

THE HORIZON LINE

UTP PROOF

The Horizon Line

*A Story of Migration between
Bangladesh, Italy, and London*

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Translated by Clarrie Pope

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS
Toronto Buffalo London

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Translation made in arrangement with Am-Book (www.am-book.com)

Toronto Buffalo London

utppublishing.com

Printed in the USA

ISBN 9781487559823 (paper)

ISBN 9781487559854 (EPUB)

ISBN 9781487559847 (PDF)

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

[CIP to come]

Cover design: Will Brown
Cover image: Francesco Saresin

The manufacturer's authorised representative in the EU for product safety is Mare Nostrum Group B.V., Doelen 72, 4831 GR Breda, The Netherlands. Email: gpsr@mare-nostrum.co.uk

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University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario, for its publishing activities.



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Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Financé par le
gouvernement
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Foreword

When I first met the author of this unique book more than ten years ago, I was staying in Trieste and the rendezvous was at the railway station. In a pre-meeting email, he described himself in the following terms so that I would recognize him as he disembarked from the train: “I have a Beatles haircut, glasses, and a bit of a beard.” Such a visage is immediately recognizable from the opening sketches of the book: “Stefano” is, of course, Francesco Della Puppa. The pictures and text, so clear and easy to follow, are an allegory of two intertwining journeys: most importantly, that of Bangladeshi migrants to Northeast Italy and then onward to East London; and secondly, the research journey of Francesco/Stefano, the sociologist of migration seeking to understand the phenomenon that he is researching.

During his visiting fellowship at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research at my university in 2015–16 and then 2016–17, I was pleased to collaborate with Francesco. Technically, I was his mentor during his stay; in truth, I think that I learned more from him than the other way round. But we did subsequently cowrite two articles

on Italian Bangladeshis' onward migration to London, published in two top migration journals: the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2019) and the *International Migration Review* (2021). These two papers stand amongst my favorite and arguably best scientific articles. I hope that Francesco feels the same.

The pictures and the dialogue that follow this foreword perfectly capture the bittersweet nature of Bangladeshi migration, which, despite its complexities, illogicalities, twists, and turns, is an exemplar for many such global migrations over recent decades. As told in this book, the story of Bangladeshi emigration unfolds in two stages. The first is from Bangladesh to Italy, and, specifically, in Della Puppa's sociological fieldwork, to the "Banglatown" of Alte Ceccato, a small industrial settlement near Vicenza in Northeast Italy, where the migrants work in the tanneries. In fact, Bangladeshis have settled in many parts of Italy, where they work mainly in industry, in restaurants, and as street traders. Elsewhere in Northeast Italy, they are particularly numerous in the shipbuilding town of Monfalcone, where the local far-right mayor has railed against the scale of their presence and tried to crack down on a number of "Muslim" practices.

Della Puppa's field research in Alte Ceccato – also available in more detail in two academic texts in Italian: *Uomini in movimento: il lavoro della maschilità tra Bangladesh e Italia* (2014) and *Alte Ceccato: una banglatown nel nordest* (2015) – reveals the dichotomous nature of the migrants' working lives, social experiences, and plans for the future. On the one hand, they are able to obtain steady factory jobs and earn incomes that would be unthinkable in Bangladesh. They are able to bring over wives – often via arranged marriages – from Bangladesh and start their families in Italy. After a number of years, they qualify for Italian citizenship. They say that Italy is the most beautiful country in the world.

On the other hand, they do not feel fully at home in Italy – or, rather, they are *made* not to feel at home there, since they are socially excluded as “brown-skinned Muslims” and denied opportunities for socio-occupational upward mobility. Their wives, socially isolated in soulless blocks of flats with young children, are particularly unhappy – as one of the author’s interlocutors laments, “She never smiles.” These are some of the factors that encourage the “Italian-Bangladeshi” families to onward-migrate to London. The wives believe that they will be less lonely there, within the largest Bangladeshi migrant-origin community outside the homeland. The men hope for better employment opportunities in a global city and not in a mono-economic industrial village. Above all, the children will have better educational and career prospects in England – where, for example, the Mayor of London is the son of a Pakistani immigrant bus driver and there are several Bangladeshi-origin Members of Parliament. In Italy, Bangladeshi parents believe that their sons and daughters have little chance of working as a banker or doctor or lawyer; they will always be the dark-skinned children of immigrant workers. Whereas in the open and meritocratic UK society, especially in multicultural London, their children can succeed academically, go to university, and become high-earning professionals. At least, that is the theory.

The reality is that there are some sharp divisions in British society. The London labor market offers few opportunities to newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants beyond low wages and long hours as a taxi- or van-driver or work in restaurants and fast-food outlets. The low pay is scarcely sufficient to sustain a family in a city where the cost of living is so high. So, being a migrant in London is also a bittersweet experience. On the positive side, the women are generally happier and the children have better educational opportunities. There is a stronger welfare system, with subsidized housing and top-up benefits

for those on low incomes. Across East London, from Brick Lane and Whitechapel out to Hackney and Ilford, there is a vibrant and long-settled Bangladeshi population with many mosques and ethnic-community facilities.

On the downside, the work is flexible if precarious (which suits some of the author's interlocutors), the urban environment is crowded, and relations with the established Bangladeshi community (most of whom originate from the Sylhet region, with a different dialect and culture) are sometimes tense. Thus, the onward migration from Italy to London is a story of sacrifice, undertaken largely for the future of the next generation. The conversations captured in the speech bubbles speak of nostalgia not for Bangladesh but for Italy and its nice weather and proper coffee. Somewhat bizarrely, the coffee shop "Caffé Italia," run by Italian-Bangladeshis, is the main community hub where Francesco Della Puppa meets most of his London-based informants. This proves to be a lifesaver for his research after an unforeseen turn of events leads to the loss of his participants' contact details. In a lovely twist, Stefano takes a part-time job in the café and learns to make proper cappuccino and macchiato under the tutelage of the Italian-Bangladeshi barista.

There is a broader context that frames the historical saga of Bangladeshi migration. This is the colonial legacy. As one of the speakers says, Britain governed Bangladesh for centuries in a regime of colonial plunder. Nowadays, it can be argued, this plunder continues with the exploitation of Bangladeshi migrant labor. Bangladeshis are still drawn to the colonial metropole as part of the ongoing dynamics of global migration, whereby histories of colonialism are reproduced in contemporary migration flows, sometimes via intermediate stages such the unique Bangladeshi

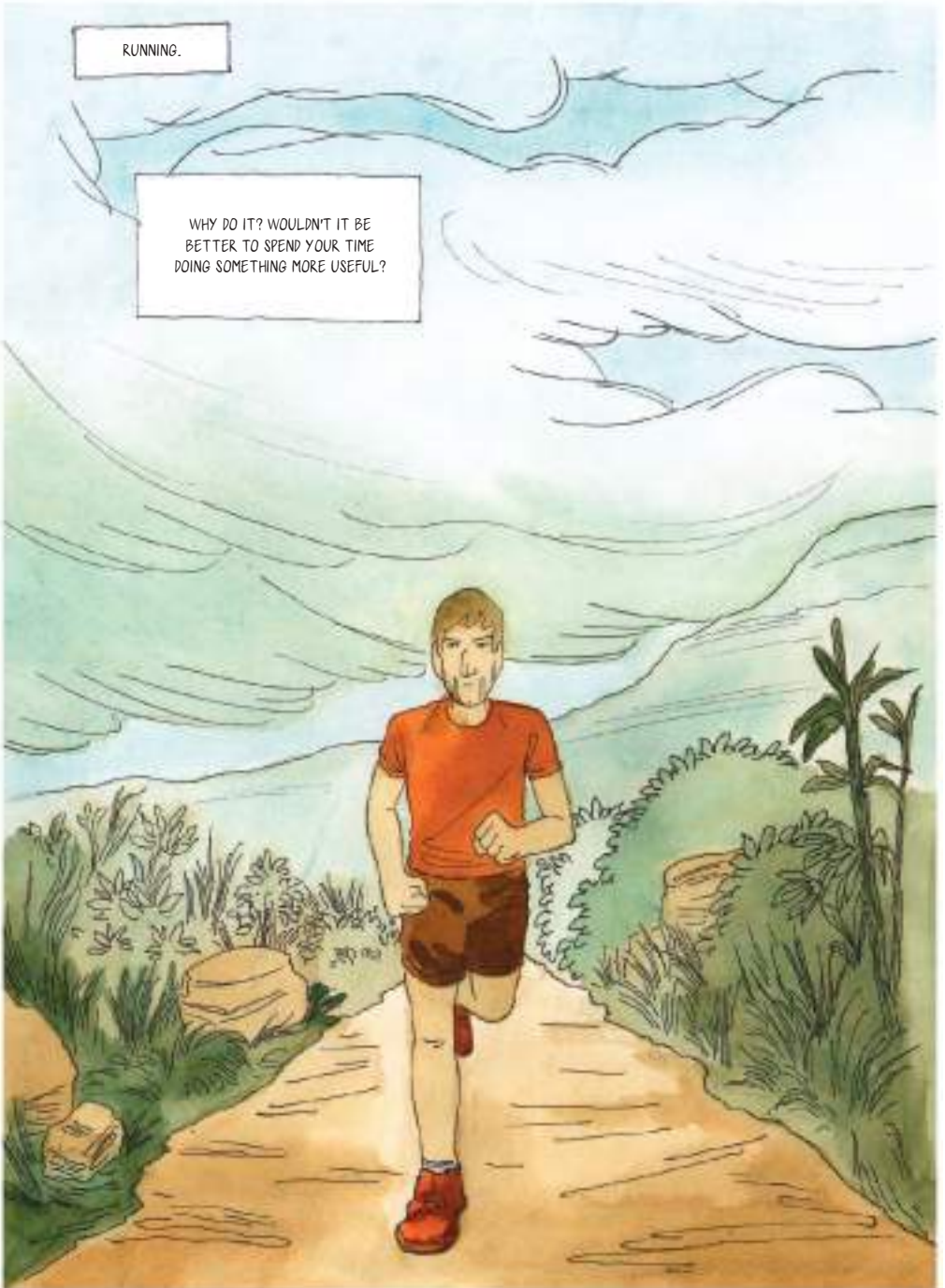
presence in Italy. Within these global power structures that shape migration flows, individual stories are what matter, and this graphic book tells the stories with remarkable clarity and directness.

Russell King
University of Sussex

THE HORIZON LINE

RUNNING.

WHY DO IT? WOULDN'T IT BE
BETTER TO SPEND YOUR TIME
DOING SOMETHING MORE USEFUL?



UTP PROOF



BUT THINGS THAT DON'T REQUIRE ANY REAL EFFORT ARE BORING.

RUNNING IS CONSTRUCTIVE. YOU HAVE TO STAY FOCUSED.

AND ACCEPT THAT THE PATH ISN'T ALWAYS SMOOTH.



THAT THERE ARE MANY UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES.

CRISES, PAIN, HUNGER, THIRST, TIREDNESS...

SUFFERING...



BUT THERE ARE ALSO REBIRTHS AND RESURRECTIONS, THE RETURN OF STRENGTH AND ENTHUSIASM, THE JOY OF LIGHTNESS, A SENSE OF FREEDOM, YOUR LEGS TURNING SMOOTHLY...

WHAT DO PEOPLE WHO DON'T RUN KNOW?



WHEN YOU GET TO THE POINT WHERE THE CLOUDS BECOME CONFUSED WITH THE SUMMIT, YOU SEE EVERYTHING MORE CLEARLY, EVERYTHING FINDS ITS PLACE, EVERYTHING MAKES SENSE, AND FINALLY YOU UNDERSTAND.

YOU REALIZE THAT IT'S WORTH IT.



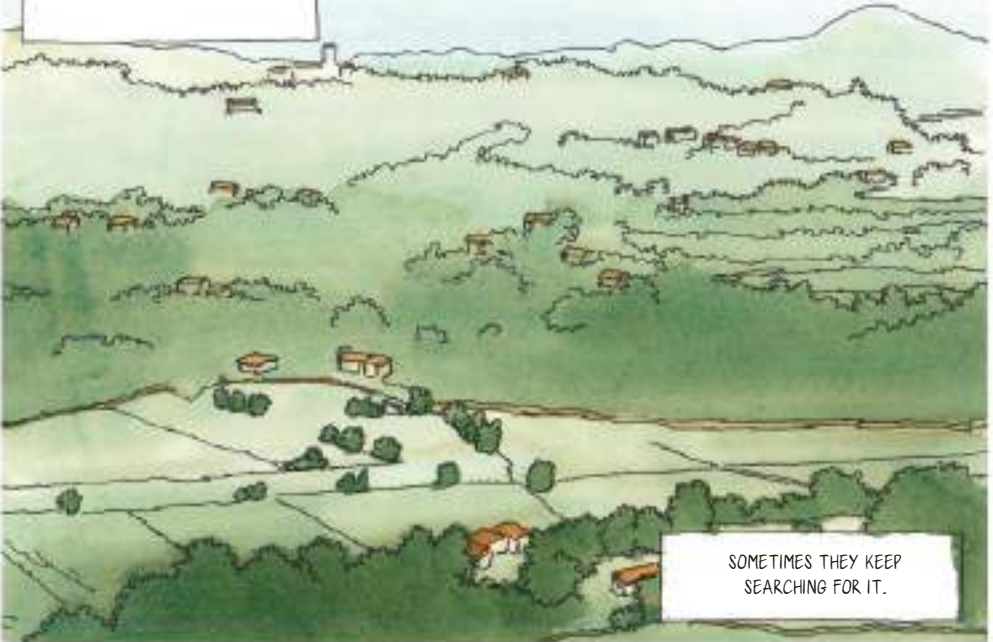
YOU ARRIVE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU NEVER ARRIVE, AND YOU KEEP GOING.

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS MOVING.

ALWAYS MOVING.



SOMETIMES THEY GO HOME.

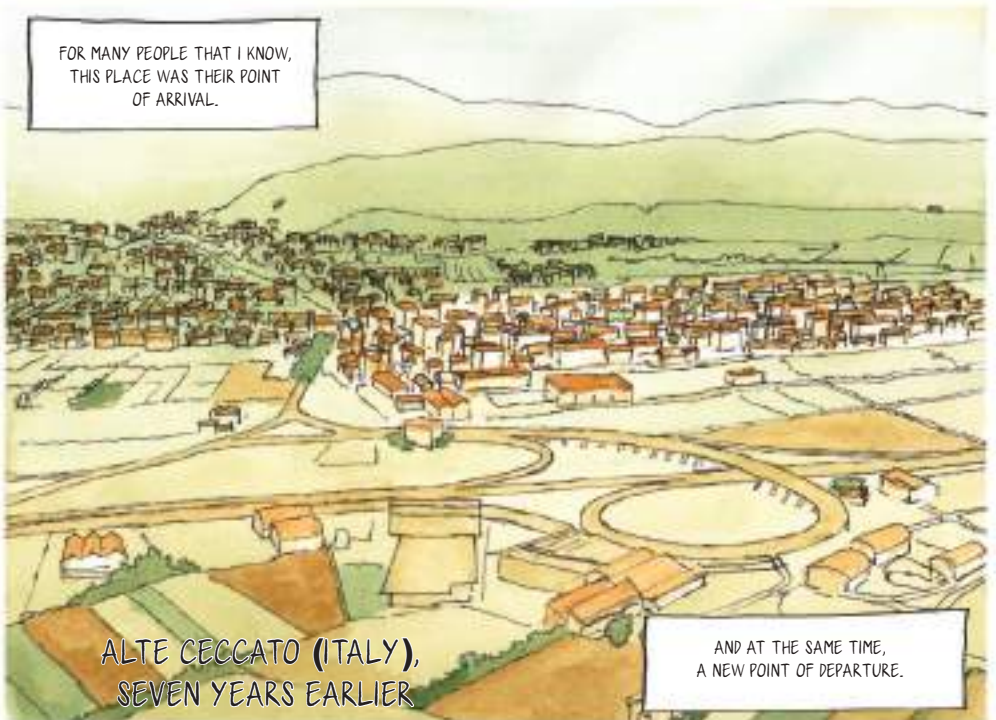


SOMETIMES THEY KEEP
SEARCHING FOR IT.

AND THIS PLACE...



FOR MANY PEOPLE THAT I KNOW,
THIS PLACE WAS THEIR POINT
OF ARRIVAL.



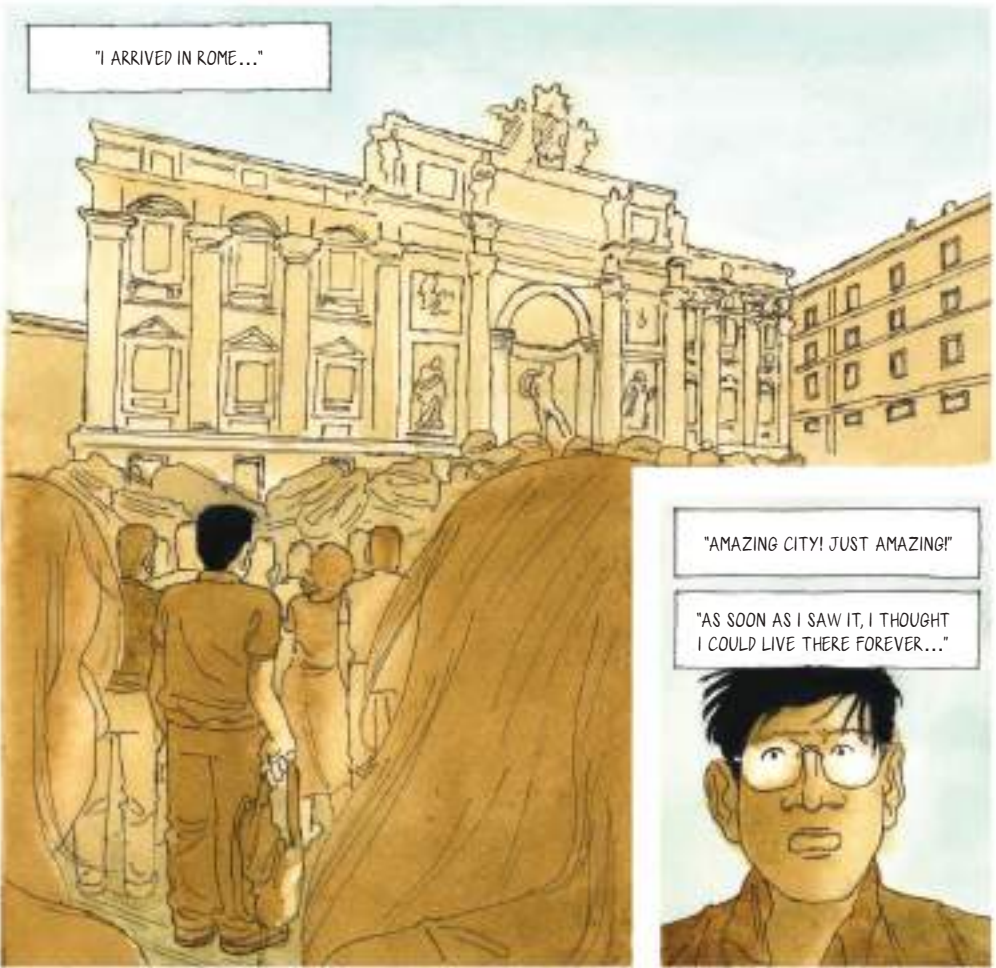
ALTE CECCATO (ITALY),
SEVEN YEARS EARLIER

AND AT THE SAME TIME,
A NEW POINT OF DEPARTURE.





"I ARRIVED IN ROME..."



"AMAZING CITY! JUST AMAZING!"

"AS SOON AS I SAW IT, I THOUGHT I COULD LIVE THERE FOREVER..."



BUT THE ONLY JOBS I COULD FIND WERE WASHING DISHES, BEING AN ASSISTANT COOK, HELPING IN A GROCERY STORE...

TEMPORARY, POORLY PAID JOBS, THEY WEREN'T ENOUGH TO MAKE A LIVING...

AFTER SOME TIME, I MOVED NORTH... AND ENDED UP IN VICENZA. IN ALTE CECCATO, IN FACT, WHERE WE MET.

YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THAT... ALTE, MONTECCHIO MAGGIORE, IN THE VICENZA AREA... INDUSTRIAL OUTSKIRTS THAT I'VE STUDIED IN DEPTH.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TANNING DISTRICT IN EUROPE, AT THAT TIME IT ATTRACTED A LARGE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS, WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.



"AT FIRST IT MUST HAVE BEEN STRANGE FOR THE ORIGINAL RESIDENTS, BUT IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE VILLAGE TO REACH A NEW NORMALITY."



AND LABOR WAS ALWAYS IN DEMAND, SO FINDING A JOB WASN'T HARD.

I FOUND ONE IN A DAY... I WENT TO THE FACTORIES BY BIKE AND WAS HIRED IN A TANNERY.



WITH A PERMANENT CONTRACT RIGHT AWAY!



"THERE WAS SO MUCH WORK TO DO,
I STARTED OFF AS A MANUAL WORKER..."



"I FOUND A HOUSE WITH
FELLOW BANGLADESHIS...
WE BECAME FRIENDS..."

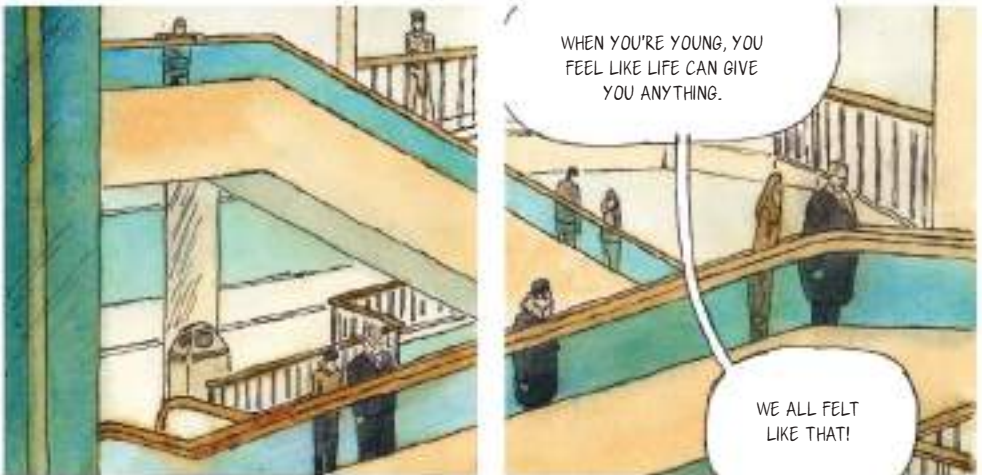


"ON SUNDAYS, WE WOULD GO OUT,
SOMETIMES WE WENT TO VICENZA,
SOMETIMES WE JUST WENT TO THE
MAIN SQUARE OR TO ARZIGNANO..."

"ONE TIME I EVEN
VISITED VENICE!"

I WASN'T MUCH OLDER THAN 20,
I WAS CAREFREE AND IN EUROPE...
IN ITALY! THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
COUNTRY IN THE WORLD! TO ME IT
STILL IS, MY HEART IS STILL THERE...







THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE THING WE WOULD NEVER HAVE IN ITALY ...

AN IMPORTANT THING...

I AM SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, BUT MANY OTHER ITALIAN BANGLADESHIS FELT THE SAME WAY.

BECAUSE I'M ITALIAN YOU KNOW? ITALIAN CITIZEN, DOCUMENTS AND ALL. MANY OF US BECAME ITALIAN CITIZENS.

WE WERE ITALIAN, BUT STILL CONSIDERED FOREIGNERS. I WOULD ALWAYS BE A BANGLADESHI WORKER, AND MY SON WOULD ALWAYS BE THE SON OF A BANGLADESHI WORKER.

YOU UNDERSTAND?

IN THEORY, WE HAD EVERYTHING...

BUT IN PRACTICE, WE WERE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS! MY PASSPORT SAID I WAS ITALIAN, BUT MY SKIN, MY NAME, EVERYTHING ELSE SAID I WASN'T...

THAT'S WHAT WE WERE MISSING, STEFANO.

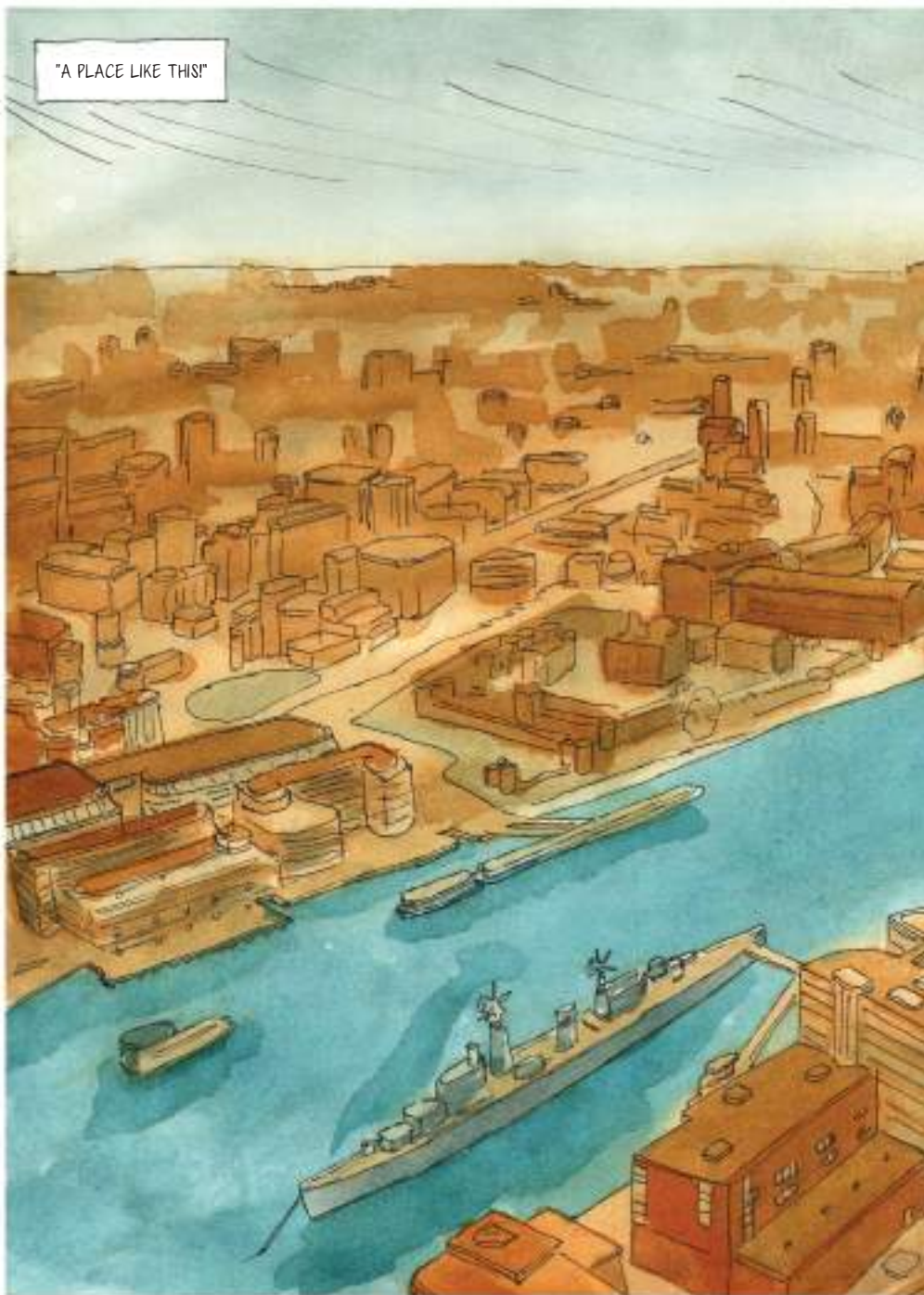
THIS!

A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN WALK PAST AND NOBODY THINKS YOU'RE FOREIGN OR STARES AT YOU.

WHERE YOU CAN HAVE A COFFEE WITHOUT FEELING DIFFERENT... ALTHOUGH COFFEE HERE ISN'T AS GOOD AS IT IS IN ITALY!

A MULTICULTURAL PLACE.

"A PLACE LIKE THIS"







I'M GLAD YOU CAME HERE TO CONTINUE YOUR RESEARCH... IT'S VERY INTERESTING HERE, YOU'LL SEE!

HAVE YOU MET MANY PEOPLE? HAVE YOU DONE MANY INTERVIEWS SINCE YOU ARRIVED?

NOT EVEN ONE YET! YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON I'M MEETING... AND THIS ISN'T REALLY AN INTERVIEW...



WHY NOT? I'VE TOLD YOU LOADS OF STUFF!

LOOK, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TOMORROW AFTERNOON? ARE YOU FREE?

PERHAPS YOU DON'T KNOW, BUT THERE'S AN ITALIAN CAFÉ IN WHITECHAPEL...

MANY OF US MEET THERE.

US ITALIAN BANGLADESHIS, I MEAN.



UTP PROOF





HACKNEY



RUNNING.

RUNNING HELPS YOU THINK.

IT MAKES THINGS CLEARER,
HELPS YOU TO MAKE
DECISIONS MORE EASILY.



YOU CAN CONCENTRATE ON YOUR LEGS,
AND YOUR WORRIES START TO FADE.

OR THINK ABOUT THINGS, LETTING
YOUR LEGS TURN ON THEIR OWN.

AS IF MOVING YOUR LEGS, YOUR
HEART, AND YOUR LUNGS ALSO
HELPS TO MOVE YOUR HEAD
AND MIND IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



IN LIFE, NEEDS, DESIRES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES WIND TOGETHER INTO ONE SHADY STREAM, WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE.

WHILE RUNNING, ONE STEP AFTER ANOTHER, YOUR QUESTIONS FIND ANSWERS, EVERY PIECE FINDS ITS PLACE...

AND EVERYTHING BECOMES ORDERED, IN YOUR HEART AND IN YOUR HEAD.

POSSIBILITIES, FEARS, HOPES, CHALLENGES, EXPECTATIONS, INTERNAL REFLECTIONS. WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR 42 KILOMETERS, FOR 100 KILOMETERS, FOR A WHOLE DAY?

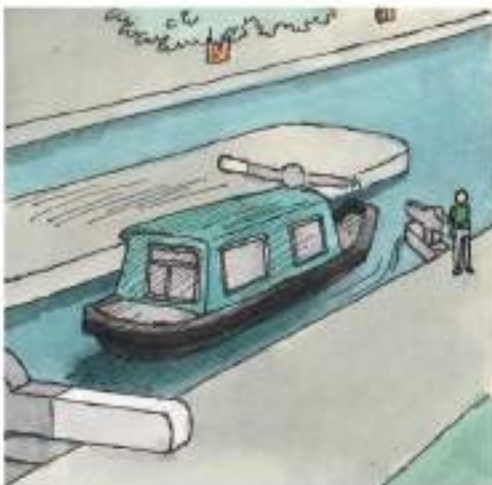
WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE HEADS OF THOSE WHO LEAVE THEIR NATIVE COUNTRY, STOP FOR A WHILE, AND THEN SET OFF AGAIN, STARTING OVER FROM SCRATCH? WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE HEADS OF THOSE WHO DECIDE TO TELL THESE STORIES?

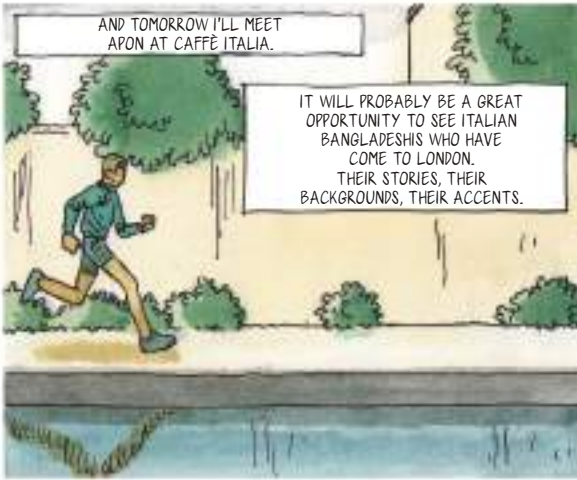


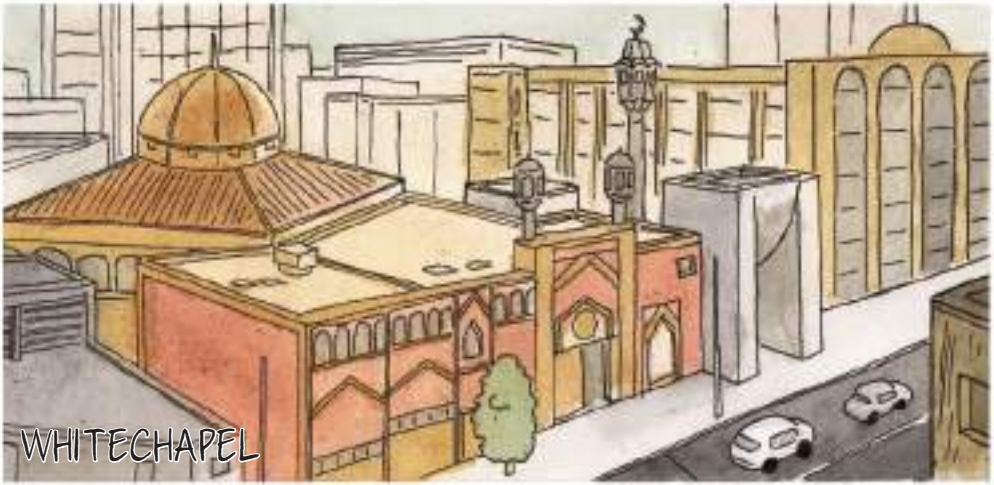
PEOPLE, THEIR WEAKNESSES, THEIR FEARS, THEIR HOPES, THEIR DREAMS... CAN YOU TELL THE STORIES OF OTHERS WITHOUT TELLING SOME OF YOUR OWN STORY?



UTP PROOF





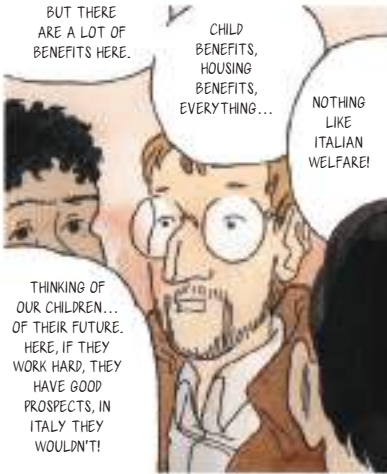














I USED TO LIVE IN VENICE. SIXTEEN YEARS I LIVED THERE, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL YEARS OF MY LIFE. I LEFT MY COUNTRY AS SOON AS I GRADUATED, AND CAME TO ITALY... BUT IN ITALY MY DEGREE WAS WORTHLESS...

IN VENICE, AT FIRST I WORKED IN THE STREETS, I WAS A STREET VENDOR... THEN I STARTED WASHING DISHES IN A RESTAURANT IN SAN POLO, NEAR THE RIALTO BRIDGE.



YES, YES, I DO... AND HERE IN LONDON?



I'M A CAMERAMAN...







OUR COMMUNITY IS LARGE... THE ITALIAN BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY, I MEAN. AND VERY ORGANIZED TOO...



OVER THE YEARS A LOT OF ASSOCIATIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED...

BUT OURS IS THE BEST!

HA HA!



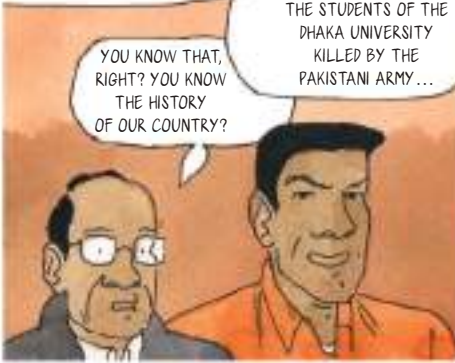
WE MEET HERE TWICE A MONTH TO ORGANIZE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES FOR OUR COMMUNITY. THERE'S A LOT OF US HERE IN LONDON, MANY ISSUES...

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN OUR LANGUAGE, OUR TRADITIONS, OUR CULTURE... WE ORGANIZE EVENTS AND PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES, WE HELP NEWCOMERS WITH DOCUMENTS AND WITH THE BUREAUCRACY FOR GETTING BENEFITS, FOR HOUSING...

FOR INSTANCE, SOON IT WILL BE FEBRUARY 21, THE NATIONAL DAY OF OUR NATIVE LANGUAGE...

WHICH IS ALSO A NATIONAL HOLIDAY FOR BANGLADESH, WHEN WE COMMEMORATE THE STUDENTS OF THE DHAKA UNIVERSITY KILLED BY THE PAKISTANI ARMY...

YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT? YOU KNOW THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY?



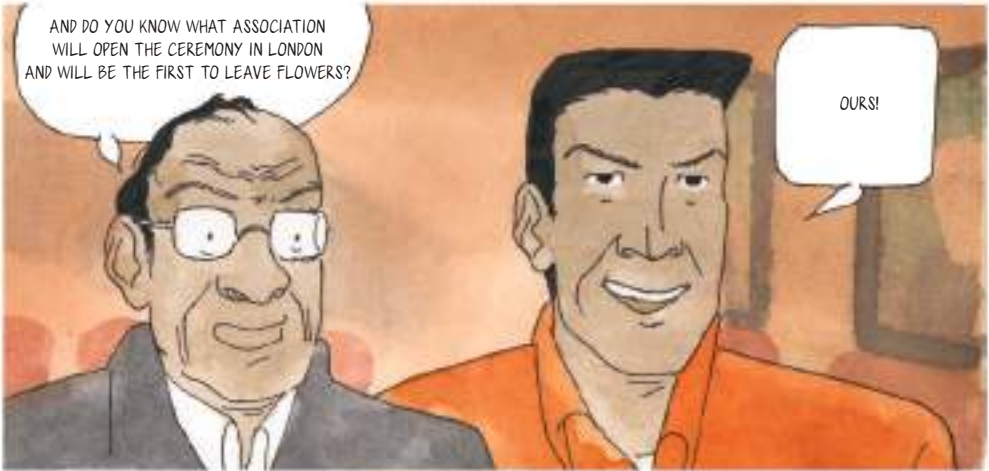
"ON THAT NIGHT, EVERYBODY IN DHAKA LEAVES FLOWERS ON THE MARTYRS' MONUMENT. IN LONDON TOO, IN A PARK NEARBY, THERE'S A REPRODUCTION OF THE MARTYRS' MONUMENT, AND IT'S THE SAME AS IN DHAKA."

"AND ON THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 21 WE'LL ALSO LEAVE FLOWERS, LIKE WE DO IN BANGLADESH."



AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT ASSOCIATION WILL OPEN THE CEREMONY IN LONDON AND WILL BE THE FIRST TO LEAVE FLOWERS?

OURS!



WE ARE STARTING THE MEETING SOON... WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY?



IT WOULD BE VERY INTERESTING, BUT I DON'T WANT TO INTRUDE...

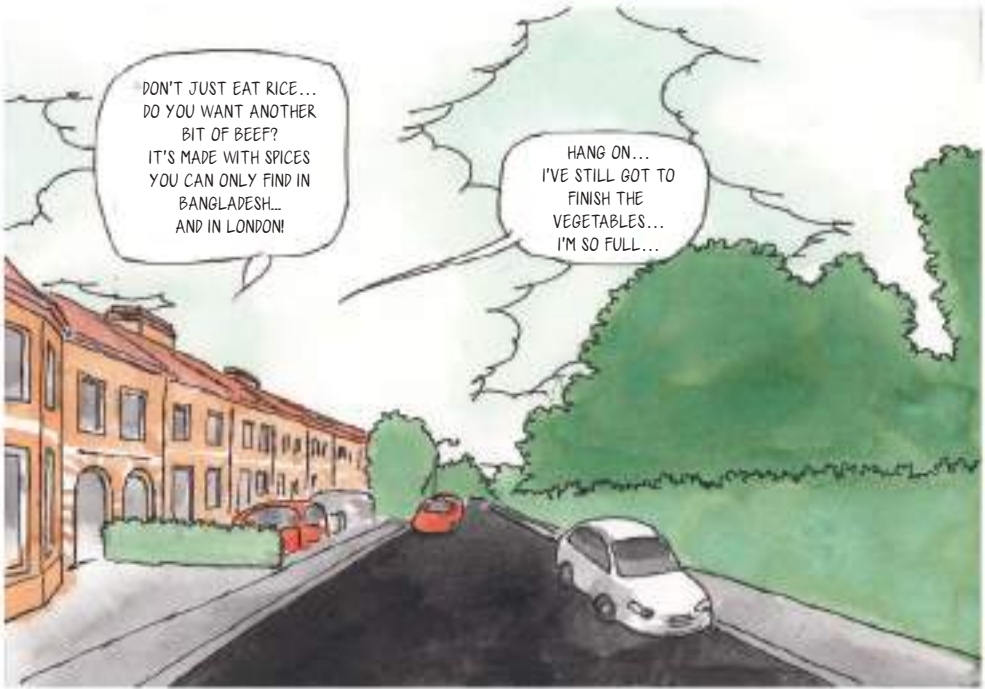
AS YOU WISH.





"BUT I WOULD SAY AROUND
11 O'CLOCK, SO WE CAN
HAVE LUNCH TOGETHER!"







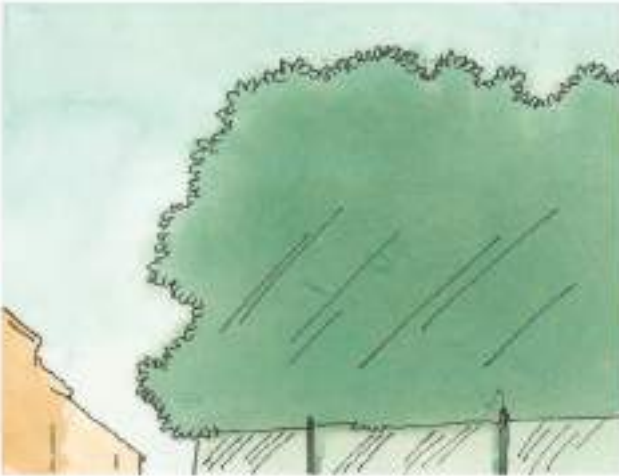
WELL, THE BRITISH ROBBED OUR RICHES
AND EXPLOITED US FOR CENTURIES.
THE PEOPLES OF THE INDIAN
SUBCONTINENT, I MEAN.

STILL GOING ON ABOUT POLITICS?
HOW BORING!



I MADE SOME TRADITIONAL
SWEETS FROM OUR COUNTRY...





HERE... THIS WAS SHORTLY AFTER WE GOT MARRIED. WE WERE ON A TRIP TO VENICE...



SHE'D JUST JOINED ME IN ITALY AND... LET ME SEE IF I CAN FIND THE PHOTOS OF THE WEDDING...

ZIHAUR... IS IT OK IF WE... UM... DO THE INTERVIEW I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT...?



THAT WAY YOU CAN TELL ME YOUR STORY, FROM WHEN YOU WERE IN BANGLADESH, AND THE DECISION TO LEAVE ITALY FOR LONDON...

YES, YES, LET'S DO IT. I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING. BUT FIRST LET'S HAVE A CUP OF TEA, OK? LIKE WE DO IN OUR COUNTRY...

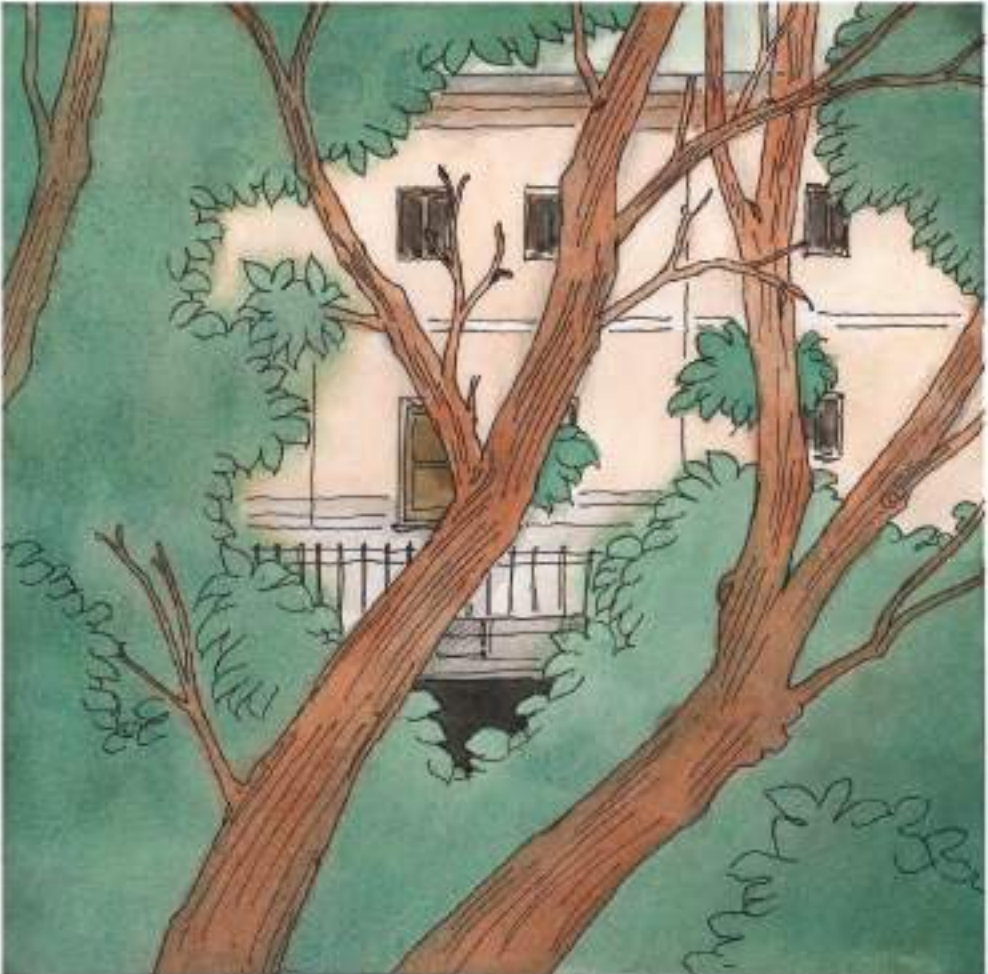


UTP PROOF



THE ENGLISH DRINK A LOT OF TEA, DON'T THEY? HERE IT'S NOT LIKE ITALY, WHERE YOU DRINK COFFEE... I REALLY MISS THE MACCHIATOS YOU GET IN BARS.

IT'S ALWAYS THE FIRST THING I DO WHEN I GET BACK TO ITALY: GO TO A BAR AND ORDER A MACCHIATO...



THE ENGLISH GOVERNED INDIA FOR CENTURIES...
EVEN BEFORE BANGLADESH EXISTED,
WE WERE PART OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.
AND IN THAT PERIOD, THEY TOOK OUR
RESOURCES, PRECIOUS METALS, PEOPLE...

COLONIAL
PLUNDER.



AND THAT'S WHY BANGLADESH, BUT ALSO PAKISTAN
AND THE WHOLE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, IS POOR
AND ITS PEOPLE GO TO WORK IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
IN EUROPE, OR IN OTHER COUNTRIES...



SO EVEN IF WE
GET SOME BENEFITS
HERE NOW, WE SHOULDN'T
FEEL INDEBTED... MANY OF
MY FELLOW BANGLADESHIS
THINK THAT...

OH DEAR, ITS LATE! I DIDN'T
REALIZE IT WAS THAT TIME ALREADY...

I'VE GOT TO GO...
I'VE GOT TO START
MY MINICAB SHIFT...



BUT... UM, OUR INTERVIEW,
CAN WE...

DO YOU WANT
ME TO GIVE YOU
A LIFT HOME?

NO, NO,
THANK YOU...
I'LL TAKE
THE TUBE...

ARE YOU SURE?
WELL, THANKS FOR
COMING...

WELL...



YOU'VE GOT
MY NUMBER...

IF YOU NEED
ANYTHING ELSE
FOR YOUR
RESEARCH,
YOU CAN
ALWAYS CALL.



CLACK





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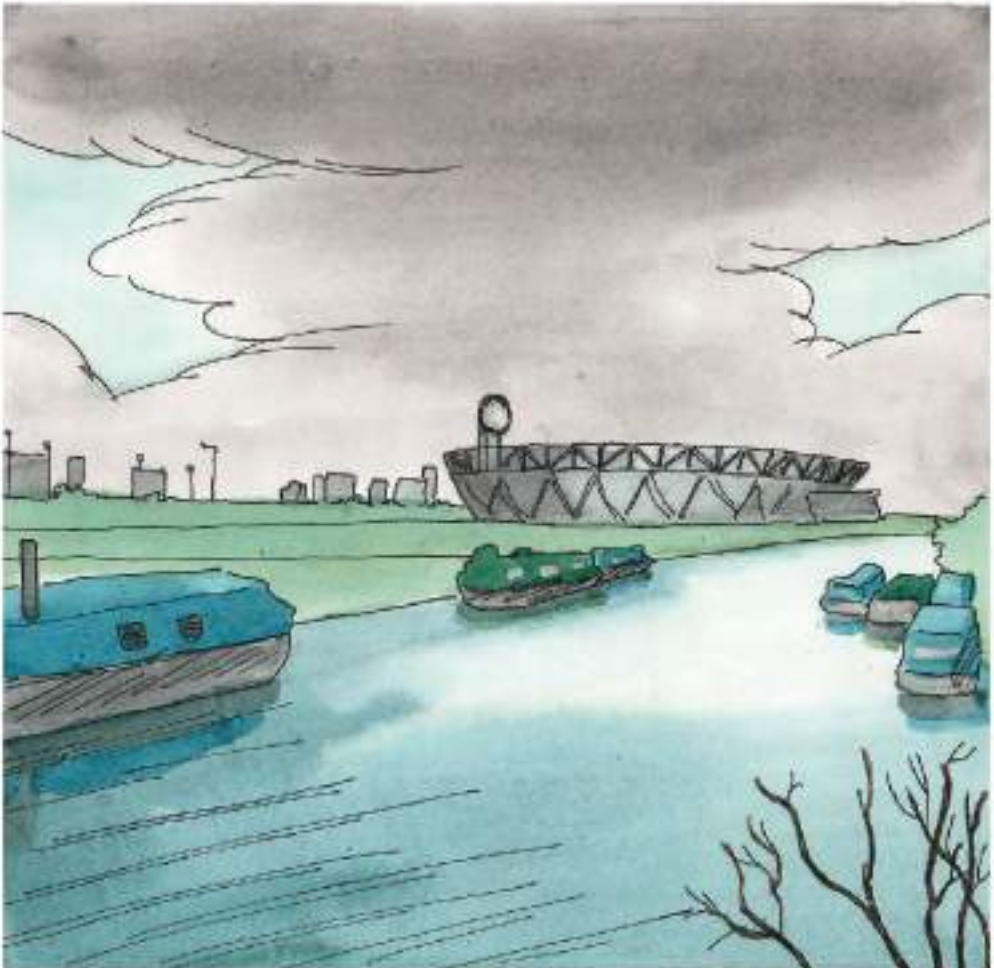


WHAT WOULD YOUR REGRETS BE?

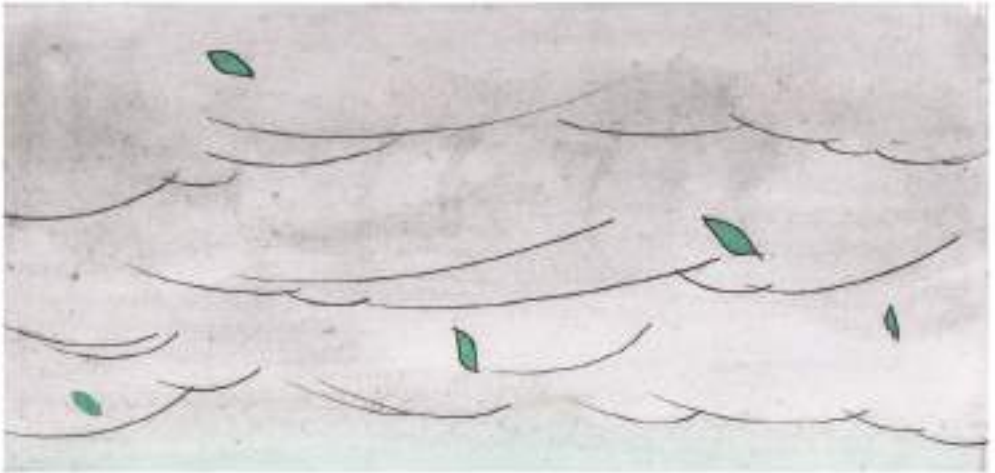
AND, MOST OF ALL, WHAT WOULD YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT?



AND THEN... THIS THING, THESE DEPARTURES... THEY COULD REVEAL A LOT ABOUT ITALY...







ETHNOGRAPHY NEEDS TIME. IT'S SLOW.
RELATIONSHIPS HAVE TO BE CREATED...

IT SHOULDN'T BE
HURRIED, IT NEEDS
SPACE TO BUILD UP
TRUST, REACH A CERTAIN
LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE,
FOR YOU TO BE
ACCEPTED...



I KNOW THAT ETHNOGRAPHY IS ABOUT LIVING... YOU NEED TO
KNOW HOW TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN SITUATIONS, WAIT,
LET THINGS HAPPEN WITHOUT FORCING THEM.



AND SO WHY AM I AFRAID OF
WASTING TIME AND ENDING UP
NOT FINISHING ANYTHING?



M... MORAD?

YES, IT'S STEFANO...
DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
HOW ARE YOU DOING?
I'M CALLING...
ABOUT THE INTERVIEW.



AH, YOU CAN'T?

YES, WAIT JUST
A SECOND...





A-AT LEAST
LET ME
KEEP MY
DOCUMENTS...



GIVE IT TO ME!

AND YOUR
PHONE!

MY PHONE?
BUT...



WITHOUT MY PHONE I'M SCREWED.

MORAD WILL CALL AND NO
ONE WILL ANSWER.

AND MY CONTACTS, THE INTERVIEWS
I'VE ALREADY SCHEDULED.

I'LL HAVE DONE ALL
OF IT FOR NOTHING.



UTP PROOF



IT'S OLD, SEE?

IT'S GOT A
BROKEN
SCREEN.

IT'S NOT
WORTH
ANYTHING.



YOU'LL USE IT TO
CALL THE POLICE.

NO!

I PROMISE...



FUCK OFF!



AND NOW, WITH NO MONEY AND
NO PHONE, IT'S REALLY OVER.





ALTE CECCATO,
TWO YEARS EARLIER



SOMETHING THAT'S HARD FOR US BANGLADESHIS IS FAMILY REUNIFICATION, WHEN YOU BRING YOUR WIFE TO ITALY AFTER YOU'VE MARRIED HER IN BANGLADESH.

IT'S A NIGHTMARE...

FOR THE HUSBANDS AND MOST OF ALL FOR THE WIVES, WHO THINK THEY'LL BE ABLE TO HAVE A GOOD LIFE IN ITALY AND THEN FIND OUT IT'S HARD...



HMM...

IN WHAT SENSE?

UH, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EXPLAIN.

FOR A START, WEDDINGS IN MY COUNTRY, BUT ALSO IN INDIA OR PAKISTAN... ARE ARRANGED.

ALMOST ALWAYS IT'S THE FAMILY THAT DECIDES WHO YOU MARRY. OR, IF YOU DECIDE, YOUR FAMILY HAS TO SAY WHETHER IT'S OK OR NOT. OFTEN YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR WIFE, OR AT THE MOST YOU KNOW WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE...

IT WAS LIKE THAT FOR ME... YOUR PARENTS SEND YOU A PHOTO OF A POTENTIAL WIFE, OR YOU GO BACK HOME AND LOOK FOR A WIFE...

BUT ANYWAY THEY'VE GOT TO APPROVE IT...

BUT WHY DO YOU SAY THAT REUNIFICATION WITH THEIR WIVES IS HARD FOR OTHER BANGLADESHIS?

IT'S A BIT HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT I'LL TRY...

IT WASN'T HARD FOR ME TO FIND A WIFE: I COME FROM A GOOD FAMILY AND ABOVE ALL I WAS LEGALLY IN ITALY, WITH A RESIDENCE PERMIT AND A GOOD JOB...



"IT'S 1990, YOU'RE 20 YEARS OLD, YOU WERE BORN IN BANGLADESH, AND LIKE MANY PEOPLE IN THAT TIME, YOU'D LIKE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, PROBABLY TO GO TO EUROPE."



"AT THAT TIME, MANY OF US DREAMT OF ITALY."

"AND YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE... TO HELP YOUR FAMILY, YOUR MUM, YOUR DAD, AND YOUR SIBLINGS AT HOME."



"BUT ALSO TO HAVE AN ADVENTURE AND SEE THE WORLD..."



"AT THAT TIME, IT WAS STILL EASY TO FIND WORK... EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE A RESIDENCE PERMIT. SO YOU WERE ABLE TO EARN MUCH MORE THAN IN BANGLADESH, EVEN IF YOU HAD TO DO A JOB THAT YOU'D NEVER HAVE ACCEPTED IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY."

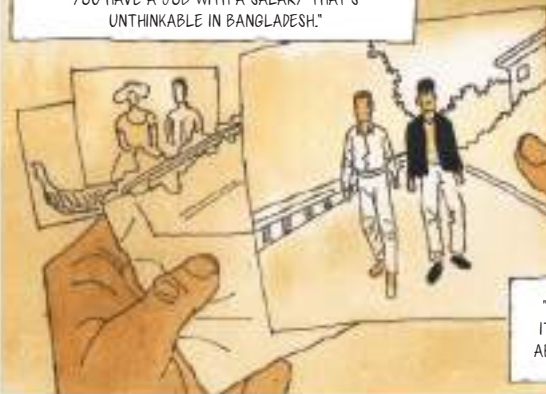


"IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY, AS A GRADUATE AND THE SON OF A GOOD MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY, YOU'D NEVER HAVE BEEN HAPPY WASHING DISHES OR BEING A MANUAL WORKER. BUT HERE, YES, ALSO BECAUSE THEY PAY YOU WELL... YOU ARE IN ITALY, AND YOU CAN SEND MONEY HOME."



"TO THOSE YOU'VE LEFT AT HOME, YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL: YOU LIVE IN EUROPE, YOU HAVE A JOB WITH A SALARY THAT'S UNTHINKABLE IN BANGLADESH."

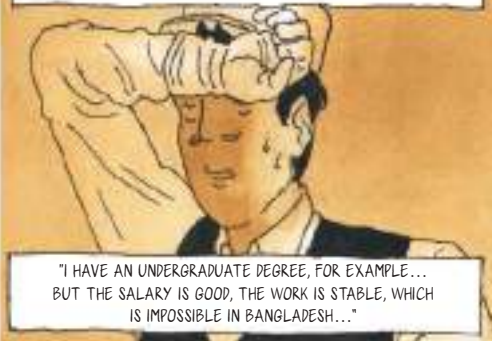
"THERE'S A SENSE OF SECURITY, THE HEALTH SYSTEM, SCHOOL, YOU CAN WALK IN THE STREETS AT NIGHT, YOU'LL GET MARRIED AND GIVE YOUR CHILDREN A GOOD FUTURE..."



"BUT THE HARD LIFE WE HAVE IN ITALY, THEY DON'T SEE IT BACK HOME, THEY DON'T KNOW IT, AND WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT... MAYBE ALSO SO OUR FAMILIES DON'T WORRY."

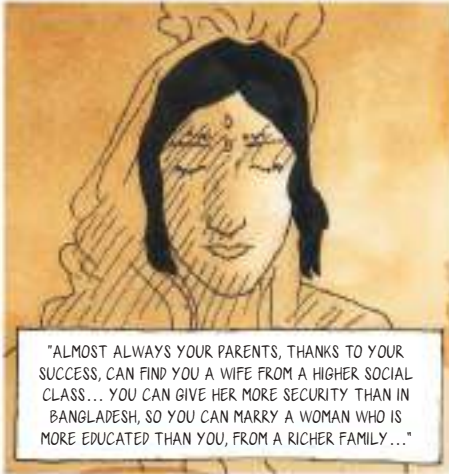
"SOMETIMES WE DON'T EVEN SAY WHAT WORK WE DO, BECAUSE BACK HOME BEING A MANUAL WORKER IS NOT CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR THOSE FROM MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES, WHO ARE OFTEN EDUCATED..."

"THAT'S WHY WE ARE CONSIDERED 'A GOOD CATCH': WE HAVE A LOT OF SECURITY, AND MANY FAMILIES WANT THEIR DAUGHTERS TO MARRY SOMEONE WHO HAS EMIGRATED TO EUROPE."



"I HAVE AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE, FOR EXAMPLE... BUT THE SALARY IS GOOD, THE WORK IS STABLE, WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE IN BANGLADESH..."

"BUT WE DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED..."



"BUT THEN YOU GO BACK TO ITALY AND YOUR WIFE GOES TO LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS, ON HER OWN, WITH YOUR BROTHERS, YOUR SISTERS-IN-LAW..."



"THAT'S HOW WE DO IT: AFTER THE WEDDING SHE GOES AND LIVES WITH THE HUSBAND'S FAMILY. THE WIFE HAS TO LOOK AFTER HIS PARENTS, HELP THEM OUT, TAKE CARE OF THE HOUSE... SOMETIMES IT GOES WELL, AND YOUR MUM AND YOUR SISTERS-IN-LAW GET ON WITH YOUR WIFE."

"OTHER TIMES IT DOESN'T GO SO WELL: THEY ARE STRICT, ORDER HER AROUND... AND SHE FINDS HERSELF A LONG WAY FROM HOME, FROM HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY. YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN PROTECT HER, BUT YOU ARE IN ITALY BECAUSE YOUR HOLIDAYS ARE OVER!"



"AND SO YOU HAVE TO DO THE DOCUMENTATION FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION! WORK CONTRACT, RESIDENCE PERMIT, RENTAL CONTRACT, MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE, MARITAL STATUS, PASSPORTS... EVERYTHING TRANSLATED INTO ITALIAN. AND IT'S NEVER-ENDING, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING MISSING..."

"WELL ANYWAY... IN THE END YOU GET IT DONE AND YOUR WIFE ARRIVES IN ITALY, AND YOU BEGIN REALLY LIVING AS A MARRIED COUPLE."



"BUT ACTUALLY, YOU AND YOUR WIFE DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER VERY WELL. YOU'VE ONLY MET HER A FEW TIMES, THERE WERE PHONE CALLS... AND IT'S NOT EASY TO START LIVING TOGETHER."

"YOU'RE ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT HER, THAT SHE'S DOING OK, HAPPY TO BE HERE. BUT THAT ISN'T ALWAYS THE CASE... BEFORE SHE LIVED IN A LOVELY HOUSE WITH SERVANTS, NEAR HER FAMILY."



"AND NOW SHE'S IN A BLOCK NEAR THE FACTORIES, SHE'S A HOUSEWIFE, SHE DOESN'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE, AND SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANYONE. SHE ONLY HAS YOU, AND YOU ARE WORKING FROM THE MORNING TO THE EVENING..."

"...AND SHE CRIES ALL DAY, SPENDING HER DAYS WATCHING BENGALI TELEVISION OR ON THE PHONE TO HER MUM..."



UTP PROOF









MMM...
YOU KNOW, I SPOKE TO OTHER BANGLADESHIS WHO WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE... AND THEY PUT THINGS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENTLY...
WHAT DID THEY SAY?

THAT IT'S THEM WHO WANT TO GO TO LONDON, THAT THIS NEW DEPARTURE IS A SUCCESS AND WILL TAKE THEM WHO KNOWS WHERE.

HA HA!
WELL OF COURSE THEY WON'T TELL YOU IT WAS THEIR WIFE WHO DECIDED, AND THEY DIDN'T WANT TO...
OR PERHAPS IT'S TRUE THAT FOR MANY IT'S A CHOICE, A SUCCESS...

EVERYONE KNOWS THESE THINGS, BUT NO ONE TALKS ABOUT THEM.
AND A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY GOING TO LONDON IS THEIR GOAL, BUT IN FACT IT CAN BE VERY PAINFUL...



UTP PROOF











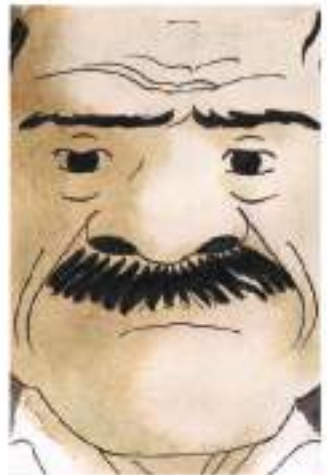


REDBRIDGE

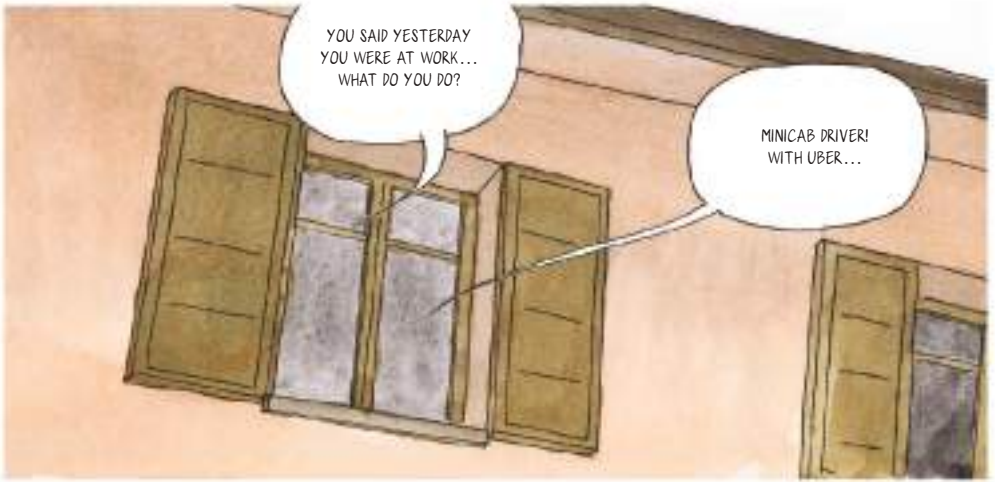












I CHOOSE MY HOURS. WHEN I WANT TO, I OPEN THE APP AND GET GOING. WHEN I DON'T WANT TO, I TURN IT OFF AND DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. I WORK MAINLY IN THE MORNINGS, EVENINGS, AND WEEKENDS. THAT'S WHEN THERE'S THE MOST DEMAND. ON THE WEEKENDS I OFTEN WORK ALL NIGHT.

AFTER BEING HERE FOR A WEEK I FOUND A HOUSE, WITH THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING BENEFIT, AND TWO JOBS... THEN I GOT MY UBER LICENSE... THERE ARE LOTS OF POSITIVE THINGS...

BUT MY LIFE IN ITALY WAS A DIFFERENT THING ALTOGETHER...

YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON WHO'S SAID THAT... IN GENERAL, EVERYONE IS HAPPY THEY CAME TO LONDON.



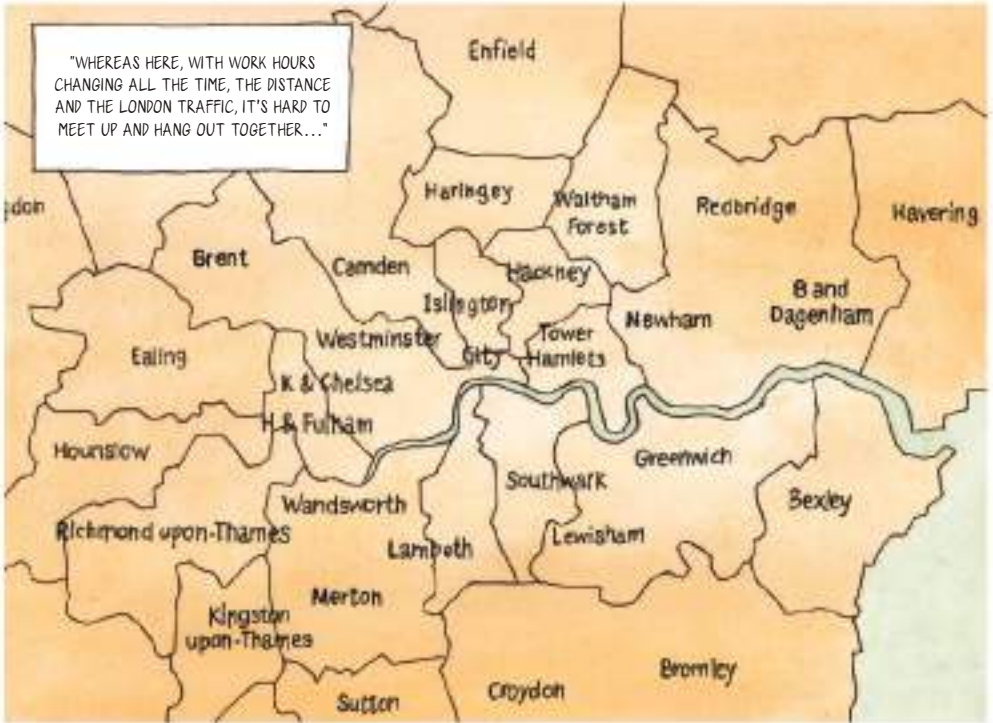
AH, BUT I'M ALSO HAPPY: WE CAME HERE MAINLY FOR THE CHILDREN, FOR THEIR FUTURE. HERE IT'S BETTER, BUT IT'S ALSO MORE COMPLICATED... STRESSFUL.

LONDON IS A BIG CITY, EVERYONE'S ALWAYS IN A HURRY BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS SO EXPENSIVE, AND YOU'RE NEVER ABLE TO SEE ANYONE. YOUR FRIENDS LIVE FAR AWAY, IT TAKES AN HOUR TO MEET UP WITH THEM, AND YOUR WORK HOURS ARE ALL OVER THE PLACE...

IN ITALY... IN ALTE... EVERYTHING WAS MUCH SIMPLER.







UTP PROOF















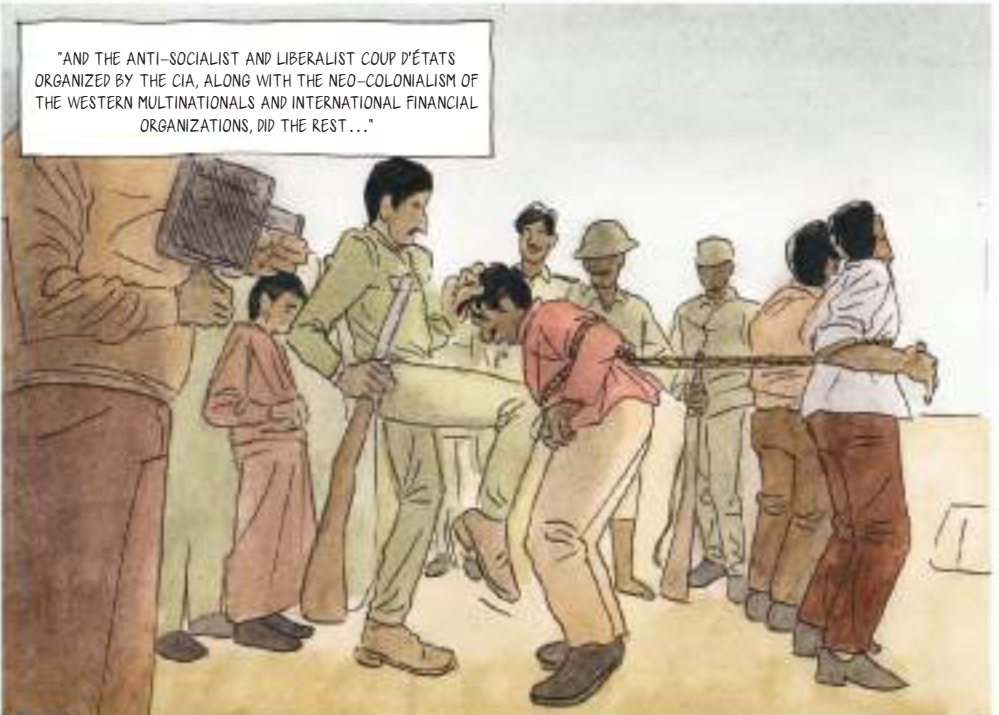




"THEY BLOCKED DEVELOPMENT, IMPOSING BONDS OF DEPENDENCE AND SUBALTERNITY WITH THE COLONIAL MOTHERLAND, CREATING ENORMOUS INEQUALITIES BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS THAT ARE AT THE BASE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS..."



"AND THE ANTI-SOCIALIST AND LIBERALIST COUP D'ÉTATS ORGANIZED BY THE CIA, ALONG WITH THE NEO-COLONIALISM OF THE WESTERN MULTINATIONALS AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ORGANIZATIONS, DID THE REST..."





IT ALL BEGAN WITH
BRITISH COLONIALISM...

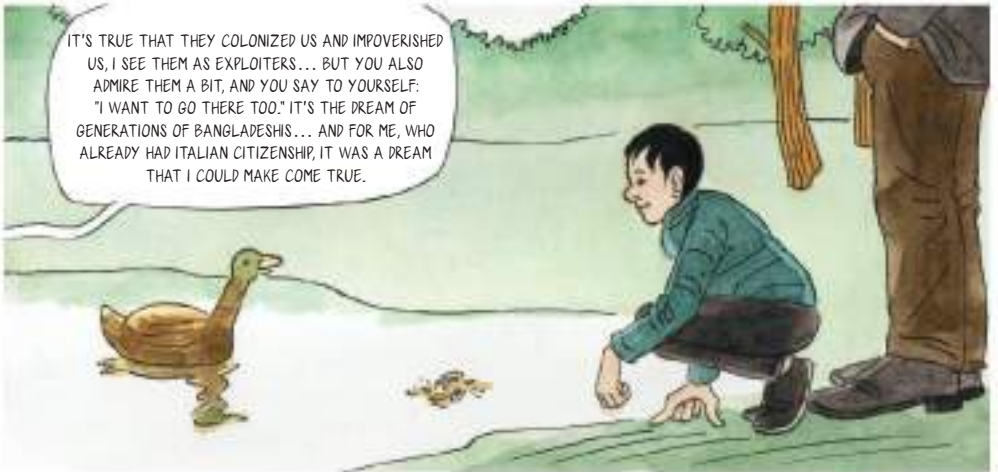
BUT YOU CHOSE
TO COME TO
ENGLAND!



WHEN YOU GROW UP IN A COUNTRY WHERE EVERYONE SPEAKS ABOUT THE ENGLISH, WHERE THE LAWS ARE LIKE ENGLISH LAWS, THE SCHOOLS ARE INSPIRED BY ENGLISH SCHOOLS, YOU DRIVE ON THE LEFT LIKE IN ENGLAND, YOU USE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE... YOU GROW UP WITH THE MYTH OF ENGLAND.



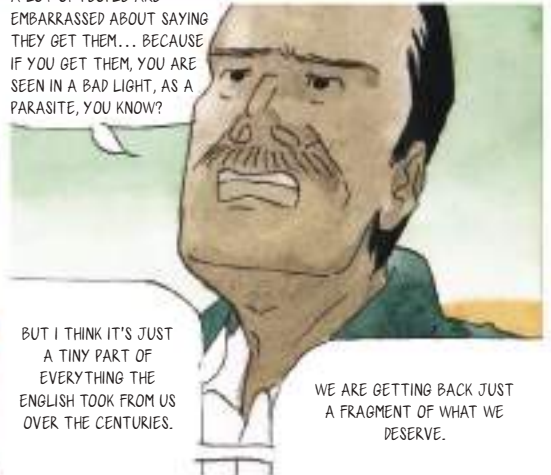
IT'S TRUE THAT THEY COLONIZED US AND IMPOVERISHED US, I SEE THEM AS EXPLOITERS... BUT YOU ALSO ADMIRE THEM A BIT, AND YOU SAY TO YOURSELF: "I WANT TO GO THERE TOO." IT'S THE DREAM OF GENERATIONS OF BANGLADESHIS... AND FOR ME, WHO ALREADY HAD ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP, IT WAS A DREAM THAT I COULD MAKE COME TRUE.



MY FATHER WAS ABLE TO SEND ME TO UNIVERSITY... AND I WAS ABLE TO TAKE MY SON TO ENGLAND TO STUDY AND GROW UP HERE... AND MAYBE HE'LL BECOME A DOCTOR OR A POLITICIAN OR WHO KNOWS... YES, OF COURSE, HERE WE GET BENEFITS. WITHOUT BENEFITS WE COULDN'T GET BY...



A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE EMBARRASSED ABOUT SAYING THEY GET THEM... BECAUSE IF YOU GET THEM, YOU ARE SEEN IN A BAD LIGHT, AS A PARASITE, YOU KNOW?



BUT I THINK IT'S JUST A TINY PART OF EVERYTHING THE ENGLISH TOOK FROM US OVER THE CENTURIES.

WE ARE GETTING BACK JUST A FRAGMENT OF WHAT WE DESERVE.

THESE BENEFITS... EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT THEM, BUT HOW DO THEY WORK? HOW DO YOU GET THEM?

EH, IT DEPENDS, THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT TYPES... LIKE FOR HOUSING: IF YOUR RENT IS TOO HIGH, THEY GIVE YOU SOMETHING TOWARDS IT.

MY RENT IS MORE THAN £1000, AND I ONLY EARN £1300 OR £1400 AND COULD NEVER LIVE OFF WHAT I'D BE LEFT WITH, SO THE COUNCIL GIVES ME A HAND AND PAYS ALMOST ALL OF MY RENT.



"THEN THERE'S CHILD BENEFIT: IF YOU'VE GOT A LOW INCOME, YOU CAN GET SOME MONEY EVERY MONTH FOR EVERY CHILD THAT YOU HAVE."



"OR THERE'S INCOME SUPPORT: IF YOU WORK BUT YOU DON'T EARN VERY MUCH, THE COUNCIL HELPS YOU OUT... BUT YOU'VE GOT TO BE CAREFUL, BECAUSE THEY ONLY GIVE YOU MONEY IF YOU WORK LESS THAN 27 HOURS... IF YOU WORK ANY MORE THAN THAT, THEN NOTHING."

"LOTS OF US DO LOW-PAID JOBS... DELIVERY, SECURITY IN SUPERMARKETS, MINICAB DRIVERS..."



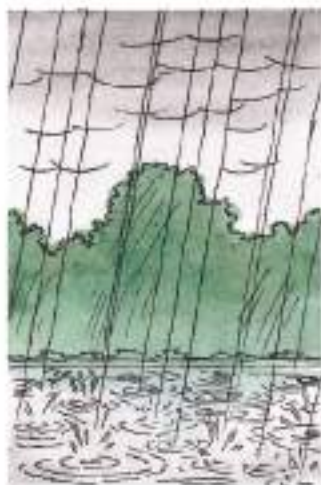
"WITH A JOB LIKE THAT, YOU CAN WORK 50 OR 60 HOURS A WEEK, BUT YOU STILL WON'T EARN ENOUGH TO LIVE IN LONDON."

"LONDON IS EXPENSIVE, SO THE ONLY WAY TO GET BY IS TO WORK LESS THAN 27 HOURS AND GET BENEFITS. AND YOU EARN MORE THAN IF YOU WORKED 60 HOURS."











ACCORDING TO ABDELMALEK SAYAD, THE EMIGRANT AND IMMIGRANT ARE DOUBLY ABSENT... ABSENT IN TWO PLACES AT THE SAME TIME.



IN THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, WHICH THEY LEFT BEHIND.

AND IN THEIR DESTINATION COUNTRY, WHERE THEY REMAIN A FOREIGNER.



I FEEL I'VE COMMITTED A BETRAYAL...

?



SAY AD?

RUN... AND THINK OF THE BETRAYAL OF LEAVING YOUR OWN COUNTRY, TO GET CITIZENSHIP IN THE DESTINATION COUNTRY...



FOR THE ITALO-BANGLADESHI WHO EMIGRATED TO LONDON, THEN, THE BETRAYAL IS DOUBLE...

AND THE FACT THAT ALMOST EVERYONE KEEPS REPEATING HOW GRATEFUL THEY ARE TO ITALY...

...IT COULD BE DUE TO A SENSE OF GUILT FOR LEAVING ITALY.

MOVING YOUR LEGS HELPS TO MOVE YOUR MIND, EH?

A BETRAYAL OF WHAT YOU WERE AND OF THE PLACES YOU'VE LEFT BEHIND, OF THE GROUP YOU BELONG TO...



RUN... REACH THE HORIZON!

BUT YOU CAN'T REACH THE HORIZON.

LIKE YOUR INTERVIEWEES... WHO KEEP CHASING A HORIZON THAT MOVES FURTHER AWAY...

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, THEY MOVE FORWARD, THEY KEEP WALKING...

AND STEFANO, EVEN YOU RUN, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO ME LIKE YOU WANT TO REACH THE HORIZON... MAYBE YOU'RE ACTUALLY RUNNING AWAY?









FROM THE 1990S ONWARDS, THERE WAS A HIGH LEVEL OF MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO ITALY, BUT IN RECENT YEARS, MAYBE BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, MANY OF THEM HAVE DECIDED TO SET OFF AGAIN.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

BECAUSE THEY SEE ENGLAND AS A COUNTRY THAT CAN OFFER THEM MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN...



THEY DON'T WANT THEM TO END UP AS UNSKILLED WORKERS IN A FACTORY LIKE THEY WERE FOR TWENTY YEARS...

WHEN MANY OF THEM ARRIVED IN ITALY, THE ECONOMY WAS STILL EXPANDING... THE LABOR MARKET WAS INCLUSIVE, ALTHOUGH IN THE LOWEST GRADE JOBS...

FOR THOSE ARRIVING FROM BANGLADESH, IT WAS QUITE EASY TO BECOME REGULARIZED BY OBTAINING A RESIDENCE PERMIT... AND TO FIND WORK WITH A WAGE THAT WAS VERY HIGH BY BANGLADESHI STANDARDS...

AND WHAT CHANGED?

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, WHICH HIT MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE HARDER THAN ANYWHERE... AND THE IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD ARRIVED IN ITALY IN THE 1990S HAD ALSO CHANGED: IN THE MEANTIME, THEY HAD BECOME FATHERS, THEIR CHILDREN HAD BEEN BORN AND GROWN UP THERE, THEY WENT TO ITALIAN SCHOOLS... THEY HAD ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP...

THEY ACCEPTED THEY WOULD BE WORKERS ALL THEIR LIVES, BUT THEY EXPECTED THEIR CHILDREN TO HAVE A BETTER POSITION, BOTH SOCIALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY... BUT IN ITALY THEY DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS POSSIBLE...



UTP PROOF

BECAUSE IT'S TRUE, THERE WAS WORK... BUT NO POSSIBILITY OF A CAREER: YOU STARTED OFF AS A WORKER AND THEN WHAT? YOU KEEP DOING THAT...

BECAUSE ITALY DOESN'T HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION LIKE OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AND IMMIGRANTS FIND THEMSELVES DOING THE LOWEST STATUS AND LOWEST PAID JOBS... AND OFTEN IT'S THE SAME FOR ITALIANS WITH FOREIGN ORIGINS...



REGARDLESS OF THEIR QUALIFICATIONS...

MANY OF THEM ARE GRADUATES, BUT IN ITALY IF YOU'RE AN IMMIGRANT OR YOU HAVE DARK SKIN, IT'S RARE FOR YOU TO GET A HIGH STATUS POSITION.

OR AT LEAST, THIS IS THE IMPRESSION THEY HAVE AND WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO COME HERE.



BASICALLY, ITALY, WHICH IS A COUNTRY WITH MORE RECENT IMMIGRATION THAN THE UK, IS NOT YET A MULTICULTURAL AND COSMOPOLITAN COUNTRY.





AND IS THAT WHAT YOU MEANT WHEN YOU SAID THE PEOPLE WHO HAD MOVED TO ITALY HAD CHANGED?

ACTUALLY, I DON'T KNOW IF THE UK IS COMPLETELY, BUT THAT'S THE IMPRESSION PEOPLE HAVE WHEN THEY COME TO LIVE HERE. THEY ARE TIRED OF BEING CONSIDERED "FOREIGNERS" EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE AN ITALIAN PASSPORT. AND SO THEY USE THAT PASSPORT TO EMIGRATE AGAIN, THIS TIME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHANNEL.

IN A CERTAIN SENSE, YES. THEY ARE NO LONGER UNMARRIED YOUNG PEOPLE, 20 OR 25 YEARS OLD, READY TO ACCEPT ANY WORK TO SEND MONEY HOME AND HAVE AN ADVENTURE. NOW THEY ARE MIDDLE-AGED HUSBANDS AND FATHERS.

THEY ARE NO LONGER IRREGULAR IMMIGRANTS WHO HAVE TO RENEW THEIR RESIDENCE PERMITS, NO LONGER PEOPLE WITH LIMITED RIGHTS... BUT ITALIAN CITIZENS!

AND YET THEY FEEL LIKE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS. AND WHILE THEY ACCEPTED WORK BREAKING THEIR BACKS IN THE FACTORY OR BREATHING IN ACIDS IN THE TANNERY, THEY DON'T WANT THIS TO HAPPEN TO THEIR CHILDREN, BORN IN ITALY AND WITH ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP.

"EVEN THOUGH I WAS A WORKER, MY SON SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT, HE SHOULD GRADUATE AND REALIZE HIS DREAMS AS A DOCTOR OR ENGINEER OR POLITICIAN."



SADIQ KHAN IS THE SON OF A PAKISTANI DRIVER AND TODAY HE'S THE MAYOR OF A GLOBAL CITY LIKE LONDON, YOU SEE? THAT'S UNTHINKABLE IN ITALY, AND THE BANGLADESHIS WHO LEAVE TO COME HERE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT.



OF COURSE, MAYBE THEY HAVE AN IDEALIZED VISION OF LONDON AND OF BRITISH MULTICULTURALISM... IN THE END, THE COLOR OF YOUR SKIN OR YOUR PLACE OF ORIGIN "COUNTS" HERE TOO. BUT AT LEAST IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, A BLACK POLICEMAN OR A MUSLIM POLITICIAN...

THESE ARE MIDDLE-CLASS PEOPLE WITH MIDDLE-CLASS ASPIRATIONS, AND THEY THINK THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THEM IN LONDON THAN IN ITALY...

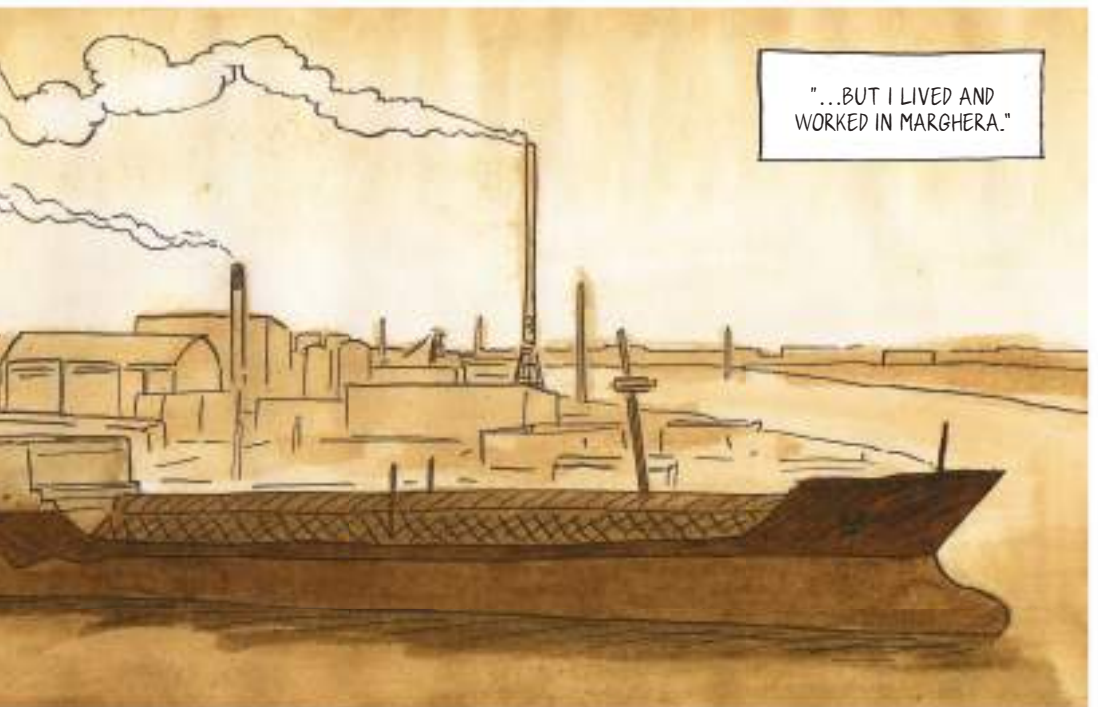
AND THEN THERE'S A FASCINATION WITH THE EX-COLONIAL MOTHERLAND, PLUS THE FACT THAT LONDON HAS THE OLDEST BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF BANGLADESH...











"I DID LOADS OF JOBS, FIRST IN RESTAURANTS WASHING DISHES AND THEN AS AN ASSISTANT CHEF..."



"BUT THEN I WANTED TO BRING MY WIFE TO ITALY, AND I NEEDED MORE STABLE WORK..."



"AND SO I WENT TO WORK IN FINCANTIERI, SHIP BUILDING... ALTHOUGH US BANGLADESHIS DID THE WORST JOBS... THE DIRTIEST, MOST DANGEROUS..."



"WE WORKED LOADS AND THEY PAID US VERY LITTLE... I WASN'T EMPLOYED BY FINCANTIERI BUT WORKED FOR A SUBCONTRACTOR."

BUT IT WAS A GOOD PERIOD OF MY LIFE.



IN VENICE I DID SOME FILMING FOR BANGLADESHI TELEVISION...

WHEN WE HAD OUR HOLIDAYS, FOR NEW YEARS, I SENT VIDEO REPORTS BACK TO BANGLADESH... BUT IT WASN'T PROPER WORK...

IN ITALY I WAS JUST A FOREIGN WORKER...

HERE I MANAGED TO FULFILL MY DREAMS... OF COURSE, IT'S ONLY A SMALL TV CHANNEL, BUT IT GIVES ME WORK.

AND IT'S A CHANNEL THAT IS BROADCAST ACROSS THE WORLD.













SO YOU'RE STUDYING US, HUH?

WELL... WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT...

WELL, LOTS OF US HAVE COME... AND OTHERS ARE GOING TO JOIN US.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN LONDON?

LET'S SAY I'M DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON ITALO-BANGLADESHIS IN LONDON...

TWO AND A HALF YEARS. ALMOST THREE NOW.

ALMOST ALL OF US ITALIAN BANGLADESHIS KNOW EACH OTHER. SOME EVEN KNEW EACH OTHER BEFORE COMING HERE. THEN OTHERS MEET THANKS TO THE ASSOCIATION AT THE CAFFÈ ITALIA.

DO YOU ALSO KNOW BRITISH BENGALIS? WHO WERE BORN HERE?

IN WHAT SENSE?

THEY'VE BEEN HERE FOR GENERATIONS, THEY WERE BORN IN LONDON, THEY TOOK YEARS TO GET WHERE THEY ARE, AND SUDDENLY WE COME, EUROPEAN CITIZENS, WHO CLAIM BENEFITS, TAKE COUNCIL HOUSES...

IT'S A GOOD QUESTION...

TO TELL THE TRUTH, VERY FEW. YOU KNOW, THEY AREN'T VERY FRIENDLY TO PEOPLE WHO'VE JUST ARRIVED.



UTP PROOF



UTP PROOF



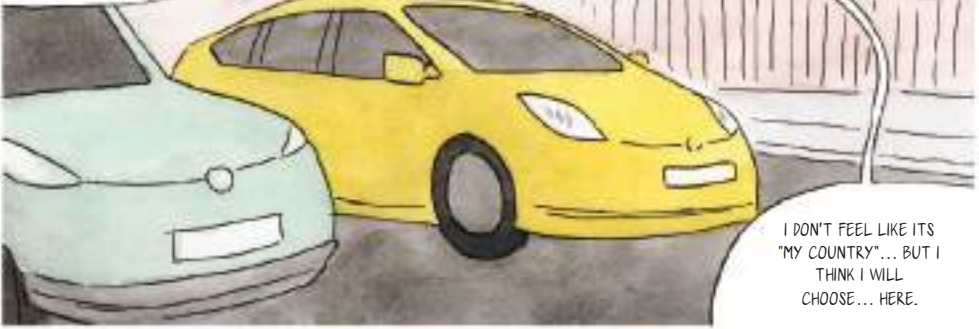




UTP PROOF

ITALY IS ALSO MY COUNTRY, I'VE GOT LOTS OF FRIENDS THERE. BUT THERE AREN'T ANY CEMETERIES FOR MUSLIMS.

HERE IN LONDON, IT'S NORMAL... THERE ARE LOADS. PERHAPS MY CHILDREN WILL BE HERE, AND THEY CAN COME TO PRAY AND BRING FLOWERS...



I DON'T FEEL LIKE ITS "MY COUNTRY"... BUT I THINK I WILL CHOOSE... HERE.



AND YOU?

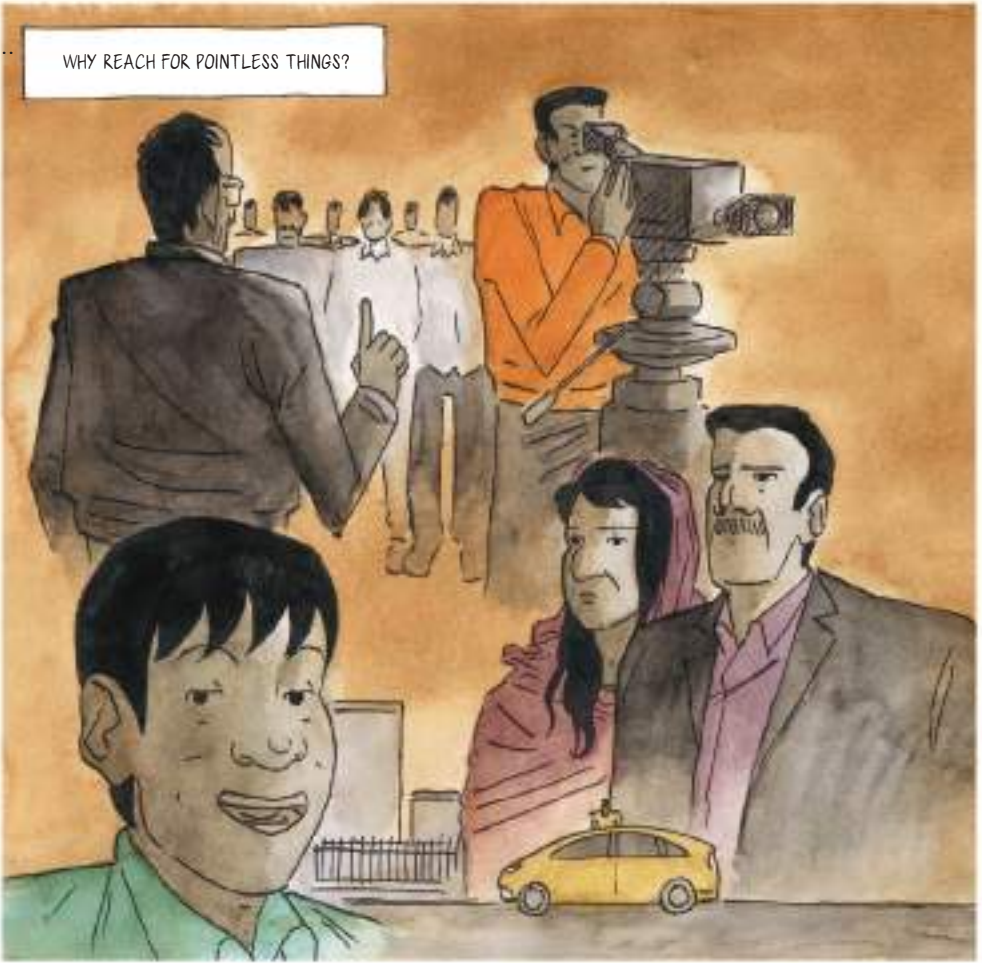








WHY REACH FOR POINTLESS THINGS?



MOVING, EMIGRATING, STARTING AGAIN FROM SCRATCH... IT'S LIKE RUNNING TOWARDS A GOAL...



A GOAL THAT KEEPS MOVING
FURTHER AWAY FROM
THOSE CHASING IT.

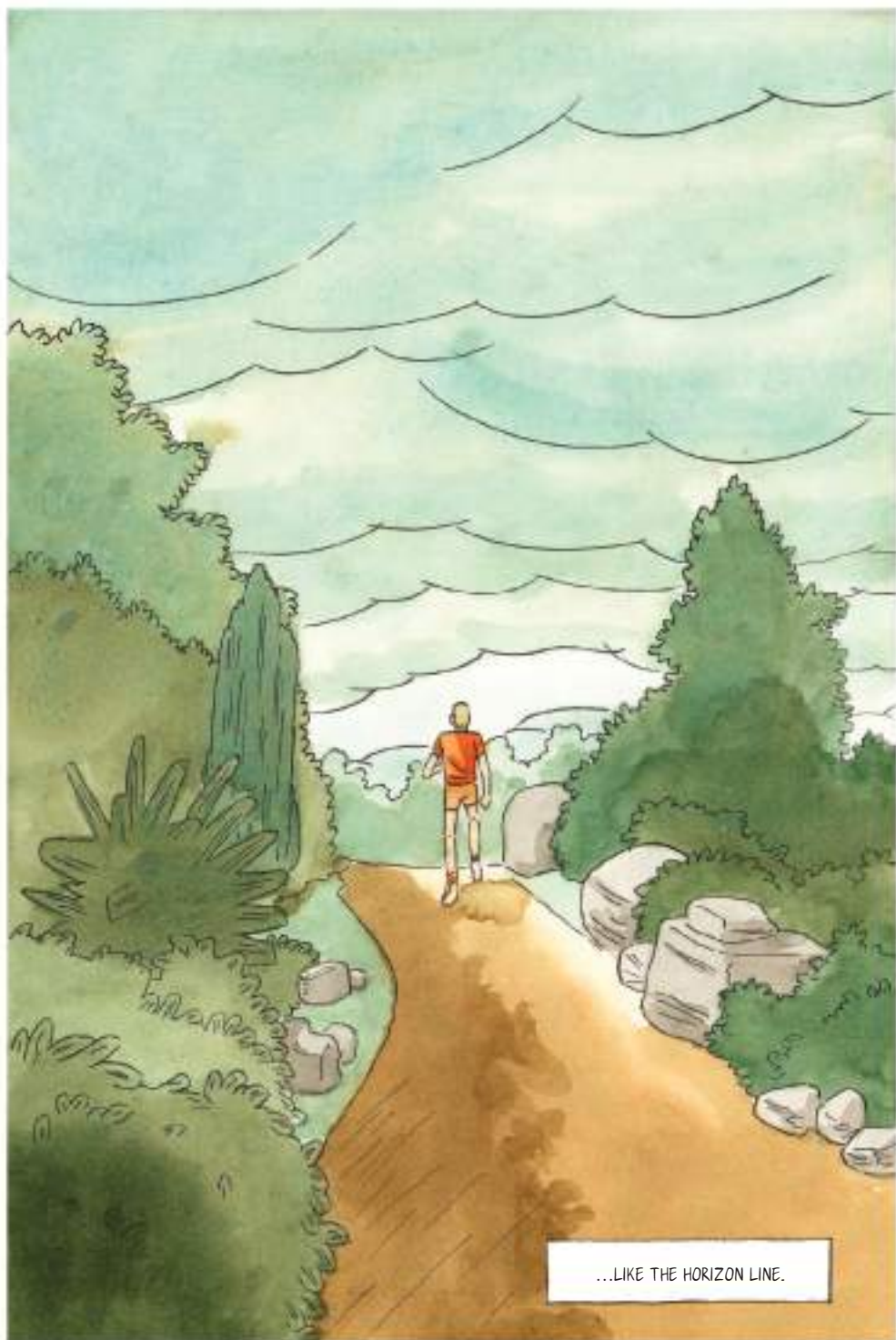


IT'S ALWAYS UNREACHABLE...



BUT THERE IS ENDLESS
INCENTIVE TO KEEP MOVING
FORWARD...





AFTERWORDS

An Ethnographic Novel on Migration between Bangladesh, Italy, and London

FRANCESCO DELLA PUPPA

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Ethnography is a method, approach, and research paradigm that requires immersion in the “field” and in the social world being investigated, as well as direct interaction with the social groups and subjects within it. Of course, this definition is incomplete, and as such would rightly be criticized by sociologists and anthropologists alike, but it should help the reader to understand this book and the title of this afterword, which makes reference both to this methodology and to the equally controversial expression “graphic novel,” which is often used to define this literary genre and narrative form.

Between 2009 and 2012, I was a PhD student carrying out ethnographic research on the social construction of gender and the transformations in masculinity of Bangladeshi immigrants whose families had reunited with them in Italy (Della Puppa, 2014). Located in the Municipality of Montecchio Maggiore, in the Province of Vicenza in northeastern Italy, the small town of Alte Ceccato – often known simply as Alte – provided a useful vantage point from which to observe this

process. This study then took me to the various hubs of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Italy (Rome; Marghera, in the Province of Venice; Monfalcone, in the Province of Gorizia; and others), but also to Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and London (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015).

The Bangladeshi immigrants I interviewed reported virtually overlapping migratory routes: most arrived in Italy after other migratory experiences, almost always in other European countries, and, less often, directly from Bangladesh or after a period working in oil-producing countries in the Persian Gulf or North Africa; they were initially “undocumented” either in Italy or in Europe, working in the informal economy until they were regularized, almost always through an amnesty; they spent a more or less prolonged period in Rome (Priori, 2012); and then moved to “Provincial” contexts, often close to large industrial centers in northeastern Italy (Della Puppa, 2014).

During the initial stages of my fieldwork, in the first informal conversations I had and the first interviews I did, there was one thing I failed to properly analyze, but which repeatedly emerged in the words of the subjects of my research: citizenship.

For the Bangladeshi men who immigrated to Italy, whose wives had joined them, and who had subsequently had children in the country, it was clearly not a question of substantial citizenship, lived out in their daily lives, in the relationships created in their neighborhoods and workplaces or through their children’s schools, nor was it a question of social citizenship, understood as the acquisition and exercise of social rights, achieved thanks to workers’ struggles. They referred to formal citizenship, granted to them after ten years of continuous residence in Italy, expressed in their identity documents and then transferred to their children and wives. For the

Italian-Bangladeshi immigrants I encountered, more important than the symbolic and identitarian aspects of citizenship, which did emerge later, were their Italian (and therefore European) passports (Della Puppa & Sredanovic, 2016; Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2021).

While I saw their acquisition of Italian citizenship as the final step in their rootedness in Italy, they understood it as the key to possible further geographical mobility in Europe, and, from an intergenerational perspective, beyond Europe. On the one hand, the economic and social conditions of the country had radically changed since their arrival: between the 1990s and the 2000s, the Italian economy and labor market were still relatively inclusive, offering a fair degree of professional stability, and Italy's migration policies, however restrictive and exclusionary, could be defined as "instrumentally lax," in keeping with the so-called "Mediterranean model of migration" (King & De Bono, 2013; Pugliese, 2011). But now, economic and social policies have become increasingly liberalized, and the labor market does not seem to offer much possibility of upward social mobility to working class children in general and even less so to young people of immigrant origin – by which I mean better living conditions and better social class positions for yourself and for future generations in comparison to previous generations. The 2008 economic crisis further reduced possibilities for economic and social fulfillment, creating a suffocating and oppressive climate.

On the other hand, the aspirations of these immigrants, who in their country of origin belonged to the middle and, often, upper-middle class, also changed in line with their different family and biographical statuses: no longer "only" emigrant children who send remittances to their families of origin, but also husbands and, above all, fathers, driven by responsibilities, duties, and

expectations for their children. Their emigration was an attempt to regain their upward social mobility for themselves and, above all, for the families they would create. But this social and economic improvement, which had seemed achievable when they had first settled in Italy, failed due to the structural changes that had taken place in the previous thirty years. The only way to fulfill their aspirations as emigrants, to continue to give meaning to their lives, and to justify their sacrifices and sufferings as immigrants, was to emigrate again.

The most coveted destination was almost always the former colonial “motherland,” the UK and London, which stirred up and continues to stir up not only a desire for reconciliation, but also a certain fascination and attraction for generations of Bengalis and other citizens of the ironically named “Commonwealth.”

The motivations behind this new emigration, defined as “onward migration” (Della Puppa, 2021), can be found in the pages of this comic, which show a dense interweaving of mutually reinforcing economic and cultural, collective and individual drives. Firstly, aspirations for the upward social mobility of the next generation, especially in the context of the economic crisis that hit Mediterranean European countries particularly hard, with the benefits that this investment could bring in the future (*in primis*, schooling in the English language, and so an increase in the possibility of being integrated into the international labor market). Secondly, the expectations related to perceptions of the UK, which is loosely idealized as more multicultural and meritocratic, allowing everyone, especially the young, from all national, linguistic-cultural, and religious origins, to enhance their skills and potential precisely because of the British colonial past. Thirdly, the desire to live in a society that is considered to be more cosmopolitan, and, above all, in a more inclusive labor market, thus breaking free from the label of “foreigner” and the

role of the “generic worker.” Fourthly, the desire to join a larger community of “compatriots” and to be inserted into a context which is perceived to be in keeping with your cultural and religious belonging. Fifthly, the search for a welfare system which, rightly or wrongly, is considered more inclusive than the “family-based” or “Mediterranean” system in Italy (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

I have used the expression “onward migration” to define this new migratory mobility. In the literature, however, there are various different perspectives and, as a result, different definitions given for multiple mobilities within the same migration trajectory. The concept of “transit migration” has been adopted to analyze the transit of asylum seekers and irregular migrants to a context other than the one they are in (Collyer & de Haas, 2012). The term “secondary migration” has been used for the journeys of nationals from countries in the “Global South” who have stayed legally and for an extended period of time – although temporarily – in other countries with advanced economies before arriving at their final destination (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Takenaka, 2007). A similar experience of mobility is described through the term “stepwise international migration,” which refers to a deliberate strategy adopted by migrants to accumulate the economic, social, and relational resources necessary to reach their ultimate destination (Paul, 2011). Ossman (2004) talks of “serial migration” when describing the “migratory careers” of individuals who have lived for a significant period of time and achieved a high level of social inclusion in at least three different national contexts, and who have engaged in this international mobility to pursue better educational, career, or family opportunities. The expression “twice-migration,” on the other hand, was used by Bhachu (1985) in his study on the migration of Sikh populations who, in the early 20th century, left the Punjab for Kenya and Uganda, where they found work building

the national railway, and then at the beginning of the “Africanization” process in the years immediately following the independence of the former colonies on the continent moved to the UK. In other words, this was a mobility born of British colonialism and internal to the nations that belonged to the so-called Commonwealth. We now arrive at “onward migration” (Della Puppa & King, 2019; Giralt-Mas, 2017; King & Della Puppa, 2021; Nekby, 2006; Ramos, 2017), which refers to intra-European mobility by migrants who originate from a third country and are “naturalized.” Unlike the protagonists of the aforementioned mobilities, migrants who undertake “onward migration” did not plan this at the beginning of their migration journey, but made that decision following a change in the socioeconomic context of their place of residence, a transformation in their future possibilities, and a broadening of their migratory aspirations. Hence, the expression “onward migration” best describes the phenomenon of Italian-Bangladeshis relocating to London.

Analyses of onward migration mainly focus on the experience of refugees (Ahrens et al., 2016; Bang Nielsen, 2004; van Liempt, 2011) or on “economic” migrants of African origin coming from countries such as Nigeria (Ahrens, 2013) or Senegal (Toma & Castagnone, 2015). Closer to my own research are two studies on the onward migration of Latin Americans from Spain to the UK (Giralt-Mas, 2017; Ramos, 2017). The literature brings to light the multiplicity of motives behind onward migration: the perception that the chances of gaining a professional career or, at least, of improving one’s working conditions, are limited; wanting to escape from a social context perceived as racist, discriminatory, or Islamophobic and to become part of a society understood as more cosmopolitan and “multicultural”; and the desire to unite with relatives and friends or to become part of a larger community of compatriots.

By the end of my PhD, many of my interviewees had achieved their aspirations and had put into practice what they had been planning in the years previously. Thanks to the “mobility capital” granted to them by their citizenship and institutionalized in their passports, many of the families I had met (some of whom I had become very close to) had left Italy and moved permanently to the UK, almost always to London or Greater London. First, only a few “pioneering” families started to leave, but they were soon followed by many others in a self-perpetuating trend, perhaps also partly due to people imitating those who had gone before and because they now had support in the UK.

Faced with the increase in departures, the municipal council of Montecchio Maggiore started to become concerned, to the point that it commissioned “social research” – not by me, of course – on the changes taking place specifically in Alte, with a particular focus on the recent emigration of formerly immigrant residents.

The results of this rushed and slapdash study were presented at a public assembly, which I attended as an audience member. A paradoxical reality emerged in this meeting: the council, led by the Northern League, an extreme right-wing xenophobic party that had brought along its clique, was concerned about the departure of Bangladeshi families (with Italian citizenship) and the depopulation of the area, because many classes in schools, if not whole schools, were in danger of being shut down; because the high streets and the multiple retail shops in the area were disappearing; because the service charges in many blocks of flats were not being paid due to apartments being left empty as the Italian owners could not find other tenants; because the mortgage payments of Bangladeshi immigrants were no longer being paid, and the banks did not know what to do with low value flats on the housing market, hitherto considered “houses for

immigrants"; and because the public spaces in the town were becoming increasingly deserted.

The paradox can be found in the fact that during its two terms in office, this council – following in the footsteps of the previous center-left council – had approved a series of racist and objectively discriminatory resolutions (as established by an Italian court) against immigrant residents, especially Bangladeshis, with the declared aim of discouraging their families from settling in the municipality. These resolutions affected the right to family reunification, called for dawn raids in the homes of immigrants or those of immigrant origin, discouraged immigrant residents from using street furniture (e.g., benches), obstructed immigrant associations, and discouraged Muslim believers from practicing their religion in the properties they had bought.

But now they were eagerly requesting these families not to leave the area! This left even the council's own supporters confused. In fact, when I took the floor to point out that the emperor had no clothes – that the council was contradicting itself – they insulted me.

At the same time, this paradox threw light on the gap between the narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness of the municipal administration and the cosmopolitan projects and global aspirations of Bangladeshi families. While petty local politics, not unlike national politics, put all its energy and frustrations into exploiting loopholes and implementing arbitrary regulations to hinder the establishment of immigrant populations, the latter nurtured their ambitions and pursued their goals, flying higher in order to broaden their horizons far beyond the borders of the neighborhood, the province, the region, and the nation.

Of course I soon realized that this phenomenon was not limited to the tanning district, that is, the area of which Montecchio Maggiore was a part, but also included the large Bangladeshi

communities residing in other industrial districts, such as ship-building (Monfalcone, Mestre and Marghera, Genoa and La Spezia), engineering (Brescia, Milan), and other areas of Italy where Bangladeshi immigrants are mainly employed in services (obviously Rome *in primis*, but also Tuscany and Emilia Romagna).

Thus this book does not aim to tell the story of the community of Alte Ceccato and Montecchio Maggiore – indeed I hope that this is not what the reader will get from it – but to recount the trajectories of that segment of the Bangladeshi diaspora which, from the 1990s onwards, came to Italy and found work and settled with their families, deeply transforming the social, demographic, and cultural landscape of the country, and then left for other European contexts. This book also more specifically describes – or at least aims to describe – the transformations that Italy has gone through and is going through in a more general sense, following first the intensification of policies of liberalization and then the economic crisis, both of which are reflected in changes in migration (Tilly, 2011). Finally, it recounts Italy's newfound role as a “migratory crossroads” within the aforementioned “Mediterranean model of migration” (King & De Bono, 2013; Pugliese, 2011), albeit, today, with new protagonists.

As would be expected, Italian-Bangladeshi families who have now relocated to the UK after decades in Italy return to Italy for shorter or longer visits to see friends, often during the holidays. On these occasions, they say they are satisfied that they have made the right choice, presenting themselves as families who have made it, and describing the British context positively and with enthusiasm. These temporary visits to Italy and idealized representations of the UK reminded me of what, paraphrasing Abdelmalek Sayad (1999), we might call the “migration lie,” that is, the collective misconception of the reality of migration, made up of omissions and minimizations, ostentations and

myths, which reproduce in the country of origin illusions related to the migration destination, making uprooting more tolerable for emigrants-immigrants.

The immigrants recounted idealized narratives about life in Italy to their family, friends, and acquaintances in Bangladesh – omitting experiences of loneliness, racism, and social downgrading – in order to present themselves as successful and their decision to emigrate as the right one. Likewise, the narratives about their new life in London also emphasized its positive aspects and left out their negative experiences.

Aware that the social reality I would encounter would not be drawn neatly in black and white but would more likely be made up of a multiplicity of kaleidoscopic and ambivalent social trajectories and situations, I decided to follow my research subjects to the UK in order to understand and describe the positive and negative implications of their onward migration.

Reflecting on the motives behind their new emigration, both the “dark sides” and the “bright sides” of the lives of Italian Bangladeshis in London are shown in this book: the social and occupational downgrading that forces them to work in jobs that they deem unsuitable for their age, social identity, family role, and professional profile; the absence of a stable and predictable work routine and, as a result, the fragmentation of their lives and the reduction in time spent socializing and with their families; the decrease in wages and disposable income and the resulting dependence on the benefits system; and the mistrust or outright hostility they receive from the “Bangladeshi diaspora” in London, that is, the community of Bangladeshi origin who have lived in the UK for generations (Della Puppa, 2021).

Alongside these negatives there were of course many positive aspects of redemption and fulfilment, although often told with a touch of nostalgia for Italy and the period they spent there.

Perhaps, however, their nostalgia is more for a time than for a place: it is nostalgia for an age and stage of life that is idealized in the moment it is told, but it is also nostalgia for a way of being and for an attitude; it is nostalgia for the ability to be able to delude themselves and for their fascination with a world and a life outside of Bangladesh that they would never have imagined would have brought them to the capital of the (former) British empire, which has always been perceived as responsible for the economic and political subalternity of the Indian subcontinent, but for which they also have a thinly disguised admiration.

The new migration of Italian Bangladeshis to London and the UK fits within the broader framework of the Bangladeshi diaspora (Alexander et al., 2016) and the longer history of migration from South Asia to the UK. The story of Bangladeshi migration to the UK has been clearly recounted by Adams (1987), Gardner (1995; 2002), and Zeitlyn (2016), with special reference to the main diasporic community in inner East London. To briefly summarize, this migration started with the East India Company's recruitment of seamen from the Sylhet province of Bangladesh in the 19th century, some of whom settled in British port cities over time, above all in the London Docklands. A second wave of migration and settlement occurred in the postwar period, fueled firstly by the demand for low-skilled labor in factories, catering, and services, and then consolidated by family reunifications in the wake of the *Commonwealth Immigration Act* (1962) and the *Immigration Act* (1971), as well as by marriage migration (Alexander, 2013). By the time of the 2011 census, there were 447,200 people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK, with nearly a fifth of the national total residing in the borough of Tower Hamlets (Zeitlyn, 2016).

In these pages you will find something more than an account of (part of) my research, since, just like in socio-anthropological

research, this comic also says something about my experience as a researcher, offering me an opportunity for self-reflection. Through the filter of the stories of the interviewees and my participation at a distance as an ethnographer in their experiences and everyday lives, I elaborated on my own family relationships, sentimental relationships, and friends; my biographical and gender trajectories; and my aspirations and the habitus that run through me. Bourdieu (1992, p. 168) writes of the potential for re-appropriating “primary experiences” in ethnographic research:

Ethnology and sociology have allowed me to come to terms with those primary experiences, to re-appropriate them without, I think, losing anything of what I have subsequently acquired. This is not at all common among defectors, who often feel deep malaise and sometimes huge shame for their origins and original experiences. The research I carried out around 1960 in that small village allowed me to discover much more about myself than any other form of introspection.

This reflexivity cannot help but raise the question of the asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the subjects at the centre of the research and of the intersection between the multiplicity of belongings and attributions that form the prism of identities and positions subjects within the hierarchies that make up and traverse social space (Crenshaw, 1991; 1993; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis et al., 2006), both before, after, and, above all, during my research “in the field.”

One of my concerns was that I might be perceived as a foreign body in the social context I was entering into, tending to objectify the subjects with whom I interacted. I worried that my gaze might be perceived as “colonial” and/or “objectifying” or

become a “scientific” and “normalizing” gaze, classifying the actions and performances of the research “objects” to reduce and homogenize individual behaviors into a “community” whole, flattening their plurality of attributes to a unity; dividing, comparing, and differentiating individuals; constructing categories for the inclusion or exclusion of some people with respect to other people; and measuring them according to a graduated scale (Foucault, 1975).

On the one hand, because I was European “by birth,” and a white man representing a university institution, I might hold a dominant position in the eyes of my interlocutors as a result of the informal hierarchies that shape social relations, for they, although also Italians, were of Bangladeshi origin and had been racialized and made to work in low-skilled jobs. On the other hand, the fact that I was unmarried and childless, despite being well into my thirties – unlike the Italian Bangladeshis with whom I interacted, who had been married for years and had families – undermined my masculinity and partially challenged the hierarchical order in which they and I were implicitly placed. And so my marital deficit and thus my partial inadequacy with respect to the status of a successful man could rebalance the symbolic and social asymmetry that is embedded in us despite ourselves.

I will conclude by revealing some of the background preparation – which I find very interesting – for this book. Firstly, I would have liked to have drawn the pictures myself, but my homonym coauthors prevented me from doing so, and perhaps I, the publisher, and the reader should thank them for that. We also had to cut some sequences which recounted things that really happened during my research in London, because they would have paradoxically seemed artificial, unrealistic, and fictional, thus compromising the book’s ethnographic efforts. For example, in a city of 15 million people, walking through a

shopping centre I bumped into some Italian Bangladeshis that I had met in Alte Ceccato, without having previously planned to do so or having made an appointment with them. Similarly, if we had shown the sequence in which Stefano asked a woman in an off-licence, who was dressed in a colorful sari and talking to her son in Italian, where she had lived in Italy, and she had replied “a small town in the province of Vicenza that I don’t think you’ll have heard of, it’s called Alte Ceccato...,” then I don’t think you would have believed it.

There is one final consideration I would like to end on. The research reported here was carried out around the time of the Brexit referendum, which is still reshaping the equilibrium within the European Union, and the comic was created during the pandemic, which is still radically changing the global economic, social, political, health, and demographic landscape. Added to this are the effects of environmental devastation and climate change that are becoming increasingly evident and violent across the planet. The ways in which these epoch-making phenomena will shape the migratory movements involving Bangladesh and Europe, Italy and the UK, and how they redesign the trajectories of this book’s protagonists remain to be written . . . and drawn!

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Reaching a Wide Audience: The Advantage of Using Graphics and Text

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The decision to combine graphics and text in this publication is a refreshing move given the difficulty of disseminating academic research to a wide audience. The graphic format allows the author to depict his explorations of urban landscapes and his engagements with his interlocutors. We hardly ever show ourselves undertaking research, and this reticence is strengthened by ethical considerations, both personal and institutional.

This issue of representation is bound up with the widening influence of autoethnography and reflections about how our engagement with others and “positioning” is shaped by diverse political, social, cultural, and economic considerations. The use of graphics rather than photographs to represent the research process makes me think about authorship and authenticity. Some questions immediately come to mind. How does the author select what to draw? What colors are chosen? What bodies to show and how to represent them? Is a photograph more authentic than a

graphic? What are the advantages and disadvantages of combining graphics and photographs? To what extent can the author's use of graphics be linked to the "visual turn" within the Anglophone social sciences?

Migration Studies – Multiple Routes, Diasporas, and Global Flows

With regard to the field of migration studies, this study joins others in showing the diverse routes taken by migrants to the European region. This particularly helps those of us with close links to a long-established community such as the Bangladeshi community in East London. The story told in many accounts that have been published by members of this community revolves around a unilinear movement from the Sylhet district in what is now northeast Bangladesh to Britain – a movement intimately associated with "lascars," who worked in the ships going back and forth between ports in the Indian subcontinent and Britain. However, those whom Francesco Della Puppa meets demonstrate the diversity of migration routes and places of origin as they travel to Italy and eventually on to London and hail from districts other than Sylhet. This diversity reminds us that there are multiple Bangladeshi diasporas rather than one such diaspora. Communities are not fixed and monolithic but change as networks and belongings are shaped by global flows of people, information, goods, and money.

Anti-Globalism, Nationalism, Transnational, and Translocal Ties

These global flows are, of course, not unconstrained. They are directed by corporate interests, encounter territorial restrictions

at national, regional, and local levels, and are challenged by various anti-globalization agencies. This study portrays the challenges and dilemmas, familiar to those working within migration studies, encountered by people seeking to adapt to different social, cultural, political, and economic conditions. As “twice migrants” they are obliged to do this not only in Italy but again when they move to Britain. At the same time, they try to maintain their ties with a changing Bangladesh through networks that are translocal rather than transnational since they engage with relatives, friends, and acquaintances, who are located within specific locales and who themselves may be moving in search of opportunities within Bangladesh.

Lifecourse and Horizons

This study also illustrates how individuals negotiate and reflect upon the familiar process of moving through life, i.e., lifecourse. They moved to Italy as young men expecting to stay for a relatively short time and then return to Bangladesh. However, they stayed on and started to settle down just like the lascars, who did not return after their ships docked in London and other ports during the 1940s and 1950s, or those who managed to find work in Britain’s industrial sector during the 1960s and 1970s. Wives arrived from Bangladesh and children were born, so decisions had to be made about the family future. Political change at the international level in the form of Brexit led some Bangladeshis to move to London and start a new life, where they hope that their hard work in often insecure and low-paid jobs will help their children to move up the socioeconomic ladder and into professional, middle-class occupations. As one of the interlocutors notes, horizons change – who can tell what storms are brewing beyond the horizon?

Moving Between Settlements and Economic Effects

This study also shows Bangladeshis moving between different types of places – Bangladeshi villages and towns, small Italian towns, Rome and the industrial outskirts of tourist Venice, as well as the eastern suburbs of London. The economic structure of these different locations plays a crucial role in their lives, with farming in rural Bangladesh providing a very different rhythm of life and a different social hierarchy from the economic activities they undertake in the industrial area of Venice or the “gig economy” of Rome or London. Savings in Italy and London are often sent back to Bangladesh in the form of remittances and invested in land or houses, enhancing the status of families “back home” and encouraging inflation in “migrant villages” – a process seen in many other countries, such as the Balkans and Poland, with substantial diasporas in the USA, Canada, Australia, and Britain.

Ultimately, this inventive ethnography of “twice migrants” raises lots of fascinating issues and questions that warrant further exploration. I congratulate the authors on producing such a stimulating study and look forward to seeing how these questions are taken up in future research.

On the Move: The Multiple Migrations of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

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The opening image is of a young man running down a flower-lined path under billowing clouds. He ruminates about why he is running, pushing himself to always move ahead to an unknown destination. “You arrive,” he says, “but at the same time you never arrive, and you keep going.”

The young man, we soon find out, is an Italian researcher, a sociologist who has studied Bangladeshi migrants in Italy. Now he is in London to conduct research on the Italian Bangladeshis who left Italy to come to the UK. They are “twice migrants” (Bhachu, 1985) who have been through two major international migrations in their lifetimes.

The theme of movement, whether running through a park or crossing oceans to cross a border, runs through this compelling publication. Absorbing visuals and characters draw us in, teaching and challenging us as readers to think about the project of migration as a human experience. We learn about the ups and downs of being an ethnographer as Stefano the researcher gradually finds his way into Italian-Bangladeshi spaces. At one

point he loses the contact information for a key informant and is forced to retrace his steps back into the community. We feel his anxiety as he tries to interview a man who keeps delaying the process with cups of tea and Bengali snacks. And we get a window into the ethnographic self – the complex ways in which those who are the focus of research become part of the inner life of the researcher. Stefano reflects on his own life and where he is going as he probes the movements of these twice migrant Bangladeshis.

Eventually, Stefano finds his way to Caffé Italia in Whitechapel, London. There he finds a community of migrants who identify with both Bangladesh and Italy, even as they have been driven to move to the UK to find better opportunities for their children. In comparison to Italy, the UK is seen by the Bangladeshis to be more accepting and open to them. The UK is a more cosmopolitan environment, a reflection in part of its longer history of accepting migrants from the Global South, especially from its former colonies. This history includes movements from present-day Bangladesh.

Movements across national borders are part of a regional history that predates Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971. The end of British rule over South Asia in 1947, accompanied by the partition of India, spurred one of the largest mass migrations in history, of an estimated 15 million people. However, it is only after 1971 that we see the development of distinctively Bangladeshi international migration flows and settlements, defined by their relationship to and identification with Bangladesh as a nation. Since then, the Bangladesh diaspora population, also known as “probashi Bangali,” or people from Bangladesh who live abroad, has grown. From the Shaheed Minar Monument in Toronto, Canada, to the “Welcome to Banglatown” signs

that greet people in Hamtramck, Michigan in the USA, the Bangladesh diaspora of today is a visible and influential presence in metropolitan areas throughout the world.

From 1947 to 1971, during the period of Pakistani rule, movement abroad was limited for people from present day Bangladesh because of the discriminatory practices of the Pakistani government, including the routine denial of passports to the Bengalis of East Pakistan. Despite these constraints, the Pakistan era did see the development of a migration circuit between Sylhet and Britain. The roots of this circuit lay in the nineteenth-century history of young men from Sylhet who found work as *lascars* or sailors on British ships that carried out goods from the region. The experiences of these pioneering seamen created a culture of migration in the region with enduring social networks between Sylhet and Britain. In the post-World War II years, Bengalis moved to Britain as labor migrants and gradually established their presence by sponsoring family members to join them.

Starting in the 1980s, national and global forces converged to usher in an era of expanding international migration for Bangladesh (Kibria, 2011). National policies became increasingly subject to international financial regimes and the principles of state-centered development were replaced by those of integration into the global market economy. A major component of these movements is labor migration directed largely towards the oil-producing GCC states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Since the 1990s, these destinations have expanded from the GCC to include a wider range of countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Jordan, and Lebanon. Hampering the growth of stable, multigenerational Bangladeshi diaspora communities in these societies are host country policies designed to prevent long-term settlement and integration and to ensure

that Bangladeshi workers return home. Most Bangladeshis are recruited to work abroad on short-term labor contracts, often for low-skilled jobs in agriculture, construction, and domestic service. With some exceptions for professional, entrepreneurial, and skilled migrants, families are not permitted to join them. In these societies, citizenship is not automatically granted to those born in the territory and opportunities for naturalized citizenship are largely limited to the foreign wives of national men, and foreign workers are generally prohibited from marrying locals.

The movement of Bangladeshis to Italy is a more recent phenomenon, starting in the 1990s (Della Puppa & King, 2018). It is part of a larger stream of post-1980s international migration from Bangladesh that is directed towards the Global North, to Australia, Canada, Italy, the United States, and other economically developed countries. A critical feature of this stream, unlike the far larger movement of labor migrants from Bangladesh to the Arab Gulf states, are its middle-class origins.

The independence of Bangladesh in 1971 resulted in expansion in the ranks of the middle-class due to a new growth of employment opportunities in the public administration sector. In the years that followed, middle-class sectors grew and stratified to include professionals, business owners, and white-collar workers in the financial and retail industries and NGO sector. However, upward mobility within the middle class, from the lower to upper tiers, remain limited. Along with ongoing precarity and the threat of downward mobility, these circumstances have continued to motivate middle-class Bangladeshis to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

As we learn through the voice of Stefano, the Bangladeshi movement to Italy dates to the 1990s. It began with young single men from middle-class backgrounds who entered Italy and found work in factory and service jobs. Eventually they are able

to acquire citizenship and marry, bringing wives from Bangladesh to start a family in Italy. Later, the migration story continues as they cross the Atlantic to settle in the UK. There they find a more extensive Bangladeshi community as well as greater opportunities for their children to move into professional occupations in the future.

The men that Stefano talks to clearly miss Italy – its magnificent beauty and easy pace of life. They consider themselves to be “Italian” in some part. As they gather in Caffé Italia to reminisce and drink cups of espresso, they reminisce about the past. But as they leave, they enter into an existence guided by aspirations for the future. The promise of a better life for their children keeps them moving. Like the narrator of the story, they are running, driven by aspiration and hope.

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Migrant Dreams: Italian-Bangladeshis Navigating Challenges of Home and Identity

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As I reflect on the journey of the Italian-Bangladeshi migrants to the UK, I am reminded of the deep awareness they carried with them – the knowledge that the struggles they would face in their new home were inevitable. It is a journey they had taken before from Bangladesh to Italy and were doing all over again, but this time, they were going from Italy to the UK. This awareness is a constant thread throughout this comic as we follow their path, from Italy to Britain, confronting both familiar and unexpected obstacles.

Ambalavaner Sivanandan, former director of the Institute of Race Relations in the UK, once powerfully asserted that “your face is your passport” and this appears to resonate profoundly with the research participants in this comic. In the UK, multiculturalism is often heralded as a strength, a hallmark of diversity. However, for the Italian-Bangladeshi migrants, this diversity was a double-edged sword. Unlike in Italy, where they were seen as second-class citizens despite holding Italian citizenship, the UK presented both opportunities and harsh

realities. The freedom of multiculturalism in the UK was a perk they never had in Italy, where they were continuously marginalized.

In the 1980s and 90s, Bangladeshis started migrating to Italy in more significant numbers, with many seeking work in the industrial North, drawn by the promise of economic stability and opportunities. Italy, at the time, was experiencing a labor shortage, and the Bangladeshi migrants filled these gaps – often taking on low-paying, labor-intensive jobs in factories, agriculture, and construction. While the path was challenging, the Bangladeshis' deep admiration and love for Italy was palpable, expressed throughout the comic. They viewed Italy not just as a place of work but as a country of refuge and opportunity, particularly in contrast to the instability and limited prospects they faced back home in Bangladesh.

For many, Italy was not just a stepping stone but a home they came to cherish. They admired Italy's rich history, culture, and lifestyle, with its vibrant cities, stunning architecture, and the slower, more communal rhythms of life. The café culture, in particular, became a lifeline for the Bangladeshi community. In this space, they could forge connections, share their stories, and maintain a semblance of the home they had left behind. These cafés became central to their lives, not just for food or drink, but as a reflection of the kind of community they were striving to build. The Italian-Bangladeshi community in Italy felt a strong sense of attachment to the country – they respected its traditions, admired its way of life, and saw it as a place that, despite its challenges, offered them a semblance of dignity and a sense of belonging.

This deep respect and admiration for Italy were evident in the way they embraced the country's language, culture, and social customs, even while enduring hardships. Despite the racism

and discrimination they faced, they continued to build lives in Italy, taking pride in their new citizenship and often going above and beyond. However, the experience of being accepted as Italian citizens was bittersweet, as they were still frequently seen as outsiders, excluded from the cultural mainstream despite their legal status. Still, their love for the country endured, particularly in creating a home away from home through their community spaces. But there was always something amiss: the lack of presence of Islamic institutions. The multireligious and multicultural elements of the UK are what drew them there, but also the access to religious spaces.

When these Italian-Bangladeshis arrived in the UK, they brought with them a vibrant, distinctive café culture – an exciting fusion of their Italian roots and Bangladeshi identity. This new wave of cafés, established by migrants, is reshaping the landscape of British Bangladeshi culture. Again, these cafés are not merely places for food and drink; they serve as gathering spaces where diverse cultural practices merge and Italian and Bangladeshi elements combine to create something entirely new. It is a unique space for community-building that bridges the past and the present, blending the warmth of Italy's café culture with the vibrant, energetic spirit of the Bangladeshi diaspora.

This revival of café culture is not unlike the multicultural melting pot that once thrived at London's Cannon Street during the colonial period. Back then, Cannon Street was a hub for seamen who had jumped ship, a place of cultural exchange where different communities from across the British Empire intersected, sharing food, stories, and experiences. Just as Cannon Street was a site of convergence for seamen from many different parts of the world, today's Italian-Bangladeshi cafés in the UK are creating a similar space where identities

merge, stories are shared, and cultural legacies are passed down through generations. These cafés are modern-day beacons of heritage, just as Cannon Street was a port of call where cultures mixed, albeit in a different time and under different circumstances.

This café culture represents more than just the blending of cuisines; it symbolizes the dynamic and evolving identities of the Italian-Bangladeshi community in the UK. In these spaces, the past is not forgotten, but rather celebrated and reinterpreted. Here, the migrants can reconnect with their roots while adapting to a new world, a new horizon. The cafés become places of continuity – continuity of culture, continuity of community, and continuity of resilience. Through this merging of identities, these cafés serve as a bridge between the old world and the new, as well as a reflection of the complexity of migration itself.

In the early days of migration to Italy, the first arrivals were predominantly young, single men. These men were driven by the allure of adventure and the hope of new opportunities.

Many of them sought to escape the limited prospects of life in Bangladesh, and Italy, with its booming economy, was a land of promise. The idea of finding work, earning money, and experiencing a new culture was an exciting prospect for these young men, who were often eager to explore and take on the challenges of a new life abroad.

However, as time passed and these men settled into their new lives in Italy, their priorities shifted. Marriage and family became central to their existence. When they brought their wives over to Italy, it marked a turning point in their migration journey. No longer just young men seeking adventure, they were now building families and establishing roots. The arrival of children intensified this shift. With the responsibility of raising a family

in a foreign land, these men had to reconsider their relationship with Italy. The focus was no longer just on their individual aspirations; it was about creating a stable and secure life for their children, ensuring they had the opportunities they sought when they first arrived.

This new chapter in their lives raised essential questions about identity, belonging, and cultural preservation. As fathers, they had to balance the need to integrate into Italian society with the desire to maintain their Bangladeshi heritage. They were no longer just a part of a migrant labor force; they were now part of the fabric of Italian society, with a deep connection to both Bangladesh and Italy. This dual identity became increasingly complex as their children grew up in Italy and were exposed to both Bangladeshi and Italian influences. The tension between these two cultures was palpable, as the first-generation migrants sought to pass down their traditions while also acknowledging the new Italian world their children were growing up in.

The arrival of children also pushed the Italian-Bangladeshi migrants to reflect on the kind of future they wanted for their families. The dream of returning to Bangladesh faded for many as the bonds to Italy grew stronger. Yet, as they began to create a home in Italy, they also had to grapple with the realities of their outsider status – still, in many ways, seen as foreigners in a country they had come to love and respect. There was also a steady economic decline, resulting in fewer opportunities. This complicated relationship with Italy mirrors the broader experience of migration, where the journey is about settling into a new place and navigating the shifting dynamics of identity, belonging, and the passage of time.

The concept of having access to Italian citizenship while enabling movement worldwide also contrasts sharply with the limitations imposed by a Bangladeshi passport. For many, the

freedom that Italian citizenship provided likely felt like an escape from the restrictions that their Bangladeshi passports symbolized, offering a broader world while remaining tied to a country with its own set of challenges.

Colonialism, with all its historical weight, is an ever-present undercurrent in this narrative. The legacy of Britain's colonial past and its impact on the Bangladeshi migrant experience cannot be ignored. The wealth of the UK, built on exploitation and looting, casts a long shadow over the very migrants who now navigate its streets. These historical injustices shape how Italian-Bangladeshis view their place within the UK – recognizing that their contributions and the struggles they faced were never genuinely acknowledged by the country that benefited from the exploitation of their homeland.

Much like the first generation of British Bangladeshis, the Italian-Bangladeshis have also created their own associations and organizations designed to help with bureaucracy, provide resources, and ensure the preservation of their culture. These spaces are a critical lifeline, offering support to new migrants while also reinforcing the importance of maintaining cultural ties, even in the face of assimilation pressures.

An essential element that emerges throughout the comic is the sense of not feeling indebted to Britain. The recognition of how much of Britain's wealth comes from colonial exploitation means there is no sense of gratitude owed to a country that profited from the very people it marginalized. This is a powerful reminder that the pursuit of acceptance does not solely define the migrant experience but is defined by the complexities of historical relationships that continue to shape the present.

As we come to the end of the comic, it is a reminder that while Italian-Bangladeshis have established themselves in the UK, their stories are far from over. Migration, pain, and the challenges of

delayed gratification continue to haunt many. Life in London – fast-paced, hectic, and in constant motion – starkly contrasts with Italy’s slower, more communal rhythms, with its vibrant squares and reliable working hours that allowed for a life outside of the grind.

The tensions that exist within the Bangladeshi diaspora are also crucial to acknowledge. There are strained relationships between the British Bangladeshis and the Italian Bangladeshis, with the former sometimes viewing the latter as taking resources and opportunities that should be theirs. Moreover, tensions between Sylheti and non-Sylheti Bangladeshis persist, as the majority of Italian Bangladeshis are non-Sylheti, adding another layer of complexity to the already rich and diverse community.

Ultimately, the migration story of Italian-Bangladeshis to the UK is one of struggle, resilience, and the quest for identity. While many have settled and thrived, the journey is never linear, and the pain, challenges, and complexities of migration are far from resolved. As this comic reminds us, migration is not just a physical journey – it is an emotional, cultural, and historical one, ever-present and constantly unfolding. Despite their hurdles, Italian-Bangladeshis’ love and admiration for their first adopted home in Italy is a testament to their resilience and the deep connection they felt with the country that offered them hope. This journey, marked by both loss and achievement, continues to shape the lives of those who embarked on it, reminding us that migration is as much about finding a sense of home as it is about overcoming the pain of displacement.

A State of Permanent Impermanence: Italian Bangladeshis Chasing Shifting Horizons

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The first time I went to Italy was on a school trip to Venice and Florence back in the 1980s. I attended a comprehensive girls' school in the London Borough of Haringey and our group was ethnically mixed, reflecting the local area. I remember being very conscious of that, i.e., being part of a visible group, distinct from other tourists, as we attracted attention (albeit in the form of intense curiosity rather than hostility) everywhere we went. Since then, I have travelled to Italy many more times over the years and have observed increasing ethnic diversity. I became particularly aware of the increasing Bangladeshi presence. On these trips, I would hear Bangla being spoken, even resorting to using it myself when I heard staff in a shop speaking to one another in Bangla. More subtly, I sensed how people (other Bangladeshis, I assumed) would look at me, perhaps recognizing me as familiar, as possibly "one of theirs."

In 2016, en route to Turin for a work event, I spent a day and a night in Milan. The obligatory flower seller, a young man who I

shall call Mohsin, entered a venue I was in. Although I was a solo woman diner, he approached me, asking me if I wanted to buy a flower, and we eventually began speaking in Bangla. I ended up finding out about Mohsin's life and his journey to Italy. One thing that stuck with me was when he told me that he couldn't tell his family what job he was doing. He told me that he had always hoped to go to university in Dhaka but the prospect of working in Italy carried more cachet with his extended family as well as greater economic promise.

Reading this graphic novel almost ten years later, I was reminded of this encounter and the burden of representation carried by migrants, the weight of familial and societal expectations, both in the country of departure and the country of arrival and indeed, in the case of Francesco's participants, the country of *rearrival*. Reading about the experiences of his research participants, it became abundantly clear to me that Mohsin had only felt able to tell me the uncomfortable reality of his life because there was no way I would have known his family. He'd ascertained that I was *bileti*, born and brought up in London with my family hailing from a different district in Bangladesh to his. Meeting me and telling me what he did wouldn't get back to his family and so his, and ultimately their, honor would be protected.

In *The Horizon Line*, Francesco tells the story of conducting research with Bangladeshi migrants in Italy who have chosen to migrate onwards to the UK. The graphic novel captures the vicissitudes of migration as well as the journey of the researcher – we are all running, metaphorically or otherwise, towards a horizon. Our journeys may never end, and we may never reach the destinations we envisaged when we began. Even if we arrive at our destinations, they may not offer what was promised or what we imagined. We may find ourselves

in perpetual motion, in a permanent state of impermanence. Nonetheless, we have no option other than to survive and live through these journeys. We learn of the researcher's own fraught journey: of the challenges of running, and the research journey itself. The trials and tribulations of conducting research, the push and pull of working with others, being conscious that other people have their own lives and conflicting commitments irrespective of our research objectives, however valid they may be. Inevitably, as Francesco shows, sometimes we end up being stuck in limbo, sometimes because of our own choices and decisions and sometimes as a result of issues outside our control.

The power of this graphic novel lies in its nuance and range. It frequently disrupts the homogenizing tendencies of ethnographies to essentialize communities. The form of the graphic novel, both in its use of image and direct speech, humanizes the research participants. More importantly perhaps, the research data itself is *humanizing*. The complexities of migrants' experiences are illustrated in their intertwined stories. These include the grand narratives of why people migrate as well as the everyday encounters and problems which shape their quotidian experiences. This mode of storytelling also shows how research participants exist beyond the limits of the researcher's framework, in contrast to more traditional formats, such as journal articles and monographs. The format of a graphic novel captures and brings to visceral life the dynamic elements of migratory experiences; the transience and impermanence is built into the analysis. In standard monographs there are always routine discussions of methods and, if you're lucky, there will be a compartmentalized discussion of reflexivity and the positionality of the researcher/author. In this graphic novel, however, we find the researcher's role and his relationship with participants visible throughout the

process. In fact, the researcher's role is pivotal to the analysis. This is, therefore, as much the story of the researcher as that of the research participants.

The impact of the format of the graphic novel on the presentation of the research is very apparent. Moreover, this format also opens up the possibility of widening access to this research. While some of the stereotypes about academic ivory towers may be exaggerated, the exclusionary effects of academic publishing are undeniable. The price of academic books makes them prohibitively expensive for individuals and public libraries. Journal articles are frequently behind paywalls and the academic conventions which are required to get research published often make it impossible for such articles to be accessible to a wider readership. By contrast, the graphic novel is successful in democratizing the process. Its format and content create opportunities for engagement with a range of audiences. Being able to visualize the participants allows a wider audience, who may feel excluded from "traditional" academia, to connect with the material.

The research encapsulates a range of different dynamics involved in the migratory experience. Differences of generation, gender, and class are explored to varying degrees. Of particular interest to me is how geographical differences are acknowledged, highlighting the significance of spatial, regional, and national contexts. Here I am referring to regional differences emanating from Bangladesh, notably between those from Sylhet and elsewhere in Bangladesh. The migratory trajectories of Bangladeshis are not homogeneous but the story of migration(s) from Sylhet has dominated sociological and ethnographic studies. These differences occasionally reflect socioeconomic backgrounds and the urban-rural divide in Bangladesh and therefore the push and pull factors influencing migration. Furthermore, these differences continue to shape migrants' experiences and

their relationships to one another and their sense of community. I recall how in the early days of my parents' migration to London they would end up speaking to other Bengalis for no other reason than that they were Bengali. Once they had clarified this though, the next question would invariably be "*Apnar desh kuthai?*" which means "Where is your 'land'?" – with "land" in this context referring to "district" in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, what is also apparent in this research is how the experiences of migration are radically shaped by the different contexts of the "host" countries, Italy and the UK, reflecting the varying histories of and experiences of migration within both countries in Europe. This includes the different economic opportunities available to migrants and questions of status. In Italy, a country where tourism comprises over 10% of the economic output (compared to just over 2% in the UK), it is unsurprising that this is where many Bangladeshi migrants end up working, albeit precariously. Beyond this, the postcolonial relationship and cultural and linguistic ties between Bangladesh and the UK affect how the UK is regarded as a destination for ultimate settlement. The graphic novel shows participants referring to British colonialism and implying that migration to the UK is almost tantamount to the receipt of reparations. The relationship between Italy and the UK has of course been shaped by the issue of Brexit; the research was conducted around the time of the referendum and the threat to freedom of movement expedited people's choices. London's status as a global city no doubt affects how it is perceived by migrants. Furthermore, the tendency for many migrants not to disclose their negative experiences perhaps creates unrealistic aspirations which Bangladeshis in Italy end up adopting. The reality of remigration must be perceived as better in order to retrospectively justify the move and the concomitant disruption.

The question of generation arises in different ways in the work. The question of *when* substantial numbers of Bangladeshis migrated to the UK and Italy respectively affects their experiences. How many generations of Bangladeshis are there in each country? The UK includes fourth and fifth generation Bangladeshis, whereas migration to Italy is relatively more recent. This undoubtedly affects a sense of settlement, feelings of belonging, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. That is not to suggest that this is a straightforward linear relationship whereby longer settlement results in a greater sense of belonging; later generations may be less willing to accept the racism and discrimination earlier generations tolerated. The question of numbers and (the lack of) geographic concentration affects whether there is a sense of a “critical mass” of Bangladeshis in Italy, something which may no longer happen now given communities’ onward journeys to the UK.

Then there is the question of intergenerational relationships. In the early days of postwar migration to the UK there was often a presumption of “the myth of return” – that postcolonial citizens would migrate to the “mother country,” make money, and then return to their “home” countries. As immigration regulation and restrictions increased exponentially, the decisions to migrate or return became less flexible. Families would be brought over and people had to make long-term choices which were difficult to reverse. Returning “home” became less of an option or, once the decision was taken, it was final. The arrival of children (i.e., a new generation) brought with it a whole other level of decision making about the future, in particular about the relative merits of opportunities in Europe and Bangladesh. These developments – having families and forming new communities – also changed where “home” was identified. The relative novelty of the Bangladeshi presence in Italy combined with perceptions of the

“success” of more established communities in the UK prompted many to relocate to the UK, and to London in particular, for the benefit of the next generation.

Gender differences are significant here. Bangladeshi migration has been driven by younger men, but it is after they start marrying that Bangladeshi women begin migrating to Italy. It is here that the mask undoubtedly slips. For many families in Bangladesh, marriage to a man overseas is seen as a positive move, a step up the social mobility ladder but, as already highlighted, the reality of recent migrants’ lives rarely meets the heady heights of these collective aspirations. While women may have no alternative than to adjust to this rude awakening, once children arrive, decisions need to be made.

Reading this graphic novel, I was reminded of my parents’ migratory trajectory. Theirs is an inconvenient story that doesn’t sit neatly within grand narratives of Bangladeshi migration in academic literature. Francesco’s research encouragingly captures some of the complexities and avoids generalizing. It therefore expands and complicates our understanding of global stories of migration. I was also reminded of how my dad’s response to seeing his fellow Bangladeshis, particularly those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, was often tinged with “maya.” “Maya” has always been a word I found difficult to translate into English. In my encounters and experience of the word it has come to mean something akin to “pity” but without the objectification and implied superiority associated with that term. Instead, it’s more comparable to a combination of compassion, affection, and tenderness. These stories are tinged with “maya,” the small joys and disappointments of everyday life, stories that many of us with migrant backgrounds can relate to, whether we have undergone similar experiences ourselves or, because of our kismet, have managed to avoid them.

What next? Does chasing the dream of remigrating to London fulfill its promise? The reality of the Bangladeshi experience in the UK belies its perception as an aspirational destination for Italian Bangladeshis. For example, around 18% of Bangladeshi workers are paid below the National Minimum Wage, compared to 3% of white workers. (Khan, 2020). Furthermore, a report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025) found that between 2020–1 and 2022–3, over half of people in Bangladeshi households (56%) lived in poverty, with even higher poverty levels for children in those households (67%). The impact of this long-standing economic deprivation and structural disadvantage has dire consequences and can be seen in the vulnerability of British Bangladeshi communities during the height of the Covid pandemic. According to Public Health England, the people most at risk of dying of Covid were of Bangladeshi ethnicity (Redclift & Anand, 2021). They were twice as likely to die as white British people and, if treated in hospital, only half as likely to survive.

The wider political landscape in both countries, across Europe, and around the globe also matter of course. This includes the realities of increasing xenophobia and the rise of the far right (whether that refers to the success of Fratelli d'Italia in Italy or the co-option of far-right policies by the Labour Party in the UK), which are important contexts to these stories. Moreover, the changing political situation in Bangladesh and the impact of Trump's second term will no doubt have an effect on how these journeys develop.

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Francesco Matteuzzi is a screenwriter and journalist who made his debut in the world of comics in 2005. He has written several graphic novels, including *Hokusai: A Graphic Biography* (illustrated by Giuseppe Latanza), *Mark Rothko: The Story of His Life* (illustrated by Giovanni Scarduelli), *Banksy: A Graphic Novel* (illustrated by Marco Maraggi), and *Funny Things: A Comic Strip Biography of Charles M. Schulz* (created with Luca Debus). His work has been published in Italian, French, and English. Since November 2023, he has been the head of education and training at the PAFF! International Museum of Comic Art.

Francesco Saresin is a comic artist and illustrator based in Bologna, with a degree from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. He is a lecturer in comic art and illustration at the Fantalica association in Padua.

In 2015, he founded the comic anthology magazine *Brace*, and since 2020 he has been publishing his short comics online on the website Ricordorama. His works have been exhibited in various shows in Bologna, Padua, Treviso, and Cremona.



Russell King is emeritus professor of geography at the University of Sussex, where he was dean of the School of European Studies and founding director of the Sussex Centre for Migration Research. He has been researching migration in its various forms for more than fifty years. His latest book, coauthored with Nilay Kilinc, is *A Place in the Homeland? Turkish-German Return Migration*.

John Eade is a professor of sociology and anthropology at University of Roehampton and a visiting professor at the University of Toronto. He has researched British Bangladeshi identity politics, the Islamization of urban space, globalization and the global city, travel, and pilgrimage. He is the coeditor of two book series: Bloomsbury Studies in Religion, Space and Place; and Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism. He is the author of *The Politics of Community: The Bangladeshi Community in East London* and *Placing London: From Imperial Capital to Global City*, as well as numerous articles and chapters in edited volumes. He is also co-patron of Swadhinata, a Bangladeshi community group which promotes the development of heritage projects in East London, and chair of the South Asian Cinema Foundation.

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Muslims in the East End: The Changing Landscape of Dress and Language. Her work has appeared in academic journals including *Identities* and the *Journal of Muslims in Europe*.

Naaz Rashid is an associate professor in the School of Media, Arts, and Humanities at the University of Sussex and codirector of the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies (SCCS). Her research is broadly focused on the intersections of race, religion, gender, and class. She is the author of *Veiled Threats: Representing the Muslim Woman in Public Policy Discourses* and coauthor of the forthcoming book *Situated Citizenship: From Brick Lane to Little Bangladesh*. She has written extensively about changing representations of Muslim women in the UK's counterterrorism agenda.

ethnoGRAPHIC

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