

Conveyor belt poem

By Daniel Briggs



In a key note speech at the conference, Daniel Briggs presented his perspective on inclusion by offering a critical look at our system and how it is designed to reproduce the same structural inequalities year after year, as in a conveyor belt. This poem captures some of this sentiment, including the frustration and anger felt because of these constraints, especially in light of the mass movement of migrants into Europe and the suffering that they must endure because of these structural inequalities.

It's funny how fate,
Can turn in your favour,
As against you oscillate.
Can provoke self-hate.
Yet, just like a bet...
It can you create.
A gamble on debt,
Nothing to lose,
Can cancel the threat.
Like speaking the unspoken,
At a forum,
Where the norm,
Is this weird polite form,
Like established decorum.
And to say what's been said,
Is like a flock of sheep,
After the shepherd tread.
And to do what's been done,
Is as original as none.

And I suppose that's why,
I was invited,
To stimulate or to try,
Not because I was cited,
(Though I was delighted)
Tenth on the list.
To a conference, assist,
To offer a twist...
And here is my case,
And what it consist.

"It is about young people,
And how their mobility,
In an education industry,
Is mobilised by ideology,
A meritocratic philosophy,
A middle class notion,
To stoke drive and devotion,
To kickstart the idle,
And that self-improvement,
Is logical promotion,
Where personal investment,
Is worthy testament,
A measure of success,
And internalised assessment,
Seen socially as best."

"But to suppose is wrong,
That all those young,
Bear this human capital,
To make this move tactical,
To the cultural goal,
To make their life practical,
Is outside their control."

"For either they live,
On the one hand,
In city wastelands,
Sold a dream of inclusion,
In a life of exclusion,
Yet this is what politics,
Had for them planned.

Yet unemployment is rising,
Inequality oversizing,
The companies downsizing,
The corporations devising,
Their spending plans revising,
Leaving surplus populations,
In a cycle of frustrations,
Resubmitting applications,
Or file for benefit,
And not get it definite,
So millions remain spare,
Not here, not there,
Not anywhere or anywhere.
Which is why countless,
Are commercially swayed,
Where others obeyed.
And end up believing,
All the time perceiving,
That qualifications and courses,
Build CVs enormous,
And calls with job offers,
They will be receiving..."

illustration by Siri Taimia



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“...But this is deceiving.”

“Then on the other,
And even more precarious,
Is a group more various,
Who come from all over,
From countries war-torn,
Where the chances of death,
Are present when born.
Regimes which send teams,
To bomb their own people,
To violent extremes.
They ran from their land,
And this is how politics,
In their misery had a hand.
Now a miscalculated sundry,
Just like e-mail,
Ignored until Monday,
Yet at borders they poise,
Where thousands make noise,
Even washed up dead boys,
Does not deter them away,
While at the Commission,
They chat over latte.”

“And yet this is the existence,
From which we have distance.
Such is our lifeworld,
So individualistically reduced,
That what happens to ‘me’,
Is only of concern.
It is what we now learn.
For we are now wedged,

In a commercial life fledged,
And the pastime to pass time,
Away from this corruption,
Are in spaces of consumption,
Which inhibit our gumption,
And reduce critical assumption,
Cancel out questioning,
And the important issues, pressing.
And in popular cultural depictions,
Are the nail-bar addictions,
And narcissistic afflictions,
A generation living in fictions.
The meritocratic subscriptions,
Of a life worth lived,
Advertised on placards,
To be spent on credit cards,
Places been, celebrities seen,
But what does it mean?
A socially weighted envy,
Sold to us trendily,
To get lost in malls,
And spend without thinking,
And experiment with drugs,
All the night, drinking,
The investment to tell,
Clouds the reality that dwell.
And this is the spell,
That is to people sold, well,
In android phones,
And Facebook statuses,
In online forums,
No concern for tomorrow,
Because today is ‘awesome.’”

“This is the omen,
That talks candidly Bauman.
So when problems are seen,
They can be turned off on TV.
Because it doesn’t affect ‘me’ directly,
It cannot be real, correctly.
So the beggar on the street,
Made poor life decisions,
Could not quite compete,
And let himself deplete.
And the job I don’t have,
Doesn’t belong to the chav,
But some Eastern European,
‘Who’s over ‘ere stealin’,
‘Or asylum appealin’.
So the education I ‘flunked’,
Was because I was drunked,
Duped into this thinking...
In disbelief blinking,
Because at graduation,
Reality is at me winking.
But I can study a Master,
And on a conveyor belt run,
Just to get ‘there’ faster,
Yet when I get off,
I still don’t have much.
The horizon still distant,
While the rainbow persistent,
And it I still can’t touch.”

Illustration by Sirri Taimla

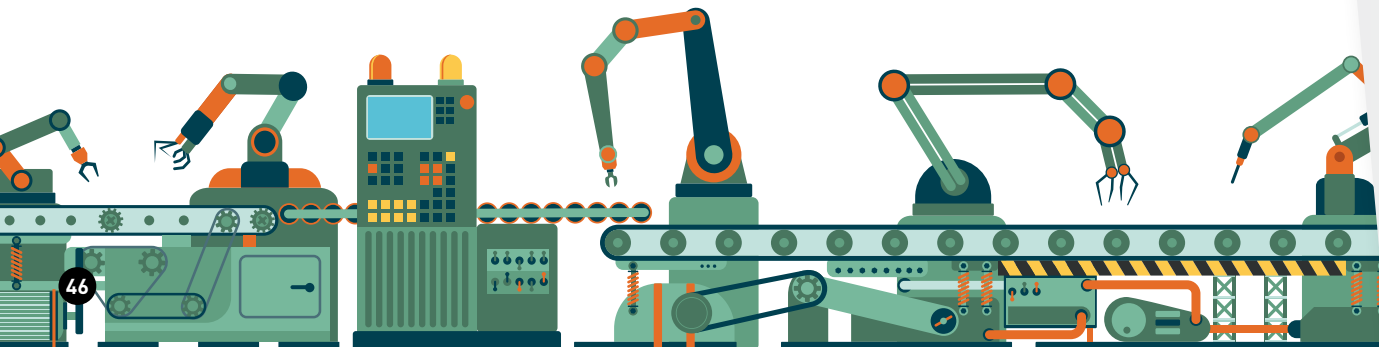


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“And we can sit around tables,
With our names on labels,
Tell of our good work,
And the youth it enables.
But all the while storing,
Are these things said here,
That we are ignoring.
And our efforts,
As supposed experts,
Should be to admit,
Before being able,
To honestly commit.
It is to this reality,
That we should submit.”

And after all this,
Some said what I said,
Was fantastic and great.
But that is not the debate.
Even though in Istanbul.
I turned up late...
But I wasn’t sightseeing.
Nor at the tables with labels,
Nodding in agreement.
I was with young Syrians,
Which is thinking ahead,
Because the future of Europe,

Is where they have fled.
Because of our damage,
Now this is our challenge.
So rather waiting for rain,
To turn to storm,
We should not weather it,
As it clouds over fast,
We should together it,
We should it forecast.

And I know I’m part of it,
So write me the chapters,
Where I turn on my discipline,
And turn all septic.
And attack, epileptic...
To infect them implicitly,
In the pomp written explicitly,
About their “humanity”,
Is mere ugly vanity,
Of conferences, of “relations”,
Of prestige and citations,
And career-climbing migrations.
To be Professor,
And let it be known?
But I just like history,
And how it had grown.

I just believe in people,
It is really that simple,
And be it how it will,
Until I lay still...
For at my funeral,
Many assemble,
Not in my excellence,
Do they resemble.
Nor in my propensity,
For philosophical density,
Nor my writing intensity.
They are there,
Because they care.
Be they one,
Be they none.
I was here,
Then I’m done.

**And even in my grave,
Where I have true peace,
This mess will cease,
For when we fall hard...
We will rise up,
And when all goes down,
Is when we will rise up.**