

## Welcome to the West End

by Bethan Curley

*“Every spoken word piece needs a rhythm. Life needs a rhythm.  
It should include everything and everyone – frankly impossible.  
Benwell doesn't play by the rules. It goes beyond the norm.  
Breaks all boundaries. Isn't your average kind of village.”*

***Bricks upon bricks, memories cemented.***

**Welcome to the West End,  
A place of many stories, gifted people and family.  
A village nurturing a diverse community,  
Still, it's the lingering ignorance that segregates our unity.**

*“I have a way of speaking to people. I love speaking to people,  
No matter their background socially, race, religion, gender, sexuality.  
This killed me, that I'm going to write this without talking to the people of Benwell.”*

***Neglected parks, hidden flowers.***

**I have not travelled far, though to stroll down the streets is to see the world.  
And I give myself permission to be the voice of a girl,  
Found in the heart of Benwell, with no sense of belonging.**

*“One conversation with a person might mean nothing to the world, but to a person it  
could mean the world.”*

***Secluded car parks, shattered glass.***

**I know this place like the back of my hand,  
Though it is not my hands that are looked down upon.  
Shops strip of their signs yet the owners cannot strip of their skin.**

*“What if it's not the language that's the barrier?  
What if it's ignorance?”*

***Stranded bus stops, worn-down roads.***

**They may not share a language but they share a favourite recipe,  
They share a smile,  
They share a street,  
Or even, at the end of a day, a tattered bus seat.**

*“I wish I had the confidence to speak for myself. I need to give my voice space.  
When I write, ideas come out that can't be verbalised. I **need** to keep writing.*

*You want to put everything out there and change the world, but you have to start somewhere.”*

***Ragged benches, connecting alleyways.***

**From Poland. China. Barbers that are Turkish:  
Hidden behind closed doors is the culture that should flourish.  
My thoughts of change are too rich for, well, here.**

*“None of them have ever escaped the West End.  
Constant circle,  
Repeating over generations.  
I want to be the one  
Who escapes.”*

***Reserved graveyards, neighbourhood laughter.***

**I stand, looking back:  
Teeming with life, an encapsulated dome.  
Though the magic is rarely seen, I guess it’s just home.**

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