

45. Contemporary literature

Pat Mora *Borders* (1986)

Immigrants 183

Pat Mora (b. 1942) is a modern poetess, a native of El Paso, Texas, who explores the theme of borders.

wrap their babies in the American flag,
 feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie,
 name them Bill and Daisy,
 buy them blonde dolls that blink blue
 5 eyes or a football and tiny cleats¹
 before the baby can even walk,
 speak to them in thick English,
 hallo, babee, hallo,
 whisper in Spanish or Polish
 10 when the babies sleep, whisper
 in a dark parent bed, that dark
 parent fear, 'Will they like
 our boy, our girl, our fine American
 boy, our fine American girl?'

1. **cleats:** sports shoes



Jamaica Kincaid

At the Bottom of the River (1983)

Girl  184

Elaine Potter Richardson was born in Antigua in 1949, but at the age of 16 she moved to New York. In 1973 she adopted the name of Jamaica Kincaid mainly because she preferred anonymity for her writings. She wrote mainly autobiographical novels and focussed on issues such as family relationships and colonialism, which she treats with lyricism and anger. A more violent tone is present in her latest works, *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) and *My Brother* (1997).

First published as part of Jamaica Kincaid's 1983 story collection *At the Bottom of the River*, the following short story shows two women that are talking to each other. One is older than the other and is giving advice on how to behave properly.

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline¹ to dry; don't walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak² your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to
5 make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum on it, because that way it won't hold up³ well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna⁴ in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut⁵ you are so bent on⁶
10 becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys⁷, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street – flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew⁸ on a button; this is how to make a button-hole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress⁹ when you
15 see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease¹⁰; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra¹¹ – far from the house, because okra tree harbors¹² red ants;
20 when you are growing dasheen¹³, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you

1. **clothesline:** it. *filo del bucato*

2. **soak:** it. *metti in ammollo*

3. **hold up:** it. *terrà, durerà*

4. **benna:** a Caribbean word for 'silly songs'

5. **slut:** it. *donnaccia*

6. **bent on:** it. *incline a*

7. **wharf-rat boys:** it. *ragazzacci*

8. **sew:** it. *cucire*

9. **hem a dress:** it. *fare l'orlo*

10. **crease:** it. *piega*

11. **okra:** a plant

12. **harbors:** it. *può attirare/nasconde*

13. **dasheen:** another plant



smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone
 25 you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set
 a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important
 guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for
 breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know
 you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I
 30 have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is
 with your own spit¹⁴; don't squat down¹⁵ to play marbles¹⁶ – you are not a
 boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers – you might catch something;
 don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird¹⁷ at
 all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona¹⁸;
 35 this is how to make pepper pot; this is how to make a good medicine for a
 cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it
 even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back
 a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this
 is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a
 40 man; and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work
 don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you
 feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this
 is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread¹⁹ to make sure it's fresh;
but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?; you mean to say that after all
 45 you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near
 the bread?

14. spit: it. *sputo*

15. squat down: it. *metterti accovacciata*

16. marbles: it. *biglie*

17. blackbird: it. *merlo*

18. doukona: (*Caribbean*) a typical dish

19. squeeze bread: it. *strizza il pane*

Chinua Achebe

Dead Men's Path (1953) 185

Nigeria is the homeland of more than two hundred different native tribes including the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Ibo in the southeast. Each group has its own language, but their common language is English, due to the British rule that ended in 1960. Chinua Achebe, though fluent in the Ibo language, usually wrote in English, but dealt with tradition in his country and the clash of cultures, as in the upcoming story. It is set in an Ibo village whose inhabitants still show respect for their local deities and beliefs.

Michael Obi's hopes were fulfilled much earlier than he had expected. He was appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School in January 1949. It had always been an unprogressive school, so the Mission authorities decided to send a young and energetic man to run it. Obi accepted this responsibility with enthusiasm. He had

5 many wonderful ideas and this was an opportunity to put them into practice. He had had sound secondary school education which designated him a 'pivotal teacher' in the official records and set him apart from the other headmasters in the mission field. He was outspoken¹ in his condemnation of the narrow views of these older and often less-educated ones.

10 'We shall make a good job of it, shan't we?' he asked his young wife when they first heard the joyful news of his promotion. 'We shall do our best,' she replied. 'We shall have such beautiful gardens and everything will be just modern and delightful...' In their two years of married life she had become completely infected by his passion for 'modern methods' and his

15 denigration of 'these old and superannuated people in the teaching field who would be better employed as traders in the Onitsha² market.' She began to see herself already as the admired wife of the young headmaster, the queen of the school. The wives of the other teachers would envy her position. She would set the fashion in everything... Then, suddenly, it occurred to her that there might not be other wives.

20 Wavering between hope and fear, she asked her husband, looking anxiously at him. 'All our colleagues are young and unmarried,' he said with enthusiasm, which for once she did not share. 'Which is a good thing,' he continued. 'Why?' 'Why? They will give all their time and energy to the school.'

25 Nancy was downcast³. For a few minutes she became skeptical about the new school; but it was only for a few minutes. Her little personal misfortune could not blind her to her husband's happy prospects. She looked at him as he sat folded up in a chair. He was stoop-shouldered⁴ and looked frail. But he sometimes surprised people with sudden bursts of physical energy. In his present posture, however, all his bodily

30 strength seemed to have retired behind his deep-set eyes, giving them an extraordinary

1. **outspoken:** *it. esplicito*
 2. **Onitsha:** a city in Nigeria

3. **downcast:** *depressed*
 4. **stoop-shouldered:** *it. con le spalle curve*

power of penetration. He was only twenty-six, but looked thirty or more. On the whole, he was not unhandsome.

'A penny for your thoughts, Mike,' said Nancy after a while, imitating the woman's magazine she read.

35 'I was thinking what a grand opportunity we've got at last to show these people how a school should be run.'

Ndume School was backward in every sense of the word. Mr. Obi put his whole life into the work, and his wife hers too. He had two aims. A high standard of teaching was insisted upon, and the school compound⁵ was to be turned into a place of beauty.

40 Nancy's dream-gardens came to life with the coming of the rains, and blossomed. Beautiful hibiscus and allamanda hedges⁶ in brilliant red and yellow marked out the carefully tended school compound from the rank neighborhood bushes.

One evening as Obi was admiring his work he was scandalized to see an old woman from the village hobble⁷ right across the compound, through a marigold flower-bed and the hedges. On going up there he found faint signs of an almost disused path

45 from the village across the school compound to the bush on the other side. 'It amazes me,' said Obi to one of his teachers who had been three years in the school, 'that you people allowed the villagers to make use of this footpath. It is simply incredible.' He shook his head.

50 'The path,' said the teacher apologetically, 'appears to be very important to them. Although it is hardly used, it connects the village shrine with their place of burial.'

'And what has that got to do with the school?' asked the headmaster.

'Well, I don't know,' replied the other with a shrug of the shoulders. 'But I remember there was a big row⁸ some time ago when we attempted to close it.'

55 'That was some time ago. But it will not be used now,' said Obi as he walked away. 'What will the government Education Officer think of this when he comes to inspect the school next week? The villagers might, for all I know, decide to use the schoolroom for a pagan ritual during the inspection.'

60 Heavy sticks were planted closely across the path at the two places where it entered and left the school premises. These were further strengthened with barbed wire.

Three days later the village priest of Ani called on the headmaster. He was an old man and walked with a slight stoop⁹. He carried a stout walking-stick which he usually tapped on the floor, by way of emphasis, each time he made a new point in his argument.

65 'I have heard,' he said after the usual exchange of cordialities, 'that our ancestral foot-path has recently been closed...'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Obi. 'We cannot allow people to make a highway of our school compound.'

70 'Look here, my son,' said the priest bringing down his walking-stick, 'this path was here before you were born and before your father was born. The whole life of this village depends on it. Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it. But most important, it is the path of children coming in to be born...'

Mr. Obi listened with a satisfied smile on his face.

75 'The whole purpose of our school,' he said finally, 'is to eradicate just such beliefs as that. Dead men do not require footpaths. The whole idea is just fantastic. Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas.'

5. **compound:** area

6. **allamanda hedges:** flowering plants

7. **hobble:** walk with a limp

8. **row:** it. *chiasso*

9. **slight stoop:** bowing posture

'What you say may be true,' replied the priest, 'but we follow the practices of our fathers. If you reopen the path we shall have nothing to quarrel about. What I always say is: let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch.' He rose to go.

80 'I am sorry,' said the young headmaster. 'But the school compound cannot be a thoroughfare. It is against our regulations. I would suggest your constructing another path, skirting our premises. We can even get our boys to help in building it. I don't suppose the ancestors will find the little detour too burdensome¹⁰.'

'I have no more words to say,' said the old priest, already outside.

85 Two days later a young woman in the village died in childbed. A diviner¹¹ was immediately consulted and he prescribed heavy sacrifices to propitiate ancestors insulted by the fence.

Obi woke up next morning among the ruins of his work. The beautiful hedges were torn up not just near the path but right round the school, the flowers trampled to death and one of the school buildings pulled down... That day, the white Supervisor came to inspect the school and wrote a nasty report on the state of the premises but more seriously about the 'tribal-war situation developing between the school and the village, arising in part from the misguided zeal of the new headmaster.'

10. **burdensome**: a problem

11. **diviner**: it. *rabdomante*

Hanif Kureishi

My Son the Fanatic (1994)



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This short story is a good example of what happens in many societies where second-generation immigrants are not at ease with Western values leading them to becoming entrapped in fundamentalist ideals. The story revolves around a Pakistani father, Parvez, and his son, Ali. The former tries to integrate into English society, working as a taxi driver while keeping ties with his home-country as weak as possible; the son, on the other hand, seems to be integrated into London society, but suddenly changes attitude. The father tries to understand what has happened to his son up to the conclusion which asks the reader an interesting question about fanaticism.

- Surreptitiously the father began going into his son's bedroom. He would sit there for hours, rousing¹ himself only to seek clues. What bewildered him was that Ali was getting tidier. Instead of the usual tangle of clothes, books, cricket bats², video games, the room was becoming neat and ordered; spaces began appearing where before there had been only mess.
- 5 Initially Parvez had been pleased: his son was outgrowing his teenage attitudes. But one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books and fashionable clothes the boy had bought just a few months before. Also without explanation, Ali had parted from the English girlfriend who used to come often to the house. His old friends had stopped ringing.
- 10 For reasons he didn't himself understand, Parvez wasn't able to bring up the subject of Ali's unusual behaviour. He was aware that he had become slightly afraid of his son, who, alongside his silences, was developing a sharp tongue³. One remark Parvez did make, "You don't play your guitar any more," elicited the mysterious but conclusive reply, "There are more important things to be done."
- 15 Yet Parvez felt his son's eccentricity as an injustice. He had always been aware of the pitfalls⁴ which other men's sons had fallen into in England. And so, for Ali, he had worked long hours and spent a lot of money paying for his education as an accountant. He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And now the boy was throwing his possessions out!
- 20 The TV, video and sound system followed the guitar. Soon the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed. Parvez couldn't sleep; he went more to the whisky bottle, even when he was at work. He realised it was imperative to discuss the matter with someone sympathetic. Parvez had been a taxi driver for twenty years. Half that time he'd worked for the same firm.
- 25 Like him, most of the other drivers were Punjabis. They preferred to work at night, the roads were clearer and the money better. They slept during the day, avoiding their wives. Together they led almost a boy's life in the cabbies' office, playing cards and practical jokes, exchanging lewd⁵ stories, eating together and discussing politics and their problems. But Parvez had been unable to bring this subject up with his friends. He was too ashamed.
- 30 And he was afraid, too, that they would blame him for the wrong turning his boy had taken,

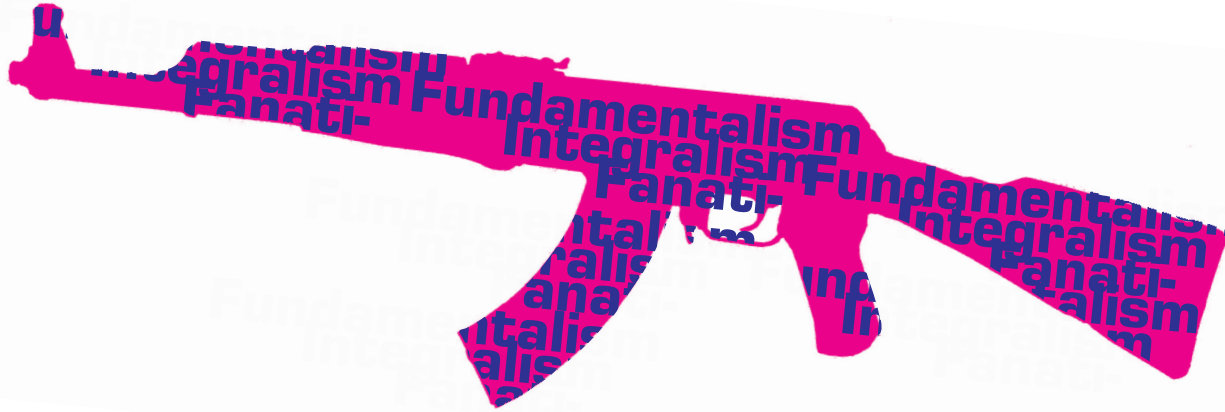
1. **rousing**: becoming active (it. *rianimandosi*)

2. **cricket bats**: it. *mazze da cricket*

3. **was developing a sharp tongue**: it. *stava rispondendo sempre più a tono*

4. **pitfalls**: unsuspected dangers

5. **lewd**: indecent



just as he had blamed other fathers whose sons had taken to running around with bad girls, truanting from school⁶ and joining gangs.

For years Parvez had boasted to the other men about how Ali excelled at cricket, swimming and football, and how attentive a scholar he was, getting straight 'A's in most subjects. Was it asking
35 too much for Ali to get a good job now, marry the right girl and start a family? Once this happened, Parvez would be happy. His dreams of doing well in England would have come true. Where had he gone wrong?

But one night, sitting in the taxi office on busted chairs⁷ with his two closest friends watching a Sylvester Stallone film, he broke his silence.

40 "I can't understand it!" he burst out. "Everything is going from his room. And I can't talk to him any more. We were not father and son – we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me!"

And Parvez put his head in his hands.

Even as he poured out his account the men shook their heads and gave one another knowing
45 glances. From their grave looks Parvez realised they understood the situation.

"Tell me what is happening!" he demanded.

The reply was almost triumphant. They had guessed something was going wrong. Now it was clear. Ali was taking drugs and selling his possessions to pay for them. That was why his
50 bedroom was emptying.

"What must I do then?"

Parvez's friends instructed him to watch Ali scrupulously and then be severe with him, before the boy went mad, overdosed or murdered someone.

Parvez staggered out into⁸ the early morning air, terrified they were right. His boy – the drug addict killer!

55 To his relief he found Bettina sitting in his car.

Usually the last customers of the night were local 'brasses'⁹ or prostitutes. The taxi drivers knew them well, often driving them to liaisons. At the end of the girls' shifts, the men would ferry them home, though sometimes the women would join them for a drinking session in the office. Occasionally the drivers would go with the girls. 'A ride in exchange for a ride,' it was called.

60 Bettina had known Parvez for three years. She lived outside the town and on the long drive home, where she sat not in the passenger seat but beside him, Parvez had talked to her about his life and hopes, just as she talked about hers. They saw each other most nights.

He could talk to her about things he'd never be able to discuss with his own wife. Bettina, in turn, always reported on her night's activities. He liked to know where she was and with whom.

65 Once he had rescued her from a violent client, and since then they had come to care for one another.

6. **truanting from school:** *marinando la scuola*

7. **busted chairs:** broken chairs (it actually also refers to the fact that he could not keep everything inside any longer)

8. **staggered out into:** walked out unsteadily

9. **brasses:** slang for prostitutes

Though Bettina had never met the boy, she heard about Ali continually. That late night, when he told Bettina that he suspected Ali was on drugs, she judged neither the boy nor his father, but became businesslike and told him what to watch for.

70 “It’s all in the eyes,” she said. They might be bloodshot¹⁰; the pupils might be dilated¹¹; he might look tired. He could be liable to sweats¹², or sudden mood changes. “Okay?” Parvez began his vigil gratefully. Now he knew what the problem might be, he felt better. And surely, he figured, things couldn’t have gone too far? With Bettina’s help he would soon sort it out.

75 He watched each mouthful the boy took. He sat beside him at every opportunity and looked into his eyes. When he could he took the boy’s hand, checking his temperature. If the boy wasn’t at home Parvez was active, looking under the carpet, in his drawers, behind the empty wardrobe, sniffing, inspecting, probing¹³. He knew what to look for: Bettina had drawn pictures of capsules, syringes, pills, powders, rocks.

80 Every night she waited to hear news of what he’d witnessed.

...

Once this clue had been established, Parvez watched him at other times. The boy was praying. Without fail, when he was at home, he prayed five times a day.

85 Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught the Koran. To stop him falling asleep when he studied, the Moulvi¹⁴ had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez’s hair, so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions. Not that the other taxi drivers had more respect. In fact they made jokes about the local mullahs¹⁵ walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live, while their eyes roved over¹⁶ the boys and girls in their care.

90 Parvez described to Bettina what he had discovered. He informed the men in the taxi office. The friends, who had been so curious before, now became oddly silent. They could hardly condemn the boy for his devotions.

95 Parvez decided to take a night off and go out with the boy. They could talk things over. He wanted to hear how things were going at college; he wanted to tell him stories about their family in Pakistan. More than anything he yearned to¹⁷ understand how Ali had discovered the “spiritual dimension”, as Bettina described it.

...

100 As Bettina rubbed his head Parvez told her that the previous evening he and Ali had gone to a restaurant. As they studied the menu, the waiter, whom Parvez knew, brought him his usual whisky and water. Parvez had been so nervous he had even prepared a question. He was going to ask Ali if he was worried about his imminent exams. But first, wanting to relax, he loosened his tie, crunched a popadom¹⁸ and took a long drink.

Before Parvez could speak, Ali made a face.

105 “Don’t you know it’s wrong to drink alcohol?” he said.

“He spoke to me very harshly,” Parvez told Bettina. “I was about to castigate the boy for being insolent, but managed to control myself.”

He had explained patiently to Ali that for years he had worked more than ten hours a day,

10. **bloodshot**: it. *iniettati di sangue*

11. **dilated**: enlarged

12. **liable to sweats**: it. *soggetto a forte sudorazione*

13. **probing**: investigating

14. **Moulvi**: Islamic scholar/teacher

15. **mullahs**: leaders of a mosque

16. **roved over**: wandered

17. **yearned to**: wished

18. **popadom**: very crispy round-shaped Indian bread

- that he had few enjoyments or hobbies and never went on holiday. Surely it wasn't a crime to
 110 have a drink when he wanted one?
 "But it is forbidden," the boy said.
 Parvez shrugged, "I know."
 "And so is gambling, isn't it?"
 "Yes. But surely we are only human?"
- 115 Each time Parvez took a drink, the boy winced¹⁹, or made a fastidious face as an
 accompaniment. This made Parvez drink more quickly. The waiter, wanting to please his
 friend, brought another glass of whisky. Parvez knew he was getting drunk, but he couldn't stop
 himself. Ali had a horrible look on his face, full of disgust and censure. It was as if he hated his
 father.
- 120 Halfway through the meal Parvez suddenly lost his temper and threw a plate on the floor. He
 had felt like ripping the cloth²⁰ from the table, but the waiters and other customers were staring
 at him. Yet he wouldn't stand for his own son telling him the difference between right and
 wrong. He knew he wasn't a bad man. He had a conscience. There were a few things of which
 he was ashamed, but on the whole he had lived a decent life.
- 125 "When have I had time to be wicked?" he asked Ali.
 In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He
 had broken countless rules of the Koran.
 "For instance?" Parvez demanded.
 Ali hadn't needed time to think. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he asked his father
 130 if he didn't relish pork pies²¹?
 "Well..."
 Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with²² mushrooms and mustard and
 sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for breakfast every morning.
 Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to
 135 her, "You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!"
 Parvez was so annoyed and perplexed by this attack that he called for more drink.
 "The problem is this," the boy said. He leaned across the table. For the first time that night his
 eyes were alive. "You are too implicated in Western civilisation."
 Parvez burped²³; he thought he was going to choke²⁴. "Implicated!" he said. "But we live here!"
 140 "The Western materialists hate us," Ali said. "Papa, how can you love something which hates
 you?"
 "What is the answer then?" Parvez said miserably "According to you."
 Ali addressed his father fluently, as if Parvez were a rowdy crowd that had to be quelled²⁵ and
 convinced. The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again
 145 and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed²⁶. The West was a sink of hypocrites,
 adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes.
 As Ali talked, Parvez looked out of the window as if to check that they were still in London.
 "My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop there will be *jihad*²⁷. I, and
 millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause."
 150 "But why, why?" Parvez said.

19. **winc**ed: felt embarrassed (it. *faceva una smorfia*)

20. **had felt like ripping the cloth**: had the strong will to tear the table cloth

21. **didn't relish pork pies**: didn't like pork pies

22. **smothered with**: covered with

23. **burped**: it. *ruttò*

24. **choke**: suffocate

25. **as if Parvez ... quelled**: it. *come se Parvez fosse una folla turbolenta da domare*

26. **routed**: defeated

27. **jihad**: holy war

“For us the reward will be in paradise.”

“Paradise!”

Finally, as Parvez’s eyes filled with tears, the boy urged him to mend his ways²⁸.

“How is that possible?” Parvez asked.

155 “Pray,” Ali said. “Pray beside me.”

Parvez called for the bill and ushered his boy out of the restaurant as soon as he was able. He couldn’t take any more. Ali sounded as if he’d swallowed someone else’s voice.

On the way home the boy sat in the back of the taxi, as if he were a customer.

160 “What has made you like this?” Parvez asked him, afraid that somehow he was to blame for all this. “Is there a particular event which has influenced you?”

“Living in this country”

“But I love England,” Parvez said, watching his boy in the mirror. “They let you do almost anything here.”

“That is the problem,” he replied.

165 ...

One evening Bettina was sitting in Parvez’s car, after visiting a client, when they passed a boy on the street.

“That’s my son,” Parvez said suddenly. They were on the other side of town, in a poor district, where there were two mosques.

170 Parvez set his face hard.

Bettina turned to watch him. “Slow down then, slow down!” She said, “He’s good-looking. Reminds me of you. But with a more determined face. Please, can’t we stop?”

“What for?”

“I’d like to talk to him.”

175 Parvez turned the cab round and stopped beside the boy

“Coming home?” Parvez asked. “It’s quite a way.”

The sullen boy shrugged and got into²⁹ the back seat. Bettina sat in the front. Parvez became aware of Bettina’s short skirt, gaudy rings and ice-blue eyeshadow. He became conscious that the smell of her perfume, which he loved, filled the cab. He opened the window.

180 While Parvez drove as fast as he could, Bettina said gently to Ali, “Where have you been?”

“The mosque,” he said.

“And how are you getting on at college? Are you working hard?”

“Who are you to ask me these questions?” he said, looking out of the window. Then they hit bad traffic and the car came to a standstill.

185 By now Bettina had inadvertently laid her hand on Parvez’s shoulder. She said, “Your father, who is a good man, is very worried about you. You know he loves you more than his own life.”

“You say he loves me,” the boy said.

“Yes!” said Bettina.

“Then why is he letting a woman like you touch him like that?”

190 If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with twice as much cold fury.

She said, “What kind of woman am I that deserves to be spoken to like that?”

“You know,” he said. “Now let me out.”

“Never,” Parvez replied.

“Don’t worry, I’m getting out,” Bettina said.

195 “No, don’t!” said Parvez. But even as the car moved she opened the door, threw herself out and ran away across the road. Parvez shouted after her several times, but she had gone.

28. urged him to mend his ways: *it. gli consigliò di pentirsi*

29. The sullen boy shrugged and got into: *it. Il ragazzo imbronciato fece un'alzata di spalle ed entrò*

Parvez took Ali back to the house, saying nothing more to him. Ali went straight to his room. Parvez was unable to read the paper, watch television or even sit down. He kept pouring himself drinks.

200 At last he went upstairs and paced up and down outside Ali's room. When, finally he opened the door, Ali was praying. The boy didn't even glance his way.

Parvez kicked him over. Then he dragged the boy up by his shirt and hit him. The boy fell back. Parvez hit him again. The boy's face was bloody. Parvez was panting. He knew that the boy was unreachable, but he struck him nonetheless. The boy neither covered himself nor

205 retaliated; there was no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: "So who's the fanatic now?"