



BREAD AND SALT

You cannot understand the migrant if you haven't heard his story first.

Gazmend Kapllani

Migration has been a human constant since people first came out of Africa in search of something better. Diversity is another human constant: people have different physical realities, different experiences, different beliefs and different cultures. Migration does not increase diversity. It makes what already exists more apparent.

Artists migrate. When they do, they reach across those differences, creating dialogue with new audiences through their images, music, performance and texts. In a world that is so conscious of its cultural diversity, artists can play a valuable part in enabling intercultural dialogue.

Bread and Salt explores these issues through the stories of 18 artists who have settled in Europe from other parts of the world. It draws on their experiences to make actual and particular what is too often considered only through simplifying generalisations. And it asks how far nationalistic ideas of cultural identity are consistent with Europe's stated commitment to equal rights.

Bread and Salt

Stories of Artists and Migration

REGULAR MARVELS
ISBN 978-9-081-60505-2
Vrede van Utrecht

François Matarasso

bara a halen

brauð og salt

brood en zout

brot und salz

brød og salt

bukë dhe kripë

chléb a sùl

Bread and Salt

chleb i sól

duona ir druska

ekmek ve tuz

kenyér és a só

kruh i sol

леб и сол

leipää ja suolaa

ogia eta gatza

pain et sel

pâine și sare

pane e sale

panem et salem

pano kaj salo

pan y sal

sool-leib

το ψωμί και το αλάτι



Bread and Salt

Stories of Artists and Migration

François Matarasso

With images by Bill Ming

Vrede van Utrecht

2013

Regular Marvel No. 3, June 2013

The first edition of *Bread and Salt* included 30 numbered copies reserved for the people who shared in its creation, of which this is:

No.

For:

Bread and Salt:
Stories of Artists and Migration

First published in 2013 by Vrede van Utrecht
Kromme Nieuwe Gracht 70
3512 HL Utrecht, The Netherlands

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Images © 2013 Bill Ming; Hindi Poems © 2013 Mohan Rana
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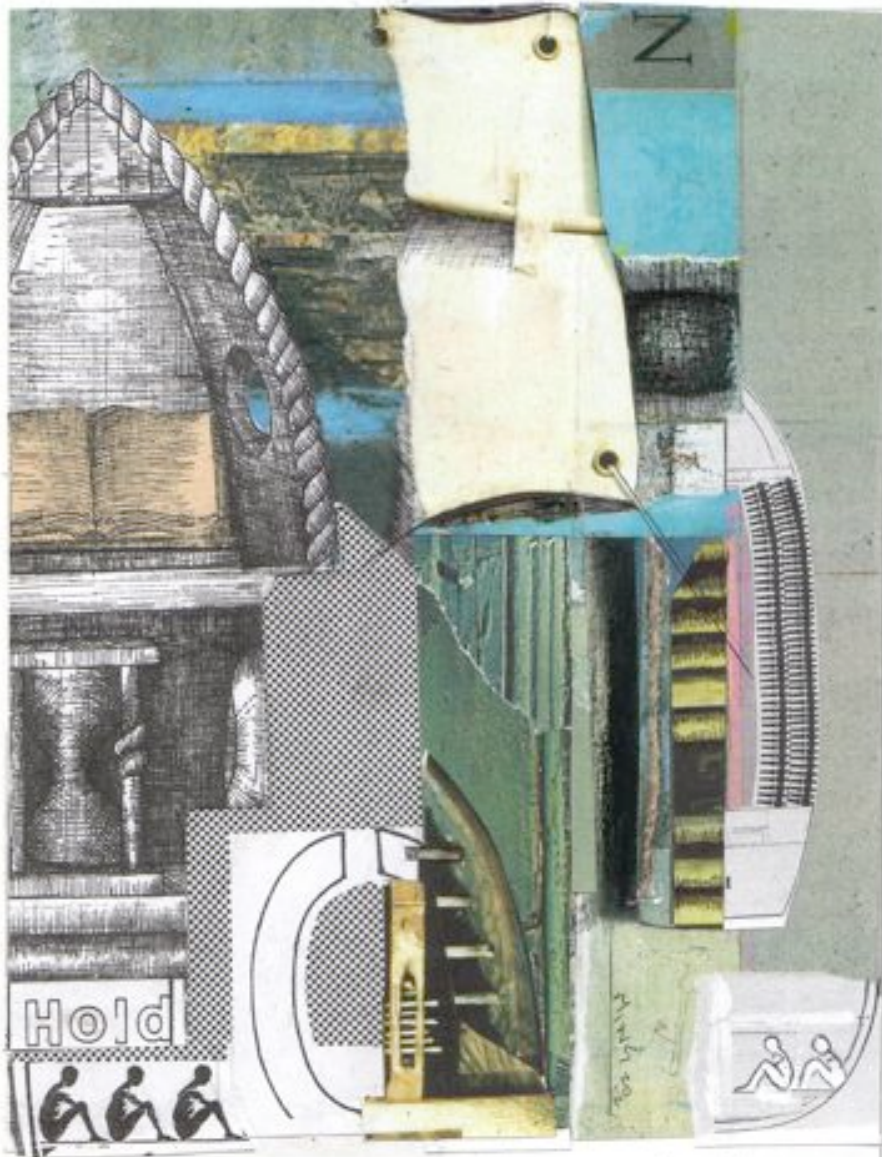
ISBN 978-9-081-60505-2

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Designed by Dave Everitt & François Matarasso
Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham

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MINS 20/12 MAY

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

Hope today is a contraband passed from hand to hand and from story to story.

John Berger, 2011

Foreword

Bread and Salt weaves together stories of artists who, in their art and lives, make a distinctive contribution to intercultural dialogue in Europe. Intertwined with these stories are historical and philosophical threads, some of them personal. But the larger part of the fabric draws on conversations with artists now living in Europe whose lives, and usually careers, began far from here—in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

The book explores these people's reasons for leaving their homes, their journeys and their discovery of Europe, their experiences of establishing themselves as artists here, and their contribution to the arts in their new homes. It suggests that these artists trace new paths between social groups. Whether that work of crossing boundaries is deliberate or not, it is the natural outcome of the artist's need to communicate and, in a new society and culture, to find and understand a new audience. The further outcome of these artists' work is to build confidence, empathy and the competencies for living together.

The book does not deal with the rights and wrongs of immigration policy, globalisation or how societies govern themselves. Nor is it concerned with how European societies acquired the social, cultural or political character they have today. Such questions lie beyond both my capacities and intention.

Bread and Salt is the third 'Regular Marvel' to be published, though it was the first to be conceived, early in 2011, since when it has gone through several evolutions. The meetings at its heart began with a conversation one sunny autumn afternoon on the Mont des Arts in Brussels, where the city's annual Europalia Fes-

tival was celebrating the culture of Brazil. It was followed by further encounters over the next 18 months: at a youth cultural centre in Utrecht, a summer house in the suburbs of Copenhagen, a café in Lyon and an artist's studio in Sheffield, among other places. Two or three conversations took place via Skype and there have been phone calls and email exchanges since, to explore further questions and ensure that each person is happy with the way I have told their story and the words attributed to them. There were some conversations with old friends, but mostly these were meetings with strangers, resting only on trust. People met me as friends of friends, contacts of people I know. The diversity of their countries of origin is wide, but that, like the choice of European countries, was governed by opportunity, not design

As with the previous books in the series, my approach is literary rather than sociological. Its formal model is the essay, which proceeds by allusion as much as explication, prefers questions to solutions, and invites an interpretative engagement. In the words of Theodor Adorno, 'The essay thereby acquires an aesthetic autonomy that is easily criticized as simply borrowed from art, though it distinguishes itself from art through its conceptual character and its claim to truth free from aesthetic semblance'. *Bread and Salt* will succeed only to the extent that it retains and rewards the reader's interest with truth.

A word about words

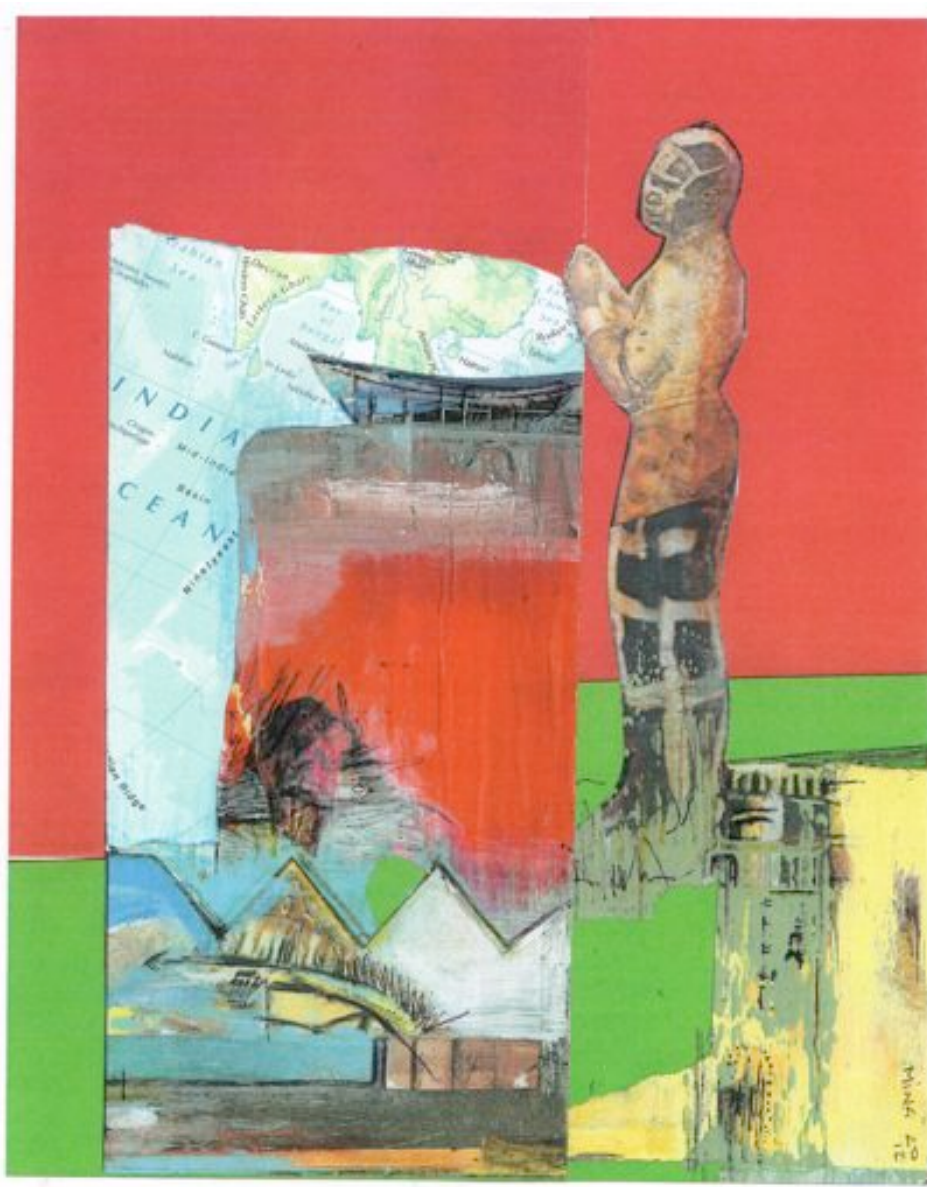
'I'm used to thinking that stories in English are so much richer or more important than stories I hear in my own language.'

Henning Mankell, 2009

This book was written in English because that is the language I work and write in, though it is not my mother tongue. Those who use a dominant language—or in the case of English, the dominant language—are always at risk of seeing it as normal. All other languages are variations, diversions, aberrations, even; othernesses that might be exotically attractive, threateningly alien or just tediously incomprehensible. Reality happens in English, where English speakers are in control.

But English is the mother tongue of only one or two of the people whose stories are told here. Some of them do not speak it at all, or only slightly. Our conversations were conducted in English or French, with varying degrees of ease, but sometimes with the help of an interpreter. The speech that has been included here, therefore, is often a translation of another language. Some of the co-producers have had to turn to Google Translate for help in checking what I have written.

None of this is a problem. It is just normal in a world with thousands of languages, each of which is a different way of imagining reality, describing experience and creating a culture. Linguistic diversity, like biological diversity, is a vital resource that needs protection. I have therefore tried, at least in the quotes from written sources, to reproduce the original language even where, as in the case of Greek or Hindi, I do not master it. You may therefore find unfamiliar words or passages in this text, though English versions are in the sources at the end of the book. I hope that you will not find this alienating, but I trust you will see why it is right to accord equal value to other words if you do.



1. Thresholds

MARY: Bread... that this house may never know hunger.
Salt... that life may always have flavor.

It's a Wonderful Life, Frank Capra, 1946

Pâine și sare

They are waiting for us at the top of the path, in front of the museum: the mayor, in jacket and tie, the curator and a few other friends and supporters. To one side stand two young people in Romanian costume, red and black and white, crisp as fresh linen in the pale morning sun. They hold a golden loaf and a dish of salt: *pâine și sare*. Handshakes and introductions; then I'm invited to take a piece of bread with a few grains of crystal. A glass of clear *palincă* and a toast to health and long life.

A hundred yards off, some Roma labourers pause briefly to observe the welcome ceremony, then return to their work.

This is Transylvania, the land beyond the forest, where Scythians, Saxons, Magyars, Vlachs and many more have lived successively and together over centuries. After the First World War, the defeated Austro-Hungarian Empire lost the territory to Romania, which had sided with the victorious Allies. Transylvania was then home to three principal ethnic groups: Romanians, Hungarians and Germans, each with their own language and culture. Since the revolution in 1989, most of the last have left to claim the

right of return as *Auslandsdeutsche*, Germans abroad, but about 20% of Romanian citizens in Transylvania are still Hungarian.

I came to know southeastern Europe through cultural development work with Belgian and Swiss foundations. Over the years I have visited many villages and small towns in Romania, Albania, Bulgaria and what was once Yugoslavia. Sometimes, we have been three or four visitors to see how the work is going; more often, it's been just an interpreter and me. But whatever the circumstances, I have been welcomed everywhere with warmth and generosity. Tables have been set with *burek*, the traditional cheese pie made with filo, and *zelnik*, its spinach-based cousin; with salami, cured ham and meatballs. Tomatoes and plums have been brought in from the garden, and there has been yoghurt, 'national' coffee, black tea and every kind of homemade fruit spirit. And, always, bread.

No one is in a hurry. There are introductions and rituals to be observed as we get to know one another over the course of a morning. There is much to present and explain, and not only what has been achieved through the project. There is a church or a mosque, old houses, an archaeological site, a museum; sometimes the young people perform a local dance or song. It is people's culture that is being presented, as a valuable gift. Man does not live by bread alone.

And then there is time to talk, round a table in a shady garden, or in the mayor's gloomy office that hasn't seen new paint since Tito's day, to talk and get to know one another a little. It is a human exchange that will linger in the memory.

I am under no illusion, though. This courtesy is done not to me personally but to the donor whose, representative I am, for now. And here, as in other poor places in the world where work has taken me, I am also, and inescapably, a representative of the rich and powerful nations. I have in my pocket a bank card and the European Union's burgundy passport. Days later, transferring between flights in Munich, that identity document takes me

into a different line, past the returning *Gastarbeiters* and others hoping to enter the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, without the protection of a right of return. A bored policeman flips my passport across a scanner, barely glancing at me before sliding it back under the glass. Further down the hall, the line of non-EU citizens has not moved.

Accounting for myself

— Τι περιμένουμε στην αγορά συναθροισμένοι;
Είναι οι βάρβαροι να φθάσουν σήμερα.

Κ.Π. Καβάφη, 1904

It was not always like this. Seventy years ago, this policeman's father—or someone much like him—arrested my father for the crime of racial impurity: not an act, but an essence. Robert was 16 years old and living in Salonica, the ancient port of the Balkans, with his Jewish father and French Catholic mother. What followed—ghetto, prison, escape and protection by the Greek Resistance—is one story among many millions from Europe's dark 20th century. For him, as for many other lucky survivors, it led to a border, statelessness and, eventually, some sort of integration. After the Liberation, my father, grandfather and grandmother were reunited in Athens, having spent months not knowing which of the others, if any, was still alive. But by 1946, the Greek Civil War had begun and Robert, fearing conscription, found an irregular passage on a ship to Marseille where he registered as a refugee alien. It took eight years to acquire French citizenship, and he had to do military service anyway. And then, three years later, he moved to Britain with his English wife.

Why this old story? Why, indeed, this highly personal introduction to a book ostensibly concerned with questions of art and migration? Not because my story is special or even especially in-

teresting but because identity, so deeply bound up in culture and so often expressed in art, is always personal. In the opening pages of *Le crime et la mémoire*, the Franco-German historian, Alfred Grosser, goes to some lengths to tell the reader about himself, because what is said on a subject as difficult as crime and memory is inseparable from the person saying it. It does not of course follow that, because no perspective is objective, all views are of equal value. For Grosser, one key difference in how we approach these difficult questions is the extent to which we are first conscious of our own subjectivity and the factors that shape it, and then seek to take account of both in searching for a full, balanced understanding.

La différence est grande entre celui qui veut tendre vers l'objectivité et celui qui s'en détourne—délibérément ou par ignorance de ses propres déterminations, du prisme intérieur qui déforme sa perception des autres. On risque en effet de dérailler dans l'explication si l'on a négligé de s'expliquer soi-même.

Alfred Grosser, 1989

The questions explored in this book—history, identity, justice, rights and culture among them—are no less subjective and no less contested than those around crime and memory. Indeed, some of these stories involve people remembering crimes of which they have been the victims. I have always tried to avoid getting between my subject and my reader but here, while that principle remains, I feel an obligation to give some account of myself. To someone with a mixed heritage, that particular sense of obligation is not new. Indeed, I cannot easily remember a time when meeting someone did not involve explanations.

I was born in England but grew up in a French-speaking family: English was the language of school (and then work). There were not many children with foreign names in rural schools in the 1960s and mine, which even today English speakers often

struggle with, was an immediate signifier of difference. It did not always make for an easy school life. So, with childish simplicity, I decided that, if I wasn't allowed to be English, I would be French. After all, many of my relatives were French and we spent the summers in France; I was even at school in Paris for a few weeks. My love of Tintin, Astérix and Lucky Luke, and later of Camus, Sartre and Balzac, made it easy to steep myself in the culture, so it was years before I understood that no one I knew in France thought me anything but English. You are not French because it is your mother tongue and your parents have old 45s of Georges Brassens and Yves Montand. The passport is only half the story—and only policemen believe that half.

It was many more years before I went to Salonica and, seeing my great-grandfather's name on the school building he had sponsored in 1928, understood that my identity was not a simple binary choice between England and France. The inscription was placed in memory of another crime: the drowning of my great-grandmother and two great-aunts when their ship was torpedoed in 1918 by a German submarine in the Mediterranean. But you are not Jewish because your grandfather was: just a *Mischling*, a *métis*, a half-breed.

So now, when people ask, I say I am European. If that's not enough, I explain that my grandparents were all born in different countries and religions—it's a long story.

The moment you point at a difference, you enter, regardless of your age, an already existing system of differences, a network of identities, all of them ultimately arbitrary and unrelated to your intentions, none of them a matter of your choice. The moment you *other* someone, you *other* yourself.

Aleksandar Hemon, 2013

None of this entitles me to speak about migration, or about anything else for that matter. It is simply an account of the particular subjectivity I bring to this issue. I present my identity papers so

that you, as reader, may decide whether I shall proceed. I do not need personal experience of migration to speak about it, as a person need not be poor to speak about poverty, black to speak of racism or an economist to discuss economic policy. Our right to believe, think and say what we wish is protected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It does not depend on anything else. We do not have to be clever or well-informed or share the 'right' opinions. We might be judged by our peers for what we say—literally so if our speech violates their rights, for instance, by inciting racial hatred. But we have the right to say it.

To suggest otherwise is a dangerous form of essentialism that enshrines authority in a person's biology or their heritage, rather than in their conduct. It is dangerous (as well as wrong) because if one human being can have more authority because of who they are, it follows that another can have less. We find ourselves, in no time at all, in that favourite human game of separating sheep from goats. And we know where that leads.

The condition of migrancy

Migration not infrequently gets a bad press. Negative stereotypes portraying migrants as 'stealing our jobs' or 'scrounging off the taxpayer' abound in sections of the media and public opinion, especially in times of recession. For others, the word 'migrant' may evoke images of people at their most vulnerable.

United Nations Development Programme, 2009

One lesson that might be drawn from this story is that it is not so easy to say who is a migrant, despite the newspaper headlines. Among my own parents and grandparents only one person lived their whole life in the country of her birth. The other five moved home for shorter or longer periods, acquiring a variety of languages and legal documents in the process. In the case of my pa-

ternal grandfather, the state he left behind to study medicine in France, the Ottoman Empire, disintegrated in his absence: ten years later he went home as a citizen of Greece, a country whose border had moved over him.

The truth is that migrating is something people do, not something they are. To migrate is a verb not a biological condition. A migrant is someone who is migrating, as a student is someone who is studying. Neither activity defines the person, only the activity they are currently doing, and that is never all that they are doing.

The United Nations defines an international migrant as someone who stays outside his or her usual county of residence for at least a year. That sounds straightforward enough, on the face of it. But faces are so easily misread. Among those whose faces might fit are foreign students, military personnel, diplomats, nomads, employees of multinational companies, refugees and asylum seekers, most of whom would not see themselves, or be seen by others, as migrants. Indeed, so hard is it to differentiate all those who cross borders that the United Nations has invented a taxonomy of international migration with 18 separate categories that take three pages to explain. And that is without going beyond the qualifier 'international' to consider the much greater numbers of people moving from rural areas to cities in China, India, Nigeria or Mexico.

There are so many reasons for migrating, and some involve more choice than others. War, oppression, natural disaster, famine and other catastrophes can all force people into looking for somewhere safer to live, for a while or for good. Others are attracted by the prospect of work, education or a better life. Millions of women now serve and care for the rich to support their own poor families at home. Millions of men endure labour conditions that Western citizens rightly spurn, sustained only by hope of a better future. In what way can leaving home in search of food, safety or a wage be thought a free choice?

Who's gonna build your wall boys?
 Who's gonna mow your lawn?
 Who's gonna cook your Mexican food
 When your Mexican maid is gone?

Tom Russell, 2007

Poverty is the defining characteristic shared by all who are labelled migrants. No one describes the highflying corporates and executives as migrants. No one makes them wait in the wrong line at the airport. On the contrary, states do whatever they can to attract these skilled workers and wealthy expatriates with tax allowances and other inducements. Relocation companies advertise their personal service in taking the strain out of moving between the world's 'global cities'. Nothing opens borders like cash, whether it lines the pocket of a banker, a senator or a people smuggler. Its power trumps every liability of race or religion, politics, age or infirmity. But without that skeleton key, you are just a migrant.

In 1975, John Berger and Jean Mohr published *The Seventh Man*, a book of images and words about the experience of migrant workers in Europe. In a text not short of shocking passages, nothing is worse than the photograph on pages 48 and 49. A thick black border imprisons a bleached white room in which stand six Turkish men in boxer shorts. All are looking away from the camera, and from a white man in dark trousers and a check shirt, who holds the fourth man's underpants open to inspect his genitals. Along one side of the image is the text, '*Medical Examination, Istanbul*'. It might as well say '*Selektion*'.

Artists as migrants

You cannot understand the migrant if you haven't heard his story first.

Gazmend Kapllani, 2009

Artists are like everyone else and so, like everyone else, they sometimes find themselves needing or wanting to cross borders.

Some have no difficulty doing so because they are citizens of the rich nations for whom gates generally open. The talent or success of others has placed them among the cosmopolitan élite who are more at home among their peers of every nationality than their humbler fellow citizens. Who asks for Salman Rushdie's work permit? John Lennon's radical politics slowed but did not block his green card. Gérard Depardieu's Russian passport was personally given him by the President, its ink barely dry. Big states have always collected great artists whose presence adds lustre to their own power. The VIP lounges of international airports are draped with divas and ballerinas, film stars and pop singers, novelists and architects, pursuing their careers where they choose, without let or hindrance.

Artists not lucky enough to be born in the right place or with the right gifts really are just like everyone else. War, hunger and insecurity threaten them neither more nor less than their neighbours. Their imagination sometimes gets them into more trouble with the regime, but you do not need to be an artist for that to happen. Their ambition and talent may help, but others have those too, in other fields. In the end, and in the eyes of every border guard, civil servant and resentful local, an artist who is a migrant is just another migrant.

So this book does not start from the idea that artists have a different, more interesting or more important experience of migration because they are artists: to say it again, essentialism is dangerous. But it does ask whether, in pursuing their work,

artists might make a distinctive and valuable contribution to intercultural dialogue in a European cultural landscape whose rhetoric is often inclusive but whose borders are also well defended.

‘Real human beings living in real places’

It seems to me that we live in a world where it has become increasingly important to try and live in bodies not our own, to embrace empathy, to constantly be reminded that we share, with everybody in every part of the world, a common and equal humanity.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2012

Reality is so complex that humans have to live in a grossly simplified sketch of it in order to function at all. Our minds cannot process more than a tiny fraction of the information we receive, which is itself an infinitesimally small part of the information available. Mostly, that is not a problem: just a way of getting through the day. One can easily buy a loaf of bread with one’s mind elsewhere. There’s no need to reflect on the ingredients or baking process, on the lives and working conditions of those who contributed to its production, on the different types of loaf eaten by different peoples or on their cultural, religious or political significance. We just hand over some bits of metal or paper, about which we also do not think, and receive in exchange another piece of our daily bread.

Although we share the planet with seven billion other human beings, and most of our religion, philosophy and law teaches us to believe that we are in one way or another of equal importance, it is equally hard to think about more than the few we get to know in the course of a lifetime and the very few for whom we have strong feelings. Instead, we organise ourselves and others into categories that simplify the unimaginable complexity of

actual lives into abstract groups in relation to which we can position ourselves. Some are biological and relate to sex, appearance, age or ability. Others, such as wealth or class are social; still others classify by occupation, status before the law, place of birth, beliefs, conduct and a host of other distinguishing characteristics, many of which are loosely jumbled into the capacious sack called culture.

And one of those simplifying categories is ‘migrant’. Like all such labels, its meaning is different from place to place and from time to time. Indeed that meaning changes radically if the word is applied to oneself or another. The romance and pathos with which stories of Irish or Scots emigration are represented is far removed from contemporary narratives of immigration: it’s the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In the unsubtle language of politics, refracted through the rarely more subtle language of the media, a simplifying term can become as crude as a club or a chain. Its incessant repetition, both to say, and to imply what it is not (yet) acceptable to say, erodes awareness of the complexity of individual lives as water smooths the surface of the rocks it passes over. Gradually the texture of actual experience is worn away, leaving only the simplifications that we have to work with, but which can be so dangerously misleading when we forget that they are only simplifications and start to believe that they are real or true.

There are, perhaps, 200 million international migrants in the world, depending on how the word is defined, and bearing in mind that people do not remain migrants. The weight of that figure is unstable. If it is said to be equivalent to the population of Brazil, the fifth most populous country in the world, it may seem rather heavy. On the other hand, if it is said to represent 3% of the world’s population, it may seem much lighter. But however we try to understand a figure like 200 million, no one can understand 200 million life stories, or even 200 life stories. And yet, Gazmend Kapllani—himself once a migrant—says that it is also

impossible to understand the migrant without knowing his or her story.

The task of this book is simply to introduce a degree of necessary complexity into the equally necessary simplifications with which we all live. It does so by describing some, just some, of the particular experiences that artists who have migrated to Europe from other parts of the world have been willing to share in conversations with me. The value of the stories that follow is that they are not representative of anyone other than the person to whom they belong. They stand only for the irreducible reality of each human being's lived experience and the value of that human being: an equal and non-negotiable dignity.



2 Deconstruction

Accept the unknown. There are no secondary characters. Each one is silhouetted against the sky. All have the same stature. Within a given story some simply occupy more space.

John Berger, 2011

Home

The lives of migrants do not necessarily begin any differently from those of other people, or at least not in ways that forewarn that migration will be part of their future. Zeliha Yurt, who would one day perform in community theatre in Holland, lived in rural Turkey until she was 15 years old. Her mother died in terrible circumstances when Zeliha was six; it was a loss she still bears. Afterwards, she was brought up by her grandparents, with two sisters; it was not, despite its trauma, an unhappy childhood. She had friends and had fallen in love with a local boy, when her father, who was working in Holland, told her that he was taking her there because he had arranged a husband for her.

Sardul Gill, who was born in the Punjab, also lost a parent at an early age: his father. He lived with his mother's family before moving to Amritsar for secondary school. There were no art lessons at school but he had already discovered a love of painting. He sought out local artists and talked with them about their work; whenever there was an exhibition in the city, he went. He matric-

ulated at 16 and the family decided he should go to Kenya, where his mother had been born, to work and help look after relatives there. For a teenager brought up in rural India, the cosmopolitanism of Nairobi at the close of the British Empire was an exciting shock. Sardul was open to the diverse cultures of Africans, Europeans, East African Asians and others. He continued painting and at nineteen, still without formal training, won first prize in a national art exhibition. The approval of judges from the University of Nairobi gave him the confidence to try for art college. His first thought had been to return to India, but his uncle sponsored him to go instead to England, where a sister was already settled. He arrived in 1964, with a portfolio of work that he soon learned was unfashionably figurative in the eyes of admission tutors. He was accepted on a graphic design course in Newcastle, for which his inexperience in abstraction was less of a hindrance. And he began another journey of discovery, in an England that was simultaneous withdrawing from its imperial vocation and reinventing popular culture for itself and the Western world.

Said M'Barki was born in Agadir in Morocco, four years after an earthquake killed 15,000 people and destroyed much of the city. By the time he began theatre studies at the university, Agadir had recovered its prosperity, its winter beaches popular with European tourists. Said discovered acting very young, at school and in the cinema, and had been encouraged by teachers. As a teenager, he formed his own theatre company and after his studies he developed a community drama practice that was an alternative to both Berber traditions of storytelling and the classical legacy of French colonialism.

'I worked with all kinds of people, the poor and the not so poor, people with psychological or psychiatric problems. I gave them time to speak and to listen.'

Said M'Barki

Growing up in 1950s Bermuda, Bill Ming's early years were much like those of other youngsters in a prosperous outpost of Britain's shrinking empire: family, fighting with his brothers, school, the beach, playing with friends and, always, drawing and making things with his hands:

'I was one of these little shy kids that couldn't talk much, but everything I saw, I just drew. My inspiration mostly came from American comics. I used to love drawing cowboys and Indians and making things for the kids in the neighbourhood. When I was going to school, at times of the year like Christmas or Easter, the teacher would call me out from assembly and I felt like the chosen one. She would get me to draw on the blackboard—rabbits, Santa Claus and all that, and maps in Bible Studies. I was the go-to guy. It really gave me some kind of confidence. Everything else I just wasn't very good at but art was always my number one thing.'

Bill Ming

And yet it did not occur to Bill, as a black Bermudian, that he could ever *be* an artist. The only artists exhibiting in the streets of Hamilton were white. He knew the casual discrimination of the day, when theatres, hotels and restaurants had separate seating for blacks and whites. His first job, as an offset printer's mate, brought him into contact with cruel, overt racism from an employer who knew how to humiliate his staff. Even so, the teenager kept drawing, making and writing. Inspired by the American radio stations that reached Bermuda from the East Coast, he wrote songs with a friend and sent them hopefully to publishers in New York. When he was asked to join their doo-wop group, the Key Notes, Bill was too shy: instead, he designed logos for their jackets.



Kaoru Bingham

European music has given the world many things, but its most popular, durable gift is an instrument invented in Italy 300 years ago which can now be found in every nook and cranny of planet Earth. It has no equivalent in any other culture, has an astonishingly broad repertoire and enjoys pride of place in virtually all forms of music. It is of course the piano.

Howard Goodall, 2000

A couple of decades later, in an ordinary town north of Tokyo, Kaoru Bingham was also dreaming of the West, of America.

'After the war we just absorbed Western culture and made it ours. We tended to admire all the Western things: blond hair and blue eyes—very, very beautiful. Kimonos at certain times of year, that's very nice, but in a young girl's head the dream is to wear that long dress, the Western thing. Also, to me, the scenery was just so beautiful and something I just didn't have.'

Kaoru Bingham

At her parents' instigation, she began studying the piano very young and, while she loved painting and reading, she knew she would be a pianist almost before she could think about it. The piano brought her into a more profound contact with European culture and especially the sublime peaks of Romanticism.

'I could read them only in Japanese, but I read what you call European classics, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Dostoyevsky and Proust. I loved it—I wanted to know, I wanted to read. No one ever said to me, "Kaoru, read this or read that," but I've got an older brother who was massively into the French—Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mauriac: that influenced me a bit.'

Kaoru Bingham

And underpinning all this immersion in Western culture, the daily contact with Chopin, Liszt and Schubert over the black and white keys of the European piano.

In Batman, a city in South Eastern Turkey, another girl was falling in love with a different music—the traditional tones and structures of Kurdish song. Mizgin Özdemir, the fourth of seven children, had contracted polio at the age of two. Unable to walk, she spent her days on a bed at home, listening to the radio while her siblings were in school. For a long period, having no crutches, she had to get about by crawling, an experience to which she ascribes the determination that has seen her through so much. Her disability meant that her parents did not expect her to marry or contribute to the family income, and so, if she missed out on education, she had more freedom and time than her sisters. Much of that was used to develop her singing and to learn to play the saz, the lute-like instrument that is central to music in the region, but is normally played only by men. The changed expectations caused by her disability meant that she was allowed to smoke



Mizgin Özdemir

(which her sisters were not) and to go out. At the age of 17, she was beginning to perform in public.

The Turkish authorities prohibited Kurdish music at the time, so her decision took courage. Before long, her beliefs were drawing her closer to art and politics: with a group of friends, Mizgin made music critical of Hezbollah in Kurdistan.

'There were four of us in the group at that time: one was writing the texts, one was playing the saz, one playing rhythm, and I was singing. In Batman perhaps 10 people were shot every day in 1992; some were my friends. We knew we were doing a dangerous thing when we made a recording. It was a kind of underground movement. The tapes were listened to by Kurds throughout Turkey.'

Mizgin Özdemir

Life would shortly become much more dangerous for Mizgin.

In Argentina, the political scene also tense for Elina Cullen, studying art at the Academy in Buenos Aires, during the period of the 'Proceso de Reorganización Nacional' known to others as the military dictatorship that ruled between 1976 and 1983. The Academy was damned by the regime as a nest of communists, lesbians and drug addicts and it used informers to try to uncover its demons. Elina's favourite teachers, those who valued critical thinking, were fired. Some of her fellow students simply disappeared. After graduating, Elina moved far from the capital, to Patagonia, and became an art teacher. At 26, she was divorced with two young children, but if things did not work out on the domestic front, in other ways she was very happy, loving where she was living and closely involved with an exciting group of artists making radical work in theatre and art.

Then people she had taken as friends began asking questions, making vague insinuations and putting pressure on her to change her way of life. Her ex-husband made claims on her property, and then for custody of her children. Legal procedures were instituted. She felt a horrible nexus of family, security and law starting to menace her. Arrested, she was beaten; brought before a judge, she was threatened: her children would be taken from her if she continued her work. She decided to leave.

Leaving

Australia: the young country for you and your children. Maybe you're seeking a new and exciting life—then Australia's the country with great opportunities and a great future. Maybe you want room to move, space to grow—Australia's the country for get up and go people. 700,000 Britons have already gone to Australia. If you simply must know more, see your local TV paper:

1960s TV advertisement for subsidised migration from the UK to Australia

The decision to leave home is never easy. In time of war, famine or insecurity, the pressure is intense and the choices between dangers, more or less unknown or incalculable, agonising. But whether they go in fear or hope, every migrant experiences the wretchedness of leaving family or friends, a home, a culture, an occupation, familiar sights, sounds, tastes and smells—in short, a sense of belonging.

Many who go with regret at what they are leaving also travel in hope towards a long-cherished goal. Among them are those who come to Europe in search of educational chances not available at home.

Looking for adventure, Bill Ming signed on with the *Queen of Bermuda*, cruising between New York, Liverpool and the Caribbean. He spent four years as a cook, with responsibility for soup. In shipboard magazines and on shore leave he discovered the work of black artists, writers and musicians who were invigorating the American scene. His hands and mind were always busy. But when the old ship was decommissioned, he found himself back in Bermuda, adrift in his mid-twenties. Determined to do something with his art Bill used his savings on a plane ticket to London. It was 1971.

In more recent years, the huge expansion both of higher education and the arts profession have made European universities attractive to young artists from across the world—and the high fees they are willing to pay make foreign students equally attractive to the continent's art schools.

Cleverson di Oliveira left his home in northern Brazil to study art in Antwerp in 2003. His course taught him a great deal about contemporary art; living in Belgium taught him a lot about himself. Lodged in an isolated house beside a wintery canal, he found those early months lonely, an experience that was thrown into sharper relief by his fellow students who knew little of Brazil be-

yond carnival and expected him to be ready to party at the first invitation. As time passed, he faced the greater challenge of sustaining an artistic practice while earning enough to live; it would be years before he found a way to flourish as an artist in his new home.

In 2000, Chien-Wei Chang came to London to train as a silversmith. He had worked in sales for Tiffany in Taiwan but wanted to become a maker himself. After preliminary studies at home, he applied to art schools in Britain, Germany and the USA. It was mere chance that the only college to offer him a place was in the UK. The move was not easy:

'To be honest, I really hated London. Everything was really old; it felt quite dirty as well. My first home stay was in a very industrial area in North London. We'd all watched the movies 'A Room With A View' and 'Howards End' in the 1980s: that was my impression of Britain, but it was totally different. And everything was very expensive and not really friendly. Actually, the first months I just wanted to go back. But I was 29 so I made this crucial decision to prove this was not an emotional move. I really wanted to do something with my life, so I chose to stay and try to prove the decision I made was right.'

Chien-Wei Chang

He did stick with it, completing his four year degree course and developing both craft skills and artistic ideas, moving from the more commercial aesthetic he had brought with him to ambitious, individual pieces exploring his evolving sense of identity. As a result, his career has flourished in Europe since he left college and, after 12 years, Chien-Wei has been granted British citizenship.

For others, it is a change in family circumstances that brings a change of country. At the age of 24, Said M'Barki fell in love with



a distant relative who had been living in Europe for more than a decade already. When they agreed to marry, they decided to make their life in the Netherlands, so Said's new wife dealt with the immigration procedures.

At about the same time, Mohan Rana met a young English architect who was spending a year in India. His own father had migrated to Delhi from the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, but family tradition locates their origins in the desert plains of Rajasthan. Mohan was writing regular columns on art exhibitions in Delhi and book reviews for Hindi dailies. He was also beginning to establish himself as a poet in Hindi, though his first book

was still some years in the future. When the new relationship became marriage Mohan's life took a path he had not anticipated. For 23 years he has lived and brought up his family in England, a country he had never previously visited.

Zeliha Yurt's life with her grandparents and sisters in Turkey was also interrupted by a prospective marriage, but not one of her choosing. The man her father had decided she should marry lived in Holland, so she left her home for a three-day journey across Europe in a VW Kombi with various relations, stopping only for food and to allow the two drivers to exchange places. She arrived at a foreign worker's hostel in Tilburg late one Saturday night. When she woke to see empty Sunday streets, she thought someone must have died. And on Monday morning she started work in a textile factory. Since she had no Dutch, no one bothered to try to explain anything: she was handed a broom and expected to know how to use it.

Sorrow. Deep melancholy. My affections
still with those I left behind. The world
seemed a great wilderness.

Ruth Padel, 2012

Other migrants leave in fear and travel in uncertainty.

Elina Cullen was lucky in one respect: she had an uncle who could help her get out of Argentina. The day before she was to return to court, Elina took her children out of school. Her uncle drove her to the border crossing into Uruguay, where they presented her cousins' identity papers, though the ages were wrong.

'At two o'clock in the morning, we crossed a border in the north, quite far from Buenos Aires. We were covered with a blanket and my uncle went out of the car and presented the papers. We were just under this

blanket, hoping that nobody would look too much. I put my daughter's hair up and gave her big gold earrings that 10-year-old kids wouldn't wear. So, we passed.'

Elina Cullen

Even in Uruguay, Elina was not safe. Her ex-husband learned where she was and she had to hide again, living for several months in a tent in Piriápolis with the children. As winter approached it became clear that this could not continue: a friend lent her the money for three airline tickets to Spain. From there, she made her way to Denmark, where she had a friend, but the official reception was chilly. Although she explained her situation, and applied for provisional residency, she was given 24 hours to leave the country. A quick marriage was the only way to avoid deportation to an uncertain fate. Through all this, she had been protecting her children as well as herself.

'It was a nightmare. I didn't know how to handle this situation with them. I was very afraid about what effects it would cause. I talked with a friend, a psychologist, who said "The truth is always the best. No matter how hard it is, it's something you can relate to". So I told them the truth the whole way through about what was going on.'

Elina Cullen

Abdoul Bour was born in Chad, where he lived with his family until his late teens. He studied anthropology at the University of N'Djamena and had a keen interest in style and dress. It was this that eventually helped him when war reached the capital in 1979 and the family fled. Abdoul made it to Bangui, in the Central African Republic, but was separated from everyone else.

When I became a refugee, I was alone. I was in another country and I didn't even know where my parents were. I was alone in a small room



Abdoul Bour

I rented. I wanted to go on to Congo or further south, but it didn't work out. As I was leaving, I met people who told me 'No—war is starting over there, towards Rwanda.' So I backtracked and stayed in the Central African Republic.'

Abdoul Bour

Casting about for a way to earn some money, Abdoul asked his landlady if he could use the rusty sewing machine that sat in the yard. He stripped it down, cleaned and fixed it, and tried his hand at doing small repairs for the neighbours. He had flair and his love of style soon showed itself. He did some work for a local police officer who was so pleased that he designated Abdoul his personal tailor and began to spread the word about him. He turned for help to a Senegalese tailor, learning how to make pockets and a hundred other tricks of the trade. Business grew and

he was able to employ seamstresses: he learned more by looking over their work at night, after they had gone home.

Abdoul would sometimes accept unpaid commissions from prestigious clients or do little jobs for nothing: as a refugee, it was important to have friends and even, perhaps, some protection among the local elite who came to dress themselves in his increasingly sophisticated styles. But such hopes were empty. Abdoul saw three insurrections during the 11 years he lived in Bangui, and each time rioters attacked his workshop. At the last assault, he'd had enough and took a friend's advice that things would be better in Togo. He left his sewing machines in Bangui, hoping to sell the business on, but never saw anything of it again.

Within a couple of years Abdoul Bour had built a new couture business in the coastal city of Lomé, again attracting wealthy clients and now beginning to sell some of his designs to outlets in Paris. But things turned sour in the instability that followed the death of President Eyadéma in February 2005.

'Some people came to the house to attack us. They said, "Ministers come here to get their clothes made, and ministers' wives, so you must have plenty of money—and on top of that you have a white woman." They stabbed and cut me in several places. That's when my partner decided that we had to go.'

Abdoul Bour

Abdoul's Dutch partner invited him to join her in Utrecht. A few weeks later he disembarked from an Air France flight to Paris holding a Refugee Passport with a visa from the Dutch Embassy in Ghana.

Here's the church and here's the steeple.
Open the door. They've burnt the people.

Jackie Kay, 1998

Bright Richards fled war in Liberia and Maher Khatib escaped from Lebanon: we will meet them both shortly. But other insecurities than war can force people into the no-man's-land of immigration control and asylum seekers' centres. Political oppression can lead someone to fear for their freedom or their life, and then any way out will do.

In 1980s Iraq, during the long war with Iran, Mahmoud Alibadi had repeatedly extended his studies at the University of Baghdad Academy of Fine Arts in an effort to avoid conscription. When it was no longer possible to continue as a student, he went underground, but was caught at a checkpoint by the military police. There followed periods of prison, release and re-arrest until eventually he was sent for basic training in the army. After six weeks he went absent without leave, determined to get away for good.

'I was very sure that if I get arrested, my life is finished. I made these false papers and I went to the Polish Embassy, which was almost the only one open in Baghdad in this period. I was very honest with the lady working there: I said maybe you have secret cameras recording me. I explained everything and I got sent to Poland. I was very lucky.'

Mahmoud Alibadi

In Poland, where he spent only two weeks, Mahmoud was offered a choice of going to Sweden or Denmark. He chose Denmark because he had read Kierkegaard and liked what he had seen of the artist Per Kirkeby in an art magazine at the Academy in Baghdad. There was no better reason to choose between two unknown countries: what mattered was that they were beyond the reach of the Iraqi security services.

At the age of 18, Mizgin Özdemir was living in Istanbul with her sister, supporting herself by singing at weddings and social functions. With no schooling, and speaking Kurdish at home, her com-

mand of Turkish was imperfect. It was only now that she set out to teach herself to read and write, an achievement of which she remains proud. Istanbul was a struggle and even the Kurdish music scene was not very welcoming. She did eventually find a record company who were interested in her music. The recording was done quickly: two or three rehearsals and then a take. The completed album eventually sold 100,000 copies, though it was the label that made the money. The consequences for Mizgin were much less fortunate.

She was arrested at a wedding where she had been hired to sing. The police had noticed how often her record label's poster adorned the homes they raided in search of Kurdish activists. Guilt by association earned her a week in a police cell, out of touch with family or friends. She was questioned intensively and has never forgotten being told by one of her interrogators that her life was not worth the price of a packet of potato chips.

When Mizgin was released, the police turned to her elder brothers and other relatives to put pressure on her to stop singing. She didn't leave home for two months, thinking that she would have to give up her music to protect her family, if not herself. She felt as if she could not breathe. Then someone said they could get her out of Turkey.

I gave him my ID papers and he came back some days later with a passport and a visa to Denmark—all false; I never went to the consulate. I'd never heard the name Denmark; I'd heard of Copenhagen before, but I didn't know that it was the same place. He said "You have a 10-day visa; you have to go now". It was hard to decide to go now or never, because my family meant everything to me. Through the weddings, I had some money for the flight and hotel, so I went to a travel agent and bought a ticket.'

Mizgin Özdemir

Arriving

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article I, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951

Quite recently, huge blue and white signs have appeared above the passport officers' desks in British airports bearing the words: UK Border. I was puzzled at first by this apparently pointless mark, whose equivalent I do not see in other countries. Then I wondered if this was perhaps a legal fiction that defines the arrivals halls as being outside the UK, much as embassy buildings are considered part of the territory of the countries they belong to rather than the country where they stand. So someone who was not allowed past the passport officer would not have to be deported, with all the legal niceties that might involve: since they had never entered the United Kingdom, they could simply be sent on their way as the responsibility of the airline that brought them to the doorstep.

I have stood at the borders of countries not specially inclined to favour the citizens of the European Union, but never in much doubt that, with a modest outlay of dollars and patience, the gate would open. How different is the experience of someone waiting with a weak or false passport, without the resources to go elsewhere and in terror of being sent back to the place they have fled. Almost everyone I spoke to had vivid memories of their first hours on European soil, whatever the circumstances that brought them.

Bill Ming did have a British passport, when he arrived at Heathrow Airport in 1971, but as a 'British Subject: Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies' he did not have automatic right of entry to Britain. The reception was not friendly:

'I said to them "I've come over here to study, to get into a college or school". But I had no letter, nothing like that. So they took me to the backroom boys. They really harassed me for about two and half or three hours—I can't remember. I just lost all sense of time. It was like the light on your head: 'You want a cigarette? No! You're not getting a cigarette.' I think they saw a black guy getting an education as a dangerous idea. Finally, they gave me a month to find a school or get the hell out.'

Bill Ming

Abdoul Bour had more basic communication problems at the Dutch border, despite his visa. As an African used to multilingual societies, he was shocked that a European police officer spoke only his own language. Indeed, he came to believe that the man could understand his French, but was making a point by refusing to communicate except in Dutch.

The only police that Mahmoud Alibadi met on his journey from Iraq to Denmark were at the Polish border, where a simple exchange of cash got him onto a ship to Copenhagen. It was a few days before Christmas 1992, and very cold.



Mahmoud Alibadi

'A driver saw me leaving the ship and he went to the office, I think to tell the police about me, but I took no chances and ran, ran, ran for 25 minutes, until I was almost in the city centre. I met Anita that same evening. I was standing just in the front of a gallery, one of the good galleries in the city, and she asked me if I liked the work. It was evening but because it was winter there were lights on. I did not know what she said to me but we could understand each other somehow and she helped me find the place where I could claim asylum. Later we became a couple and I moved into her place.'

Mahmoud Alibadi

Learning

Getting in is the end of a journey, even for those who do not intend or hope to stay permanently. It is the end of one journey and the start of another, not just into the territory of a new country, but also into its overwhelming and baffling culture. Mahmoud Alibadi had never been outside Iraq before, and his knowledge of Europe was literally mediated.

'I had this idea that everybody would open up and say "Welcome!"; I remember some places where I had that experience, but in general it was very difficult. There are lots of Danish artists fighting to get their projects done, and you realise there are many difficult things like language, culture and how to do things. You have to learn everything from the beginning like a little child of six.'

Mahmoud Alibadi

Eduardo Ponce Rangel remembers every moment of his first day in Europe, a young artist from Peru making his way to Paris in the 1970s. It was marked by a series of misunderstandings that left him dazed by the time he finally reached a friend's apartment in the 14th *arrondissement*, late that night. He had got himself from Luxembourg airport to the railway station and had managed to buy a ticket and find the right train; what he could not find was a second-class carriage. It was only after much confusion that he understood that he was entitled to sit in the smart compartment that, in Lima, would certainly have been reserved for First Class passengers. Then, wanting a sandwich, he'd had an incomprehensible and unpleasant encounter with the buffet staff about money in different currencies.

Finally, at the Gare de L'Est in Paris, he had asked a kind looking man for help in finding where he should go, showing him the slip of paper on which was written his friend's address. The man said nothing, but motioned him to follow. Uncertain what new

adventure he was embarking on, Eduardo trailed him into the metro, on and off trains, along passages and up escalators until they emerged into a big square, full of traffic. Still without a word the older man took the stranger down three or four streets before triumphantly pointing Eduardo to the door he was looking for. Refusing payment for his trouble, the man signed goodnight and went on his way. Only then did the Peruvian understand that the communication problem had been physical not cultural: his guardian angel was profoundly deaf and could not speak.

Everyone I met told of similar experiences, as they remembered the confusion of deciphering codes and symbols that others took for granted. Seiko Kinoshita had arrived in London for a month's intensive language study before going on to Nottingham where she was to study an MA in textiles. Like Eduardo, she had an unsettling arrival in the capital, which she found to be quite unlike the image she'd gained of Britain at home in Japan. She had an address in the East End, where a family was putting her up. Emerging from the Tube station, she found herself amongst people who didn't look much like the middle class English people she had imagined. When a Jamaican man opened the door of her temporary home, her first thought was that her hosts must be wealthy to have a manservant. As it turned out, she spent a very happy month with her African-Caribbean family.

Said M'Barki had a more embarrassing first day in Holland. His brother-in-law had got him a job as a cleaner, where he would be able to get by until he learned Dutch. Said went to the canteen for his break, as he'd been told, and found a table laid with food and coffee.

'In Morocco I'd heard that the Dutch people were really kind, so when I walked into that cafeteria I thought, "Hey, this is for me; this is really nice". I sat down at the table with the white tablecloth, and the other employees were at another table eating sandwiches with peanut



Said M'Barki

butter. I started cutting these lovely pies and the girls at the other table were laughing. I thought they were being friendly. I tried something from all the different pies. Then the boss comes in and starts talking to me in Dutch.'

Said M'Barki

The factory manager was not pleased to find the new cleaner helping himself to a buffet laid out for the imminently-expected mayor. There were angry words and much pointing and laughter from the other staff. Said fled in humiliation at having so badly misread the situation. He never went back.

A few days after his own arrival in Holland, Abdoul Bour had a frightening experience in a big railway station, when he lost sight of his partner. She didn't answer her mobile phone and no one he turned to spoke French; in his panic he even feared she might have brought him here to abandon him. His anxieties were

misplaced, of course: she had just left her phone at the house. But the feeling of being alone in an incomprehensible and unfriendly city stayed with him.

The struggles with the authorities did not help. Even with his Dutch partner and a lawyer's guidance, it was hard to understand the state's demands and harder still to satisfy them. Every concession had to be fought for. Getting access to language lessons was a struggle, though he was entitled to them. If he was unwell and failed to attend even one of the daily four hour sessions, a letter would arrive. In Dutch. He had brought a precious sewing machine from Togo, but he didn't dare set up as a tailor at home in case he was accused of working unlawfully.

'Every day, I lived in fear from this and many other things. I began to understand the meaning of stress, which I had never known in Africa. I became depressed. I lived like that for four years.'

Abdoul Bour

Abdoul found part-time work as a cleaner, like so many migrants. Prospective employers and academic course leaders dismissed his African diplomas and he learned not to bother showing them.

He was not alone in finding his skills and qualifications discounted in the European labour market, despite the supposed opportunities for skilled workers. When Isabel Duarte first came to Belgium, her career in journalism at home in Brazil meant nothing. The employment services only offered her cleaning jobs.

'There isn't much space for us here, especially in the jobs market, so we have to make twice, three times the effort to get a place, and even then we often don't succeed. We're under-employed, because we don't speak the language perfectly. But we have a whole spectrum of other knowledge and skills that are not valued—so that reduces us to... well, we don't have the same value.'

Isabel Duarte

Not everyone is looking for work or intends to stay permanently. Students, refugees and others may not know what their future holds when they reach Europe. Neither Seiko Kinoshita nor Chien-Wei Chang had expected to be living in Britain ten years after the end of their studies. In fact, for different reasons, both found it easier to earn a living in the UK's contemporary arts scene than at home in Japan and Taiwan. That may change of course, as it has for Eduardo Ponce Rangel, who returned to Peru after 25 years in France to set up a studio and gallery, first in the small southern town of Yanque and then in the Andean municipality of Urubamba, an hour from Cusco. Today, he divides his time between the country of his birth and the country where his artistic career was made, his exhibitions in each place owing something to the other.

When Maher Khatib finally got to Denmark, with that mix of courage and luck characteristic of many irregular migrants, he was just glad to be out of the war. He was 17 years old and had always lived in Lebanon although, as a Palestinian, he did not think of it as exactly 'home'. He did not anticipate that Scandinavia would become home either: it was a temporary refuge.

'As a young boy, I didn't think much about the future. I just thought, I'm away from Lebanon and the war—now try and get a new life; maybe I'll stay two years and go back. I stayed for 27 years. I did go back twice, but I couldn't feel at home there any more.'

Maher Khatib

The following year, his mother and father followed him to Denmark with the rest of the family, so there are only more distant relations in Lebanon today. It is in Denmark that Maher has made his life as a photographer, teacher and activist, and where he has brought up his own family. It is here that Maher Khatib,

like all the new Europeans I met, has found ways of rebuilding a life and offering his gifts to the society that is now home.

Back to London, across international time zones
I step out of Heathrow and into my future.

Bernadine Evaristo, 2009

Two poems

फिलिप्स का रेडियो

उस पर विविध भारती और समाचार सुनते घर पुराना हो गया
उसके साथ ही ऊँची नीची आवाजें कमजोर तरंगों
उसके नाँव भी खो गये पिछली सफेदी में
धूप में गरमाये सेल रात के अँधेरे में एकाएक
चुप हो जाते हैं समाचारों के बीच,
आईडहोवन की खुली सड़कों में तेज हवा से बचते गहर के बीच
खड़ी विशाल फिलिप्स कॉरपोरेशन की इमारत को देखता,
जेन्नाक्रॉसिंग पे खड़ा मैं सोचता,
क्या यह फिलिप्स का रेडियो है!

खग्रास

हमने की कोशिश अँधेरे को मिटाने की
हो गए मंत्रमुग्ध चमकते बल्बों की चींधियाहट से
कि नहीं दिखता कुछ भी उस चमकते अँधेरे में,
गढ़ा एक नया अँधेरा जिसकी रोशनी में मिटा दिया दिन को
बिड़की पे खींच कर पर्दा

तुम्हारी निराशा को अपनी कोशिश में
ठीक करते करते मैं भूल भी गया अपनी गलतियों को
अगर तुम्हें मिले वह आशा का चकमक पत्थर इस घुप्प में टटोलते,
बंद कर देना बत्ती कमरे से बाहर जाते हुए
देखना चाहता हूँ अँधेरे को तारों की रोशनी में
बंद आँखों के भीतर.

by Mohan Rana

Philips Radio

My home grew wizened on its Vividh Bharati
Its highs and lows, the fluctuating waves
Its knob has forsaken us in our last whitewash
Cells heated in the sun turn silent by nightfall
In between the headlines

Cowering from the rough wind in the open streets, at the heart of Eindhoven
I stand near a large building of Philips Corporation
I walk the zebra-crossing ponderingly
Is it our Philips Radio!

English version by Arup K. Chatterjee, 2012

Eclipse

Trying to overcome the dark,
we become dazzled by shining bulbs.
Nothing is visible in this glowing darkness,
We have made a new darkness in whose light
we blotted out the day,
drawing a curtain across the window.

Trying to cure your despair
I forgot even my miscalculations.
If you do find the flint of hope
as you fumble in this profound darkness,
turn off the light as you leave the room,
so I can see the dark starlight shine
behind my closed eyelids.

English version by Bernard O'Donoghue and Lucy Rosenstein, 2010



3 Reconstruction

Each story is about an achievement, otherwise there's no story. The poor use every kind of ruse but no disguise. The rich are usually disguised until they die. One of their most common disguises is Success. There is nothing to show for achievement except a shared look of recognition.

John Berger, 2011

After the earthquake that ruined the Moroccan city of Agadir in February 1960, King Mohamed V is reputed to have declared that if destiny had destroyed Agadir, its reconstruction depended on faith and will. Although not all migrant artists see their homes destroyed, they are all obliged to begin building in a new place with a handful of personal possessions. Given the obstacles many had to overcome before that process can even begin, they are lucky to have not just faith and will but creative talent as well.

Making art

Requirements for leave to enter the United Kingdom as a writer, composer or artist: 232. Deleted on 30 June 2008 by paragraph 17 of Statement of Changes HC 607 except insofar as relevant to paragraph 238. Please see Appendix F for the wording of these Rules in a case in which they are relevant.

UK Border Agency, 2013

Bright Richards is an actor and writer from Liberia. He knew what he wanted to do by the time he was 12 years old, though his parents advised that art would not make him rich. They



Bright Richards

changed their minds by the time his career had brought the success of a popular comedy show for national TV.

It's not so strange, because we had just one television station and the show was in prime time, twice a week. So, after the President, you're the next person on television. Many people don't want to see the President because they know his story; he's saying the same thing every time.'

Bright Richards

The civil war had started but was still far from the capital. It was censorship rather than violence that affected Bright's work, but he enjoyed the challenge of learning how to express himself within the codes. As the situation worsened, though, this life became unsustainable and he sought the protection of a refugee camp. It was a horrible experience. Fighting continued; people

died. Eventually, he was able to secure a passage out. He didn't know and didn't care where he was going. It was at least safe from rockets and random death.

In the Liberian camp, Bright Richards had used his creative skills, putting on comedies, doing photography, selling work—always trying to forget war and help others forget about it too, for a little while. In the Netherlands, safe albeit with an uncertain future, his need to create, engage with ideas and find new audiences became a dominant concern and a route to renewal. He took encouragement from a fellow refugee.

'There was a guy I met in one of the refugee camps, from Afghanistan; a very interesting guy. He would wake up in the morning and he would buy himself a rose. He would put it in a glass. He doesn't have much money, but he buys himself a rose every day and puts it in a glass. It's so nice. I was so inspired by him because he said: "If there's nobody to give me a rose, I will give myself a rose." Maybe that's part of my own policy. If nobody's willing to give me a stage, that means I have to create a stage.'

Bright Richards

Holland was a culture shock for Bright in every way: language, social norms, performance codes and then, as he began to understand things better, the unwritten, unspoken assumptions that shape every society. He bought a pair of clogs, the old wooden shoes that are an icon of the Netherlands, and wore them for almost three years. A friendly African in clogs was a talking point in the street and people seemed to welcome this symbolic effort at belonging. In the offices where migrants spend days negotiating with bureaucracy, officials smiled and became helpful.

He wore the clogs when he went for an audition at the Theatre School, but it was his talent that got him a place, despite his still shaky command of Dutch. The three year course was a lesson

in integration, as he tried to learn about a new performance style without losing his own.

'There's a different way people express emotions, in African society and in Dutch society. I have a very different interpretation. When we were doing Hamlet, people say he's having a psychological problem. I would say no—in the African tradition, when you die and somehow your mother is involved in the death, that means, in the tradition, the oldest son would become crazy. This very different interpretation was quite challenging for both the tutors and the institution.'

Bright Richards

Unsurprisingly, Bright soon began to look for his own ways of making theatre that could speak to Dutch audiences without requiring him to turn his back on the culture, knowledge and traditions he had brought with him from West Africa.

Aziz Aarab, who was born in Morocco but spent his childhood in Holland, found his subject in everyday life. As a child he envied the toys of his Dutch friends, from smaller families with better-paid parents. He saw that the only white person in his school was the teacher, and he lived the fights that sometimes flared with teenagers from the other school. He watched the Dutch residents move away from his Utrecht neighbourhood. And he grew up with a love of words, of music and art, and, particularly, of the American comedians who showed how you could talk about all these things, even the sharpest, and make people laugh: Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor and Chris Rock.

'They were a mirror reflecting to their own people, the black community in America. You can go to a church or a mosque and listen to the preacher preaching, but if it's not funny enough maybe you will fall asleep. They do the same thing, but they do it with comedy. That's what I liked about it, and I wanted to translate the



'American comedy to the situation here, because we are the African Americans of Holland.'

Aziz Aarab

When a local theatre showed no interest in offering the teenage comedian his first gig, Aziz hired the place for the evening and promoted himself. His father, who had always pushed him towards business like his brothers and sisters, was not impressed, but he changed his mind when his son cleared €500 for half an hour's work, after costs. The show was about the life of Moroccans in Holland, the misunderstandings on both sides and the absurdities of everyday life. Aziz was unafraid to approach religion, though he focused on what people did rather than what they believed. Once he went too far and offended a Hindu spectator: it was a lesson in understanding boundaries. He had already learnt how to handle things when a joke fell flat and the adrenalin rush he got from real laughter. Looking back, Aziz believes that his fa-

ther's business skills and clear sense of what matters in life gave him the confidence to invest in a career as a comedian.

I think that is a lesson that I learned from my father. He always said to us "Even if you fall six times to the ground, stand up and try it again. Money isn't everything". What will happen if I lose the money? Are they going to kill me? Will I go to jail? No. It's a risk, but that's life.'

Aziz Aarab

After school, Aziz did business studies, worked in a bank and then took on a small restaurant, but he continued to perform and, above all, to write. He threw himself into turning a long story he had written at school into a novel. *Drerrie*—Moroccan slang for boy—tells the story of young Moroccans growing up in Holland, of their families and the community they live in. Aziz spent time talking to people, including some of those who had been at school with him and were now in prison, to understand better the multi-dimensional reality of immigrant experience. As with his entry into comedy, he preferred independence, turning down conditional offers from publishers in favour of producing the book himself.

Drerrie was well received, with two reprints, each one paid for with the income from previous sales. Aziz has been invited to speak in schools and prisons and featured in the media. But he has often had to explain that *Drerrie* is a novel, not a piece of reportage from a territory its readers may know only by reputation.

'Dutch people always ask me "Is this really true and is that you?" They all think that I'm talking about myself. It's like one plus one for them. They see me as a Moroccan writer who is defending his culture. But it's just a novel, it's a story—it could be Harry Potter. That's the thing I don't like about it, because each time I have to explain: no, it was fiction.'

Aziz Aarab

In Denmark, Mahmoud Alibadi was lucky with his asylum application: granted permission to stay in just six weeks, he was soon making a new life. He found a shared studio space and began painting again, using wood from building sites. His first exhibition was in a group show of selected foreign artists living in Denmark. Uncertain of the right address, he got there late on the opening night to find seven of his paintings had already sold. He invested the proceeds in good canvases and paints. After that first show, there were always galleries willing to show his work and Mahmoud was able to live from his art.

Even so it was difficult to find his way in the Danish cultural scene, which had few parallels with what he had known in Iraq. It was a long time before he understood the different approaches of commercial and non-commercial galleries and felt he could make the right choices about his own work. With limited access in Iraq to contemporary art discourse, he initially felt out of touch with thinking and criticism in Denmark. At the same time, he longed for more serious critique of his work, so that he could improve and begin to feel part of that discourse.

It took Bill Ming much longer to become established as an artist in 1970s Britain. He did finally get a place on an art foundation course in a small provincial college, studying at the same time for the school certificates he'd missed out on in Bermuda. Not allowed to work in Britain, he had to go home each summer to earn money for another year in college. When he finally got to art school to do a degree course, he was confronted with an academy with no interest in the black African and American influences he was working with.

'The tutors, particularly these young guys from London, used to go to the pub lunchtimes and have a belly full of beer, and then they'd have a tutorial. They'd give me a hard time about my work, about

everything. I can take criticism, but when they start to go through my notebooks and read my poetry out loud and laugh at it...'

Bill Ming

One of the lecturers, who has since become a well-established figure, wrote an assessment that still angers him, 35 years later:

'He wrote "Bill's work is all right, but I look forward to meeting him again when he accepts the culture that surrounds him". I was doing things about my heritage—using plants, looking at food, I was looking at African art. When I discovered Picasso used African art I thought I might as well go directly to the source. I was using my background because everybody else was just doing European stuff. I was the only black guy in there. So I decided to just fuck everybody off and said, "You're telling me these things and yet here you are, you know nothing about me, my history." I was older than most of these guys—but I just wanted to learn.'

Bill Ming

The lesson he was being given was perfectly clear to Bill: he should conform to the college's idea of a black artist. He didn't take it then—or since.

Sardul Gill, who had been steered into graphic design by his college tutors because of his skill in drawing, had to find a different route into the fine art that he actually wanted to do. Frustrated by the constraints of commercial design, he retrained as a teacher and found fulfilling work in education as well as time to develop a career as an artist. After a first exhibition in his local library, Sardul was invited to be part of a group show with other non-European artists, organised by the local authority. He was conscious of the danger of being trapped in a kind of ethnic ghetto, where his work was used to demonstrate the right-thinking of cultural managers rather than for itself.



Sardul Gill

'That expectation was there, unless people had seen your work. You could feel it quite easily, but I rejected that all the time, whenever the situation arose. Yes, you could feel the pressure of it. But it didn't affect me mentally, because I am too strong. I never felt I needed to produce work that basically looks Indian. I never felt that.'

Sardul Gill

At the same time, Sardul recognises that his experience, sensibility and philosophical outlook all contribute to a creativity that is different to those of artists born and brought up in the dominant English culture. His work is now quite abstract, drawing inspiration from science and the natural world, but it remains, for him, an expression of his life and its changing cultures.



Seiko Kinoshita

Seiko Kinoshita had come to study art textiles in Britain partly to explore European ideas of art and design. She had been keen to move on from the disciplined aesthetics that shaped her studies and subsequent work in Japan and she was drawn to ideas in English textiles. In the early months, she flung herself into this new artistic language, taking inspiration also from tutors working in ceramics and fine art, as well as textiles. But over the years, as she has assimilated both her heritage and the new culture she encountered in the British contemporary art scene, she has returned to some of the aesthetic ideas of Japan.

'I wanted to be different. I think that's why I was really trying too hard. But since I've been settled here, I feel freer, because I don't need to be very different. People see I am different anyway. Whatever I do, very strangely, people think that it's very Japanese. I don't think that at all; I think I can be more natural in choosing colour or the design—more spontaneous, following nature. That's my challenge: using traditional techniques to make something new.'

Seiko Kinoshita

Seiko's work has gradually adopted new materials, such as paper that can be woven and folded, and she has been successful in exhibitions and public art commissions. But it was school workshops that gained her an income after she graduated. She had returned to Japan but, without connections or a wealthy family, it was impossible to earn a living as an artist. So began a series of visits to Britain, where her reputation was growing, but she could only get short stay visas. Fortunately, she was in demand from schools keen to give children meaningful experiences of cultural diversity, so she could prove that there was work for her that other artists could not offer. Time after time, she explained to British embassy officials that she was contributing to the education system in a unique and valuable way, and she would be granted a working visa for another year or two.

Even so, it was wearing to have to return regularly to Japan to apply once again for a visa and wait for permission to return. It was equally wearing to have to satisfy the authorities in England, to appeal against poor decisions, and to be treated in the end like a fraudster or a criminal. And all the time to wait.

"Gentle Rain' is an old work I was making for the visa situation. I knew English people don't like rain, but sometimes you really are depressed about a situation that's nothing to do with yourself. It's out of your hands: you just have to pray you get a visa. One day I was crying, really because I didn't know what I could do about it. I realised that rain was not always unpleasant, because sometimes, then, I hated sunny days. On sunny days people in England are happy and I thought, "Everybody in the world is happy except me." So I was much more comfortable with a rainy day. I looked out the window from my studio and thought that rain could be quite healing. If it rains, it brings you a kind of quietness. That's why I was saying that rain could be gentle for me.'

Seiko Kinoshita

Although Mizgin Özdemir had fled Istanbul for the right to express herself in music, she arrived in Copenhagen without her saz. On crutches, she had been unable to carry anything but a small bag. In the uncertainty of flight, she was not even sure whether she was coming for a holiday or whether she was really making a permanent change in her life: her brother had advised her to decide once she was there. A contact from the Kurdish cultural centre met her and took her to the refugee centre in Sandholm that would be her home for the next year and a half.

'I was trying to find connections, and I was told to go to a cultural centre the Red Cross had at the time. I met a lot of people. It was a beautiful place. It was my university, this cultural house, a really very good place.'

Mizgin Özdemir

There she met Hungarian and Iranian musicians and, despite the language barriers, they made friends and began to play together. Musicians from Africa, Armenia and elsewhere would sit in, exchanging melodies, rhythms and ideas. Five months later, a friend of a friend of a friend brought Mizgin's saz to Copenhagen. One of the songs she wrote about this time includes the lyric:

'My saz, my saz, you have such a beautiful voice. When I put you on my lap, you become part of me, my saz.'

Mizgin Özdemir

Having her instrument again was just the beginning of a long struggle to find a place in the Danish musical scene. Mizgin felt that, while Danish musicians were often open to music from Africa or Latin America, they had little interest in Kurdish music. Audiences were very receptive when she could get a chance to play, but the programmers and institutions remained largely indifferent to her. And not only to her: many of the musicians she

met at the Red Cross centre were gifted instrumentalists but with no training in European music traditions they could not get work in Denmark. Ten years later, Mizgin knows several who have given up playing as a result, and now work only as labourers or in menial jobs.

'Many musicians and artists from abroad come here. They die creatively because nobody wants to listen to them. They're like flowers with no water. I met one guy at the Red Cross who played the duduk wonderfully. It was two years before I met him again; I said "How are you, what are you doing, what about the music?" He said, "Music finished, years ago." I also know a guy from Holland who sang opera beautifully. He came from Iran to Kurdistan. He's finished. He went crazy because he could not find a place. It's Europe—there is not too much respect for musicians.'

Mizgin Özdemir

In Belgium, the young Brazilian art student, Cleverson de Oliveira, lived through similar struggles, as he tried to survive both financially and creatively after graduating.

'As an immigrant, I felt did not have much space or means to develop my art here, especially as the priority for someone in my situation is to fight for life. And as time passes, your priorities change; I did lots of other things that gradually destroyed my artistic side. But the artist's soul was still there, despite submission to repetitive labour, despite the burden of difference. And it is in the same everyday existence that you find ways of resisting and making space for freedom and creativity.'

Cleverson de Oliveira

Cleverson's chance to get back to creating art came when, after several years of just working to survive, he discovered Arte N'Ativa, a voluntary association promoting Brazilian art in Brussels. He began to offer art workshops to young people and returned

to painting with an exhibition of portraits of the great figures of Brazilian music—Gilberto Gil, Chico Buarque, Joao Bosco and Elis Regina. His most recent success was an exhibition of art made from recycled materials, held in March 2013 at the Brazilian Consulate in Brussels.

Mizgin's chance came through Tavse Stemmer (Missing Voices), a small non-profit organisation supporting women musicians in Denmark. Once she had a platform, Mizgin began to make a name for herself. She got two small grants from the Danish Arts Council and a prize from the Refugee Council, which helped raise her profile, as well as providing material support. Although it is still hard to make a living, Mizgin is happy with her music and life in Denmark. She has married a fellow musician and they have a young daughter: what matters now is the pleasure of daily life and creating music in a new network of solidarity.

Making space

'You have to find a way to survive in this society that didn't actually invite you to come. You have to understand full well, "I have something to offer". I just want this society not to forget me. I don't want to forget myself, I really don't. It's very easy to let that artist in you die, especially within this society and that's my struggle. I don't want that to die.'

Bright Richards

Artists who come from a non-European culture often face challenges from the art establishment of their adopted countries that European artists are not confronted with. The most basic, but also the most ambiguous, problem is that of recognition. Artists who do not have the signifiers of legitimacy—going to the right university, working for the right producer, exhibiting in the right galleries—can struggle for acceptance even if they work within

a wholly Western contemporary art aesthetic. Such tokens of authority—cultural passports—are often used by gatekeepers to protect themselves from having to make, and defend, actual judgements of value. It is the art world's form of essentialism.

How can a foreign artist know if their work is rejected because it is not good enough or because of prejudice? Neither answer is good, but they have very different implications. And on what basis is the judgement of quality made, if the work is in an aesthetic and cultural tradition unfamiliar to the person making it? We can only interpret art from within the context of our existing knowledge, experience and taste. None of us is objective, but does everyone have the integrity to accept that reality and, accepting it, to test its limitations?

After he graduated Chien-Wei Chang began trying to get his work into London's craft galleries. He visited each one with a case of samples and met with some success, but also some resistance.

'I got some galleries to take it, but at that time my work still had an Eastern look. In one very famous gallery, the owner really liked it but he said, "Chien Wei, I think your work is probably not good for the UK market. It's probably better you just get back home and work there.'

Chien-Wei Chang

Bill Ming also feels that the British art world has often failed to see beyond form. As a sculptor, he produced pieces in media ranging from bronze to found objects, but wood carving has been a consistent strand of his practice. Bill believes that many curators see work in wood as folk-art at best: unsophisticated and naïve.

'Some have responded positively, but a lot of time they just see me as an outsider. They would actually like to go somewhere else, to Africa, where they could pick up all this craft and put it in museums. I think they want to see Black art, even Black artists, in museums—not out

there in the galleries. That's what we are: we're like curios and museum pieces.'

Bill Ming

Aziz Aarab often felt cornered by other people's ideas of his work. It is not unusual for a publisher to suggest changes in a first novel, but those he approached wanted only changes that made *Drerrie* fit in with western clichés of Muslim culture. One thought a passage about a young man who returns to his faith in jail was too positive. Another felt that a father should be more restrictive towards his teenage daughter. A third simply wanted more sex in the book. Aziz chose to protect his text's integrity by publishing it himself, but the clichés reappeared in some of the media interviews he did to promote it.

'A journalist said, "I read the book and it looks like you are glorifying this character who's a criminal." I looked at him and said, "Did you really read the whole book, carefully?" He said, "No, I have to say, I just read a few pages." I said, "Then don't ask me the question if you don't know what you're talking about. If you read the whole book you'll see that crime doesn't pay.'

Aziz Aarab

Another reporter was not much interested in Aziz as a writer or a comedian. His story was just that it was a miracle to meet a Moroccan doing something positive.

In Denmark, Elina Cullen has struggled with other difficulties in challenging what she sees as an increasingly intolerant environment. Her artistic work has often taken a critical position towards dominant social and political values—which, of course, situates it in the centre of contemporary Western art. That freedom of expression is one of the European values that are often held up to the rest of the world. But as someone who has sought

refuge in Europe, Elina feels she is often expected to moderate her critique in gratitude for the protection she has been granted.

'They like to criticise the rest of the world, telling them how to do things better. But don't dare to say anything to them. They tell me, "It's not so bad for you, you're not black enough and you're not a Muslim" or "If you don't like it here, why don't you leave?"'

Elina Cullen

Mahmoud Alibadi has sometimes faced similar criticism. A work he exhibited in 2009, which touched on sensitive questions of identity and rights, attracted widespread media attention. Throughout, commentators always described him as an 'Iraqi-Danish' artist, as if to signal a contingency in his art that diminished its right of free expression. At the same time, conservative Muslims are sometimes critical of his Western manner and silence about his religion, while the far right has not held back either. It is not an easy position for an artist to be in.

'I don't want enemies; I want friends. But I think the big thing is ignorance—as human beings we make our own problems with ignorance: my biggest enemy is myself.'

Mahmoud Alibadi

Mahmoud has found allies though, within and beyond the arts world. Other artists I met also expressed gratitude to active supporters in their new countries, people working to secure a place for non-European artists. Mizgin would have found it much harder without the support of Tavse Stemmer, which helps non-European women musicians develop the skills and knowledge to succeed in the Danish arts economy. It was founded in 2009 by Annette Bellaoui, an experienced promoter who had become frustrated by the indifference to world music among her colleagues.

'It is really, really hard to get the various cultural institutions to see them as real artists and not as a curiosity. They are sometimes almost pitied. I mean, you really have to force people to come and watch them.'

Annette Bellaoui

In addition to prejudice on the local music scene, some women musicians also faced opposition from traditionalists who believe that Muslim women should never 'exhibit' themselves, either as people or as artists. Annette had seen video of Mizgin performing and, when she could not interest any of her contacts, she decided to take action directly. Tavse Stemmer was the result and four years on there are about 45 artists from seven countries affiliated to the group.

'The main thing is to create a forum for women with non-European backgrounds and to give them opportunities to pursue a career as artists, if that is what they want, if they have the talent and the ambition and the will. I'm not a magician and I don't hand people things on a plate. I sort of show them the way and say, "Okay, the rest is up to you".'

Annette Bellaoui

Through her contacts with musicians, promoters, journalists and the funding system, developed over years in the music scene, Annette helps migrant musicians to find ways in, get known and build their reputations. Access to training and promotion enables women to survive as freelance artists in a competitive environment. Without such constructive but not uncritical support, fewer musicians would make the transition that Mizgin Özdemir has achieved from singing at weddings to performing in concert halls.

While there are comparable organisations in other countries, they are few and they often exist in a borderland of their own, between the non-European artists they exist to help and a cul-

tural sector that is not always keen to share its resources. Public funding tends to be small and insecure. Sometimes it must be won from social rather than cultural budgets. Tavse Stemmer gets irregular funds from the Danish government and bodies like the Musicians Union, but it is run by volunteers. Cultural funds have been reduced in most European countries in the recession but even in the boom years before the 2008 banking crash, very little found its way to artists working outside the elite forms of European culture. Some crumbs fell from the table, a little charity was distributed. But it was very unequal and, lacking salt, could be hard to swallow.

In Tavse Stemmer, non-European musicians in Denmark had the support of friends who understood and were part of the local music scene. In other cases, migrant artists have organised their own associations and networks.

Isabel Duarte founded the Arte N'Ativa Brasil in 2007, when she returned to Brussels with her Belgian husband, some ten years after her first stay in the city. The association was established to find a local outlet for the craft jewellery made by women in north-eastern Brazil, where Isabel was originally from. It has since grown into a thriving cultural and social association working simultaneously to overcome the isolation felt by many Brazilians in Brussels and to promote awareness of their culture among other residents of the capital. Those for whom the organisation is now a centre of cultural life include Cleverson de Oliveira.

'I've been involved since June 2011 and I feel nurtured by this atmosphere that's conducive to art, joy and the freedom to create. I can fulfil my artistic knowledge without fear of judgment or rejection, diving into the pleasures of living together that nourish my roots and strengthen my wings.'

Cleverson de Oliveira



Isabel Duarte, François Matarasso & Cleverson de Oliveira

Arte N'Ativa—the Brasil suffix was dropped after a few years, to signal the group's inclusive intent—now promotes concerts, dance workshops, and other cultural events at MicroMarché in the city centre, attracting heterogeneous audiences in a multinational city. The experience has transformed Isabel's relationship with her adopted city and country, giving her a strong sense of purpose.

'I feel I have a place as an active citizen responsible for changing my own reality. It's as if I'm fulfilling my mission here. I no longer feel like someone who is here to rehearse all the things the system expects of immigrants. What changed for me was that I rediscovered the value I had when I left my country. Even though the language is different, and there are different cultures to connect with, I've done that by showing what I could already do, not by leaving it to one side like unnecessary baggage.'

Isabel Duarte

Making conversation

Intercultural Dialogue is a series of specific encounters, anchored in real space and time between individuals and/or groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, with the aim of exploring, testing and increasing understanding, awareness, empathy, and respect. The ultimate purpose of Intercultural Dialogue is to create a cooperative and willing environment for overcoming political and social tensions.

Platform for Intercultural Europe, 2008

The EU designated 1997 the European Year against Racism and Xenophobia and 2008 the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Such initiatives are largely symbolic, but symbols can be telling signals of current preoccupations. Could it be that the change from being *against* racism to being *for* dialogue marks a new openness within European public space, a recognition of the legitimacy of the voice of the other? Perhaps. But nationalist and xenophobic politics are building across the continent and the continuing economic crisis undermines post-war progress in these areas that once seemed secure.

Intercultural dialogue happens between people, not states or parties. It happens all the time in diverse societies, in schools and libraries, workshops, offices and shops, on buses and on the radio, in cafés and in art centres. It happens from necessity and choice, with varying levels of commitment and varied results. It is, at one level, just the everyday business of living together.

Simply in creating work and seeking audiences, artists often find themselves engaged in a rich, self-aware practice of intercultural dialogue. Like Bright Richards with his clogs, artists living in countries with different cultures from their own have little choice but to reach out, to try to understand and to explain.

When Mohan Rana's first poetry collection, *Jagah (Dwelling)*, was published in Delhi in 1994, he had already been living in Britain for four years. His poetry had come under the influence of a new geography and he had to find ways of translating European experiences into Hindi poetry.

'I was trying to write something about the space I was in—the landscape, the ambience—but the language I was familiar with had no relation to it, because it was from north India. You come across landscape like a Scottish peat bog—we don't have peat bogs in India; we have areas where there is salt marsh, and mud flats, but they are not bogs like there are in the Scottish Highlands. I stayed for almost four months in the Isle of Skye: so when I'm trying to write that I'm walking on a bog, how do I write it so that the person who is reading in India, in Delhi or somewhere in Bihar, can visualize this, hear and feel a walk in the peat bogs in Hindi, the language I knew and lived and worked with? It was—and still is—a creative challenge that has helped me to develop my own style.'

Mohan Rana

The seven volumes Mohan has now published in India, and which have made him a noted poet of his generation, have all had to negotiate this challenge of using the language of one place and culture to write about experiences that have often happened in very different places and cultures. Over time, Mohan's poetry has become more abstract and more personal as a result, partly reflecting what he sees as the functional character of the English he uses every day. The language that is the medium of his art is internal, coming to life when he is writing; on his regular visits to India, the language of poetry becomes external once again.

'Language is like a river, which perpetually flows while it is being topped up by the streams and tributaries of a socio-cultural biosphere. However, I am not in this ideal situation. The river of



Mohan Rana

language is not flowing on the surface for me: it flows underground and deep within. Day to day, I inhabit and interact with English, which is not the language of my poetry. I live in a world of multiple languages at the same time. I feel I am not just an émigré of latitudes but that I cross frontiers of language on a daily basis. When I am writing, I am in a space in my mind where a voice awakens from her dream—I translate that into a poem. While compiling my last collection 'Ret ka Pul' (Bridge of Sand) I wrote a poem in which I expressed 'Bhakha Maha Thugni Hum Jaani', pointing to the illusory power of language. It is the great trickster. I have few words in my lexicon; therefore, silence becomes an essential and core experience for me. I believe poetry is not in the words on the paper but within the reader. The reader is the writer of the poem.'

Mohan Rana

In 2011, after more than 20 years in Britain, Mohan Rana published his first work in English, a chapbook of twelve poems

translated by Bernard O'Donoghue and Lucy Rosenstein. For the first time, he has been able to take a place in the literary culture of the country where he has now lived almost half his life, giving readings in Hindi and English at festivals and events. The Poetry Translation Centre, which financed and published the work, was established in 2004 to help overcome those language barriers that can make it so hard for non-European writers to open a dialogue with and in Europe. At the same time, Mohan feels that his relationship with his home culture has changed, at least in how others perceive it:

'For the past few years, in print, online commentaries and reviews, I have noticed in the mainstream discourse of Hindi poetry in India, that I am classed as a Hindi Pravasi (diaspora) poet, because I am not living in the geography of Hindi, that is not resident within the physical borders of India. I think a writer as a person can be an émigré, but not his writing. I imagine myself to be world citizen but I wonder sometimes: can I be truly a global citizen who lives by universal values, while everyday global reality keeps reminding me of my own lines, in The Cartographer, "As geography changes its borders, fear is my sole companion".'

Mohan Rana

Visual artists and musicians do not face such obstacles. Eduardo Ponce Rangel, Sardul Gill and Elina Cullen, emerging or established artists in the lands of their birth, have found space as artists in the European countries where they now live. Their work is shaped by culture and identity, as well as by their ideas and life experiences, but in subtle and varied ways. The work of each, and of thousands of other artists who have migrated to Europe, adds a different accent to an artistic language undergoing rapid evolution.



Some European countries have taken steps to adjust to that evolution, and the wider societal changes it is part of, by ensuring that young people have access to a range of cultural experiences. Since many schools now educate children of widely different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, this serves not only to familiarise the next generation with more of the culture they are growing up in, but also, in some cases, to validate the cultures of the children themselves. Bill Ming, who has led sculpture workshops in British schools for 30 years, believes that it is important for young people to work with non-European artists.

'You get these kids at a young age—Black, White, Asian, Chinese or whatever—they see what we can do. This is a new generation that's coming up. They see us as one of them, that we're sharing our art, we can all grow together. We can have a good time with that, take it where we want to go. That's one of the main reasons why I went into schools—to let kids see that we are people too. We can be creative and they can learn from us and we can learn from them. At the end of the week they won't let me leave sometimes.'

Bill Ming

In their different ways, Said M'Barki and Aziz Aarab both use their artistic skills to engage young people of North African origin who are growing up in the Netherlands. In 2007, Aziz started working at a cultural centre in the Kanaleneiland district of Utrecht, one of 40 neighbourhoods in Holland designated by the Ministry of Housing as requiring special attention. Three out of four residents are not of Dutch ethnic origin: one of those who left is Geert Wilders, now an MP and leader of the Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom). Aziz wanted other young people, and especially those from disadvantaged immigrant backgrounds, to have the kind of opportunities for self-expression that had transformed his own future.

Under his leadership, the Kanaleneiland cultural centre has become an ambitious focal point for talented young people. There is a weekly programme of music, dance, rap and art workshops, a recording studio and rehearsal rooms for hire. The tuition is always by professionals and the deal is that, eventually, the young students have to perform to others, whether it is at the centre or elsewhere.

'If you follow rap lessons here, at the end of the road you're supposed to play, to get on stage. We are always looking for different stages in the city, in the country. When we see somebody is ready then we will send them there. We teach them also that they can make money with their talent.'

Aziz Aarab

Said M'Barki has spent much of the past twenty years making theatre with young people and others in the local community. Though it has never paid well enough for him to be able to do it full time, his theatre practice has been very rewarding. He has developed plays that explore everyday issues of concern to the young people he is working with. Said has also performed in professional and community theatre, and in films such as the recent

hit, *Rabat*, though he always plays Moroccan characters. He has got used to being told, by Moroccans, that he acts well for a Moroccan. But he also knows that what matters is a good story.

'Whenever I perform Dutch people will see a Moroccan first. Once I start acting, people gradually see me as a character, because the problems I'm facing could also be those of a Dutch person. Then they see me as a human being, not as a Moroccan.'

Said M'Barki

The visibility on European stages and TV of performers like Said M'Barki, Bright Richards, Aziz Aarab and Mizgin Özdemir is in itself an important representation of diversity. 'Colour-blind casting' has become more common in British theatre, with black actors like Adrian Lester and Chuk Iwuji playing English kings in Shakespeare, but it does not happen without comment.

Seiko Kinoshita also enjoys her work in schools and values the opportunities it brings to introduce children to Japanese ideas, aesthetics and stories. She takes the same approach to exhibitions and public art commissions, looking for connections between the cultures of England and Japan. Her work is often about common human experiences, like the weather, and how people respond to them differently in the two countries. But sometimes it raises more sensitive questions: in 2009 she made an abstract piece called 'Yellow' for a group show of contemporary Asian art in Blackburn, gently reclaiming an epithet that is sometimes used as a racial insult.

'I don't feel trapped because people think I'm a Japanese artist, but I think for them it's easy to categorise me. Sometimes I can use that to my advantage, as well, so I think it kind of works both ways.'

Seiko Kinoshita

Like most groups working to support non-European artists, Tavse Stemmer puts intercultural dialogue at the heart of its work. Its Radiant Arcadia Choir includes singers with 15 different languages between them: Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Gaelic and Bulgarian as well as Danish. The group performs songs in all these languages, and all its members are able to sing parts in tongues they do not speak; they released their first CD in April 2013.

That engagement in other cultures reaches beyond the European space. In 2011, Tavse Stemmer took 15 musicians from Denmark to Morocco for a ten-week programme of exchanges, performances and workshops. Ironically, such exchanges can be harder within the European Union. The group had links with similar organisations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, but organising tours was made difficult by visa restrictions. Hostility does not always come from the same direction, though. Conservative Muslim men have sometimes raised objections to concerts the women have promoted, leading to deep theological debates. And there have been confrontations with skinheads too, on occasion, though they are less interested in theology.

Bright Richards is very interested in theology, or at least, in religion, which he sees as being of great importance to many of those who have come to the Netherlands in recent years. He founded New Dutch Connections as a platform for creative work that celebrates the contribution of these new citizens and makes space for dialogue between cultures and religions. *As I left my father's house* is a specially created performance that explores war, migration, prayer and survival, and refers to the narratives of exile in the three Abrahamic faiths.

'I began from my own experience as a war victim and then I started speaking to Muslims and Jews who are also victims of war. I also tried to find out how they cope with it and that is what I bring together in

the performance. So, when I'm dealing with illegal immigrants now, I'm also trying to look at the whole experience of being an illegal immigrant—living in prison for being an immigrant. I have also been imprisoned. I try to create space where people share experience, where people keep developing themselves.'

Bright Richards

The production has been seen in churches, mosques, community centres and other spaces where people of different faiths and none are willing to come together. Sometimes, it has been difficult, and there have been long negotiations with community leaders before the show has been allowed; but the dialogue, like the discussion that follows every performance, is an integral part of the work. This project, like the other initiatives that Bright Richards has undertaken in Holland, is never just for the new Dutch, the migrant people. He is reaching out to everyone.

'They are my audience. I have to communicate with the Dutch. I have to open the windows for them to see the particular worlds that live next door, that they don't see every day. I have to help the Dutch to see their neighbour in a different way, by seeing themselves in a different way. I have to make them feel, but in a very safe way. I have to help them to identify with me, without even knowing that they want to identify with me. So, I need the Dutch. They are now my audience. When I was in Liberia I had an audience. I didn't have to think about it: I had it. I grew up with Liberians, I know them, and they know me. When I'm dealing with the Dutch, I have to build the bridge. I don't expect them to build the bridge. I have to build the bridge.'

Bright Richards

For Mizgin Özdemir, being in Denmark and particularly in the multicultural, multi-ethnic context of the Red Cross cultural centre, gave her access to a much wider world of music than she had ever known in Turkey. She was careful to listen to what other mu-

sicians were doing, waiting to be invited to join in, but she was not alone in this: everyone showed respect for one another's musical languages. She was able to extend her knowledge far beyond the world of Kurdish music with which she was familiar and develop a mature and individual musical voice.

I know where I'm from; I know that. I know my music. I love my music, I love my language, I love my culture, like all people, actually—but I want to know also how Iranian musicians play, Arabic music or for example Andrea Bocelli or Sarah Brightman or Googoosh from Iran, I want to know them also, not just Şivan Perwer.

Mizgin Özdemir

Today, Mizgin performs and records with jazz musicians, tabla players, violinists and other musicians with a different background. Her latest project is the NewNordicNative tour of Scandinavian countries for Autumn 2013, in which artists from the region and from other parts of the world will perform new arrangements of one another's music, together in a shared space.

But it is not only Mizgin's performances that have evolved: her older songs have also taken on a life of their own. She was performing in Germany recently when she heard a well-known Kurdish singer do one of her anti-Hezbollah songs from 20 years ago in Batman. He hadn't known that she had written the song: it had passed into the river of music. She too has been swept along in the current, to new lands and extraordinary experiences.

I had the courage of youth, of being afraid of nothing really. If I'd known then that I would go through all these things, coming to Denmark alone at the age of 24, knowing nobody, I might not have done it. But if I was asked to make that tape again, I wouldn't be afraid to do it. Well, perhaps I would be afraid, but I would still do it.

Mizgin Özdemir



Maheer Khatib

In Copenhagen Maher Khatib has been exploring connections between Danish and Palestinian culture for many years, using photography in schools and with groups of young people as a lens for social activism. He became fascinated by Copenhagen's municipal allotments, and made a book documenting these distinctive sites. He liked the slightly kitsch appearance of huts where people put things they no longer want at home, but don't care to throw out. He noticed also that many immigrants had taken up gardening and that the atmosphere was often very good between allotment neighbours, united by a common enthusiasm for growing food and flowers. He observed how ready people were to share knowledge and help one another.

'Then I took it to Palestine. I went to Palestine to show the photography and tell them about the Danish allotment gardens. Now I'm working in a project with a group to make the first Danish garden in Ramallah—but made by Palestinians. They're building it by themselves. I'm just giving them tools, and showing them how we do it

in Denmark. Most of my projects start with a creative idea and turn out to be social realism.'

Maher Khatib

Maher has gone on to do several projects with the Danish Cultural Centre in Palestine, including a photomathon, in which professional and amateur photographers have a few hours to make a series of images on a given theme. This produced hundreds of images of everyday life in the West Bank that are far removed from the grim and over-familiar imagery that usually represents the place.

'That's what I like about playing with different cultures. You see, what I'm doing— it's neither a Palestinian thing nor a Danish thing. It's a third thing. It's allowed me to experiment, to create this new thing; this new culture. Maybe that can get people to come closer and understand each other. If I can do it, everybody can do it. But you have to be tolerant; you have to lose the idea "Oh, this is not mine. I can't touch it". It's a process.'

Maher Khatib

Maher Khatib's work leads him into debates about culture, values and politics, but he enjoys the challenges and sees them as central to his practice as a photographer and artist. As a Danish citizen working in Palestine, he has had to deal with controversy about the notorious cartoons. But Maher is grateful for the distinctive creative life his mixed identity has allowed him to nurture.

'When I'm in Palestine, I find myself thinking—if this had never happened in 1948 and my parents still lived there, I would have been a citizen like all the others; maybe a photographer or whatever. But that would never be as exciting as my life now, because I have to deal with challenges all the time, and that makes my life richer. This

richness—it's like a production; it gets around; people can feel the energy I have, and what I want to do.'

Maher Khatib

Home again

'Si tu vois mon pays,
Mon pays malheureux,
Va, dis à mes amis
Que je me souviens d'eux.

'Ô jours si pleins d'appas
Vous êtes disparus,
Et ma patrie, hélas!
Je ne la verrai plus!

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, 1842

Everyone knows that home is where the heart is, but hearts are complex and not always within our command. They can be divided across time and space; or perhaps I am more comfortable with the French word 'partagé', which implies a division that is shared. Our hearts can indeed be shared: belonging need not be a zero-sum game.

Many of the migrant artists whose stories have been evoked in these pages have a complex sense of identity and equally involved relationships with their homes, past and present. Some, who know they cannot return home, are also uncomfortable in Europe, perhaps because they have felt—or been made to feel—unwelcome or because they have struggled to adapt themselves to the different culture of their adopted home. Their discomfort is exacerbated by recognition that the country that has sheltered

them is entitled to a gratitude they may, for various reasons, struggle to feel.

There are those, like Abdoul Bour, who wait to return to the homes they fled. In Abdoul's Utrecht workshop stands the sewing machine he brought with him from Togo, at considerable cost: he yearns to take it back to Africa and set up once more as a couturier in a city where he can truly feel at home.

Chien-Wei Chang, Kaoru Bingham and Cleverson de Oliveira all came as students and did not expect to be living in Europe years later. But circumstances change and they have made homes here, for now at least. They are happy at the enriching intersection connecting their past and present cultures. Elina Cullen feels the same, for all the difficulties:

'I love living here among 70 other "nationalities", in a peaceful manner, with a common unsaid understanding of what it is to be a foreigner in a hostile country. We are nice to each other, solidarity exists here. I have the feeling of being in the future in some way: this is how the world will look. We are going to get mixed. I am myself a mix of many different cultures: I can see the richness in that.'

Elina Cullen

For all their differences in age and background, Sardul Gill and Mohan Rana are equally settled in England, where their artistic work continues a discourse between British and Indian culture that is centuries old and has greatly enriched both societies. As India itself grows in prosperity and confidence, and Imperial relationships pass into history, that discourse will evolve further in the coming decades, but not just through diplomacy and trade: through the everyday cultural interactions of people.



Zeliha Yurt is one of those who did not choose to come to Europe. Her life here has often been difficult, but there is no way back and she has overcome so much to achieve her present security. She has loving and successful children who are Dutch citizens, with no experience of living anywhere else. Her artistic life began relatively late, when she became involved with community theatre in Utrecht, performing in a play based on interviews with local residents called *Familie a la Turca*. This experience convinced her that she had stories of her own to tell and so she has written her own journey of survival.

'I want the book to be read by women who are in the same situation I was in; I want to show them that if you take steps, freedom will come; even if you have problems.'

Zeliha Yurt

Perhaps, if Dutch publishers are not interested, she will publish it herself, like Aziz Aarab, and, like him, find the readers that cultural institutions know nothing about.

Maher Khatib and Mahmoud Alibadi both feel part of Danish society, each in his own way. For Maher, as a Palestinian, there remain unresolved questions of identity and belonging. There are also everyday reminders that his fellow citizens do not always see him as he sees himself: strangers sometimes speak to him in English, and are surprised to hear him answer in Danish. Mahmoud is conscious that things have changed in the past 20 years, and not always for the better:

I almost forget that I come from another place, but now the situation is very different. You felt you were more welcome then, than now.

There was not this talk about the clash of cultures.'

Mahmoud Alibadi

In Holland, Aziz Aarab is also concerned about the tone of media and political discourse. He has lived in Utrecht for thirty years with Dutch as his first language. His connection with his parents' land is largely as a 'son of seven', as locals call family who are only there in July, the seventh month. But Dutch friends have sometimes asked why he doesn't give up his Moroccan passport:

I said to him "Listen, in 20 years I don't know if I still can live here in Holland, because it's getting harder every day for me, with groups like the PVV and things like that. Every day you look at the newspaper, it's always something about Moroccans, about Muslims and that hurts.

What if I give my Moroccan passport away now and one day I must go back to Morocco—what am I going to say there?"

Aziz Aarab

Said M'Barki feels settled in the diverse society of the modern Netherlands:

I feel at home. I work with people from all cultures—Moroccan, Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean—and I feel welcome everywhere. It's not only with my neighbours, it's all over the Netherlands. I give you something and you give me something. It's about sharing, sharing things and sharing culture. I eat your food, you eat my food.'

Said M'Barki

He has not been to Morocco for many years and expects to end his life in the Netherlands, where his children were born and have made their lives. Still, he wants to be buried in Morocco, where his family can come to the funeral.

While there are those, like Abdoul Bour and Bright Richards, who cannot return to the countries they left, at least not yet, there are others who remake their relationships with the countries and cultures of their birth from the distance afforded them by their new homes. Chien-Wei Chang sees not only Taiwan but also China itself in another light from the distance of Europe. His family suffered during the Cultural Revolution and he is concerned about human rights in China today. With the rise in China's cultural power, there are opportunities for young artists, but he is unsure whether he would take them if they were offered.

Seiko Kinoshita is settled in Britain, where she has a young family. Although she visits Japan each year, she feels that she no longer really thinks like a Japanese person, though her family there do not notice any change in her. Now she is negotiating the complexities of two languages with her three-year-old son. She wants to be able to speak to him in Japanese, and he has already learnt that he might get a more favourable response to a request in his mother's mother tongue. But it is not easy to bring up a



child speaking a language spoken only by one parent, in a country where no one understands it.

After 25 years based wholly in France, Eduardo Ponce Rangel, has returned to work in Peru for part of each year, setting up a studio and a gallery. In Belgium, Isabel Duarte markets the art products and promotes concerts by Brazilian artists, a living bridge between the cultures.

In his sixties, Bill Ming feels accepted by the Bermudian art world, with important commissions, such as the National Memorial for those lost at sea, and exhibitions at the National Gallery in Hamilton. Being welcomed as of right into a public building that as a youth he could only enter through the back door, was a powerful moment of affirmation and belonging.

‘When I had my exhibition, I said “We are coming in the front door tonight”. Everybody said “Yeah!”. Yes, man, that night I was on fire. I read poetry and I told the people, “Yes, it’s the front door tonight, people.”’

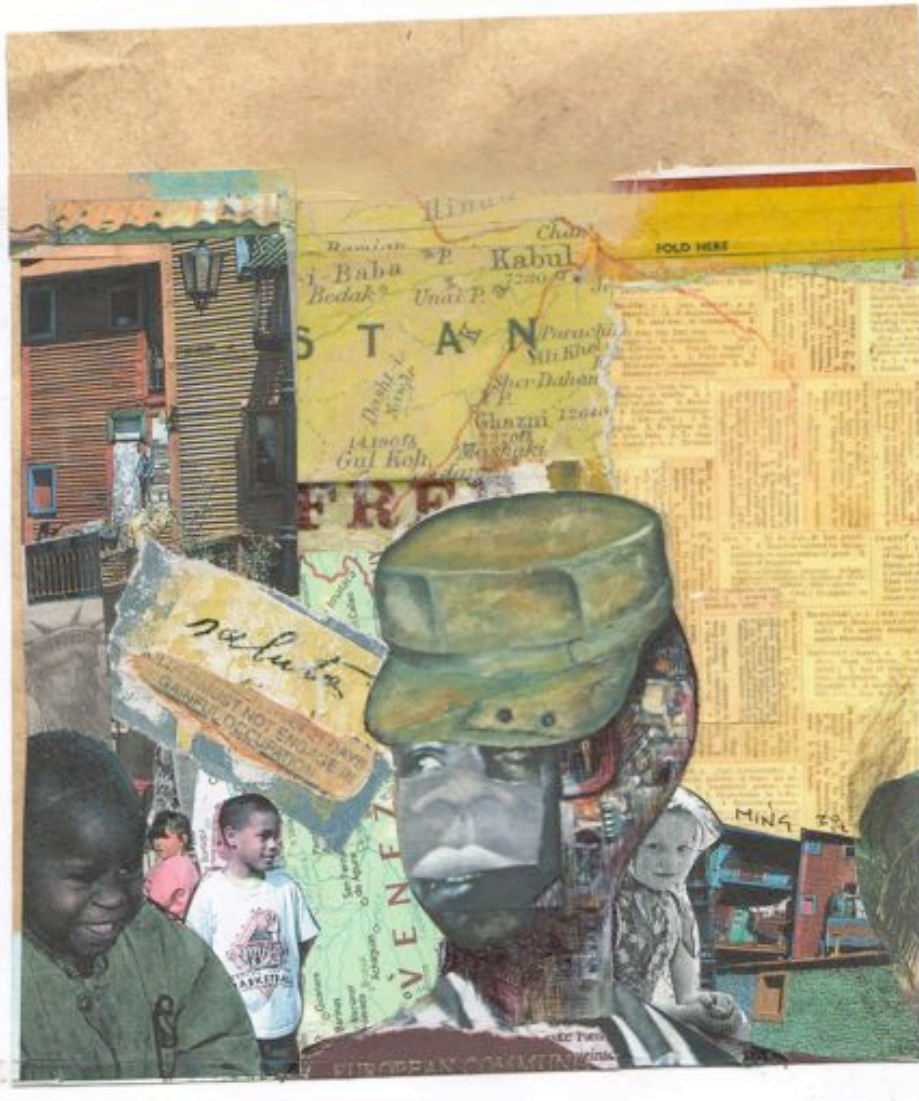
Bill Ming

Perhaps every culture has used the metaphor of the journey to describe a human life: there is certainly no shortage of examples. But those who go from one home to another, whether by choice or force of circumstances, inscribe a very obvious, visible journey in their life histories. They may never travel again; they may never return to the place they left. But they always embody the knowledge that there is more than one way of being in the world.

I don't say: far away life is real with its imaginary places

I say: life here is possible

Mahmoud Darwish, 2008



4 E pluribus unum

Out of many, one

Citizenship and universal rights

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

American Declaration of Independence, 1776

The preamble of the American Declaration of Independence has become so famous, so iconic, that it is hard to see what an innovative proposition it was, when it was adopted by Britain's thirteen American colonies on 4 July 1776. For the first time in human history, a nation was established on the basis of natural rather than legal or divine right. By claiming that people's rights derived from their nature as human beings, the American revolutionaries were redefining the very concept of a right. It was no longer a concession granted by the powerful, as had been those set out in 1215, in Magna Carta. For the Founding Fathers, a right was 'inalienable' because it derived from the condition of being human.

The importance of this change is not diminished because those who made it were unable to fulfil their ideal or perhaps even to see its true implications. They did not consider the rights they defined as extending equally to women and especially not to the millions of slaves brought to America from Africa. It would be almost a century before slavery ended and former slaves

gained the right to vote. Women got the vote only in 1920, while racial segregation was legal until 1964. Reverend Martin Luther King, who played such a key role in achieving that further step towards equal rights for all citizens, was fully aware of the inspirational importance of that claim in the Declaration of Independence, beginning the most famous passage of his most famous speech by saying:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'

Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

It is the universal nature of these rights that was so radical. They belong to everyone and they are not linked to active duties as feudal rights had been (and contrary to the recent political fashion for linking rights with responsibilities). The same radical concept underpinned the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* adopted by the French revolutionary assembly a few years later in 1789. Article IV of this document defined a fundamental concept of liberty: that a person is allowed to do anything that does not prevent other members of society from exercising the same right.

La liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui : ainsi l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres Membres de la Société, la jouissance de ces mêmes droits.

Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, 1789

The idea that human beings are fundamentally equal in rights did not then, and does not now, mean that they are also equal in character, talents, abilities or the fortune of birth. It is perfectly obvious that this is not the case. A child born in Congo or Viet-

nam does not have the same life chances as one born in Sweden or Canada: to pretend otherwise is wilful naivety or bad faith. Human societies have never been equal and there is no reason to expect that they will be in future. But that is precisely why it is so critical that all human beings, irrespective of character, talents, abilities or birth, should equally possess certain basic rights. It is the best way we have found, inadequate as it is, of protecting the weak from the strong.

Partly for that reason, the concept of equal rights arising from equal human dignity has been unacceptable to many of those who belong, or wish to belong, to society's powerful groups. In the centuries since the Enlightenment, they have therefore expended huge political and intellectual capital in attempting to find ways of making distinctions between people. Nowhere has this been more noxious, more copious, or more absurd, than in that oxymoron, race science. This pseudo-scholarly endeavour merits no further attention than to note that its use in politics has only ever led to injustice, oppression and death. Still, the idea of human equality has not been extinguished. Even in Hitler's Germany it was such an obstacle to policy that whole peoples had to be classified as '*Untermensch*' or sub-humans, in order to legitimise their persecution.

In coming to terms with the genocidal legacy of the Second World War the nations of Europe tried to strengthen the protection of individual rights and liberties, turning to the concept of universal rights set out first by American and French revolutionaries and then in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Confronted by the darkest parts of their history, within and beyond their own continent, European states have gone further than their predecessors in seeking to protect the human rights of their citizens.

In 1950, the newly formed Council of Europe adopted the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which established a European Court of Human Rights.

All member states of the European Union are signatories to this Convention. Even so, in 2000, the EU further strengthened its commitment to the idea of natural and equal rights in adopting its own Charter of Fundamental Rights:

Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity.

Charter of Fundamental Rights of The European Union, 2000

All of which is quite a lot to live up to, as those who turn to the member states of the European Union for protection are liable to find.

Citizenship and ethnic nationalism

Universal equality was not the only idea that the Enlightenment produced in its effort to understand the huge and diverse world that the age of exploration had brought Europeans into contact with. The alternative was to recognise not what human beings had in common, but the evident differences between them. In the mind of a great humanist, such as Michel de Montaigne, this recognition demanded some humility. His famous essay, *On Cannibals*, observed that people who lived according to social and moral systems shocking to Europeans were as sure of their customs as were the Europeans of theirs. He wondered whether the opinions and ways of life prevalent in 17th century France were not more a matter of familiarity than of truth or reason.

Il semble que nous n'avons autre mire de la vérité et de la raison que l'exemple et idée des opinions et usances du país où nous sommes. Là est tousjours la parfaite religion, la parfaite police, perfect et accomply usage de toutes choses.

Michel de Montaigne, 1580

Tolerance of diversity is neither a modern nor a European idea. The capture of Constantinople by Ottoman Muslim forces in 1453 was not followed by expulsion of its Christian inhabitants. Forty years later, when Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon issued the Alhambra Decree that did expel Jews from their lands, it was Beyazid II who extended a welcome to the refugees, even sending the Ottoman navy in 1492 to assist with their evacuation. The Sultan ordered the governors of all his European provinces to welcome the migrants and threatened death to any who attacked them. The Alhambra Decree—named, with all the irony history can offer, after a Muslim, Arabic palace—was repealed in 1968, by which time the Ottoman Empire had ceased to exist.

There was self-interest as well as magnanimity in the Ottoman policy towards Christians and Jews. The Empire needed these people for their skills: they were granted protection partly because of their economic contribution, just like the desirable migrants of today. Muslims remained the privileged group in this multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural empire, where the concept of equal rights in nature was incomprehensible. Tolerance of diversity may have been as inadequately enacted in the Ottoman Empire as equal rights in the new United States of America, but it is a reality of big countries and especially of empires. Since human populations are inescapably diverse, any political structure that seeks to unite large numbers of them must find ways of accommodating that difference. Ancient empires that have become nation states, such as China and India, and countries forged of immigration, like Argentina and Australia, have had to find their own ways of living with diversity of language, culture, identity, faith and values.

Europeans mostly established their empires on other peoples' lands, far from their own continent. Their ideas about human diversity, which naturally placed them at the apogee of both evolution and civilization, were shaped in a colonial context as well

as an imperial one. At home, by contrast, they spent much of the past century killing one another in doomed attempts to establish idealised, homogenous nations. Awareness of difference can lead to arrogance as readily as humility. We are not all as wise as Montaigne.

For some 19th century Europeans, recognition of cultural diversity was inseparable from recognition of cultural identity. The emergence of 19th century nationalism found an alternative conception of a state. Rather than being a rational agreement for collective self-government between free and equal individuals, as America sought to be, they imagined a nation as a people bound by blood and culture:

In 1848, the idea of the nation as a political codex was rejected by the revolutionary nationalists: they believed that a nation is enacted instead by custom, by the manners and mores of a *volk*: the food people eat, how they move when they dance, the dialects they speak, the precise forms of their prayers, these are the constituent elements of national life. Law is incapable of legislating the pleasures in certain foods, constitutions cannot ordain fervent belief in certain saints: that is, power cannot make culture.

Richard Sennett, 2011

This romantic nationalism implicitly rejected the idea of equal rights within a political conception of citizenship. Instead, nationality was a matter of inheritance, expressed in a way of life. In seeking self-determination from the empires that dominated parts of the continent—Austria-Hungary, Russia and Ottoman—or building states capable of competing with the power of Great Britain and France, European nationalists created an early form of identity politics in which rights were associated with who a person was rather than what they did or accepted. Nationalism was close to tribalism, though its advocates would doubtless have been horrified at the idea, since they used many of the political concepts established in America and France to justify their

claims. The difference was that those rights were not universally available to everyone living in a territory, or who might wish to commit themselves to it: they were written into the person. German nationalists offered both a right of return to ethnic Germans living in other states (such as Romania) and, under the Nazi regime, claimed possession of any lands where substantial numbers of them were settled: *Blut und Boden*, blood and soil.

It was this conception of citizenship that Martin Luther King rejected when he claimed the right for his children to be judged by the content of their character, rather than the colour of their skin. In 1945, amidst the smoking ruins of their continental slaughterhouse, European leaders turned once again to the principle of equal rights for human beings as human beings, rejecting the idea that rights could be based on biology, soil or culture. They built political institutions and drafted laws to reflect that vision and to protect the continent against a revival of arbitrary and unjust discrimination. But it has not been so simple to change how people think about culture, identity and belonging.

Heritage or culture?

Και τώρα τι θα γένουμε χωρίς βαρβάρους.
Οι άνθρωποι αυτοί ήσαν μια κάποια λύσις.

Κ.Π. Καβάφη, 1904

Today, the tension between the stated values of European nations and the unstated beliefs of many of their people exerts a distorting pressure on discourse about migration, culture, citizenship and identity. We have set the highest standards in international treaties and domestic law to govern the inalienable rights that protect every human being. But, when we are called upon by a refugee or a migrant to live up to our own rhetoric, we hesitate. We set standards and demand proofs. We balk at the

consequences of our own idealism. And more shamefully, we cannot accept that people who look, sound, eat and speak so differently to us can really be not just *like* us, but actually *part* of 'us', equally and without question or justification.

This tension, and the unhappy bewilderment from which it arises, is made more difficult by a misuse of the word 'natural'. Both concepts of rights—the universal and the cultural—claim legitimacy in nature but their concepts of nature are very different. The American revolutionaries believed that all human beings had equal rights because they were human beings, not dogs or horses (or slaves). Equality before one's peers and the law was undeniable because of a person's humanity. Ethnic nationalists, on the other hand, believe that there is something intrinsically different between a person from the Gandangara people of modern New South Wales and a person whose parents migrated to Sydney from Italy, or between a Serb and a Croat or a Scot and a Shetlander. There are many differences between all of these people but most of them are to do, as Montaigne saw, with upbringing, culture, beliefs and customs—none of which is natural. And those differences that are natural, in the sense of biology, are a matter of perception, which is also cultural. We categorise people according to skin colour (which the Romans, among others, did not) but not according to size. And yet a person's size is objectively more important to their life experience, although colour is widely made more important.

The audience questions flew quick and fast. 'Your name is Amish Tripathi. But the book covers only say Amish. Why is that?' 'Tripathi is a caste surname and while I am in no way ashamed of my caste, I don't want to perpetuate this divisive system. I can't do away with my surname in legal documents but the books are in my hand. So, I am just Amish,' he replied to thunderous applause.

The Telegraph (Calcutta), 3 February 2013

The problem with believing that differences between people are natural rather than cultural is that we end up being trapped by another person's description of us. Our being as physical creatures in time and space is limitation enough. The danger of multiculturalism as it has sometimes been practiced is that respect for a person's right to a self-determined cultural identity can become a refusal to allow them to change that identity. They are required, by others, to enact always a perceived essence.

In the 1960s, as popular music expanded and changed across the world, intense debates flared up about authenticity. Was it legitimate for white people to perform the blues? Ma Rainey is reported as saying that 'White folks hear the blues come out, but they don't know how it got there'. I cannot find an authoritative account of this statement though, so perhaps it is one of those ideas that is true because it ought to be true. It was certainly galling for some of those who had suffered the discrimination inseparably associated with the blues to see it picked up by privileged white youngsters, some of whom went on to become very rich with songs composed by people who could still not sit in the same restaurant as them.

Can blue men sing the whites
Or are they hypocrites
for singing, woo, woo, wooh?

Vivien Stanshall, 1967

Moral and political tensions also existed in folk music, Could this radical, left wing culture be performed on the instruments used by the facile pop music of consumer capitalism? The moment when an outraged (former) admirer called Bob Dylan 'Judas!' at a 1965 concert in Manchester has become iconic because it encapsulates the importance that such distinctions can have for people. The use of the most infamous name of religious betrayal was no accident.

Comparable attitudes exist today, as Macy Gray observes:

If you're black and you don't do R&B or hip-hop, then you're going to have a very long haul—there's only one Lenny Kravitz, one Tracy Chapman. The last label I was on only sent my records out to urban radio stations, even though I was more of a pop artist. But the fans don't care who's singing. If you hear a great song, you don't care if it's by a 90-year-old green person.

Macy Gray, 2010

Identity is not fixed permanently by birth or even upbringing. We do not choose our biology, our family or our heritage and one of life's challenges is learning to live with these inheritances. But we can and do choose our culture—the artistic and creative life we find meaningful. Where heritage is a given, culture is acquired. We hear, see and read, move, play and perform, we learn and enjoy, we discover, we share, we reject: we form our taste. In short, we cultivate ourselves—and each other. The strength of European culture, which is one reason why so many are attracted to come here, is its openness to the world. In its claim to universal value, it makes itself accessible to any and all who choose it: a provincial Japanese girl, like Kaoru Bingham, can respond to Chopin and Proust as deeply as a French teenager. To be European is not only a heritage: it can be a choice. And through the talent and creativity, courage and character, brought by those who make that choice, Europe's culture and eventually its heritage continue to grow, as they have done for more than three thousand years.

To live variously cannot simply be a gift, endowed by accident of birth; it has to be a continual effort, continually renewed. [...] Flexibility is a choice, always open to all of us.

Zadie Smith, 2009

Bread and salt

Les deux processus historiques—celui de l'intégration, celui de l'explosion identitaire—qui semblent profondément contradictoires sur le court terme, peuvent être en réalité complémentaires sur le long terme, si nous sommes capables d'inventer une politique européenne audacieuse, qui ne pense pas l'Europe exclusivement comme marché unique, qui la pense aussi—et peut-être surtout—comme ensemble culturel, comme figure spirituelle ouverte sur l'universalisme d'une Raison critique et démocratique, convaincue que l'Europe ne peut pas se fonder sur l'exclusion de LA DIFFERENCE ; qu'elle doit se construire sur l'unité essentielle de sa diversité.

Jorge Semprún, 1992

Europe lives today with the contradictory legacy of two ideas of citizenship. It is the fault line that runs through relations between the European Union and the member states, and through relations between people whose grandparents were born here and those whose grandparents were not. People's inalienable rights, not least to protection from persecution, are enshrined in European law. But Europeans have also told themselves for almost two centuries that the ties that bind them are not legal or even spiritual, but territorial, biological, ethnic and cultural.

Diversity is integral to human experience. Size and strength, appearance and gender, intelligence, talents, gifts and character: every human being is unique, so each one is different. Cultural diversity is also normal in human society. People understand, believe and value different things and, because they are mobile, they come into contact with others, who also have different knowledge, beliefs and values. It is estimated that more than half of the world's population uses more than one language in everyday life: this is not surprising since over 400 languages are spoken in India and more than 2,000 in Africa. Even in Europe, and

especially in the smaller countries like Holland, Switzerland or Belgium, most people speak more than one language.

Nonetheless, human diversity, whether physical or cultural, is a source of widespread anxiety, especially perhaps in Europe where there is an equally widespread belief that societies that were ethnically and cultural homogenous have been made multicultural without the consent of their local populations. It is understandable that Europeans who were young in the middle decades of the 20th century should feel that the countries of their birth were more unified than they are now. In 1950, a century of ferocious nationalism, territorial change, resettlement, ethnic cleansing, population transfers and genocide had indeed left the nations of Europe more apparently unified than they had ever been.

At the conclusion of the First World War it was borders that were invented and adjusted, while people were on the whole left in place. After 1945 what happened was rather the opposite: with one major exception boundaries stayed broadly intact and people were moved instead. [...] The outcome was a Europe of nation states more ethnically homogenous than ever before.

Tony Judt, 2005

The cost in human suffering of that lust for racial purity is incalculable. A continent that had been, at the start of the 19th century, a complex mosaic of peoples and cultures had been tidied into uniformity by the Procrustean expedient of lopping off or stretching anything that did not fit the vision of Europe's dictatorial ideologues. In the city of Salonica alone, 56,000 Jewish people were put on goods trains between March and July 1943, to be killed at Auschwitz. If my father had been among them, as was intended, this book would not exist, though that may be the very least significant consequence.

Debates rage and histories are written about post-war migration to (and from) Europe. Unconcerned by both polemics and explanations, the normality of diversity re-establishes itself among human populations.

Cultural diversity can only be avoided by putting oneself, or others, into prison. As Andrew Marvell wrote, albeit with a different kind of relationship in mind, 'The grave's a fine and private place, But none I think do there embrace'. Whoever prefers liberty to incarceration, human contact to solitary confinement, has no choice but to find ways of living with people who look, think, believe and behave differently. Those ways are themselves diverse. They include toleration, acceptance, appreciation and imitation; they also include vigilant wariness. Acceptance of the reality of human diversity does not entail acceptance of other people's values and cultures, only of their equal right to those values and cultures, and of the need to accommodate oneself to their existence. In short, recognising human diversity does not mean abandoning one's own beliefs.

Intercultural dialogue, as it is often called today, is not easy. The differences between people are not unreal or insignificant. Neither they, nor the feelings they encourage, can be dispersed merely with goodwill. Living in diverse societies can be enriching and exciting, but it can also take effort, skills, knowledge and commitment—and none of those should be taken for granted, particularly in a continent experiencing not only an economic crisis but also a crisis of confidence. Artists, whose currency is narrative and symbol, ideas, values and metaphors, and whose trade is communication, have a central role in that essential dialogue between people and cultures. They may not always be better at it than anyone else, but they live in the territory where it happens. They cross the borders of aesthetics and form, culture and language—or redraw them entirely. Those who come to Europe, bringing with them rich cultures and experiences from elsewhere, can be, if they wish, in the vanguard of that dialogue.

This is not a one-way street, along which non-European artists travel to explain themselves and their cultures to 'host' communities. There is not one and another, a norm and a variation, although there are wide inequalities in power, status and resources. There are as many opportunities for the artists and institutions of the large, strong and well-established European cultures to create paths and connections with the many who are not already part of their world. European societies need their artists, all their artists, to help them understand better the world as it is, not only as they wish it was, and to imagine how it might be better with mutuality, cooperation and respect.

It is not necessary to labour the point that self-sufficiency is in fact insufficient for a national culture. It is a fact, whether or not the explanation I have given is the right one. Great cultures have always risen from the interaction of diverse societies.

Hubert Butler, 1941

Acknowledgements

Co-producers

This book, like its predecessors, is a collaborative project, not by accident or even by design, but of necessity. It sets out to create a space in which people who do not know each other can meet in the free exchange of art and language. Each of the people whose stories have been woven into these pages has been an active contributor or, in the term I prefer, a co-producer. Their appearance here is the result of conversation and reflection, correction and revision. I am immensely grateful to all of them for their trust and generosity.

Aziz Aarab
Mahmoud Alibadi
Annette Bellaoui
Kaoru Bingham
Abdoul Bour
Chien-Wei Chang
Elina Cullen
Isabel Duarte
Sardul Gill
Anders Honoré

Maher Khatib
Seiko Kinoshita
Said M'Barki
Bill Ming
Mizgin Özdemir
Cleverson di Oliveira
Eduardo Ponce Rangel
Mohan Rana
Bright Richards
Zeliha Yurt



Creative associates

Bill Ming created the images that are an integral part of this book. His work, which draws on his own experience of migration and crossing cultures, is not an illustration of the text. It was created separately in response to the questions raised by *Bread and Salt*, a visual essay that stands independently alongside the text. The relation between the two is for the reader and viewer to decide. I am very grateful to Bill for the unique qualities he has brought to this collaboration.

Brood en zout, the Dutch translation of *Bread and Salt*, was undertaken with exemplary care and fidelity by Marco Derks; those who are qualified to judge are full of admiration for his work.

Thanks to the photographers who have contributed portraits to the book: Cecilia Gonzales (Eduardo Ponce Rangel) and Mohamed Youala Greets (Aziz Aarab). I made the other portraits. Thanks also to Dave Everitt, for his characteristically patient and good humoured design support.

Other contributors

Others have contributed to *Bread and Salt* in different but always valuable ways. Some have opened doors, suggested avenues of exploration or been happy to talk through the ideas. Some have acted as readers, an essential part of this process that tests and challenges the final work. Some have provided assistance of other kinds. I thank them all for their input and friendship.

Jo Burns

Fabrice de Kerchove

Laura Dyer

Pauline Matarasso

Corey Mwamba

Niels Righolt

Dave Everitt

Sabine Frank

Almir Koldzic

Bisakha Sarker

Helen Simons

Maja Spangenberg Jakosen

Vrede van Utrecht

Last, but assuredly not least, my particular thanks to Eugene van Erven and Margreet Bouwman who have followed and supported the project almost from the start. They played an invaluable part in enabling me to meet Dutch artists and in securing the assistance of Vrede van Utrecht with the publication. They coped with changes of direction and bumps in the road with kindness and reassurance; their quiet confidence in the project has played an important part in its completion.



Sources

All passages in italics are taken from interviews with artists listed as co-producers above; sources for other quotes are given below, with reference to the page on which the citation appears.

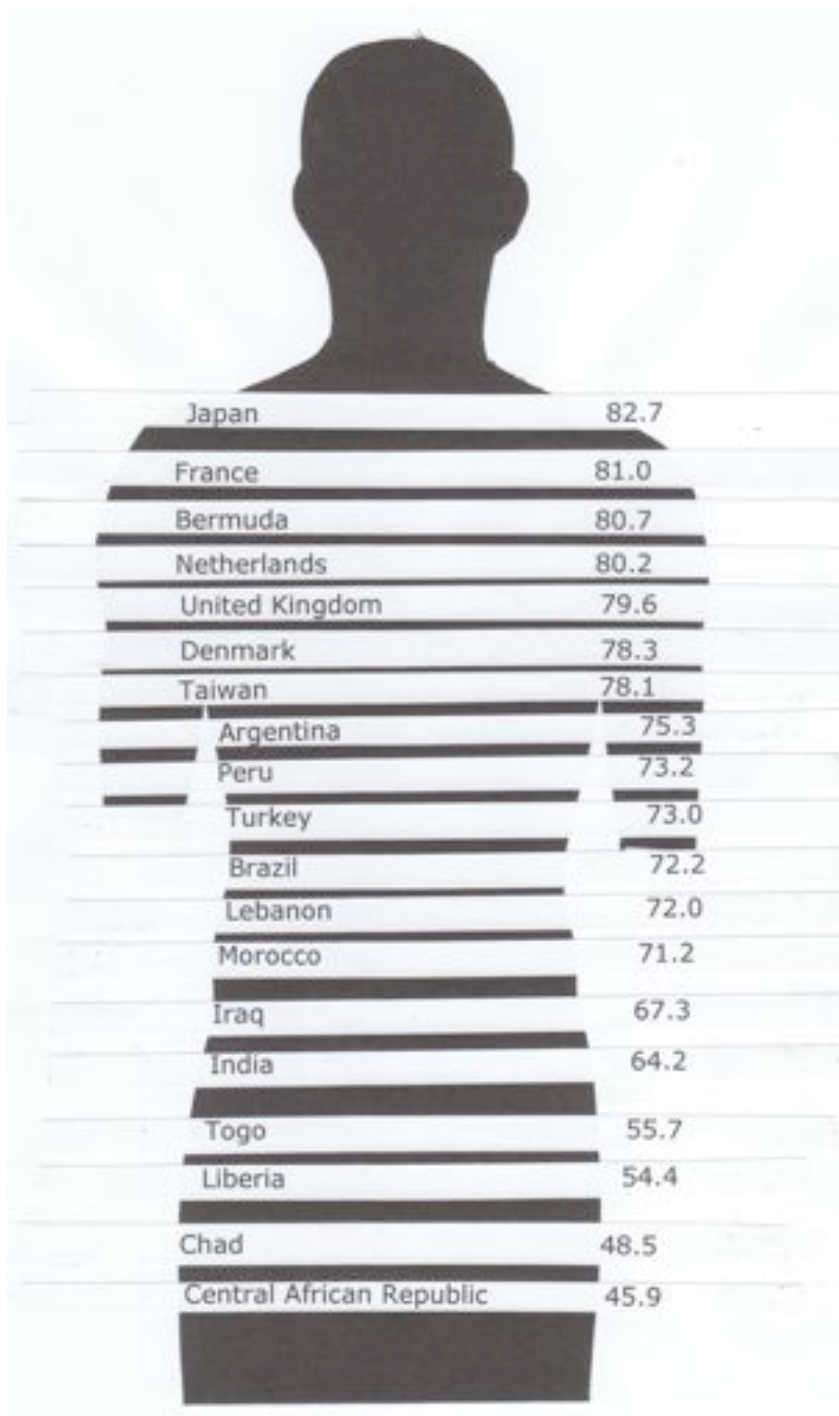
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- 3 John Berger, 2011, *Bento's Sketchbook*, London, p. 87.
- 6 From 'The Essay as Form' by T. W. Adorno; Bob Hullot-Kentor; Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, No. 32. (Spring - Summer, 1984), pp. 151-171.
- 7 **'I'm used to thinking that stories in English are so much richer or more important than stories I hear in my own language.'** These lines are taken from Laurie Thomson's translation of Henning Mankell's novel, *Den orolige mannen*, which was published in 2009 in the original Swedish and in English, as *The Troubled Man*, two years later.
- 9 From the screenplay of *It's a Wonderful Life*, directed by Frank Capra and written by Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Frank Capra and Jo Swerling, Liberty Films, 1946.
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- 12 **‘There is a great difference between a person who is aiming for objectivity and a person who turns away from it, whether deliberately or through ignorance of his own determinants, of the inner prism that distorts his perception of the others. One risks, indeed, losing one’s way in the course of an explanation if one has neglected to explain oneself.’** Alfred Grosser, 1989, *Le Crime et la Mémoire*, Paris, p. 7.
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Life Expectancy