STREET SIGNS

Centre for Urban and Community Research Newsletter

centre for URBAN AND COMMUNITY *research*

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CUCR NEWS

Welcome to **Street Signs**, the biannual newsletter of the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR). In this issue we have brought together a range of contributions from researchers and colleagues at CUCR. It hopefully gives you a sense of ongoing work based in and attached to the Centre.

CUCR tries to draw together embedded research with critical theoretical debates around the future of the city. Since spring 2002 we have continued to develop through a growth in doctoral and masters students, a number of newly funded research projects focused on the two streams of work around 'Transforming Cities' and 'Urban Cultures and Social Divisions', and a series of seminars, conferences, events and publications. A full list of working papers in Critical Urban Studies can be found on the back page, including the most recent paper in the series by Zygmunt Bauman on '*City of fears - and hopes*'.

Within the 'Transforming Cities' stream of research we have carried out further work around issues of urban regeneration, social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal. Long term action research with community led regeneration programmes in Deptford and Paddington continues. We have also completed reports around other regeneration projects in inner London in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Hackney, Greenwich and Bexley. As well as CUCR's core staff, other researchers have worked on these projects, including Anan Collymore, Jo Sadler, Caroline Blunt and Imogen Slater. The major two year evaluation of the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Action Zone led by Roger Hewitt working with Neil Spicer and Jane Tooke, will be concluded in March 2003. Marj Mayo – working with colleagues at the UWE – has just won another ESRC grant to look at 'Negotiating Ethical Dilemmas in Contested Communities'. We have also taken on an exciting action research project in three deprived neighbourhoods of Southwark, in collaboration with GAP Research and Magpie, both New Cross based community organisations. This project will work to support local residents becoming researchers to identify spending priorities for regeneration in their areas.

In the 'Urban Cultures and Social Divisions' strand of work the Centre has continued its focus of work on issues of race and racism, youth cultures, asylum and citizenship. It has also developed new projects around visual ethnography of the suburbs and the musical cultures of the city. John Solomos, Les Back, Kalbir Shukra, Azra Khan and Michael Keith will finish the three year ESRC project in the Democracy and Governance programme working around Ethnic Minority Political Participation in Contemporary Britain in the spring of 2003.

On 23rd November 2002 CUCR, the Cosmopolis Research Cluster in the Department of Sociology and City University held a conference on 'Race', Racism, Ethnicity: Changing Research Agendas'. The conference attracted a large audience and produced a lively debate addressing issues around the no borders debate, the commodification of cultural change, notions of transnational cultural flows and the continuing significance of problems of institutional racism.

The Centre has also developed four small discussion groups developing new research strands around a) the politics of residence, b) Race, asylum, refugees and identity c) Visual cultures of the city and d) Participatory democracy and the metropolis.

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As the Centre has expanded over recent years the full time staff (now numbering twelve) have been supplemented by a number of associates and visiting fellows who have based their work in CUCR. This year we are pleased to be working with Sean Baine, John Eversley and Jane Foot on some of the new projects. We have also been joined for the 2002-2003 academic year by Professor Michael Stone of the McCormack Institute of Public Affairs in Boston. Michael was one of nine US mid-career public policy professionals chosen as 2002 Atlantic Fellows funded by the British Academy and there is a contribution from Michael on pages 9-10. Tine Blom who is the Dean, Faculty of Culture, Media and Social Science from Lillehammer College in Norway is also spending part of the 2003 academic year at the Centre.

Other staff changes include Paul Halliday, who has joined the lecturing staff at CUCR, convening the MA in Photography and Urban Culture, a degree programme that complements the other MA run through CUCR, 'Culture, Globalisation and the City'. Paul is a film maker and visual anthropologist. We were sad that Emma Haughton, our administrator for the last three years left us to become the producer for the theatre group People Show but also pleased that Carole Keegan has now joined us in her place.

We have held a series of very successful seminars, with an extremely wide range of speakers and audiences. Highlights included: Carolyn Cooper from the University of the West Indies talking about the sexual politics of Jamaican dancehall culture, Ghassan Hage from the University of Sydney on paranoid nationalism, Miri Song from the University of Kent about race theory on each side of the Atlantic, Max Farrar from Leeds Metropolitan talking on the struggle for community in Chapeltown, and the journalist Sue Branford and political scientist Marianne Wiesebron from the University of Leiden, both talking about new forms of politics in Brazil.

September 2002 saw the graduation ceremony at which Colin King, Lez Henry and Tim Rapley were awarded their doctorates. Les Back supervised both Colin and Lez, whose thesis titles were 'Play the white man: the theatre of racialised performances and narratives in soccer coaching and management' and 'Reggae/dancehall music the "hidden voice" of Blak British urban expression!' Tim Rapley has worked in CUCR on the Gender in Construction research project.

Michael Keith
Director, CUCR

(For full details of research programmes based at CUCR, see www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr)

Philosophy and Human Values CUCR Joint Series

"bodies of memory, ecologies of hope"

Mondays, 4-6pm
Council Room, Laurie Grove Baths

A space for thinking aloud…

3 February: **VIC SEIDLER AND KIRSTEN CAMPBELL**
"Memory, Trauma, Justice: Explorations in the Former Yugoslavia"

10 February: **SUKI ALI AND BRIAN ALLEYNE**
"Memory, Biography and Embodied Identities"

24 February: **WILLIAM LEZ HENRY**
"Hidden Voices, Conscious Choices: Reggae/Dancehall as the Hidden Voice of Blak British Urban Expression"

3 March: **MAX FARRAR**
(Leeds Metropolitan University)
"The Struggle for Paradise: Dirty, Pretty Things in Chapeltown, Leeds"

10 March: **MONICA MORENO AND LES BACK**
"Race, Hauntings, Ethics, Visibility"

17 March: **DAMIAN WHITE AND YOSHI MOURI**
"Ecology, Culture and New Social Movements: New Directions"

24 March: **KATHIANNE HINGWAN AND YASMEEN NARAYAN**
"Practices of Embodiment and Identity in Trinidad and London"

EVERYONE WELCOME

If you are interested in participating in a session next term, feel free to contact us.

Contact Ben Gidley (b.gidley@gold.ac.uk tel:7392) or Vic Seidler (v.seidler@gold.ac.uk tel:7723).

The Sounds in *The Streets*

Paul Gilroy talks about music, cultural politics and the places of freedom.

Perhaps more than any other writer Paul Gilroy has put music and musical cultures at the centre of the understanding of culture and sensibilities of the African diaspora. His book The *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* marked its fifteenth anniversary recently by it being published in the Routledge Classics Series. Up until 1999 Paul was a Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths College and the co-convenor of CUCR's MA programme. He is now Chair of African American Studies at Yale but is still closely connected with us. In the summer of 2002 during one of his frequent visits to London he recorded this interview with Les Back. In it he talks about the role of music in understanding contemporary culture. He focused on two musical collections both released in 2002. The first is a collection of classic Calypso recordings entitled *London is the Place for Me: Trinidadian Calypso in London, 1950-1956* (Honest Jons Records HJRLP2) featuring artists like Lord Kitchener, who came to Britain on the Empire Windrush. The second is a contemporary dance album called *The Streets* (Pure Groove Music 679003) led by white musician and lyricist Mike Skinner.

Les Back: A few minutes ago you said that on one end of a continuum of dissident musical cultures there's Lord Kitchener and then at the other end there's *The Streets*. Could say something about what you mean by that?
Paul Gilroy: Well I suppose, thinking about the way that music develops in different parts of the world, I always used to imagine that Brazil was a kind of limit case. I used to think that it was a special place because it was one place, you know, different from the Caribbean or Latin-Caribbean or Central America or the United States, where the slaves and their descendants has entirely incorporated everybody in the culture, into their way of looking at the world. Music was the mainspring of that incorporation. And when I began to listen to *The Streets* and think about the record in relation to the big reissue of the calypsos from the early fifties [*London is the Place for Me*], I began to see there was half a century's story there. In which, you could argue that the, what we call them, citizens and migrants from the Caribbean in the fifties have gradually and steadily incorporated the whole country or large slices of it into their view of the world. *The Streets* was one thing that you could use to illustrate that process of incorporation.

LB: Mike Skinner is an interesting figure because he's a young man who comes to London from Birmingham and then writes lyrics about both of those cities.

PG: You know we're twenty-five years on from the silver jubilee. Then another jubilee. It seems to me like *The Streets* was almost a chance to take the sort of barometric cultural pressure of how those different developments had unfolded in the twenty-five years since 1977. One of the tracks is like a radio track led by the trombone ("Let's Push Things Forward") which very clearly registers the power of The Specials, and the "Ghost Town" moment is being recycled. I thought that was interesting: that that had looped back into the soundscape via the kind of Brummy Two-Tone sort of heritage. I don't know how old he is, my guess is, he's about twenty-two, twenty-three. So he wasn't even born then. But that's the language you have to speak in order to be heard now.

LB: What is it about the street as a place to imagine?

PG: I love the cover of the record with the block of flats there and the whole pirate radio, "lock down your aerial" feel. It's too corny almost to say, but this is an alternative public, a public world which is being again named and celebrated. In a sense, he tries to make a joke out of the transition from the underground and the tension there between the underground and the overground. I know it sounds corny, but underneath the ground you've got the underground and it's hidden and it's exciting and it's a space of innovation and all that. And then in the air you've got all the stuff flying about, you know, people, mobile phones and aerials but then in the middle there is… "You're listening to The Streets." It's not the obvious focus of all of this, but it

is the sort of mediating public space, the public moment of it. I was very engaged by the way he seemed to be in command of all of that. It might be just somebody who's sitting round in their bedroom making beats, but it didn't feel like that from the way it was thought through with the words and the music.

LB: The heroes of the record are damaged, or people who are vulnerable. Does it say something about the kind of damage that has been done to Britain?

PG: Yes, the line that comes to mind is "Has it come to this". And yet, the form of heroism which is appealed to is so striking to me. He goes back to the memory of the War and in a sense of 1945 as a really important moment in the remaking of the country. It's in that opening song ("Turn the Page") when he talks about, "The War's over, the bells ring," and I mean, that was very powerful. It has a sort of insistent, repetitive pulse which is historical and almost apocalyptic and which draws on a sort of mythic Englishness. I mean it's a reading of the War but it's also infused with sort of Arthurian legend and all this kind of stuff. I mean I felt that wasn't a utopian statement. It was a joyful thing that for me placed it within the very different tradition of expression that I associate with Blake and Shelley and that other side of England which is, you know, is a revolutionary imagination. The other day we heard Zygmunt Bauman giving a talk and one of the polarities that governed the argument he made was the distinction between people who are able to imagine a different today and the people who are inclined to imagine a better tomorrow. And I felt that was helpful in understanding my reading of *The Streets* because it seemed *The Streets* was definitely about a better tomorrow rather than an alternative today. There is a vernacular English tradition and Blake stands for me the best imaginary ancestor for that tradition of expression in relation to modernity and Blake's understanding of the relationship between the overthrow of slavery and the liberation of Albion, you know, was very particular. And we know, we've got Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker to thank for finding out the location of the original dark satanic mill on the banks of the Thames in South London. So these things are a lot closer to our life than we sometimes feel them to be. So, for me, *The Streets* is part of that tradition with Blake and Shelley: it seemed worth placing Mike Skinner *as a poet* in that tradition of expression. It's not melancholy. It's depressed sometimes, but actually the right to be depressed is actually part of not being melancholic, I'd say. My sense was, when I came to London the record was around, it was everywhere around. Everywhere I went, every shop, or you know, I heard it coming out of cars, I heard it going along, in a way that it seemed to suggest that it had touched something, that people were appreciating it. I tried to talk to people about it and they all emphasised its humour. There was a certain response which said "Well this isn't real Garage", and I thought, well no, it wasn't real authentic Garage and that's what probably what made it interesting because it was a mixture of things.

LB: Earlier you said that *The Streets* are part of a tradition of expression that doesn't necessarily have to be underscored by the idea of cultural or racial ownership.

PG: So you get the *So Solid Crew* coming in one direction, right, which shows that, you know, the rude boys are back, some of them are girls, some of them are white, they're ruder than ever. Then you get the *The Streets* coming back and you know, he's like the other moment of that equation which links to cultural exchange, a process of exchange.

LB: What is it about music do you think, Paul, that makes it such an important site for all of these things? What is it about sound, the cultures of sound?

PG: Well, because I think the key to understanding the role that they've played in this history is to see how they damage – in fact, how they overthrow – conceptions of culture as property. That they, yes, they belong in a sense to the people who write the music, or music belongs to people who perform it or whatever. But immediately it has its own life, it complicates those claims and those genealogies of culture and produces its own sort of logic of extension in the world. None of those stories if you tell them honestly are compatible with absolutist definitions of race, or ethnicity, or of culture more generally, they're just the

most fantastic and complete alternatives to that way of seeing culture and understanding its place in the world.

LB: It is also fifteen years since you published *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* which foregrounded the importance of music, how do you think about the book now?

PG: Obviously you know there are ways of telling this story, something like The Streets as an extension of the kind of inter-culture that I tried to reconstruct there, you know. It was particularly gratifying to me that he says, "I played bass tricks like Jimi Hendrix" whatever that meant. But he had his own sense of that lineage, and what may be involved in those trans-cultural possibilities and geneologies. What's depressing to me about it, is that [*Ain't No Black*] hasn't spawned a successor analysis, you know. I don't know what it is about the scale in which that story was attempted but I feel frustrated that nobody has really tried to develop that argument in that way through a period in which the musical traditions that I was concerned to reconstruct have lost a lot of their cultural authority, lost a lot of their cultural centrality. That role has been ceded to other kinds of expressive cultures. Some of which are much more word rather than sound orientated, some of which are much more visual in character. But I'm sure it will come in the end. I know a lot of people in and around Goldsmiths have been working on topics of that sort and hopefully those will become books in the near future.

LB: You sometimes refer to dissident musical cultures, what's at stake in those do you think?

PG: To me ultimately what's at stake is the ability to imagine an alternative world. And what I tried to get out in that analysis – and it's the thing I think I've stuck with – is the sense of understanding the aspiration towards freedom, which is not based on work, or in which work is not the agency or the means through which freedom is acquired and reproduced. But actually, what they are is really the absolute polar alternative to work. They represent a culture of play in and around the body, the liberation of the body from the rhythm of work - the "night-time's the right time." And so I see *The Streets*, in particular his last track which is about clubbing and is a very moving sort of account of the kind of play around music in the club scene during the nineties - that stands absolutely squarely in a much longer tradition which says, you know, when are you free, when are you most yourself, is certainly not when you're working.

LB: The discussions about culture and appropriation seem locked within an imagination that is really about production, or ownership. That is some cultures belong to people and are then stolen from them. Are you pointing to another way of thinking about what is usually called appropriation?

PG: Well, you know, there's a blip in the history of cultural industries. Before radio, you know, and before sheet music was displaced by the phonograph record as the sort of means of musical cultural dissemination and making money off it, nobody imagined that the music belonged to anybody else apart from the person who was actually performing it at that moment. People who wrote songs didn't expect to be paid for them. And, they in a sense relied on things that were more important than money. Curtis Mayfield, who always interested me in this conversation, spoke of this as a troubadour role. I don't know if that's quite the right name for it, but there are other ways of thinking the relationship between culture as a source of pleasure, as a source of joy, as a source of moral education, as well as an affirmation and as a sort of compensation for the forms of suffering and pain that people have, than to think of it through the logic of the commodity. The technological regime that produced all that has been dominant for a while and is clearly right now in a major crisis. And all these fights over MP3s and Napster and downloading stuff off the Internet and passing it around seems to me to promise the end of that relationship, the end of that way of thinking about what culture is and how it works economically. And I look forward to that day.

LB: But it seems that the people who want to make the most trenchant critique of the role of capitalist productive relations end up with a critical imagination that is saturated with a logic of capitalism.

PG: Well it is, but you have to remember, Les, that people who are against the logic of capitalism in any form are a very small select minority these days. So I mean you could say in mitigation, if you think that's the only game in town then you want to play it to win. I have some sympathy with that but it's never been my position.

LB: Ultimately, I suppose, trying to win the game of 'getting paid' means accepting the capitalist rules of the game?

PG: And, to me, the victory of that line of argument says that we've learnt nothing from the history of slavery. We've not made it useful actually, because the history of slavery teaches a very different lesson about who you are, when you're most yourself. I think people who are, you know, loosely speaking within traditions of reflection and creativity that were born from their

own experience of being commodities, should have, I won't say have an obligation, but have an opportunity to develop a different kind of argument.

LB: That means our understanding of what value is need to be rethought?

PG: Well, that's been true for a long time, Baudrillard's first two books, you know, *The Critique of the Political Economy* and *The Mirror of Production*, were essentially, from my point of view, critiques of a Marxist debate about value. He said that, well yes, you know, use value and exchange value were fine but there was also an issue of symbolic value to be taken into account, the ritual value to be taken into account. Let's think about music in the context of its ritual value rather than its exchange value.

LB: There are some things that just can't be bought?

PG: Well, let's hope so Les, let's hope so. Yes, there are some things which have a price which is not amenable to being articulated in terms of commerce and consumer culture in terms of the forms of value of any kind, logic of any kind really. And it's not just music that falls into that category.

LB: But the language of capitalist value is so pervasive that it seems to subsume even its critique?

PG: Well of course, capitalism wants you to imagine that there is no limit to that process. And I think we've seen social and political consequences of a belief that there is no limit all around us. *The Streets* is one, minor symptom of the inadequacy of that view because it systematically reconstructs the human tally of that mistaken belief.

LB: I find it hard though—and, of course, this might be me just being embraced by middle age - to communicate that to my students. That there are alternative forms of value, that you can't be bought and I can't be bought.

PG: But isn't music one place in their lives and in their experience in the world where that begins to make sense? I mean, okay, I know that there are lots of people who have dedicated, have made a lot of money out of turning the experience of play itself into yet one more commodity. You know, Ministry of Sound, I mean it actually sounds like it is part of the government. There's obviously some ambivalence about that you know, perhaps in the future there will be such a division of the Home Office.

LB: That has a kind of Orwellian ring about it, doesn't it?
PG: I don't know if there was a lot of irony in the way the Ministry of Sound was marketed. But, you know, the music sings a different song. The music announces a different verdict on its own place in the world that's not amenable to those forms of discipline. You know, never mind those forms of commodification. It's always untidy, always spills out. It always leaks. The soundproofing is never complete, you know. I was thinking about it because when I was in Berlin at the weekend, they had this thing called the Love Parade. And there were something like three quarters of a million young Poles you know, Russians bouncing around down and through Brandenburg Gate listening to this, you know, pulse of Detroit, the mutant pulse of Detroit come to Europe. I was thinking, well, it's incredible that this could have happened. As I walked along, I started to count the number of images of Bob Marley that I saw on T-shirts and hats and all of that. Just walking through this huge crowd which I did for a couple of hours. And nobody could have anticipated that this was the destination that this was what the twenty-first century would bring. It's not just the role of drugs, it's also a quest not just for a different value but a different temporality, a different priority, a different ethics. All of that is bound up in the hunger of those people and their desire to be together and what's at stake in their being together and playing like that. I don't want to be too quick in reducing it to some sort of political dissidence. But when I said it was a culture of dissent I mean it's a complex thing and it's not programmatic. It can't cheapen itself in that way. But it's very clear that there is a hunger, people are looking for the outside, they're looking for the other side of all this. And they get a glimpse of it when they're together and when they're together in time.

AT REST

Jeff McMahon reflects on the traces of memory in the urban landscape

Inscribed on a park bench in London's Highbury Fields: *Kathleen Hoy 1903-1994. Much loved Mother. Well done.* So very western and Protestant in its reduction of familial love to the accomplishment of a task, a quantifiable achievement modifying an abstract emotion. This is the industrial revolution at its most basic. Mother, her job now ended, is given this tight little send off, its curt periods cutting off any excess; the emotional equivalent of a gold watch and hand shake. Good job. Good bye. Yet such terseness is affecting; this inscription burned into the wood of a simple park bench, one of many on the perimeter of the park, one bench out of many, one mother out of a nation of, one assumes, much missed mums. It works.

Out for a run, I stop at the bench, the marker of the end of my once-around morning sprint, resting a leg on a low rung to stretch tight hamstrings. And think of my own mother. One of the triumphs of this kind of sentimental gesture is that it causes the viewer to reflect on his own life, his own mum, whether specifically accurate or not. Like any good sentiment, it sweeps away the cluttering "no" of doubt and allows for the more generous "yes"; yes, my mother has indeed done a good job with us, her children. Had she not, would this particular son be here, in London, on an extended holiday, easing a middle-aging body into another day of discovery, distraction, and occasional triumph? It was my parents, after all, who equipped me with the skills, the building blocks of personality and position, which led me here to this lovely place. And could it be their wonder at the world, a paying attention to attention, that would cause me to notice this small thing, this modest mention in a city of monuments? Well done.

But this well-being is mitigated by another marker, on an adjoining bench: "Damian Farr 11.6.68 --4..5.94 WITH LOVE." A man ten years my junior, yet dead. Died of what, this Damian? Why would a young man in his mid twenties die in the early nineties? Could he have died of the thing that I escaped, the virus I began running from, metaphorically, in the early eighties; that virus delivered, as so much is, through the act of love itself? There is no such reference on the marker, but it is a marker of my own identity, my own life, that I make assumptions, wild guesses that are not so wild, that I glean information from its very lack. Stick to the facts. Damian died the same year as Kathleen, yet died a young man, while she achieved the full span of old age. Did he too have children to leave a marker for him? Doubtful. So this memorial is left by whom, with what relation to the deceased? Would the same society which instinctively approves of Kathleen's long life and motherhood cast the same beneficent eye on Damian? Who am I to assume they would not? Why am I gathering evidence? This is not a crime, but an accumulation of notices, announcements of demise, of disappearance, brief fanfares to which I feel compelled to add notes. I am attempting to leave something of my own in this place I am temporarily residing in, applying the standards of my home, as a child in the motherland of empire, past tense. I have come to one of my ancestral lands to stand musing in front of memorial plaques about imaginary lives. And I have an agenda.

As do others; culture, even in memoriam, does not rest. Many months later, having once again the privilege to return to London, to Highbury Fields, to my morning run around the perimeter, to this mother, I find Kathleen Hoy's memorial itself marked. An additional inscription, graffitied onto the parallel lines of her park bench, barks: "DEAN, CHARLENE, NEVILLE+COLLIN WOZ ERE 2000 AN ONWORDS!!!" My initial grief at such a defacement molds injury into irony; these are the living, the young (I assume) asserting the sloppy ecstasy of their lives, spewing onto whatever surface the proof they are indeed alive, the brood of a no-longer imperial power who (I assume once again) know none of Kathleen's struggles, the context of her times, the meaning implicit in "well done." Or perhaps not. Perhaps they are her grandchildren, or peers of her grandchildren, unable to fathom this disappearance, this clipped emotion, and so must mark its occurrence; as a dog, when lifting its leg after sniffing out the past presence of another, both salutes and erases.

And what of Damian? He is, as of yet, undisturbed. Would Dean, Charlene, Neville+Collin have left something more specific to his memory? Did they purposely avoid him, choosing Kathleen instead? For Damian, would they have reconsidered the brag of their "2000 An Onwords!!!" leaving out, at the very least, a few exclamations? Yet perhaps their mark is not so different from my own written attempt; we mark-up each other's lives, and deaths, reconstituting them into our own. And we live, as they declared, on words. I run on.

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Inner City Values

Fran Tonkiss

A photograph in an estate agent's window in Sydney's inner west shows what you used to get for your money around here. The picture is less than thirty years old, but it has an almost antique quality: black and white, faded, distinctly amateur. But the period aspect is really given by the price, typewritten and stuck across the top. As an adjacent note exclaims, you could hardly buy a decent car for that today. Presumably this is meant to be good news, although it's not clear (outside the unloved ranks of real estate agents) exactly for whom. Whatever, the photograph - set alongside domestic glamour shots of original features and town gardens - captures a shift not only in what it costs, but in what it *means* to live in the inner city.

Changes in the social and physical fabric of cities are reflected, and sometimes presaged, in changes at the level of meaning and representation. The 'inner city' has never simply been a spatial fact: its various associations mark how cultural meanings, as well as economic processes, are played out in urban forms. In Sydney as in London, recent shifts at the level of class and capital - the accelerated gentrification of certain inner urban areas – have produced new social patterns in space, but also have reshaped urban imagery and identities.

The inner city has been a familiar trope for urban sociologists since the Chicago School thinkers charted the modern city in the inter-war period, but its haze of meaning goes back to those urban explorers - novelists, journalists, reformers, artists, agitators - who storied the nineteenth-century city. These twin conceptions of the inner city - the social and the spatial - come together most powerfully in the 1960s and after, in political strategies for the renewal of urban areas visited by social or environmental blight. Within the frame of the inner city, complex social and economic conditions could be spatialised in quite specific ways. The statistical snapshot however, while it acts as a powerful representation, never quite captures its object. Neither have policy instruments been the only means for transforming urban spaces. If the inner city has been a site, at once imagined and very real, of urban decline and acute social deprivation, it also and increasingly has become a site for development.

These urban changes in part can be traced at the level of built form, as the architecture of renewal gives way to an architecture firstly of conversion, and then of invention. Disused industrial buildings, in the first instance, offer new ways of making domestic space on an open internal plan, and behind an unhomely facade. New-build developments, meanwhile, magic urban lifestyle out of the most unpromising bits of infill or car park. The narratives that might be read in these urban transformations get at the link between the political and visual economies of the contemporary city. Here, the import of the 'post-industrial' has to do not only with economics but with style. If the shift from industrial to residential use of redundant buildings marks a set of changes in the urban economy, the fact that some new developments are designed to look as if they might once have been warehouses brings us very surely into the realm of simulation.

The new architecture of invention combines post-industrial aesthetics with post-modern quotation. Years after Manhattan's original loft-livers have sold up and moved off the island, a derivative 'loft' style ripples through any number of cities, from Manchester to Adelaide. The alchemy of urban meaning works in part through exchanges between different places. One exemplary advertisement in London in the mid-1990s promised 'Manhattan luxury in a Miami landscape…and it's called Alaska!'- all in the less fabulous ambience of Bermondsey. Back in inner Sydney, an array of billboards on adjacent building-sites hold out an image of the lifestyle to come, where it seems martinis and evening-dress will be an ordinary night in. Imagination, as someone once said, is everything…

Still, real people are not identical to those urban types that populate any one of the imagined inner cities, and it is in the space in-between that individuals make their own stories of city living. The contest for the contemporary inner city can be read all over the place - in the ethnography of the street or the iconography of the sign, in the urban graffiti imploring some kind of fight back, and in the fantasies of the estate agent's window. These are only ever, of course, partial representations, but that doesn't make them wholly untrue. Urban representations, however calculated, inept or banal, have a role in shaping urban identities and expectations, and in making legible the way power plays in the city.

The inner city remains a space full of meaning. As a spatial marker, it can be pretty imprecise. The outer fringes of cities, based on one reading, can display typically 'inner city' characteristics. On another reading, aspirant suburbs in places like London or Sydney can affect a new 'inner city' air, especially if train times into the city can plausibly be talked down. In one version the idea of the inner city is pathologised, in the other it is aestheticised. The spectacle of development, what is more, gets its edge from the spectre of decline.

Fran Tonkiss teaches in the Department of Sociology. Parts of this piece are drawn from her chapter on 'Inner City Living' in J. Barrett and C. Butler-Bowdon (eds) (2001) *Debating the City*. Sydney: HHT.

I Love Laurie Grove

Michael Stone

When was the last time anyone said that? The 19th century? Never?

Actually, I'm not really sure how much I do love Laurie Grove itself, as a physical place. I certainly would have more affection for it if Goldsmiths College and Lewisham borough would join together to keep the lower end of Laurie Grove clear of the ever-accumulating and re-accumulating debris, rubbish and attendant rats. Indeed, yesterday morning a rat scurried across my path.

The Laurie Grove Baths are, to be sure, a minor architectural marvel, celebrating and offering the Victorian virtue of cleanliness to the (otherwise?) great unwashed of Deptford -- that is, until taken over by Goldsmiths College and converted to studio space for art students and offices for CUCR. Is there a connection between the loss of the Baths as baths and rise of rubbish on Laurie Grove?

I am also intrigued by the tight rows of terraced houses flanking and opposite the Baths, houses that presumably provided decent (and perhaps "affordable," whatever that means) housing to generations of working-class families -- again until taken over by Goldsmiths and turned into offices, except for a few forlorn remaining residences at the lower end. As a CUCR Visiting Associate I have a very pleasant office in one of those houses, #18 to be precise. But as a housing advocate from Boston I am dismayed (to put it politely, as I am a guest after all) that my office may be a manifestation of the same kind of crass institutional expansion into working-class residential neighbourhoods of Boston by famous and not-so-famous academic institutions. In but not of their urban communities.

Across from my office is an old industrial building – now Goldsmiths as well – of the same brick as the terraces: Were work lives and home lives bounded and shaped by these identical brown bricks? What of us who are now contained within these bricks. What do they say to us? What do they do to us?

What about the "grove" of Laurie, I wonder? Is it the array of exotic plants behind this row of terraces, or are they the legacy of a Goldsmiths' botany project? And who was Laurie?

Laurie Grove does of course spill out into New Cross Road (or is it the other way around? Topologically out; psychologically in). New Cross Road is where Deptford confronts Goldsmiths College, and where some of Goldsmiths' unofficial "cool" sits hard by Goldsmiths' institutional sobriety. New Cross Road and Lewisham Way, the A2, the Roman Road – dividing and connecting and confronting class and race for two millennia.

Certainly what I most love about Laurie Grove is CUCR, where I am spending a year of indulgence thanks to the serendipitous Massachusetts family connections of Emma Haughton and Roger Hewitt, and the gracious invitation of Les Back (in his capacity as Acting Director in 2001), generously affirmed by Michael Keith upon his return as Director. I have felt warmly welcomed by everyone in the Centre and stimulated by conversations both individual and collective. Especially intriguing and insightful have been the personal offbeat guided tours of Deptford and beyond into Lewisham, Greenwich, Croydon and Tower Hamlets, provided by Ben Gidley as well as Roger, Les and Michael.

But what am I doing here anyway, other than having a holiday in sun-drenched South London? I'm on sabbatical from U Mass Boston, where I'm Professor of Community Planning and Public Policy, and I'm being supported in part by an Atlantic Fellowship in Public Policy, provided by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CUCR is a particularly appropriate place for me to be for this year because my professional life has been engaged with urban problems, policies and practice — most especially housing affordability and community-based and participatory planning — primarily focused on socially-diverse urban communities and lower-income populations. Part of my work on these issues in the U.S. has been as a researcher and consultant at the broad national level of policy, concept and theory. The other facet of my work has been as a teacher, action researcher and practitioner in and with racially and ethnically diverse communities and populations of greater Boston.

A primary focus of my research and professional activity has been on the problem of housing affordability, as defined and measured through the concept of "shelter poverty" that I first formulated many years ago. The shelter poverty standard is a residual income approach to housing affordability that reflects the interaction among incomes, housing costs and the basic costs of non-shelter necessities. It is conceptually superior to the conventional percentage of income approach and a more finely-honed instrument for assessing affordability and determining housing assistance needs. Both nationally and locally my studies of shelter poverty in the U.S. have not only examined the problem in the aggregate, but given particular attention to shelter poverty among households headed by persons of colour, women and elderly.

Since arriving her last fall I have been reading about housing affordability definitions and debates in the U.K. and discussing the shelter poverty concept with some academics, practitioners and activists. I have just finished adapting and re-computing the shelter poverty scale based upon U.K. living standards, and over the next few months will utilize data from the Family Resources Survey to compute the extent and distribution of shelter poverty and conventionally-measured affordability problems in the U.K. for selected geographical areas by tenure, income, race, age and household composition.

A closely related facet of my professional work has been on the political economy and politics of housing. While I have studied and written fairly extensively on various aspects of housing in the U.S., my attention has focused increasingly on ways of addressing shelter poverty through models of social ownership – housing outside of the speculative market under various forms of resident and community control – including limited-equity co-operatives and condominiums, mutual housing associations, community land trusts, as well as non-profit and public ownership. Not only have I written about social housing, but have been working with community-based organizations and activists to promote and expand social housing in the U.S.

I was already familiar with some aspects of social housing in the U.K., but since arriving have had a chance to take in some of the hot and heavy debates about the future of social housing. In this project, I have decided to focus particularly on social housing in Lewisham borough: it has lots of social housing, straddles inner and outer London, and seems to manifest most of the issues being debated. It is also where CUCR is located and has extensive working relationships. And it is where I am living for this year. My hope is to explore particularly the challenges for social housing from the resident and community perspective. The aim of this endeavor is to draw lessons not only for U.S. and U.K. housing policy, but also for community-based practice and action.

So you see, Laurie Grove is a brilliant base for carrying out my project this year – even though I had to sit under my umbrella for a time while writing this because of the rain coming through the ceiling. The lesson is, one should not pretend to be able to study cities without be willing to experience at least some of their minor challenges. That's why I love Laurie Grove.

Kilo's Choice

M Y Alam talks to Les Back about his new novel

M Y Alam's new book *Kilo* is a complex moral tale. It is the story of a young man – Khalil Khan - whose life is shattered by a violent attack. The incident turned Khalil – a law abiding young man – into Kilo who cuts his way through the underworld of Bradford streets. But the more Kilo succeeds in his life of crime the stronger the pull of his original values become. In the end he has to make a choice, sometimes it is necessary to do bad things.

M Y Alam was born and lives in Bradford. His is a unique take on both the nature of multicultural cities and the experience of British born Pakistanis. He cites as his main influences Muhammad Ali, George Best, hip hop music and American gangster movies, but not necessarily in that order. In the summer of 2002 he spoke to Les Back about his new novel, the 'riots' of 2001 and the influence of Bradford on his work.

Les Back: Your new novel - *Kilo* - tells a complicated moral story through one character, could say something about him?

M Y Alam: Yes, at one level this is about a drug dealer [Kilo]. But every time you see or even think about a drug dealer, there's an instant effect where all these levers and switches start operating in your head. As a result, you make a judgement which itself depends on that instant impression of what that person is, what that person means. And what it means to be a drug dealer is somebody who, in Kilo's words, is a purveyor of death and all that sort of thing. But Kilo, I think, is much more complicated than that. And that's not to say that I'm really out to condone drug dealers, but I do think, well, hang on a fucking second – surely drug dealers can't be the two dimensional and simple entities we might believe them to be. I'm not trying to push the idea that all drug dealers have got this little tale of woe – this fucking weight around their necks, but I do think we need to explore the motivations behind certain kinds of behaviour. There are no pathologies which fit the biographies of people who deal drugs but even so, I think the sad thing is that more and more drug dealers are just careerists. Whether that's a reflection on them – as individuals – or a reflection on the way society is - something else but again, even that needs some consideration and that's what I tried to do, at one level. So with Kilo, it's me saying this is a drug dealer but he's a good person. Morally he's a *very* good person: he's more moral than I'd ever be. But he sells drugs. Again that's just one level, one take, one perspective on it.

Les Back: But what the book seems to do all the time, it talks about the way in which the places and the worlds in which those characters are living and moving transforms them?

M Y Alam: The thing that really changes Kilo is situation, rather than environment. Environment – locale, place and the politics of community are important, but that's not what fucks with Kilo. In a way, I suppose place – the geographical or even geopolitical spaces are kind of incidental which is maybe why I still think I'm pretty crap at writing descriptive stuff. Besides, I don't have the patience to go on about the kinds of materials used in fucking buildings and I can't be arsed going on about the intricacies of space. For me it's what happens where things get interesting. The space and more importantly those people that inhabit and constantly recreate it are the ones who drive, define and make Kilo what he is, whatever definition that turns out to be. It's the fact that things are happening to him that drive the narrative.

Les Back: The other thing I suppose as well is that just thinking about what happened last summer and the photographs of the young Asian men that were splashed all over the papers, I can't think of a news report where you actually heard one of those young men's voices.

M Y Alam: I'm not sure if this is entirely or even remotely relevant but one of the reasons why I write is because I don't hear myself or I don't hear or see people like myself when it comes to mass media. Not that I have sleepless nights about it but it is important. Linking it back to this idea we have called 'literature', I don't read fictions about people like me either. I love film – mother's milk – but I have never seen a filmic experience with which I can truly and deeply identify with. Sure, I watch movies and read books (occasionally) where I can see where the central character's coming from but that's about it. I understand things but I don't truly relate to them. I mean how many fucking books have you read where the narration starts going on about things that are specifically talking to and *with* me? Now this is kind of dangerous ground we're walking on right now because you could get some fucking cracker start talking separatist talk but that's not where I'm at. All I ask is for some kind of fucking recognition, here, you know? I remember as a school kid reading fucking shite about the Famous Five, about Nancy fucking Drew and these days there's that Harry Potter happy horseshit but to kids like the me of 20 years ago and even for a lot of kids now, that don't mean shit. It's important because people like me were and still are told that we don't do nothing to integrate and here's you and me, talking about the fact that I've nothing to read or significantly relate to. You extend that a little further and you could argue that by not recognising and therefore indirectly representing some groups, you're actually – perhaps indirectly – telling them they're not worth recognising in the first place. Moving on to the riots, disturbances, happenings or whatever they were, the same shit happened. There were all these young and largely Pakistani men – granted some of them were fucking idiots – reacting to a strange situation. I don't know too much about the places but in Bradford, there was in some quarters genuine shock that the authorities were doing nothing about far right activism. So what do you do when you're not heard? You shout louder. And when that fails, you shrug your shoulders and fuck off home, right? I think most people would have done but on the day, a lot of shit went down – most of which could have been avoided by a little more forward planning and common sense thinking. I mean, call me fucking whacko, but coppers on horseback chasing people around and telling them to fuck off back home is not going to be conducive to peace and harmony.

Your question about not hearing any of these young men says a lot, too. Nobody heard the voices of young Pakistani men, or women for that matter, in Bradford or any other inner city where that shit kicked off. All we heard were the usual mob of 'community leaders', journalists, politicians and coppers most whom were debating the pros and cons of water canon. This is nothing new – Thatcher did it with democratically elected leaders of the IRA and the mass media does it with rioters. Now I'm not comparing the politics of the IRA with young Pakistani men but the point is, they were both seen as dangerous and therefore their views were, if not suppressed, then simply excluded. I think social class is very important here because you didn't see many middle class kids there – as a force within the riots – and why would you? What the fuck do they have to bitch about? The fact that the local IKEA's two miles out of town? I don't think ethnicity has ever been that important, not really. Ethnicity has just been used as a marker of difference because it's easy to use it that way. Truth is, white people who live in the council estates have got more in common with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi people who live in their own little ghettoes. One of the things that defines us is our class experiences, and so much of our habitus – the things we do out of habit, almost – become deeply personal and meaningful yet political experiences.

In order to get into the media, in order to be heard, you've got to have a certain background, you've got to have a certain baggage with you and that can help you acquire certain credentials which will help you to be heard. I don't think I had any of them so at times I really am at a loss as to why I got published. Myself, I'm pretty sure it's got fuckall to do with talent. I mean listen to this shit – swearing and fucking cursing like a possessed nun. Be that as it may, one of the reasons why I write is to be heard but that doesn't necessarily mean I aim to be representative by any means. I hate that idea – others seem to do fine but it's a big responsibility to take on which is maybe why I don't want it: if I wanted to represent anyone, let alone 'my people', I'd have gone into politics. Truth is, no matter what I want to believe, me writing is still going to turn out to be more representative than me not bothering to write. So that's another sort of layer to this thing about personal politics. It's not just what I write, it's probably why I right.

Les Back: Can you say a bit more about your early experience of you growing up. Could you say a little bit more about that and how you draw on this in your writing?

M Y Alam: As a kid?

Les Back: Yes, where did you live?

M Y Alam: Well I lived in Manningham for many years. My earliest memories are moving into a street of back-to-back houses. My dad bought three houses

in that street. At the time, they were like three hundred quid a piece, four hundred quid a piece. No shit, three bedrooms, back to back houses with an inside toilet, and there were outside toilets round the back, you know, they had the old outhouses. Shit, you can't even rent them for that now. So anyway, he bought one for my eldest sister, because she was getting married at the time, he bought one for my uncle, and he bought one for us and that was it. Pretty soon people started moving out. Within a year there was hardly anybody left of the white people. Everybody had fucked off, for whatever reasons. I don't think I understood too good then but it kind of made sense when I got a little older and started understanding people better. Thing is, we weren't unpleasant people I don't think. And what's more, my mum could speak English pretty well and my dad was very fluent. We never committed any pagan rituals outside people's doorsteps or anything, and yet people decided they'd move on to greener pastures. Come to think of it, though, there were two households that stayed there for a long time that were white. In one of these houses there lived these two young lads, same ages as myself and my brother at that time, couple of years in between them. And they became good friends for a long time. One of them was a really smart – I mean clever – bastard and he was the one who got me into Ska, Reggae, Soul and all that Two Tone stuff. He bought a scooter and all that and to me it was all fascinating because it was real, right in front of my eyes: scooter loaded up with mirrors, fish tail parka, loafers – the full works. Sad thing is, I heard he died a few years ago – fucking heroin. Anyway, in the other corner of the street were an old couple, a very old couple, who had a daughter who'd visit them and she had kids and we'd sort of kick around with them too. Relatively happy times. Very happy times actually. I mean the thing is at that time, my dad used to work in a mill. My dad, before I was born he had a shop, he worked as a taxi driver, and then he consistently worked in textile mills for a variety of reasons. I think he found it much easier working for someone else – which is something I've inherited from him – hate the idea of business. But the thing about textile mills even then, is that they didn't pay particularly well. I remember seeing my dad's wage packet this one time and this is 1979/80 – forty-five quid! Forty-five quid! And my dad had worked twelve hours a night, five, maybe six nights a week. But my dad always had a thing about working when he could work, you know, a work ethic and a belief that rejection of work was kind of immoral which is something I like to believe too. But we seemed to get round the money thing. My mum was a very good housekeeper. We had a couple of other friends and we did all things that kids do, you know, played footie, rode bikes, smoked cigarettes and all that. School was slightly complicated because at that time there were kids still coming over from Pakistan, so every now and then I'd be asked by the teachers to interpret for these kids – years before people got all sensitive and even practical within education. Racism at that time was fairly rife, from other kids and from teachers, you know. It was just normal, you know, this is what happens at school. Growing up, it became more so for a while. British society became quite politically charged for a while during the middle of Thatcher's reign I guess. And that sort of helped identify who I was, and by that time I'd started working and stuff so I got to see and learn more about the world. The thing about literature though, is that it's always been kind of there – maybe I just resisted it. The two lessons in school I enjoyed more than any others I suppose were Maths and English. I had a big thing about Maths, and I had a big thing about English Language. I got O levels in both and then I got kicked out. But I always liked writing and I could write a lot quickly and expressively. I always did well in English and the teachers were reasonably impressed but they always gave me those bullshit lines about acting foolish and not taking things seriously. But then after I got kicked out of school, I started working and I guess I had no need to touch a pen in that sense any more. And it was only when I went back to further education in my late twenties that I started writing again in an FE academic capacity, if such a thing exists.

Les Back: If you had to say which books caught your imagination, are there like a handful, or two or three books that you read?

M Y Alam: Just one and I mentioned this the other day, and that was Barry Hines' *Kes* really. I read that at school, first and then I saw the film on television. That worked great – seeing the same story in two different formats was amazing. Up to then, I never really considered films as books. Books were books (and shit) and films were films (and great). The funny thing, after I read *Kes*, maybe a few years later, I read another book by Barry Hines but only because my brother was reading it. And he was only reading it because it was about football and my brother, at that time, was well into and a pretty decent player. So he was reading a book called *Blinder* about a footballer, and I said well what's this about and I read that too. I read a few more things but nothing really sticks in my mind.

Les Back: When you think back to what was appealing about it, were there things that you thought, 'that

seems recognisable to me, I can imagine that'?

M Y Alam: Yes, absolutely. I think everybody recognised the games teacher, played by Brian Glover. In middle school our games teacher was a fat bastard, but he was a horrible fat bastard as well, you know. A very mean, nasty and pretty fucked up man, I tend to think. I went to a school that was very violent. I'm not talking about a school full of violent kids, I think all kids have the potential to be violent, but I'm talking violent teachers. Fucking head cases, some of them. You know we had a teacher who was an ex Hells Angel. An ex Hell's Angel teaching kids how to draw and shit. Go figure. And we had this games teacher who just seemed to take pleasure in hitting children. Fucking bizarre. Other teachers just seemed to take pleasure in humiliating children, you know, physically and verbally but this guy, he was a sadist. So I mean the Brian Glover character was kind of a nice version of our bastard from hell, our games teacher. And then there was the kid himself. I remember Billy Casper when he's getting changed and he's not got his shorts, he has to wear this very long pair of shorts. That happened to me man. I had to wear these horrible old smelly fucking blue shorts that went down to your knees. So there were moments like that and then there was this English teacher, was it Colin Welland who played him. For some reason, English teachers are always cool.

Les Back: The last thing, in what sense does the novel tell a story about Bradford, do you think?

M Y Alam: I think it would still work in any kind of multi-cultural city so to speak. If I wanted to be really, really sort of negative, I think it is a very Bradford book if there is such a thing. I say that simply because I was born and brought up there, and to me when I'm writing a book, when the characters are going to certain places, you know, I actually see those places. I might not name them, but I do visualise them and follow them around. In some cases some of the places are just amalgams, so I imagine indirectly perhaps all of Bradford seeps through. But I think it's quite complimentary of Bradford, I think it's actually a book that has a certain pride about Bradford. It was never my intention to write a fucking advert and although I believe it's positive, some people have picked it up and said it's not very positive – especially about young Asian males but that's their problem, not mine. I think it's very hopeful. It's probably much more hopeful than it should be. I think Bradford's got a lot of fucking problems. And the way things are going, I can't see things getting better for a long time. But the book isn't like that. Kilo does the morally good thing. Sometimes people have to do bad things and that's it, that's just the judgement that this one guy makes. Sure, he's a drug dealing piece of shit for some people and sure, he kills more people than a hit man so by default, you'd think he's a bad person but the world makes him that way and he does redeem himself big time, I'd say. Maybe Kilo's a metaphor for Bradford. The only problem I have is people making correlations between what I've written and what Bradford is and what they think I've written about Bradford. In my mind I haven't written anything to damn Bradford at all, in my mind I've written an honest book, partly about Bradford, there's probably less then ten percent about Bradford in there, but because it's set in Bradford, then that's the focus for some people. People forget this is fiction and, to my mind, this book is all about characters, it's all about this one guy's journey. But the bits I have written about Bradford are honest. And that's it.

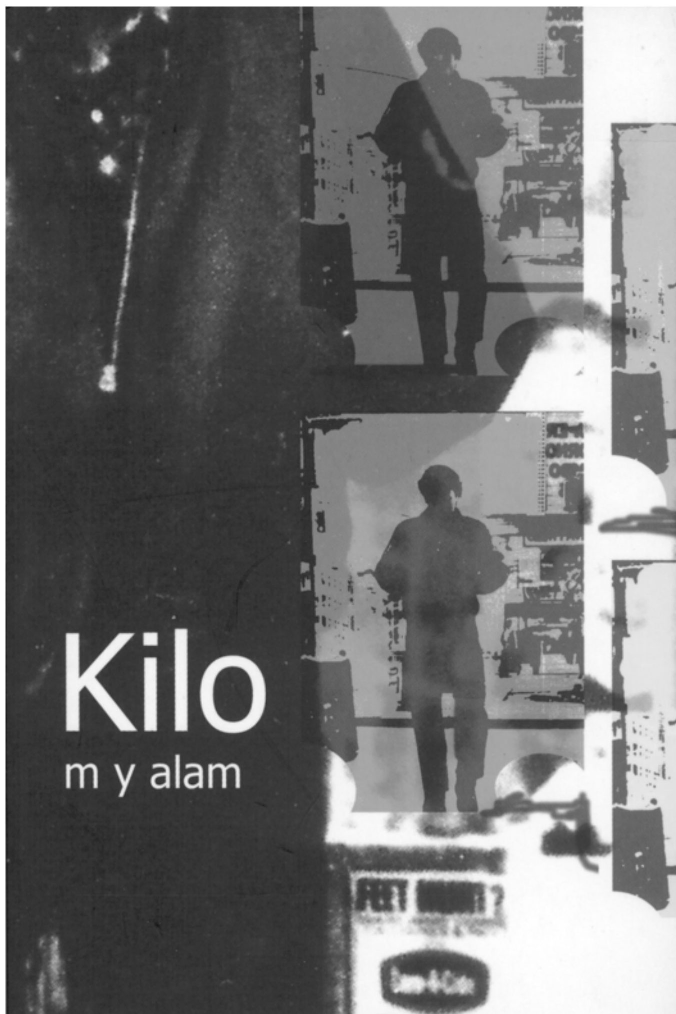
Les Back: What do you think about the way Bradford has been written about as a segregated city?

M Y Alam: Those lines of division – those boundaries, people go on about them but I don't know whether they exist or not. Sure there are some areas that are predominantly populated with white people, and there are some that are predominately populated with non-white people. But this whole idea, this whole notion of no-man's lands, no-go areas as they're called, is a bit silly, really. I mean I think there might be some truth to it all, but if they do exist, then they're due to these self appointed little police forces – there aren't too many of them but these things do get blown out of proportion. What pissed me off about that whole discourse of segregation and fragmentation was that it was just simplistic beyond belief: it's intellectual junkfood – it might taste pretty fucking good but too much of that shit's bad for you. Even now some Home Office report has come out saying some of Bradford's Muslim communities are self segregated, they're in self seclusion zones. People don't actually work like that, people don't think like that and they don't live their lives like that. It just so happens that there's a combination of factors and one end consequence is that people decide to stick together or move away in order to stick together. People go on about it as if it's only along ethnic lines that this happens but that's bollocks. Bradford's no more segregated than any other place, and again going back to the thing about class and especially wealth: there's real segregation for you. You don't see the people living up in the rich end of town coming down and mixing with the people who live in the council estates or whatever. Why are they segregated? They're segregated because it's a money thing, some have self-segregated because they've got more money and can afford to move out into places where there are loads of other rich self-

segregationists. That's all it is, it's just the way people live and have lived for centuries – how come you never see a member of the Royal family shacked up in some shithole? Because that's not the way people live, but the way people are asked to live, forced to live and some cases, actually choose to live.

Les Back: So those boundaries are much more permeable?

M Y Alam: They're not physical boundaries are they? I mean, there's no actual gates for each group to pass through. Having said that a few years ago it was very difficult for some white people to even walk up Oak Lane, which is the beginning of a largely Pakistani area. But the people who were doing the barring if you like, or doing the policing of these permeable boundaries were of a minority group: young, Pakistani men. But that's not all, some of these idiots were just that: idiots who fucked anybody around – young, old, black, white, Asian, male, female. That kind of thing leads me to suggest race or ethnicity was one factor, not the be all and end all – it wasn't that these young Pakistani men hated white people – they hated everyone. I think some of those people have problems that they need to deal with. Partly, it's just a male thing about territory and violence. Shit, even I'm scared of going up Oak Lane sometimes because you look at these guys and they look at you like you've just fucked their mother or killed their father or something. I don't know. There is something definitely wrong with the generation – it's like they need reprogramming: like some of the software's a bit fucked up or something – they've got some bugs in their system. Maybe it's got more to do with consumer culture than it has with radical Islam or anything else, you know. It's just a strange sort of juxtaposition that young Pakistani men find themselves in because here they are surrounded in a society that still says consume, eat, enjoy, buy, spend, consume and there's a shortfall towards meeting those pressures. If you can't achieve the ends, then you find different ways of achieving them, and one of the means is criminality or just different kinds of deviance from the norm. So you go through illegal, unacceptable or simply deviant means to reach the ends which are still the same. And along with that different and deviant world comes all the baggage like attitude, and posture and even an odd fucked up kind of politics which results in a shift in identity and persona, I suppose. Because you see these guys on the street and they look at you like I said, as if they have a problem with you - look at them when they're with their mothers or fathers and they're like fucking pussycats. And I say young Pakistani men purposefully because there's an interesting thing going on there in terms of aligning Muslim with Pakistani, both of which are further aligned with badness. It's kind of easy to say that what people like Stuart Hall talked about in the seventies regarding young Afro-Caribbean men as muggers, pimps and racists seems to be now applicable to young Pakistanis but I'd argue it's a much wider and much more in depth demonisation. Sure, black minorities have had 500 plus fucking years of getting shafted but I think we're now comfortable about saying and believing it was all fucked up, wrong and false. But because Islam has so many connotations and links, I think there's scope for a lot of damage which is going on right now in lots of subtle ways that we don't have time to talk about right now, but it's happening in one way or another. Truth is, this is much more complicated than religion, ethnicity, class and whatever else we can dream up. There are many more markers involved here, it's just a question if people can be arsed to think and look closer.



Les Back: That's a good place to end.

MY Alam's latest book *Kilo* is published by Route Books priced £6.95

Walter's Ghost

Hiroki Ogasawara journeys to Walter Benjamin's grave

Every overseas student has to endure the annual nuisance of renewing his or her visa. Whether at Lunar House in Croydon, Heathrow or Dover, overseas students come up against the harsh treatment of the immigration officers. To make it a less annoying experience, it is common among my fellow overseas student to make a short trip to some beautiful places. This year I chose a trip to a small town at the French-Spanish border called Portbou. My purpose was to say 'hello' to the ghost of Walter Benjamin.

The Catalonia Express train takes two hours from Barcelona to this small Mediterranean town. On this mild autumn day, the sea is quiet. Portbou is situated at the edge of the Pyrenees and it is rather too quiet and it is difficult to imagine that in its heyday it used be one of the busiest border-crossing gates in Europe. Before I flew to Barcelona, my friend Thomas told me of his childhood memory of passing Portbou station on a car train. (From either side of the border, changing a train and passport control are a common experience of the travellers.) Stepping out of the train, the station looks very empty. The roof is high, the building huge, with many tracks cross-cutting each other. Today the train tracks showed their raw steel there are no carriages running on them. The ticket office is big and so is the waiting room. But only 5 or 6 people, including myself, seemed to be arriving at this destination. I asked a lady in ticket office (she is the only person working there) where I can get a town map and other information. "Go down the slope and get to the seaside," I was told, "you'll find tourist information there." In Catalonia it is Catalan or French rather than Spanish that is the common language. I was pleased that my mysterious French got me the correct advice.

It was less than 10 minutes walk to the beach and the sea is calm. There are just a few elderly walking around. Then, I found the tourist office but it is only open from April to September. It was 1st of October. I missed narrowly. Anyway, I still need someone to tell me where I can find the dear ghost of Walter. I found a map standing beside the now closed tourist office, but it tells me nothing about my destination.

At the end of a wide promenade running from the beach, there are a few restaurants and bars and souvenir shops. A man at a souvenir shop asked me whether I have had lunch. I said, "No. I want to find Walter Benjamin's grave first." He said he knew where it was. Of course, he must know, in some ways his business depends on it. Thanks to his death at Portbou, this little town have become an alternative tourist stop for philosophers and radicals. Benjamin has become a first class celebrity in the town where they have little else to commemorate. Their special historical heritage of Portbou is a place where migrants were stopped in their tracks, a strict border town in which Benjamin was fatally turned back. I was told to go to what this man described as a 'petit biblioteque'. I walked straight down the street, then found a big picture of Benjamin on the right side of the door, to the left is a picture of a Catalan fisherman. The door is closed and the small notice said it is only open from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. I missed, once again. It was 1.10pm. For 2 or 3 minutes I stood in front of the closed door and watching Benjamin's big portrait. Nobody passed me on the street. Then came a fortunate accident.

A car stopped and the driver asked me if I came to look at the library. I said I had come to visit Walter Benjamin's grave. He got out of the car and unlocked the door… The man is running his own business just down on the corner but he is also the keeper of the library. Walter smiled at me. The library is just a tiny room. It has none of Benjamin's books; rather it is full of his photographs, his typewriter, letters, documents and a lot of newspaper cuttings. One of those docu-

ments is the hotel bill addressed to Benjamin. Tired and resigned, Benjamin overdosed on morphine tablets and refused treatment. He died on 27th of September. Hotel Francia issued the bill on the 1st of October: it was today's date, 62 years ago. I could have missed this opportunity to see these things had I not met the shopkeeper. What a coincidence! God, Buddha, Allah, whoever I don't care, blessed me. I looked again at the bill. The first item on the bill was a bottle of lemonade. Suddenly, I imagined the hotel room where Benjamin took his own life. The fatal dose of Morphine was washed down not with water but with lemonade, a poison made palatable with a sweet soft drink.

Benjamin's grave is in the municipal cemetery just 10 minutes walk from the library. However, it is not the grave but the memorial plaques on the corner of the cemetery which attract most attention. At the grave is a black plaque which adorns a beautiful triangle shape stone. The inscription reads: 'a document of culture is always also a document of barbarism'. Outside the cemetery is an art installation by Dani Karavan. It is called 'Passages' and dedicated to Benjamin and other European exiles of 1933-45. It is a huge, rectangular iron staircase, tumbling down the hillside to the level of the sea. Only a thick glass floor prevents me from reaching the rocks and waves. The thick iron walls made me feel solitary and completely shut out the sound of the outer-world. Passages are normally a two-way path allowing the walker to go and come back and also enabling people pass by each other. However, for Benjamin, it was one-way street and there was no return.

Portbou has little to record the fact that hundreds of European exiles anxiously anticipated escape and survival in the small town. The station determined the landscape itself it made the town a frontier place a place for the deported, exiled people where state power was negotiated. Why did Benjamin kill himself? He was tired, surely, after the long journey across the Pyrenees on foot. Too tired to breath? Did he simply give himself up or in the possibility of intellectual activity outside Europe. In the end Benjamin was rooted to Europe, perhaps the idea of fleeing to America like his friend Theordor Adorno was too much for him. Did Benjamin simply want to stay in his territory? The stillness of Portbou seemed to convince me of this idea.

On my way back, I got my visa extended another year. I was allowed to stay in Britain, the territory I want to stay in. Who said the border is getting diminished? You don't have to kill yourself, but there is an education in being a foreign student and experiencing Heathrow's warm welcome. Benjamin's death is a tribute to someone who decided to stay inside the border at the expense of his life. This is the easiest, if most self-destructive way to be assured of a visa extension. Borders are as strong as ever today. But the question is how to cross them, how to make it powerless and meaningless, this is the issue. Benjamin's ghost gave me a couple of nice coincidences but also made me think of the irresistible allure of Europe.

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Passages Through Dark Times

Ben Gidley talks about Jewishness, Memory and Urban Space in East Germany

> ***"You who will emerge from the flood in which we were drowned remember when you speak of our weaknesses the dark time from which you escaped…***
>
> ***Remember us with forbearance."***
>
> –Bertolt Brecht "To Those Born After Us"

> ***"Even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and in their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth…"***
>
> –Hannah Arendt "Men in Dark Times"

The transit bus from the airport into Leipzig arrived at the exact time given on the time-table. The bus glided through the flat monotony of the Saxon countryside, entering a zone of urban sprawl, in which it was impossible to distinguish which low-rise concrete box contained homes and which contained factories, warehouses, offices. The grey post-industrial landscape was punctuated here and there by Vietnamese signs, testimony to the historic links between East Germany and Communist Vietnam.

From the bus station, we crossed over the no-man's land of a wide ring road ("good for tanks", as my Yiddish teacher, Gennady Estraikh, pointed out – a fact he knew from the bitter experience of living most of his life in the Soviet Union) into the beauty of the baroque town centre. Since reunification, Leipzig has been a jewel in the East's crown, receiving heavy regeneration investment. "Leipzig is coming" is the bizarre slogan of the tourist office, which describes it as a cosmopolitan, multicultural town (not something apparent from the faces of the people I passed on the street).

It was Autumn 2001. I was in Leipzig to participate in a conference, held at the Simon Dubnov Institute for Jewish History and Culture, entitled "Jewish Questions, Communist Answers", about the historical relationship between Jews and Communist parties. I was anxious about giving my first proper conference paper – especially as I was scheduled into the opening slot, at 9 a.m., sharing a platform with some of the most distinguished scholars at the conference. As it turned out, post-September 11 fear of flying had kept away many of the American delegates, including the one I was most scared about sharing a session with. The absence of Americans, however, also meant that the dominant language shifted from English to German, leaving me feeling a little marginal – something non-English speakers regularly experience in the often American-centric academic world. As with many European academics, most of the conference participants were able to slide with ease between languages. But the multi-lingualism of the conference delegates was part of something different.

Historically, Jews have existed in the cracks between nation-states, at the margins and borderlands of empires, at the cross-roads of languages. My great-grandparents' families, for example, living in Belorus in the late nineteenth century, spoke "mame-loshn" (mother tongue – Yiddish) in the home, "loshn-koydesh" (the holy tongue – Biblical Hebrew) for prayer and study, Polish in the market-place, German to the landlord, Russian to the political authorities. This was something very ordinary; many intellectuals would have learnt other European languages too. Historically, Jews have also been a migrant people, and the storm which was the twentieth century – the age, as Hobsbawm puts it, of extremes – intensified this.

The people at the conference were people whose lives have been touched by history in a way that most English people's lives simply have not. There were men who were born as stateless, displaced people, their childhoods spent in refugee camps across Europe. One man was a "refusenik", a Jewish Soviet citizen refused the right to emigrate. There was a Czech-born man, who had recently returned to his hometown after liv-

ing in exile in Germany since the Prague uprising of 1968. There was Victor Karady, the distinguished Hungarian sociologist, who had recently returned to his country after living in exile in France since the Hungarian uprising of 1956. A Croatian historian told me of his participation in a Serbo-Croat historians group, which alternates its meetings between Zagreb and Belgrade; the group met one year in Zagreb while Serb forces bombarded it, another year in Belgrade while NATO bombs fell around them. Jack Jacobs, an American scholar in his fifties, whose son's school was at the very edge of September 11th's "ground zero", told me of his Bronx school days: every afternoon after normal school he'd go to the Bund school (organized by the Jewish labour movement) where classes were taught in Yiddish. At weekends, he would translate for his grandmother, a survivor of the Nazi occupation of Poland, as she did the weekly shopping in the neighbourhood's Latino-run stores. Ordinary people made extraordinary by the dark times through which they lived.

One particularly impressive person was Arnold Paucker, an octogenarian retired academic. He was born in Berlin, fleeing as a teenager to Palestine after Hitler came to power, serving in the British Army there, before making his home in North London. Along the way, he had been friends with the biographer Isaac Deutscher, the philosopher Isaiah Berlin and the historian Chimen Abramsky, and studied at Jerusalem's Hebrew University under Martin Buber. Sitting in the quiet of an academic seminar room, with his tweed suit, white hair, heavy Continental accent and sparkling eyes, he transported us during his talk to the campfires of totalitarian Europe's resistance fighters. He spoke movingly of his friendship with International Brigade volunteers who fought against Franco in Spain, with Yugoslav partisans who fought against Nazi occupation, with Communist rank and file soldiers in Hitler's army who found some small and some large ways of resisting fascism.

Conference papers spoke of the lies that Jewish Communists told themselves about their Jewishness in order to hasten the coming of that proletarian dawn in which all ethnic identities would melt away like dew. Other papers spoke about the bravery of rank and file Communists who endured under the terrors of Hitler and Stalin, or of dissidents who painfully lived the gap between their Marxist commitment and the brutal reality of Stalinism.

At times, contending histories and contending memories clashed in the conference debates. One Polish delegate had kept his academic post through the anti-Jewish purges of 1968 (the purges which forced Zygmunt Bauman into exile) while another had fled to Paris. The former lost his job when Communism fell; the latter returned in triumph as a leader of Solidarnosc. Behind their scholastic arguments as historians over events in postwar Poland, you could hear the reverberations of conflicting personal histories, conflicting political biographies.

The urban fabric of Leipzig likewise bears witness to these contending histories. Place names honouring the pantheon of socialist heroes – among those still left are Clara Zetkin Park and Rosa Luxemburg Strasse – become sites of struggle over memory. The former Communist Party, now the party of Democratic Socialism, unsuccessfully resisted Georgi Dimitroff Platz, named for a Bulgarian anti-fascist and Communist, being renamed in honour of Eduard von Simson, a Jewish jurist and politician and native of Leipzig.

Like Alan Bennett's Leeds or Walter Benjamin's Paris, Leipzig's central streets are connected by a network of arcades (*passagen*), covered shopping alleys built mostly in the nineteenth century. Some of them are now dark and dusty, passages into a period of history which neglected Leipzig's heritage as a city of commerce and trade. Others are bright and shiny tourist meccas, spruced up by the post-Reunification heritage industry, passages into the future which official Leipzig imagines for itself. The arcades provide alternative pathways for traversing Leipzig's cityscape, connecting streets which would otherwise run along parallel, never meeting. They also connect different narratives of the local urban past. In rescuing the memory of rank and file Jewish Communists (and Jewish victims of Communism) erased from official accounts, the narratives spoken at the conference were also passages, arcades, connecting parallel histories, alternative pasts and futures.

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He has completed a doctorate in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, supervised by Vic Seidler and Michael Keith.

Flemming's Eyes

Les Back

It is not easy to categorise Flemming Røgilds as an intellectual. He is, at one and the same time, a poet, a journalist, a translator, an ethnographer and a cultural sociologist. Although based in Copenhagen, Denmark his particular brand of intellectual travel writing has taken him on many journeys. He is a prolific writer and author of many books some of which have been translated into English. He has written profiles of Nadine Gordimer, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall amongst many others. One recent reviewer described him as the Scandinavian John Berger.

Not only a talented writer, Flemming Røgilds was responsible for the translation of Wilhelm Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism* into Danish. He has also translated many of the key writers with cultural studies for the journal *Social Kritik*. Between 1973 to 1987 he published thirteen collections of poetry. But from the mid 1980s he applied his poetic skills to developing a unique style of ethnographic writing.

In 1988 his book *RYTME, RACISME & NYE RØDDER (Rhythm, Racism and New Roots)* he gave an account of the emergence of postcolonial voices in the UK from Paul Gilroy to Linton Kwesi Johnson. He followed up this book with the publication in 1991 of *I ELEFANT-FUGLENS LAND (In the land of the Elephant Bird: South African Voices)*, a study of apartheid South Africa which was translated into English in 1994. From here Flemming Røgilds turned his attentions homeward to his native Denmark. In 1998 he published a study of racism and multiculture in Copenhagen entitled *STEMMER I ET GRÆNSE-LAND (Voices from a Borderland).* Here he developed the idea of 'bridging' as a way of understanding the relationship between young Danes and so-called 'immigrant youth'.

His most recent book *CHARLIE NIELSEN'S REJSE: VANDRINGER I MULTIKUTURELLE LANDSKABER (Charlie Neilson's Journey: Travels in multicultural landscapes)* is perhaps his most ambitious. Through his alter ego – Charlie Nielson – Flemming tells of the encounters between racism and cosmopolitanism in Europe. Drawing on a tactic reminiscent of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters,* he leads the reader through the cityscapes of London and Berlin through the eyes of Charlie Nielson. In this sense the book is an experiment in finding new ways to represent urban culture and an attempt to re-invent the 'ethnographic I/eye'

The thing that pervades all of Flemming Røgilds' work is his ability as a listener. In fact, beyond all else he is a great listener. The first time I encountered his dishevelled frame he was carrying his tape recorder in one hand and a large box of matches in the other. That was almost fifteen years ago. In those days he an inveterate pipe smoker. As he taped our conversation he dug out and filled his pipe by turns.

His method is to record taped interviews, or dialogues as he calls them, and then painstakingly transcribe each of the tapes himself, a task often taking months and months. Each tape is subject to repeated re-listening in order to find the resonance in each of these slices of time. Listening is not something that we can rely upon as an automatic faculty. Hearing is an achievement and not a given. One of the things that Flemming possesses is a capacity to listen in a way that is both inviting and respectful.

I met Flemming recently in Gothenburg, Sweden. While we have been friends for many years it was like encountering him for the very first time. The thing that struck me was the brightness of his eyes. There is something innocent in their deep blueness. In a way,

he has the eyes of a child regardless of the lines on his face or the greyness of his hair. I don't mean this as a derogatory remark, in fact quite the reverse. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to characterise his look as one of curious integrity. We have to speak to what lay behind his searching eyes.

People are drawn to him. I remember accompanying him to a local South London school during the period when he was researching *CHARLIE NIELSEN'S REJSE.* Young people flocked around him to speak into his tape recorder. Somehow his 'respondents' recognised that respectful curiosity. His is a look that reaches out; it fixes the speaker's attention. Yet, it is also a silent look both innocent and worldly. It is a look of wonder but also a look of surprise. That deep sense of attention is something that pervades Flemming Røgilds' method but also his writing.

I have probably betrayed my affection for him already. During his many journeys to London Flemming has become something of an adopted member of my family. He and my father became good friends. I remember one wonderful trip when we all went to Catford Stadium to watch the dog racing. Something of the beauty of the dogs in full flight and the Old Man's stories of what the track was like in the fifties caught the poet's imagination. Days later he presented us with a wonderfully funny and poignant city sonnet.

Years passed and when the Old Man lay fatally ill in a hospital bed, I remembered Flemming's poetry. I took them with me to break up the long night. I would read them to my father. It is true that of all our senses it is hearing that endures the longest. I didn't realise that until close to the end. Even through the morphine haze I knew my father could hear me. So I decided to read the poems aloud. I would leave the one entitled 'Going to the Dogs' - about that night at Catford Stadium - until last. I started with this poem:

Four poems about restlessness

1.
Poetomatics
shit the yellow light
in the streets knock my thoughts out
of order unable to classify
the relevance of my
steps in the
botanic
garden
of the
nite
life

2.
disgusting with these
trembling hands
that try to
find my
heart
in
the
darkness

3.
lovelight
spinning around
everywhere as
sounds of
disaster
friends
no
where
or keeping up with the faith in another time
another place
listening to the soundbites
of memory in the
shadow

4.
bouncing
they say is terrible
grab it I answer with a low voice
contrapuntal is the nature of being
becoming is a matter of time not effort
borderlines are flows to be captured in the run
longing is missing and capturing is like having **a**
moment's
rest
before sleep

But time was against us, he would live long enough for only these words. At the end of the last stanza he let go of his struggle and we placed the poems that Flemming wrote in his coffin along with the photographs of his grandchildren.

A translation of an extract from Flemming Røgilds' book *Charlie Nielson's Journey* will be published as part of the CUCR's Occasional Paper Series in 2004.

Books of the Year 2002

Street *Signs* asked staff associated with CUCR to reflect on the books they read in 2002 both for pleasure and insight.

Suki Ali

Your question about books made me realise that my addiction to trash (fictional I hasten to add) leaves me with few memories of outstanding NEW books I have read as they all merge into one long murder mystery! I did reread two that I really enjoyed – Barbara Kingsolver 'The Bean Trees' (the follow up too called 'Pigs in Heaven') Just a beautiful way of writing about horrendous life experiences of larger than life characters. It involves American Indian rights, people ('poor white trash') trying to escape poverty and prejudice and all the BIG STUFF about survival: emotional, spiritual and economic. Maxine Hong Kingston 'The Warrior Woman'. Semi-autobiographical story about a Chinese American woman and her first generation parents' stories about China. Its a really beautifully written vivid discussion of her negotiation of 'cultural difference', and being 'between two cultures' ina completely non-cliched way. Although it highlights the incredibly different belief systems and ways of knowing between the Chinese and North Americans, it does this through mythical, moving and humorous stories.

Kate Nash

I've read some wonderful books this year – especially enticing because they were nothing but pleasure but could be considered work too. Sheila Rowbotham's autobiography 'Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties' (Penguin 2001) is pop history of the early days of the women's movement, funny and moving. It's also a book about being young in the 1960s when anything was possible; or at least when it felt like that if you were adventurous, attractive and open-hearted. Rowbotham has written several histories of the women's movement, admirable because she never fails to deal honestly with the perplexities and unresolved tensions that were thrown up, trying to understand the failures as well as the successes, the obstinacies and blind-spots as well as the passions and creativity. Her reflection on the history of her own life is similarly honest so that, although you're left in no doubt that Rowbotham is a heroine of the women's movement, you know something of what that means emotionally for her as well as politically for us. To a greater or lesser extent, the 60s made us all.
Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Short Residence in Sweden' and William Godwin's 'Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'' (Penguin 1987) are also about a heroine of the women's movement, from 150 years earlier. I'm not going to write an essay comparing the lives of Rowbotham and Wollstonecraft (if this were the C18th you would surely expect nothing less), but there are a number of overlapping themes: most especially the attempt to work out the relationship between personal freedom and revolutionary politics. In Mary's case, there was also the tragic attempt to live a great romantic passion. It was living that passion that took her to Scandinavia, to try to get back treasure 'belonging to' Gilbert Imlay, her lover, who had confiscated or stolen it from the French aristocracy during the Revolution and that had been stolen in turn by the Danish captain of the ship in which Imlay was transporting it. I won't spoil the story by telling you what happened, and if it sounds like a 'bodice-ripper', remember - it's all true. If Rowbotham's book tells the story of the 60s, Wollstonecraft's is that of the Enlightenment: she endlessly reflects on the use of reason and the value of imagination, feeling and ideals, on friendship and love, freedom and convention – especially for a woman in a man's world. Her faith in the progress of reason barely falters, but she's not always so sure of her own way.

Paul Halliday

I've just read a really interesting book called 'The Dinosaur Hunters' by Deborah Cadbury. It's about the politics of scientific knowledge and discovery (dont' be put off by its unashamedly popularist title). The book charts the discovery of prehistoric reptilian remains on the South Coast during the early 19th century against a backdrop of European war, political and scientific revolution. Mary Anning, through her-knowledge of the local geology and stratigraphy, discovers specimens that challenge the existing orthodoxy of what Huxley called the prevailing 'parson sci-

ence', precipitating an ideological battle about creation, evolution and deductive thinking. The ideological lines are drawn, reputations are won and lost and we witness a moment in scientific history where religion, rationality, snobbery and institutionalised knowledge cultures begin to fragment. Good stuff. Couldn't put it down.

Ben Gidley

The books I enjoyed reading most this year were crime writer James Ellroy's adrenaline- and amphetamine-fuelled *LA Quartet*, a series of four novels set in post-war Los Angeles. The books dizzyingly mix real characters (like Howard Hughes, mobster Mickey Cohen and J Edgar Hoover) with a gallery of fictional dysfunctional racist cops, Mafiosi and perverts, to a soundtrack of mad bebop and lounge crooning. The first in the Quartet is *The Black Dahlia*, based on the true (and gory) story of the murder of a young woman, whose horrific death had uncanny similarities with the murder of Ellroy's own mother a decade later – told against the backdrop of an alternative political economy of the emergence of Los Angeles' spatial form. Then, in *The Big Nowhere*, Ellroy takes on McCarthyism, homophobia and film industry corruption, as well as a love story. *LA Confidential* covers porn, prostitution and more gore. Finally, there's *White Jazz*, of which the story goes that when his editor asked Ellroy to shorten his 900-page work to 350, he did so by eliminating the verbs.

Les Back

I think the most compelling book I read last year was Jon McGregor's beautiful first novel entitled *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*. It is a story of a street where people encounter each other both intimately and at a distance. We don't always even know the names of the characters. The most gripping character was the man with the ruined hands. We never really find out why his hands are burnt beyond repair. We know his wife is dead and that he is bringing up his daughter alone. We find out other details in passing, he is a Muslim but much of his life story remains opaque. The people who populate the novel are like neighbours you see everyday from the window, at one and the same time both familiar and a complete mystery. Towards the end of the book the man with the ruined hands offers a lesson to his child:

> "He says my daughter, and all the love he has is wrapped up in the tone of his voice when he says those two words, he says my daughter you must always look with both of your eyes and listen with both of your ears. He says this is a very big world and there are many things you could miss if you are not careful. He says there are remarkable things all the time, right in front of us, but our eyes have like the clouds over the sun and our lives are paler and poorer if we do not see them for what they are.
>
> He says, if nobody speaks of remarkable things, how can they be called remarkable?" p. 239.

The man with the ruined hands knows his daughter doesn't understand his words but he wants to "place them in the air" regardless. Perhaps, there is a lesson in this. At its best I think academic writing can produce the same kind of quality, a sense of wonder through looking and listening with care. But I think as sociologists we might not be paying enough attention to remarkable things and this novel was a timely reminder of the importance of doing so.

Inside European Union

Tine Blom

Tine Blom is a lecturer at the Lillehammer College in Norway. After 3 years as a dean, she is spending part of her sabbatical at the CUCR. She graduated in political science at the Department of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen (UiB). The tradition of this department is political sociology with a particular focus on Europe.

Other educational background is agriculture and wilderness-management (about fish, animals and plants in Northern forest and mountain-regions and the human use of them),"Public Administration and Organisational science" at UiB, Ethnic Relations / Social anthropology with focus on the Artic Region at University of Tromsø and philosophy at the University of Oslo. Her main teaching subjects at Lillehammer College are comparative politics / European relations and International relations.

This year, she will mainly be working on a Phd thesis about small North Western European states and the European Union. The empirical data are interviews with parliamentary party-leaders in Ireland, Denmark, Iceland and Norway about their attitudes to the Treaty of European Union . The analysis will evolve around the visions of Europe: how the national politicians want Europe to be in the future. Central issues are what institutional structures should organise the co-operation between the European states and their citizens and how political power shall be accounted for. This includes discussion of pro's and con's of supranationalism, federalism, consociationalism and the intergovernmentalism of no-membership.

A main aspect of international institutional structure are conceptions of democracy. What do they consider most central for European democracy – is it "democratic from above" - democratic governance consisting of competition and co-operation among the European elites? Or is it a democratic civil society - deliberation in a common European public sphere? Or is it democracy "from below" - popular participation? Other topics included in visions of Europe are economic policy – do the national politicians embrace a liberal market economy, or are they concerned with social and regional effects of this system? And should a European polity have a common security policy?

Tine's work explores different approaches to illuminate aspects of domestic EU debates. Examples are theories of polity formation, theories of international relations and a wide range of integration theories. Also she focuses on political ideology and political culture, using normative political theory, or political philosophy.

"There are plenty of sources to explain variation," Tine comments. "The four states vary in their history of state formation – three of them becoming independent states in the 20th century. They have different geopolitical positions and alliance membership, one of them, Ireland, being in the shadow of a great power, the other three being members of NATO; two of them are members of the EU and two are not. They vary in their economic base, to a different extent depending on fishing, agriculture, oil and industry; and the content – the narrative – of their traditional national identity differs. In addition, there are variations in domestic political structure and party systems."

As a start, her project is focusing on similarities in ideological worldviews. A basic idea is that they are part of some common European political culture. As small European states, their national concerns somehow are versions of common European themes – among them autonomy, how to deal with interdependence, democratic values, state-market relationship, security and international relations. The European ideologies – conservatism, liberalism, social democrat and democratic socialism — can be traced in the different national political discourses about Europe, and these ideological traditions all have their particular perception of these common topics. The ideologies are viewed as broad transnational families or modes of thought, which do not necessarily correspond to concrete political parties in each state.

Tine says "Politics should not be analysed without some element of strategic action, and ideology may be seen as a political language that is more or less implicit strategic. Ideologies are loaded with theory about cause and effect in our political world. They are normative in the sense of what expressing what the society should strive for, and strategic in the sense of prescribing direction to collective action."

"The future is always uncertain and unfinished, but politicians must present themselves as certain, persuasive as if having the best solutions to common problems. This is not only in order to gain support, but also to maintain the legitimacy for the institutions they represent, among them their states, parliaments and parties" concludes Tine. This spring at the CUCR, the focus of her work will be the theoretical discussion of historical ideologies and visions of Europe.

Ratology

Les Back

In London you are never more that twelve feet away from a rat, or so the popular legend has it. I don't mean the two-legged variety that can lurk in the corner of an Underground carriage or a Faculty Common Room. No, I am thinking narrowly, of quad-footed vermin. At the beginning of the academic year rude evidence of this unwanted presence confronted a Goldsmiths student as she strolled through the back streets of South London. A rat had been ironed into the asphalt by a superior creature with four wheels.

The shriek of this first year student - whom I had just had the pleasure of teaching – drew my attention. I scurried up the street to see the evidence for myself. The vertically challenged beast was a pretty unpleasant sight. The stain on the road gave weight - if not depth - to the urban myth that these monsters are among us at every turn.

A strange sense of responsibility to the new students is strongly felt. Perhaps the dread on their faces reminds me of my own initial encounter with the College as an eighteen year old. Regardless of what lay behind this there is a strong impulse to do something that pre-empts a repeat. So, off I go to the Porter's Lodge in search of a plan.

"There's a dead rat in Laurie Grove that's been splattered all over the road." Mick, the head porter, shrugs his shoulders, "There's nothin' we can do about it."

"Well, do you have a shovel?"

"Yeah, there's one 'round the back"

He returns with a tool that has been left – perhaps predictably – by a building contractor who hasn't returned to finish a job. He hands over the large shovel that is coloured with a green patina by what builders call affectionately 'muck'.

It must have been a bizarre spectacle. An hour ago I had been proselytising from the lectern about the merits of the 'sociological imagination.' Here I was wandering around the college wielding a large shovel for no apparent reason. I bump into a couple of students from the morning's lecture who look bemused. "We're building the universities of the future," I explain and get a cheap laugh in return. This is only half a joke. The realities of packing more students into the same lecture rooms, the financial constraints on Higher Education are causing a real accommodation crisis. Perhaps a bit of academic self-build is not such a bad idea!

Returning to the crime scene I notice that someone has placed a prawn cocktail crisp packet over the cadaver of the ex-rat, maybe out of respect. The shovel is put to work. With cringing application and an aversion of the eyes, the task of extra-curricula house keeping is completed and the rat is entombed in a 'wheelie bin' sepulchre. Return the shovel and that will be the end of it.

Walking back towards the Porter's Lodge I bump into Darren, one of Mick's colleagues. I explain what I'd been doing.
"What did you do that for?" says Darren. "It took an art student hours to squash that rat … I think they call it installation art." It dawn on me fleetingly maybe he was right? If Damien Hurst can bisect a shark, why not squash a rat?

Goldsmiths College was voted one of Britain's top 50 'coolest brands.' I am sure this is the result of its celebrity alumni including artist Damien Hurst, comedian Julian Clary, poets and musical figures like Linton Kwesi Johnson and rock band Blur. This award and the absurdity of the whole 'rat incident' triggered the imagination. Wasn't a half eaten mouse mounted on a Cappuccino cup lid on this very street last year? Maybe an anonymous art terrorist, with Situationist tendencies, is hidden away in the 'College of Kool?' Perhaps white tape should outline the place where this victim of animal homicide met its maker?

This fable from the beginning of term put a completely different inflection on Walter Benjamin's street walker "who goes botanising the asphalt." On my next caffeine induced wander I should perhaps take a flower for Dear Departed Ratty. It is probably the politicians who needs squeezing, and they might do well to spend a week walking in the footsteps the first year undergraduates. George Perec said "to live is to move from one space to another, while trying as far as possible to avoid bumping into anything." Perhaps in our time it is also a matter of avoiding stepping on anything unspeakable.

MA IN CULTURE, GLOBALISATION AND THE CITY

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Goldsmiths College
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Further information and how to apply: UK and EU students: Admissions Office, telephone 020 7919 7060 (direct line), fax 020 7717 2240 or e-mail *admissions@gold.ac.uk*; Overseas (non EU) students: International Office, telephone 020 7919 7700 (direct line), fax 020 7919 7704 or e-mail *international-office@gold.ac.uk*;
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