



Visions of Cultural Appropriation

Zad El Bacha

Utopia

There have been hundreds of years of rich, positive exchanges between cultures. When a European meets an Arab, they ask them about the patterns on their clothes, the words in their books, the instruments in their songs. The Arab asks them the same. They listen and learn, they answer in turn. Both are intrigued, they are equals and they are interested. They find the things that draw them together, they observe the differences, how their grandmothers wear their veils differently, how their string instruments have different shapes; but

they are both veiled grandmothers, they both have strings. They learn, and they take what they have learnt to their respective homes. They grow something new and complex in the awareness of their cultures' value. They thank each other. They grow each other's wealth in the process of exchange. They are equals and they are willingly sharing and growing.

Grim Grim Reality

There have been hundreds of years of violent destruction of some cultures by others. One part of the world has an immense amount of power over the Other. When a European meets an Arab, they see

only differences to be despised and destroyed.

(My mother was banned from speaking Arabic in school. My grandma wasn't allowed in court with her handmade abaya. My cousin only speaks French, despises the Koran, and will never touch the chord of an 'oud.)

They see something lesser and duller. They do not ask. They talk and they shout. Sometimes something pretty catches their eye, a colourful abaya, a flavourful dish. They do not ask. It is a pretty Other, no depth or history to it other than that which they can give it. They take the pretty abaya away

from the Arab and force them into jeans. They wear their abaya as a novelty, careless and violent. They mock and destroy and take.

Hopeful Realism

There have been hundreds of years of violent destruction of some cultures by some others. A European knows this. When they meet an Arab they see the Other and they think, "ah! I see this person and think of the Other, although they are a person." They do not ignore this. They see colour and they face it. They approach with humility, they do not ask too much. They smile and they chat. They know and they see, and they both see healing ahead. They ask cautiously

at first, they learn, they listen. Wherever they go they listen, they read, watch and look at everything. They see more and more complexity, they understand the anger, the Other becomes just another, different (but not that different) human. Variety and meaning materialise before the learner. They ask and they give thanks for what they can take. They treat it delicately, they grow, and now they have prettier clothes (and maybe they are the work of a grandma who has found her abaya again, and now it is bought and not stolen from her). Growth and healing come on both sides, they both know that they are unequal, that their inequality is rooted in years of violence that reverberates still today. They know they have to work for it not to be that way, so they are sensitive and loving, learning instead of grabbing. They're careful, they're hopeful.■

'Dear Jack'

Lizzie Searle

Dear Jack,

Darling I miss you. It hurts this far away. It's pleasurable.
I know you miss me so much more than I miss you.

You're needy and pathetic and rich. I love you.

I love the nights we sing together, huddled on the same piano stool or better still when I recline across your baby grand in Fifth Avenue.

I know you're well - you're seeing me tomorrow!
Thanks for asking, I could not be better.
No one could.

Today I polished off my third first-class essay this week and was sent more flowers from an anonymous admirer.
Bless. They're bonny.

With love as always and best wishes that one day I might write just one first-class essay, that I could not be better and that you might exist.

P.S. There are no flowers and they're not bonny.



Charlie Willis

'Catch Me If You Can'

Jenny Potter

Smudges of neon watercolour stain
The powder blue of the heavens.
Towering stems slash at bare shins,
Marking pink, criss-crossed fire
Across epidermal brickwork.

Fields dusted with poisoned petals
Glow yellow in the waning sun.
Rich greenery shrouds footed clay
Leading through lush summer growth

To trees of suitability: tall, spindly, straight
And curved by some forgotten force -
A ceremonial graveyard.

Final rays claw across horizons,
Bleaching the world in one last effort...
Cool night's breath whispers its presence
And branches whip at retreating cheeks.

The Hills

Eleanor Harris

The view from the top is never the same, although I know every hold. One of the few things you can rely on in Snowdonia is, perhaps paradoxically, that it will always be changing; and yet, despite the dramatic seasonal changes, the ancient hills are consistently compelling. All year, it is as if the mountains have their own kind of magic which decompresses your spine and lets you breathe easier and deeper. A snow-capped mountain, no matter how many times you have seen it before, will send a thrill through you with the promise it conveys of a place apart from the regular world, the unblemished snow making you feel like you have stumbled on a newly-created utopia. After a spontaneous summertime swim in a cold sky lake with a dear friend, you'll emerge muddy and half-frozen, but feeling exhilarat-

ed. Relationships accelerate with time spent outside, whether through looking after each other, or the heartfelt conversations that become magically easier under the wide skies and craggy views.

Little things, like a sachet of hot chocolate snaffled away in someone's bag, a pair of dry socks, or the cloud breaking momentarily to show you how far you have come become immensely satisfying, and provided you all keep each other warm, you will sleep well, despite the sometimes miserable weather.

Spending time in the hills generally brings out the best in people, and you come away feeling privileged to have seen how generous and helpful strangers can be. People you meet outside or in equipment shops are a wealth of encouragement and advice for whatever excursions you fancy doing, and you get the sense that they take real pleasure in passing on their passion.

Generosity is at its greatest when things go wrong; mountain rescue, composed mainly of volunteers, come out in all weathers and times to risk their lives for the lost and

injured. Teams even go and rescue sheep stuck on ledges, which really shows the deep care that people have for the area and its animals. *

But despite the friendship and the abundant wonder to be found, this is an imperfect place, and many of its problems have been worsening recently. Thousands of tourists are attracted by the beauty and adventure, but can be damaging in their numbers.

The shy animals and birds are distressed by the busyness, and rare plants get trampled. Mountain guides are pressured by the companies they work for into taking too large groups out, which increases the already considerable risks, and has caused serious accidents. Tourists with little knowledge of the countryside's rules trespass farms and damage ancient stone walls by climbing over them, thus turning what were once positive, educational interactions for both farmers and visitors into hostility from many farmers. The now-yearly battle between the new Snowdonia of adventure holidays and DofE expeditions, and the old landscape of hard graft and traditions worsens everyone's

experience.

Deaths and bad accidents are chillingly common in the hills; far more so than their relatively low height could lead you to believe, and several people are lost every year. The landscape is so unforgivingly hostile at times that this waste of lives can happen randomly; mundane issues such as ill-fitting boots, a lost map, or a unexpectedly loose rock can spiral into big issues for the inexperienced and the expert alike, especially when the weather gets bad.

For all the slate industry's grave - and sometimes deadly - cost to its workers, their descendants are still plagued by poverty now that the quarries are shut. In villages like Deiniolen, over half of the community are still unemployed, and they have the poverty statistics to match. Blaenau Ffestiniog, a town surrounded by so much waste slate that the mountains look like they have been turned inside out, is treated as a national joke for its otherworldly ugliness, but the reality of its situation is far from funny. In the statistics on child poverty, fuel poverty, unemployment and drug use, it is

shown to be a town so neglected that it has become one of Britain's most deprived places.

These problems may not seem particularly significant, given that they relate to one small corner of the country. They are, however, manifest across the rest of the world. Random, pointless loss of life can affect anyone, and prioritizing profit over people's welfare, and the exploitation and neglect of communities and environment which results, is a rapidly-growing problem throughout Britain and the world.

A proper solution to these problems will probably prove a greater challenge than can be met in this century. But, I feel that the way we deal with the troubling situations we face would be improved by adopting into our everyday lives the mentality that being in the hills gives us; embracing an approach to life where we look out for each other, respect our surroundings, plants and animals, and, above all, make the most of whatever satisfaction and happiness we can create out of the occasionally hostile environments, be they natural or man-made, in which we find ourselves.■

Skard to Islamabad

Luke Sheridan

An account of a journey. As written at the time and unaltered.

Meandering plains, gently drawn pillows of silt that at times abruptly swing into a valley as sand dunes but which tend to converge between mountains to push the water into rapids. The beginning of this journey is permeated by the gentle simple sounds of Balti folk music.^[1] The roads slither around mountains, brown and muddy then brilliant cotton white, coming precipitously close to sheer drops as it narrows here, and there sweeps down through some perplexingly emerald valley where trees like birch that shoot directly upwards line every path. And the land is a dancing of moss and clear pools between houses bordered by pile stone walls and where the churning of the water from the glistening rivulets and *[illegible]* sets the music to the softly padding pace of life.

Goats, cocks and cattle roaming the paths at leisure and propping themselves between trees or resting in dense growths of meadow flowers.

There is undoubtedly a hardship here that I would find difficult to articulate even if I could fully appreciate. However, this is, I think, the closest to an idyll one could come on this earth. The white capped Himalayan peaks show themselves above these mountains as we travel.

‘Et In Arcadia Ego’

Alexander Walls

Such a phrase, of course, we may not oft hear,
Yet what is Eden? What is paradise?
We idolise an Arcadian past;
We long for a Utopian future.
How will any of these dreams come to pass?
We must refocus. Clouds block out the light
Bringing gloom and dusk. Clouding our vision
Of what the present, right here and right now,
Represents to us. How do we now live?
What, to Utopia, can we now give?

What is this Arcadian past, which we
Seek to replicate - or then, failing that,
What is this Utopian future we
Must seek to create? For how, exactly,
Do we define Utopia, Eden,
Arcadia? But surely such things are
Personal, unique, experiences,
Which cannot be distilled to one vision.
We oft talk of an earthly paradise,
Yet alas we fail and succumb to vice.

Such a place, on earth, is but fantasy.
We cannot hope to create such a world.
For it is blighted, basking in bloodlust,
War and woe; a great malady plagues us.
Therefore, we must retreat, and consider
What it is that we find Utopian.
Time spent with friends, family, or the arts.
The time spent free from time’s constraints, free from
The bathetic banalities of life.
Only then can we be free from our strife.

1:42pm bought some biscuits and water
Need to meet checkpoint by 4:00pm! To make it onto Babusar road.

2:38 come to confluence of the Gilgit & Indus rivers

2:41 Nampkapatwat? *[sic]* Mountain range? How far behind us was K2
Update (**2:58**) Nanga Parbat

3:12 landslide has just happened ahead of us. The truck is moving the rubble about 13ft around us.
There have been lots of butterflies around for about an hour now. All of them white.

3:12 pointed out Chilas

3:44 First time driver has been overtaken! On this whole journey.
He was checking the time and is driving at about 90kmph
- I think maybe we are not on Babusar highway yet.

4:15 We got to Babusar checkpoint. Driver out of car with our documents.
The military vehicle which I assume enforces the prohibition of entry after 4pm just went past.
He spoke to them. We are through!! = 18hr car journey instead of 26hr.

By **5:00pm** we are in a peculiarly brown place. A mountain of mud. Then at times looking up we could almost be in Scotland until the face comes into focus as a mossy crimson carpet. It is raining, (not heavily) but there are patches of snow and the fog

hangs heavy around us.

5:20 small green ‘goodbye’ sign. We have left Babusar.

The men here dress distinctively. In thick and stiff garments (wool?) in earthy colours. With the brown round hats and sporting long and wide beards. Dark tan or brown shawls.

5:30 as we descend into the valley following the thin white river that borders on a mere stream we could easily be amongst the *purple glens* of Scotland, only, before us, closing off the line of the valley there are huge peaks harbouring lakes of snow.

5:33 Just informed us that this is all Taliban area. He had been looking nervous for the past half an hour at least. Hence the military prohibitions?^[2]

5:53 Driver looking round attentively at the sections of the road ahead. In Baltistan & the dry white areas he just went for it, following the ground immediately before him.

6:00pm We stopped for Tea.^[3] I feel a little uncomfortable to be honest. I don’t know how long the driver will be.
This is a very green valley.

6:24 Hotel Red Glacier? – Have no clue where we are

6:31 = huge glacier

6:41 there is poverty here and lots more tents. We pass every now and then through dusty concrete villages.

6:42 Khyber Palace sign. So we are in KPK

So many goats and glaciers.

6:48 It’s dark! Think I’ll sleep because can’t see what I’m writing.

7:06 Narran.

We got back at 2:30/ 3:00am – 18hr journey total
Stopped for an hour at about 10:00pm. I spoke to some others who had found themselves round this way. A Ukranian and a Malaysian woman with her K2 basecamp guide.
We realised we had been driving through Swat Valley.

Thomas More was aware of the unreachability of the perfect society in his *Utopia* – literally ‘no place’. I understood as I drove wanting to imagine that this was the most perfect place I had ever visited, yet being unable to sustain the illusion for 18 hours. I might never see anything as beautiful and sublime again. I might think with nostalgia about the simplicity of the place. But however fond I felt from the passenger seat of that Toyota Corolla, the poverty was unavoidable as was the harshness which bred the fundamentalism of the Taliban that still plagues the country.

^[1] 19 hours of this had me dreaming in Balti.

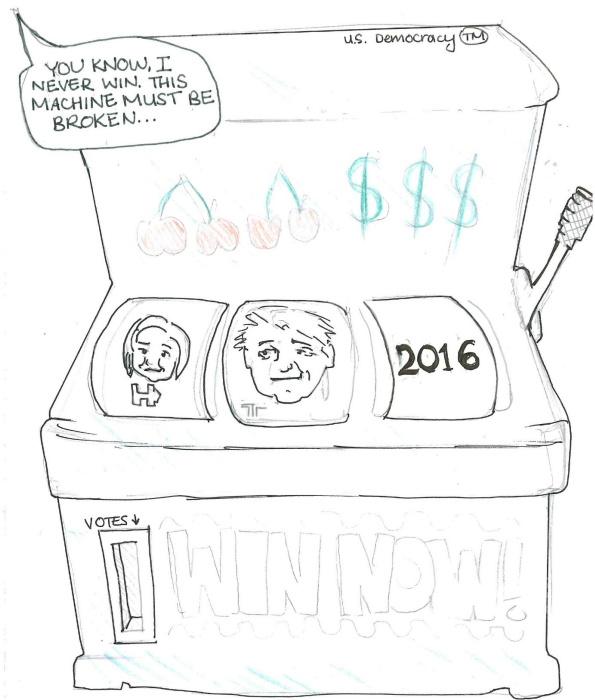
^[2] Actually also to do with rainfall and ground treachery

^[3] Every break he would come in teary wiping his eyes. Angela mentioned ‘these drivers are all on smack’.■

‘All the Blues I’ve Ever Known’

Rebecca Slater

All the blues I’ve ever known
add up to this –
this single perfect blue
which is really a thousand blues,
bottled up like the beachedblue glass
on my mother’s mantelpiece,
my father’s bluebuttoned shirt
stained from Sunday afternoons
painting my brother’s blue-walled bedroom –
a boyish bias, ever since that
blue plastic beach bucket
Blue Thomas train set –
those endless blue mornings,
staring down at the tileblue bottom –
bluebeating feet, bluewater lips –
the blue swimmer crab pulled into
my grandfather’s boat,
the blue fish brooch
pinned to my grandmother’s
deadblue breast
her Winnie Blue breath
floating like fog
across the Clarenceblue mornings –
blueink crosswords and
bluebellied lorikeets
on the outback veranda
all this –
the bloodblue bruises
from my first blue bicycle,
the muddyblue fingers
from my mother’s mulberry tree
– this
in a single blue moment
as I look up to the island skies
and say goodbye.



Tacita McCoy-Parkill

Oriel Reacts to a Trump Presidency...

Eoin Monaghan [*at 4am, on my entering the JCR*] – ‘Go back to bed, Alex. The apocalypse has already happened.’

Wesley Rawlings – ‘This is far more than something new. Syphilis would be new for me - doesn't mean that I want it. The American people have given the White House “the clap”.’

Will Cook – ‘I’m sure that JCR business is the last thing on anyone’s mind, and to fill everyone’s inbox with news about elections on a morning like this seems like some kind of sick joke. But the show must go on...’

Edwin Oliver-Watts – ‘So the streak of political events being predicted by *The Simpsons* continues...’

Anna Wawrzonkowska – ‘Friendly reminder that even if there are walls, there are gates in them and there's also a chance to walk at the top.’

Wesley Rawlings – ‘It's like putting a six-year-old in the captain's seat of a Boeing 747. You have to pray that the cabin crew just let him sit there and press the button that turns the seatbelt light on and off.’

Max Clements - ‘Lincoln didn’t die for this ffs #Election2016’

Matthew Hull - ‘What are you cooking?’

‘Baked beans, baked potato and red pepper - nothing fancy...’

‘Eh, those are all things I’m planning on stockpiling in my nuclear bunker...’

Emily Essex: [*at Compline - late-night chapel service*] - ‘I briefly considered using the Collect for War and Tumult, but I realised it was a bit too much about smiting down your enemies...’

Ariana Busby - ‘FEMALE LEADERSHIP IS NOT DEAD. Come to this show I co-directed with fellow “Nasty Woman” Saskia Tavares de Wand and make this week a little more bearable! Also bear-able because it stars Beary McBearphace! But also good old-fashioned "bearable" because this week has been the worst, right?! Except for this!’

Ben Albert Pace – ‘When the darkness comes, if you rise to face it, then you are doing much better than if you let it defeat you without a fight.

Remember that the right thing to do with the worry and the fear, is to turn it into steely resolve for action’.

Jeremy Chiu – ‘Congratulations America, you just played yourself. Have fun living with the racist tangerine for the next 4 years.’

Beary McBearphace - [*blank staring at the TV screen*]