this, you can't do that! You can't go here, you can't go there! You have to fill in a form, you need a permit! We invited local teams to visit us in Yugoslavia, out of polite hospitality, but we found they weren't allowed to travel outside their own countries. You see, it wasn't heard of! But look at Poland now, a strong country in the European Union. But then it was nothing to compare to Yugoslavia."









A short conversation from Sparkbrook

We'd been to Bosnia on a cultural exchange and come back. Then he invited me to his home, a neat and tidy flat. We drank strong coffee, Balkan style, with his wife and another friend, and we talked about how he had arrived here, so many years ago now.

"My very first experience here... I arrived at the airport, and I was taken by ambulance to the hospital and took all the tests, and the following day had the operation. I was awake all the time apart from the operation but the people were very nice. My first meeting with the British public was 20th December, and you can imagine - just before Christmas - everybody was shopping. I went with an interpreter at the hospital to ask if it was OK to go out. I felt a little bit better and they took me into the city centre by taxi. Basically we came to the back of McDonalds, on a side street and then into the High Street. It was overcrowded - that was a shock for me that I will never forget and that will always stick in my mind. Coming from Bosnia, you're just looking where the sniper is, or where the bomb is gonna shell. You can't see all the people during the day, only in the night you see people carrying the water. And when you're here and you see all the normality on the street. It just shocks you. For me it was not a normal environment, for I was so long in that other environment. That was something, the first sight. I thought: here was not normal, something is not right! I still remember every scene cut in my brain, never been erased. I think it is a problem now for Bosnia because everybody knows Bosnia from the war. Not for culture or the old bridge, just war. That needs to change. We are people. One day a lady said to me, 'Where do you come from?' I told her Bosnia and she said, 'I thought you were from France, you are so tall.' I said no, Bosnia. She said, 'Ah, the war...' You need something to look forward too you need positive experiences to build on for the future - dwelling on the past does not help, but then again it is part of your past and it's present all the time."





A short conversation from Handsworth

He came from a country that has known nothing but war for the last 30 years. He was maybe 18 years old. He had no family with him. He was putting on a brave face.

"Last week someone hit me from behind in the head, split it open, I was only walking, when he hit me he called me names like 'You fucking refugee'. I did not ask to come here, never had a choice. In fact, when you're here you wonder why anyone would come here. It's cold, everybody looks miserable... yet they can eat. They don't have to wake up to the sounds of guns or see the people you love, or even people that you don't even know, being killed in front of you, and when they kill they laugh. The person who hit me came from behind. That does not scare me, I'm used to it being done in front. I'll never ever forgive the Taliban for what they have done, not just to my country, but I blame them for being here in Birmingham too. Yes, you will find good people and bad people everywhere, but right now it's about survival. If someone good comes then yes we can be friends, but I have to travel on a road that's come my way, not one that I have chosen."



A short conversation from Smethwick

We talked in the grocery store, open till late. From here you can see the floodlights of the Albion ground, and the railway cutting and the lights of the Indian shops and Gurdwara on the high street. He'd worked there for several years. It used to have a post office, but that closed down. He was always talking about life with his customers. After his last customer left, he sat down and talked with us.

"Tolerance is a deceitful word and used deceitfully. Why should I have to tolerate abuse because I am from another country, where they are not familiar with me, they do not know me other than through a newspaper or news on a TV station, and even then they do not know me? I have a name, we have a name. I have a family, grandparents, aunts, so how can one judge me? I - and even the people against me - only put up with each other because we have no power to change anything, so tolerance is a deceitful word. You tolerate something not because you really want to, but because it is easier. I'm interested in speaking to you because you are keen and interested in getting to know me and I am delighted to be able to share these precious stories and memories, but as we speak I am excited to know about you too, and then we find that we have something in common as human beings, we may do it in a different way, or experience it in a different way, but the fact that we are exchanging excites me and I am learning. That is dialogue that is the beauty of open conversation."





Birmingham

one day at a time

Derek Bishton, a journalist and photographer who worked in the Handsworth area of the city during the 1970s and 1980s, recently wrote that “Birmingham is the enclave now, a minority white, majority nothing city, struggling in the impasse of state managed antipathy to multiculturalism”. With a population of over one million, it might be known for UB40, Steel Pulse, Duran Duran, Ossie Osbourne, or as a city which was once one of the great manufacturing cities in the world, “the city of 1000 trades”. Today it also has the youngest profile of any major city in Europe, with 37% of residents under 25 years of age, and has more Muslim residents than any other local authority area – the largest group being of Pakistani heritage. In August and September 2009, protest marches organised by the English and Welsh Defence League met with opposition from The Unite Against Fascism group, ending in street battles. This city has seen conflict before, with riots in 2005 in Lozells revealing racial tensions between the Black British and South Asian British communities. “Is Birmingham on the brink of race war?” asked a headline in The Times. During the summers of 1981 and 1985 there were riots in the Handsworth area, primarily in reaction to heavy-handed policing. Then there were the riots of 1791, which targeted religious Dissenters, in particular Joseph Priestley – a Unitarian minister, scientist and inventor – with much burning of chapels, homes and businesses.

Birmingham's ambition is to be a “global city with a local heart” and it “aspires to be among the top 20 most liveable cities in the world within 20 years”, according to the Big City Plan. This cultivated image of a world class city, with marvelous opportunities for shopping and culture, seems a little tarnished in





The most important feature that makes one British or Polish or belonging to any other nationality is not a monarchy nor a law. It is one's feelings, willingness and consciousness.

the light of some of these events. The Birmingham Post, in December 2009, looked at what lay behind the rhetoric and saw 'a deeply unsettling picture of inner city wards where violent crime, ill health, poor education and the misery of high unemployment is a way of life for thousands of people.' One morning, as we travelled into the city centre on the metro from West Bromwich, we overheard a familiar refrain: "You can tell we're in Birmingham, it's the biggest dump going..." Even though Brummies are well known to be self-deprecatory, the city has an image problem.

In the mid-70's, I arrived in the West Midlands from Jamaica to join my parents, who came here seeking work and the chance for a better life on return to their homeland. At first, we lived in a house in Wolverhampton and occupied one room as a family. We ate, bathed, and socialised in this tiny space. For a few years I never knew what it was like to enter through the front door of your home. We had to go through a dark entry and enter through the back door – this led into a kitchen that we had access to, then through a living space, and up the stairs to our home. An Asian family had rented the room to my parents. If it were not for the fact that Mrs. Kaur had three children, I would have probably spent most of my days after school in this single room and having no brothers or sisters, life seemed very lonely. Eventually, I was allowed to go down stairs and play with the other children, and we became very close. It was my first experience of interacting and exchanging with another culture other than my own. We learnt how to do each other's hair, understanding and managing the difference in textures and experimenting in the difference of oils that we used, the food that we shared, and the similarities of our experiences. My parents had told me to be careful of white people with shaven heads and black boots – Doc Martins – as they did not like





“Multi-ethnic society integration doesn’t happen without some active compromises. Multi-ethnic living together can function effectively only when it’s perceived as an advantage, not as a compromise. What can I gain from diversity? More feasts! That’s an advantage not a compromise.”

us or anybody that was not “White English”. Indeed, I was given the impression they hated us and so under no circumstances must I approach them – if I see them and they look as if they are approaching me, I must run for my life. My friends and I had that in common, we experienced the name calling, the spitting, the fighting, and we once witnessed an Asian’s man head being pushed through a pub window, shattered glass entwining with his blood. This stained our memories for a long time, likewise so did the red, white and blue flag.

We went to live in Handsworth Birmingham. We now rented a house on Lozells Road, the main high street. I can recall the area being highly populated with members from the African Caribbean community, and South Asian communities, at that time mainly from the Punjab. We were somewhat integrated, both communities entered into dialogue we occupied the same area and for some the same street. There was a mixture of Asian and Caribbean shops, although I do recall that it was mainly the Asian food stores that catered for the tastes of the Caribbean. As a young person the area was a hive of activity and a testimony to integration. You could go to the corner shop and have a “tab” on food purchases that you could pay back over time. It was a service that not only supported the small income earners and unemployed, but you got to know each other. For a youth, this was both positive and negative; you were always on your guard because if you were doing anything that seemed to be seen as untoward you could guarantee that someone knew a member of your family and would snitch on you. That’s what the streets were like. However, whilst a large section of the black community integrated on a minute scale, we all shared the same elements of an oppressed community, with many of us aware of the impact of racism and imperialism upon our lives. When and if





“Anyone who’s come from the other side of the world and come to here... what must that be like to come to somewhere strange and then to be met by people who are saying that they don’t want you here? I think that’s horrific.

I remember when I first came to England my parents experienced lots of prejudice when they were here. It’s strange because I feel people who have experienced it in the past, I think they forget it or they don’t want to understand that you have another generation of people coming here under different circumstances - but really they are same new people coming into a country and the older migrants don’t have that empathy. I don’t understand that.”





"Yeah, I'm an English person in a nice Indie band. I like the Indie style with the jeans and the shirts and the nice little shoes. It's not that I don't like any other styles or any other cultures, but that's my way of living."





“I think it’s finding the common ground. There is always a common ground with people. Everyone has an interest. We all get up in the morning, we have a wash and we eat. There’s a few basics and we have to start with basics, then dialogue will flow naturally.”

you were granted housing accommodation you knew that identifying your cultural background you would be placed in areas like Nechells, certain areas in Handsworth, but definitely not Handsworth Wood or Sutton Coldfield. These areas were considered to be middle and upper class with a large majority populated by people of Caucasian origin.

As young people, our education in terms of our culture and our identity came mainly through music, stories from our parents, other Black Social Movements and the Civil Rights Movement in America. We listened to Bob Marley, Steel Pulse, and Mighty Diamonds. We were becoming politically conscious and through lyrics like “Get up stand up stand up for your rights” we began to attempt to organise ourselves and challenge racism and the inequalities that encompassed our lives, beginning to understand the negative impact that this had on our lives in Britain. We also listened to the Bay City Rollers, the Specials, The Osmonds, Jackson Five, Slade and sounds of Motown. A mixture of these would be played at the youth clubs or the ice skating rink where we would hang out and to some extent we were united. Today a large culturally diverse community populates Birmingham. They may arrive for different reasons and circumstances, fleeing from conflict or seeking opportunities opened up by the European Union or drawn to the redevelopment and rebranding of Birmingham as a “world city”. Whilst we see Birmingham as rich in the diversity of cultures we have seen a rise in racism and xenophobia similar to those in the 1960’s and 1970’s. In the late 1990’s to the present day we have also seen an increase in crime in Birmingham, especially gang related gun crime. Many initiatives have been put in place to tackle this, but for many young people there is no light at the end of the tunnel – guns are something you are aware of and fear whether you





"I feel the film is a negative representation of black people there is no positive role models except a vicar and even he was not fully clean. I mean it shows the entire baby mothers having a go but it does not say much about us a strong women. I do not believe that there was a marketing budget available, but any publicity has to be good and controversy brings attention in the world of marketing."

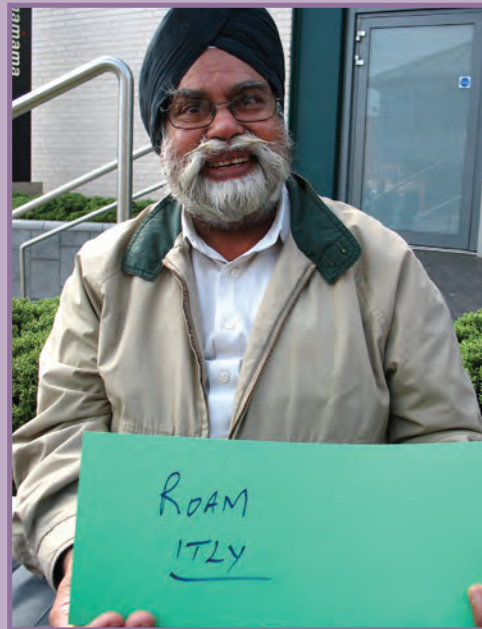
are involved or not, and because of this, and a lack of trust in the Police, many young people take to protecting themselves with weapons such as knives or other objects that can ultimately cause damage.

A young man whom I interviewed put it like this: "For a long time we have had no power, no jobs, and no money. It began with demanding respect, behind the gun you had power and it was about protection, but we have lost direction now, it's out of control. The word respect has no meaning to outsiders only to those who live and survive the life."

In November 2009, a film was released which chose to reflect on this side of the city. "1 Day" is described as a "community grime musical" written and directed by Penny Woolcock. The film follows 24 hours in the life of Flash, an inner-city hustler. Unfortunately he owes £500,000 to a local gang leader Angel, who is being released from prison and wants his money back. All the actors and performers were cast from auditions with local people and were paid for their participation in the film. The film immediately drew controversy, with claims that it glamorised gun violence, and there was reluctance to it being shown in cinemas both in the city and in Walsall and Dudley by the Odeon and Cineworld chain of multiplexes, because of "public safety issues". The Independent reported, "One multiplex said it had decided not to show the film after the West Midlands Police advised it not to do so. It emerged yesterday that a uniformed West Midlands police constable had taken it upon himself to speak to the manager of the Odeon in Birmingham and advised him, in a personal capacity, against screening 1 Day. The manager took the advice, word spread and other multiplexes followed."

In interviews, the Director made a point of describing her experience of being mugged by a young black man as a motivation for making the





"We're in Birmingham. Where else would you like to be?"





"I never grew up in no gang. I chose to join a gang. Big difference. What do you do? There are no jobs. In school they're not going to teach you how to survive. We can't get dole, you gotta eat, and when you go for a job people talk down to you, testing you. Yes there is a big problem now with guns, knives, drugs, you name it, but the big question is who created the problem?"

film. "What has made him think that it's alright to do this?" she said. The fact that the film was made in Birmingham and highlighted certain aspects of what was happening to young people who are embroiled in gangs drew the most attention from young people and the fact that it was accompanied by a hip-hop style musical aroused curiosity and an interest in viewing the film. It was something that spoke directly to young people. The majority of those I met who viewed the film gave positive feedback. But there is a conflict of opinions whether the film is fact or fiction, with a small number of young women describing the film as stereotypical. One told me, "I think there is a need to show what is happening but combine it with positivity, and there are a lot of positive young people in Birmingham. People can turn their lives around. The only reason why so many local people came forward to take part is because they were paid, and gain experience of being in a professional film not because the film would highlight a gang problem in Birmingham – we know that already. Neither would it make a difference, so in that light I do not see why the film was banned, we see American movies all the time about gangs like *Boyz in the Hood* and these are apparently based on true stories."

There is a lingering feeling that both local and national government consistently fail to look holistically at the environments in which we live, and the lack of opportunities. Economics is emphasised as playing a major part in the lives of all young people, with lifestyles "pre-packaged" and preordained. Whilst volunteering can play a valuable role, young people still need to achieve economic well-being. We have learned to question the top down prescriptive approach to building communities. To change the escalating problems – which have deep roots - a radical conversation needs to begin. Questions are our starting point – to engage, to dispute, to







روا نسیب اللہ کے زماں پر خوشی دیکھی کتاب
 دخیبان ایسی کہ ہند پر پہرہ کی کوئی کہ ہند دہیستا
 کیسے وہی۔
 اوہل می دادس فارغی خوشی دیکھی جی پہل خوشی کہ
 فیر کی کہو۔



fiction book
 from Najeeb Khan

"I'm a person with multiple identities. I live here, but I was born somewhere else. I call myself British."



*Normal. I don't know what normal is...
Normal... well, boring. Same old thing.
Come to college, go to work.
Oh, maybe mine's like that.
Mundane.
Could do with a bit of spicing up.
Yeah, a bit of variety.*





“People say where are you from? And I’d say, Britain, and they say, No, where are really from? There were times when I was growing up in Britain where I didn’t want to be Asian, I wanted to be Black, do you know what I mean? I thought, I don’t have any connection with Pakistan, it’s a crap country, and it’s nothing to do with me. I wanted to drop these labels of Muslim, Pakistani, the way people perceive you. It’s only been the last few years I’ve started to think about my heritage. In the States, they’ll call themselves I’m Spanish-American or whatever, they’re all immigrants, Seeing that made me feel more confident to look at my heritage. You can’t just cut it off. That’s been a major shift for me. You can’t just run away from it. It does come back and you have to deal with it.”









“Highgate can be known as a better community and not just for violence
We need to work together as elders and youth to deal with issues
Highgate is a place where ghetto roses bloom through cracks in the pavement
When I was a kid Highgate was home
Highgate is Highgate but you know what makes it worse is we live next to town & people come and do s**t here
Highgate is a racially tolerant community
Highgate has always been a mixed up community, most times always seen as a poor area. Before they made urban villages. It's always had a strong faith base to it, always had the mosques & churches in the area
Highgate is rough
Highgate should have a festival round here & invite local people to have their own stalls
We were held up at gunpoint again last week
There's no power in Highgate because the government isn't interested in Highgate
They finish school without high grades & there isn't much for them to do after
Highgate is dry, boring nothing to do, not enough park space
Speaking from my heart, since I've lived here, it's got better
When I first moved here there was always something happening
Highgate is vibrant
Highgate is a collective of different groups divided
It's the youngsters that need to stop the trouble. As an older person, we used to mix well and nowadays the younger ones don't understand
In Highgate young people from ethnic minorities find it hard to get jobs
The people aged between 18 & 30 need help from the older generation. Those that aint educated, They need help to make the community stronger
People show kindness
We have no pub, no space where we can congregate
Highgate is okay
The council don't care about Highgate, they don't live here. Unless we complain, then they come, then they go. They build these drug centres without asking anyone who lives here. When you go around the back of the shops you see people lying on the floor with needles hanging out their arms. You see people selling drugs all the time. The police know but they don't do anything
The mosque helps because it's a lot easier with we meet different people
Whether black, white, brown or whatever background we need to stop the negativity between each other
Highgate reminds me of my mother who passed away
Highgate needs more police visible in the area, doing more work with the children in the area
It's our favourite place





“**Highgate reminds me of my mother who passed away**

I've lived around here since I was 11. The younger generation have brought the area down with gangs

If parents bring up their children not to discriminate it would be a better place. It's down to the kids upbringing. We need to get back to basics i.e. manners, respect & learning

There's no power in Highgate because the government isn't interested in Highgate

All the new buildings here (Joseph Chamberlain College) don't seem to have effected the people who live in Highgate, I get the feeling not many people from Highgate use this buildings great facilities

More people talking to each other. I would stop people dropping litter & put in more traffic lights. There needs to be less crack heads & perverts in the area. More stuff to do at Stanhope, there should be a park where young people can go & do graffiti

My friend shows me how to make roti & samosas and I show her how to cook west Indian food

Kids don't know their phonics, I have my neighbours kids & help them learn by sharing stories When we were kids we all mixed and played together no matter what race or religion, we just played. Over the years, as the area changed, many of the original communities became fractured as some communities got more economic mobility

Too much in-fighting within the community & I'm talking about community organizations

Highgate makes me feel scared when I walk down the road. I have been threatened to be beaten up if I did not give a beggar my money. I was really scared. My house has been broken into and all my stuff taken

Highgate

is no worse than anywhere else

Schooling is not that good, for early learning it is, but for key stage 2 it isn't that good

It hasn't had the money or resources put into it that it needs

Old men in cars wait for us to come out of school

Highgate is misrepresented as a whole & unique diverse collection of nationalities separated, a micro within a macro issue, reflecting wider local, regional, national and global issues

The area is getting killed with drugs

Highgate is a very rich area not in terms of money, but the people

Highgate is like the West Midlands. Highgate is the core, in the middle. It can be the heart of the UK and should be understood as the centre of positive possibilities

Highgate is a vibrant area to work in, I've worked here for 5 years, most of the young people are good people,

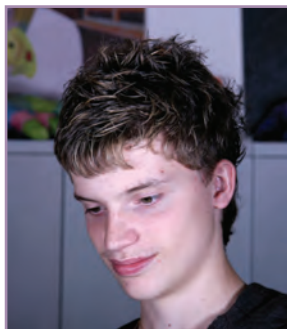
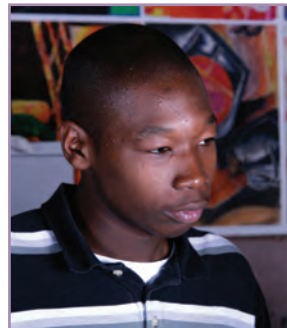
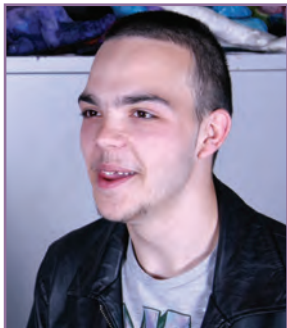








"I would describe myself as coming from the Indie-rock persuasion. I like to play a bit of rock and roll and I like to play guitar. And I like to have a good time."



"I think there should be room in any country for people to express what they want to express as long as it doesn't infringe on someone else's rights"





*"I'm a stereotypical teenager. Just normal.
Likes a laugh, likes to go out with her friends.
Up to no good, sometimes."*



*"I live a very
comfortable lifestyle.
I like to be casual,
relaxed, easy going."*





"Pakistan was where I was from, but it was not what I was about. There was a reason why my parents had left. They came because they wanted this country to be their home."

"We're becoming more aggressive and less sensitive."

"I've gotten so used to English culture, it's just normal."

"I'm tired of this Muslim thing. It's all about that faith now, like we're not human beings who have the need to eat and exist like everybody else. Everyone seems to have an opinion about it; everybody wants to be on this bandwagon. My sisters had quite extreme views and it caused the whole family to be apart. I don't have close relationships with them like I used to. The Government's not really clear and have confused things. It's like there's this box and it's full of this subject, and they talk about the box and not the people and real lives."

"I am a quarter Scottish and a quarter Irish and half England. I'm like a foreigner."

"Earl Grey, Greggs, fish and chips, the NHS... that's British."

"There's a lot of young people who are very disillusioned. They're caring people, but they don't know how to care. They don't know the value of their life. They don't know what's going on around them. They're neutral and don't have an opinion. They're seriously disengaged. They want to do something but they don't know what to do."

"We no longer talk about religion, politics, or global affairs. We can't manage a conversation anymore. We're afraid it will lead to conflict."

"We don't have respect for each other any more, we need to start talking and listen..."





Photos: Brendan Jackson, Alicja Rogalska, Geoff Broadway

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