



Janet STREET-PORTER (b. 1946) is a TV presenter, columnist and editor. For a long time she was in charge of the BBC's Youth and Entertainment Features. She currently works as editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, a prominent newspaper. Her autobiography, *Baggage: My Childhood*, is based on the first twenty years of her life.



"We're moving," my father casually announced to my sister and me one cold January evening at tea time in Fulham; "To Perivale." He might as well have said Afghanistan or Mars. I had no idea where my parents were talking about. [...]

Now, as usual, [my father] had just issued¹ the children with the minimum information necessary. That was his style: no chitchat, no discussion. Our thoughts and opinions were of no consequence whatsoever². [...]

To this day I cannot believe how cruel this decision was: to uproot me at 14 from the place where I had not only gone to school, worked in the library at the end of our street, and belonged to the running club but, most importantly, attended the youth club next to St Dionis Church. Fulham was the epicentre of my entire world. I knew all the streets, the shops, the parks, the local gangs. [...]

I spent the next days wandering around in a haze³ of resentment. One minute I was secure in my familiar world, with my close circle of friends, my piano lessons, and my 15-minute walk to school under the railway bridge in Parsons Green Lane each morning past the sweet shop and the chip shop; the next I was plunged into commuting right across London for hours on end, denied the possibility of hanging around the neighbourhood after school, going to local events and just doing what every other teenager at my school was doing – staring at boys outside the record shop, going to cafés, buying a Wimpy. [...]

Now, we weren't in London, we weren't in the countryside. We were in a featureless, recently-built zone of housing estates, factories, pubs with huge car parks, golf courses and football pitches⁴. Street after street was empty all day, as all the inhabitants worked every hour God sent to pay their mortgages⁵. This was suburbia, and I was going to have to like it or lump it. [...]

For the next six years I would spend several hours each day commuting to grammar school in Fulham, clubs in Soho⁶ and finally architectural college in Bloomsbury⁷. I lost count of the time spent waiting on the platform of North Acton

Station for a West Ruislip train, shivering from the cold and the grim⁸ realization that once again I'd be in the dog-house with Dad for coming home after the permitted hour. Finally, one Friday night, I'd had enough – I walked out with no money in my pocket and caught a train to Earl's Court. I had left suburbia, and my parents, for good.

Janet STREET-PORTER,
Baggage: My Childhood (2004)

1. issue [ˈɪʃuː] with:
ici, fournir

2. no... whatsoever:
absolument aucun(e)

3. haze [heɪz]: *brouillard*

4. pitch: *terrain*

5. mortgage [ˈmɔːɡɪdʒ]:
emprunt

6-7. Soho / Bloomsbury
= *quartiers de Londres*

8. grim: *ici, désagréable*

