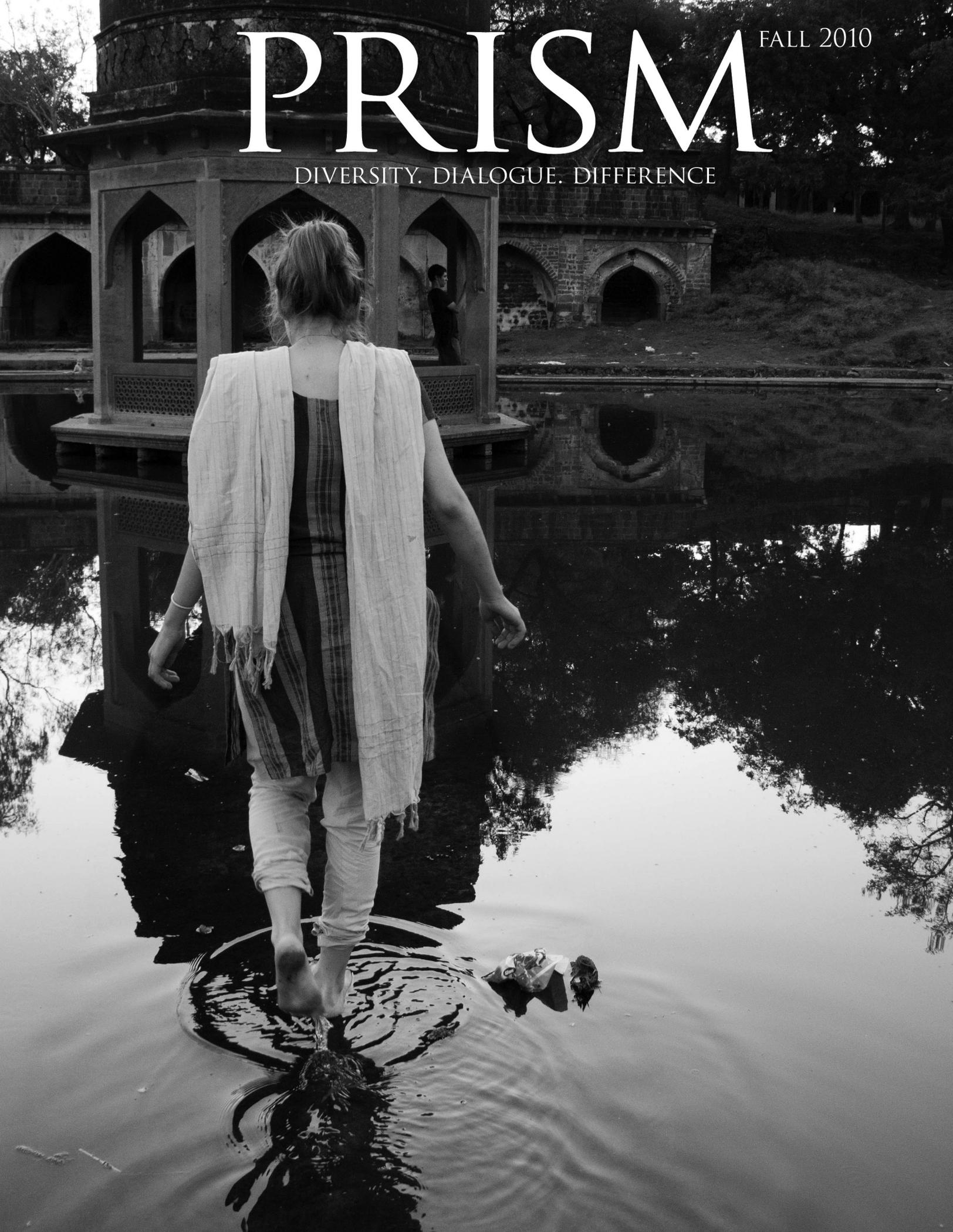


PRISM

FALL 2010

DIVERSITY. DIALOGUE. DIFFERENCE



THE FALL 2010 ISSUE

PRISM

Princeton University's literary magazine
with a focus on diversity, difference,
and international topics

Staff

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Katherine J. Chen
Shannon Togawa Mercer

EDITORS

Jordan Cruzzavala
Micheal Gunter
Phyllis Heitjan
Lizzie Martin
Janice Tiao
Kristin Wilson

LAYOUT DESIGNER

Alice Zheng

A Special Thank You To:

Giorgio DiMauro, associate director of the Office of International Programs at Princeton University, for contributing the winning entries from the International Photo Contest and giving us permission to reprint the photos.

Elizabeth Landau, the founder of Prism, who continues to offer her support for the magazine.

Saskia Miller and Stephanie Ursula Hodges, co-founders of PenTales, who passed along two wonderful stories without which this issue of Prism would not be the same.

The Lewis Center for the Arts for their constant support and generosity in making the publication of this magazine possible.

Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers,

This issue's initial goal was to capture the momentum of your summer adventures, reflections, and travels, but we ended up with much more than that. Out of a veritable treasure trove of submissions, we've chosen only the most unique artifacts of true cultural exploration for your consumption. We hope you enjoy the poetry, pictures, and essays that reflect (and refract) Princeton's diverse culture.

That said, we wouldn't be here without you, and we'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who have continued to follow *Prism Magazine* in all of its varied manifestations.

We are evolving, and frankly, we wouldn't have it any other way. Feedback from readers, contributors, and editors has crystallized in this issue, the first of a series of themed reviews. *Prism Magazine* is turning over a new leaf and we hope that you elect to turn it over with us (and the leaves right in front of you, too).

Enjoy our *Culture and Travel* issue and get in touch with us at prism@princeton.edu if you're interested in editing, submitting, or getting involved in other ways. We'd love to have you.

Warmest Regards,
Katherine J. Chen '12
Shannon Togawa Mercer '11

CONTENTS

Writing

- 6 The Yahoo Boys by Jesse Doyle
9 Jerusalem is sleeping by Shannon Togawa Mercer
10 Two Wailing Walls by Lucie Wright
12 **FEATURED ARTICLE**
PenTales: A Cultural Gateway by Katherine J. Chen
14 Down and Out in Imaginary Paris by Olivia Salazar-Winspear
16 The Story of a Man from a Golden City by Jacquetta Wheeler
20 Trajet d'immigré by Javier Alejandro Masís Obando
22 Hiding in Plain Sight by Jordan Reimer
25 Crossing by Zahava Stadler
26 Impossible by Chhaya Werner
28 The Asian Unicorn by Ting Gou
30 Rediscovering the Homeland by Nushelle de Silva
32 A Taste for Spice by Lizzie J. Martin
36 Mia Tsui – Observaciones Más Intangibles
38 Untitled by Shannon Togawa Mercer
39 Montreux Sunset by Sophie Huber
40 Mocking Time by Mark Mahernoff
41 On Hearing a Child's Laugh by Katherine J. Chen
42 A Distraction by D. S. Sulaitis
48 First Timers by Ink
49 A Chorister's Logic by Chloe Davis

Photography

- 4 Michaela Shaw – Madagascar
5 Addie Darling – Honduras
7 Alan Utria – South Africa
8 Alexandra Hay – England
9 Stephanie Chen – Italy
11 Sarah Sims – China
15 Priitha Dasgupta – France
16 Nicole Businelli – Peru
19 Hollis Barber – Morocco
23 Chhaya Werner – India
25 Chloe Ferguson – South Korea
27 Gaby Stember-Young – Thailand
29 Victor Li – China
29 Omoshalewa Bamkole – Vietnam
31 Gaby Stember-Young – Thailand
32 Gaby Stember-Young – Thailand
33 Alice Su – Vietnam
34 Chad Wiedmaier – Costa Rica
35 Danny Growald – Panama
36 Mia Tsui – Ecuador
38 Isabel Pike – Uganda
39 Ashley Eberhart – Sioux Nation
40 Jason Ramirez – Ghana
43 Andrew Sartorius – Russia
48 Mia Tsui – Brazil
51 Alexandra Hay – England



MICHAELA SHAW – MADAGASCAR

I visited Andoharano, a rural village in the commune of Ambohimahamasina, to see one of the economic development projects initiated by my employer, the NGO Ny Tanintsika ("Our Land," in Malagasy). This particular project helped to form an association of women basket-weavers called "Soamiray," who use weaving as a means of economic autonomy by producing baskets, mats, and other products for local (and hopefully someday, international) markets. This project is especially beneficial because it encourages responsible stewardship of natural resources. The woman pictured here is preparing locally- and sustainably-grown reeds for weaving, perhaps into a mat like the finished one beside her.



ADDIE DARLING – HONDURAS

This is a portion of the wall of portraits of the murdered and disappeared of Honduras on display at COFADE (Committee for the Families of the Detained and Deceased of Honduras). In the 1980's, many political dissidents or suspected communists simply "disappeared," never to be heard from again. The portrait in the foreground is of a young woman named Beatriz, aged 21, who disappeared in May 1983.

There are three conceivable ways to get rich in this world without breaking a sweat: striking lucky with a lotto ticket, marrying a merchant banker, or inheriting a fortune from that long lost Nigerian cousin you never met.

Scammers understand this better than anyone, and for quite some time they have been making a pretty penny off society's blind obsession with getting rich quick. Ultimately, they know that these types of scams have a fast-approaching expiration date on them. The more people that fall victim to their ways, the further the word spreads of their trickery and the less likely people are to fall for it. They are, effectively, the agents of their own demise. They're constantly having to reinvent, reshape, and repackage new and more cunning versions of the same scam in order to find victims to fund their lavish lifestyles.

I've always been the first to laugh at the "easy to fleece." If you're willing to send thousands of dollars to someone you've never met, as far as I'm concerned you deserved what you had coming – which is why I was left feeling so goddamn dumb-struck when I realized that an unknown lady in Salt Lake City, Utah had just fleeced my broke ass for half a year's worth of savings.

It all started in New York City. I'd packed my bags and headed on exchange from Australia to the Big Apple, knowing that my fortnightly government student payments weren't quite going to cut it on the isle of Manhattan. My visa didn't allow

me to work, so I was either to embrace the idea of poverty or try to find myself some under-the-table job. I decided to opt for the latter. I scoured Craig's List until I stumbled upon a tutoring position. It was perfect – short, simple and well-paid. The guy who was to employ me was from Iowa. He was sending his eleven-year-old son across to New York for the spring, and I was to be in charge of his learning, the price being 800 large. Over the coming weeks, we worked out every little detail: where, when, what, and how I was going to tutor him.

A month later I received a check in the mail. It was for \$3400. I figured he'd made a mistake, so I got in contact with him and he explained that he'd be leaving the country in the next day or two and hadn't had a chance to arrange his son's flights. He wanted me to deposit the check, keep my \$800, and send the rest to the child's stepmother in Salt Lake City so that she could organize his trip with the funds. It immediately started to sound a little sussed. My rip-off radar was on red alert. Nevertheless, I deposited the check and it went through. I waited a couple of days and then sent the \$2600 forward to Utah. The following day I got a call from Chase Manhattan Bank informing me that the

check I had deposited was actually a fake and that my bank balance was well, and truly, in the negative.

To add insult to injury they expected me to pay it off in the following weeks.

There's no way to describe the feeling of discovering you've just been duped. It's like the whole world momentarily stops to point its finger at you and laugh profusely in your face. I felt dimwitted, dejected, and helplessly in debt. My first port of call was the NYPD. I told them what had happened but, to my dismay, it appeared there was some truth in what The Strokes had proclaimed about New York City Cops eight years earlier. They didn't seem to get the idea of being scammed on the Internet. It seemed hopeless trying to explain.

I soon after sent a letter to Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan Chase pleading him to show some compassion and cancel out the debt. I have no doubt he never saw the letter, but what his secretary sent back was nevertheless amusing. It went something along the lines of "I understand your situation in its entirety and feel deeply sorry for you, but due to the Global Financial Crisis we are unable to assist you in this difficult time – all the best in repaying it."

Why thank you, Mr. Dimon. I'm glad



ALAN UTRIA – SOUTH AFRICA

These two boys were playing in the heap of rubbish when they sat down and began to read.

to hear you and your multi-million dollar salary “feel my pain.” There was one last hope – Frank Abagnale Jr., former check forger and scamming extraordinaire of *Catch Me If You Can* fame. A friend had told me that he’d set up a consulting firm to deal with this very type of incident. I got in contact with him and he gave me the best piece of advice I had heard from anyone to date: “Don’t pay the debt.” It was too small an amount of money for Chase Manhattan Bank to really kick up a fuss over.

So, I spent the next couple of months satisfied in following his advice. But the fact that someone was lavishly spending all that money somewhere halfway across the country slowly started to eat away at me. I did have an address on the back of the envelope that the check arrived in. It was deep in suburban Des Moines. Summer break was fast approaching and so, I decided to head across the Midwest to

Iowa. I hadn’t quite figured out what I was going to do when I found this guy. I just knew I had to find him.

I made my way across the northern states, through the urban ghost town of Detroit, across Indiana, up to Chi-town, and finally westward and into the heart of rural America: Iowa. I pulled up outside the address, and a 6’2” Eastern European man emerged. He was my height, but built like the proverbial brick-shit-house. I told him my tale and he started to get quite emotional. It turns out he’d had his identity hijacked by a scamming ring and thousands of false documents sent out under his name. He’d been receiving death threats to his home almost daily from victims that he’d supposedly duped. The FBI had even thought he was in on the act, and taken him away for interrogation accordingly only to discover he, too, was a victim. But a victim of whom?

This is where The Yahoo Boys come

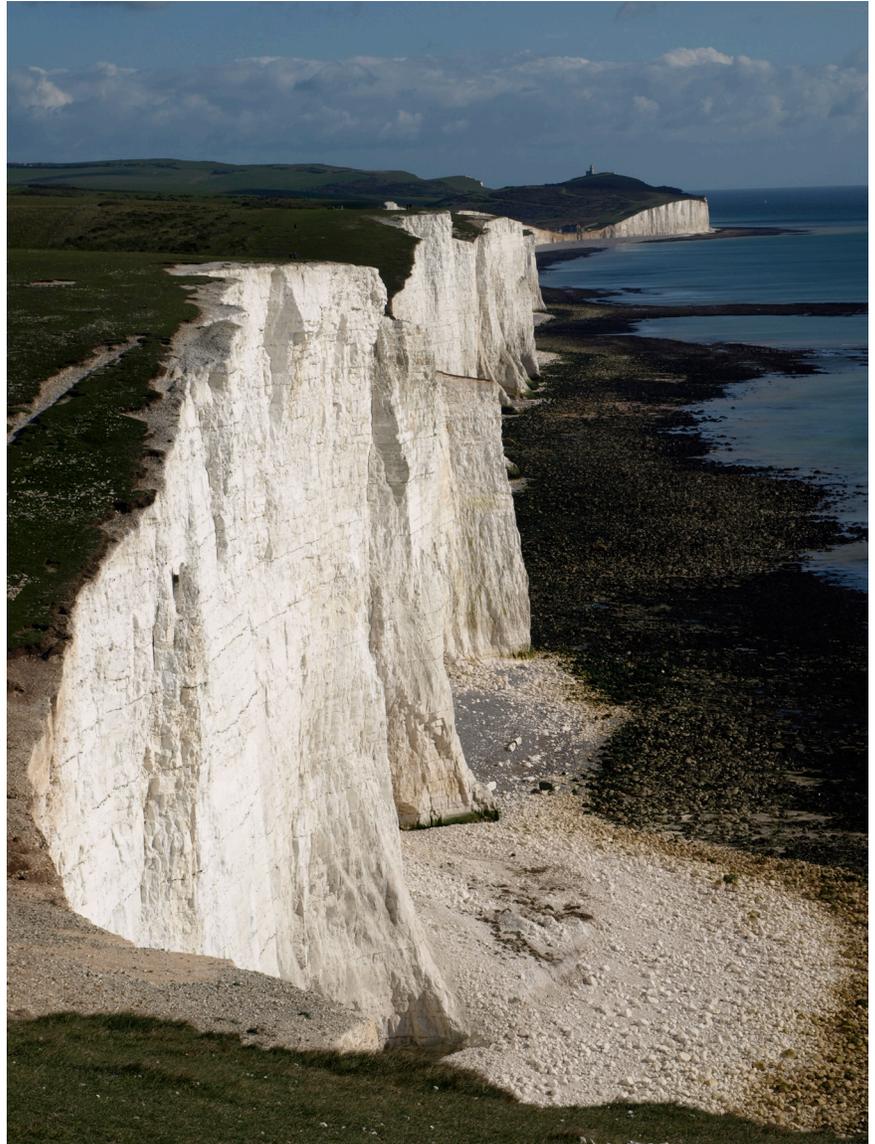
in. Young, talented, and with little prospect of finding decently paid work, they turned to the world of Internet scamming. They do so for many of the same reasons that people fall for their scams – to get rich quick. They now form a global network operating out of many different parts of the world, but the hub of their operations remains Festac Town, a derelict neighborhood hanging to the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria. Each day they send thousands of e-mails with only a few replies. But this is all they need, for each reply could potentially mean more than the equivalent of a month’s wages in Nigeria.

Their scams are far from original. In fact, they’re a rehashed version of the Spanish Prisoner scam that originated during the nineteenth century, wherein victims were convinced to invest money to help release a wealthy individual from prison for a generous reward that never eventuated. In Nigeria, the scamming

boom coincided with the 1980s oil glut, which nearly destroyed the country's economy. In the wake of this economic crisis, many university graduates found themselves deeply immersed in the world of scamming as a result of the chronic job shortage.

The amount they con victims into sending varies. For some, it can be hundreds. For others, it can be their entire savings. In 2003, a 72-year-old pensioner from the Czech Republic was conned into sending his life savings forward to Nigeria for an "oil-investment project." Upon learning that the money could not be retrieved from a senior diplomat at the Nigerian embassy in Prague, he withdrew an automatic weapon and shot dead the bearer of bad news. Others resort to taking their own life. Leslie Fountain, a senior technician at Anglia Polytechnic University in England, set himself on fire after falling victim to a scam. The effect scams can have upon victims and their families are usually nothing short of devastating.

Unfortunately for victims, there is little the authorities can do in the way of locating and prosecuting The Yahoo Boys. They use disposable e-mail accounts, fake addresses, and Internet cafes to fuel their clandestine operations. For many victims, the only way of acting upon their frustration has emerged in a form of Internet vigilantism known as "scam baiting" – a movement with an underlying altruistic motive. It involves wasting scammer's time by pretending that you've been hooked. In doing so, scam baiters hope they are preventing potential victims from being conned. There is even a site dedicated to the practice titled 419eater.com. So, if you're not too sure on what to do this summer, put your plans to volunteer overseas on hold and think about taking up scam baiting. You might just save a gullible college student from declaring bankruptcy.



ALEXANDRA HAY – ENGLAND

Seven Sisters Country Park on the English Channel. Dover may be the most famous spot for viewing England's white chalk cliffs, but the Seven Sisters are simply magnificent. The combination of the brilliantly white cliffs, rolling green hills, and blue water below is visually stunning.



STEPHANIE CHEN – ITALY

Looking down an inviting side street towards one of Rome's many churches.

Jerusalem is sleeping

BY SHANNON TOGAWA MERCER

I am awake.

There are cobblestoned streets outside
horseshoe-kissed limestone sweltering
in the Israel summer.

The Israel summer is sleeping.
I am awake.

There are pomegranate trees with
children jumping and picking in
their skirts and jackets.

Israel's children are sleeping.
I am awake.

Sometimes in the night I smell on the wind
olive trees as oil leaks from
their juicy leaves; air is cool,
ice left melting in Jerusalem kitchens
and men are sun burnt like olives
or pomegranates and I am awake,

and Jerusalem is sleeping.

BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

HELP

WALLS BUILD FEAR, BRIDGES BUILD HOPE

APARTHEID

Filing off the bus,

we say goodbye to our guide Dan for the afternoon. An Israeli tour guide, he can't come with us into the West Bank, a territory governed by the Palestinian Authority. We pass one-by-one through the gate of an iron fence and from there it is an empty slope leading up to the barrier. It's two, maybe three stories high, solid concrete and gray. I look up and see loops of barbed wire lining the top. A guard shouts at a few of us in Hebrew. No pictures.

The chaperones hand us our passports as we approach the first checkpoint. All we have to do is flash the blue passport and our passage through the several checkpoints is relatively quick. We each show them our individual passports, but we are not asked any questions nor do we receive any suspicious, questioning glances. As teenage American tourists, we're not of any real interest to the guards. Still, I feel uneasy every time we push through one of the rotating doors. Made of chipped metal, they remind me of something you'd drive prisoners or cattle through, not free people.

Finally we emerge through the actual barrier. A winding, barred walkway re-

mains, reminding me of the roller-coaster lines at Six Flags amusement parks. Instead of signs reading "30 Minute Wait From Here," I see graffiti.

BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

HELP

WALLS BUILD FEAR, BRIDGES BUILD HOPE

APARTHEID

"Come on," my teacher says softly to me, nodding ahead. Transfixed by the messages, I'd fallen behind. I wasn't the only one; behind me, a friend sneaked a photo: THEOTHERWAILINGWALL.COM

"Come on," my teacher repeats. With a final glance backwards, we exit the walkway and jog to catch up with the group, already loading the tour bus.

Here we meet Iman, our guide for the afternoon in Bethlehem. Much to our surprise, she is Christian. This makes

sense as we will be touring the Church of the Nativity, but it never occurred to us that a Palestinian guide would be anything other than Muslim. Assumption incorrect. Around 35-years-old, Iman speaks practically perfect, mile-a-minute English. After a much-needed lunch, a tour of the site where tradition holds Jesus was born, and a little shopping, Iman takes us back to the barrier. The range of emotions on the Wall strikes me. Hate and anger certainly, the very emotions the Wall was built to protect against. But as I see the graffiti a second time, I notice a tone of hope as well, pleas for cooperation and dialogue.

Less than 24 hours later and five miles away we visit another wall of equal emotional intensity. The official Wailing Wall.

It's smaller than I'd imagined. Less imposing. Less formal. Tufts of green grow out of cracks. The closer we go, the more uncomfortable I feel. Women, wailing women, surround us. Many of them clutch a black book. They hide their faces in the Torah, rocking back and forth.

It is the rocking that moves me the most. Their backs hunch and unhunch,



SARAH SIMS – BEIJING, CHINA
A restored section of the Great Wall of China.

halfway to fetal position. The motion is so fraught with emotion, so basically and instinctually human, I struggle to blink back tears.

To my right, a woman leans against a chair. She wears a knee-length black skirt and a light-blue collared shirt. With the exception of her shoes that appear more comfortable than fashionable, she could be right out of a J. Crew catalog. Like many others, this young woman presses her forehead into the Book, her body cradled by invisible arms.

I can't help but wonder as I watch her: Why is she here? Are the pages she presses to her face significant? Does she find comfort in a favorite passage or did she simply open it to a random page? Did she write a note, crinkle it, and ease it into the Wall's cracks like so many others? Does she come to the Wailing Wall often, or just

this morning?

My friend nudges me. It is our turn to approach the Wall. Note in hand, I make my way up. I don't understand how one wall could hold so much. Scraps of paper are nestled into every cranny. For fear of dislodging someone else's note if I attempt to stuff mine into already overflowing nooks, I kneel down to those stones just above the ground. Here is a place for my own prayer.

While backing away, I feel that there is something special about this place. The air is charged with feeling; there is more than just grief.

As we meet up with the boys in the common area, I see a family making their way down the stairs. A bar mitzvah perhaps? The grandfather begins to sing and the others, his children and grandchildren, join in, their voices full of spontaneous joy.

At a glance this trip might seem more touristy than anything else, but it was the epitome of one of the most valued lessons I took away from my four years at Noble and Greenough School. Nobles taught me that it was more important to be well informed and unsure about where you stood than to pick a side for the sake of having an opinion. This was not a trip about judgments. It was not a trip about finding evidence to support whatever political views you had coming in. This was a trip about observations, observing so that we might better understand the people and appreciate the complexities of the region. The only conclusion I am prepared to make is that any individual involved in negotiations could benefit from a trip to the two wailing walls.

PENTALES

A Cultural Gateway

BY KATHERINE J. CHEN

It all began with twenty blank notebooks distributed by two childhood friends to twenty people. Each lucky recipient of a notebook was asked to start a story within its pages, and then pass the book along to someone they knew who would repeat the process until the book was full. A quick turn through any one of these books reveals a treasure trove of stories, a few of which are written in neat script, while others resemble pages from a children's exercise book, replete with chicken scratch handwriting and colorful doodles.

These notebooks continue to travel around the world today, collecting new and untold stories wherever they go. An experiment that began with a mere twenty people has now blossomed into a literary organization that coordinates regular story contests, offers free creative writing classes in New York City, and hosts salon nights in seventeen different cities around the globe. Even the original storytelling experiment has in one year's time accumulated 140 participants and an international readership with writers from France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and even Australia.

Given the far-reaching influence of PenTales, it should come as no surprise that co-founders Saskia Miller and Stephanie Ursula Hodges are avid travelers themselves. Their talent for storytelling coupled with their entrepreneurial spirit has enabled PenTales to become nothing short of a global movement, all within a

year's time.

"We certainly didn't plan for PenTales to become a global movement, but I think it has become that quite naturally because Stephanie and I are always thinking globally. We are both products of German and American sets of parents, which – at least for me personally – has certainly been the source of my interest in travel, in exploring other cultures, and in striving to always think about things from different perspectives," says Saskia.

Stephanie explains that the idea for PenTales sprung from an extremely basic concept: everyone has their own stories to tell, and more often than not, people want to share their experiences as well as hear what others have to say on the same subject. She says, "A year after launching PenTales, we are all the more convinced that storytelling – whether it's through writing, photography, or filmmaking – has the power to connect people across borders, experiences, and languages and create meaningful, creative dialogue."

Organized around a central theme, PenTales events provide storytellers from all walks of life with a chance to read original work, hear new voices, and exchange

creative discourse on everyday experiences. PenTales Cities are diverse, ranging from Hanoi to Damascus to Paris, but the salon nights they host all share common themes, like "Love and Heartbreak," "Making Ends Meet," and "Great Expectations." Thus, it is entirely possible for followers of PenTales to read stories on "Crime and Punishment" from writers in Berlin, Munich, London, Mexico City, New York, and Vienna since all of these locations at one point or another hosted salon nights on the same theme.

"I think the fact that we emphasize both meeting in person and sharing stories on a global online platform makes what we are doing very unique and appealing," says Stephanie. "We're drawing on an age-old tradition of meeting and sharing stories in person and taking advantage of the web to make local stories accessible to people across the world."

Saskia adds, "It doesn't take much to get people interested in starting a local chapter because those who do are already the kind of people who like to bring people together and who are interested in exploring cultural and global perspectives. We simply offer these social innovators a new



Saskia Miller (left) and Stephanie Ursula Hodges (right) at PenTales New York City's "Crime and Punishment" event.



Stephanie Ursula Hodges at PenTales New York City's "Love and Heartbreak" event.



Saskia Miller at PenTales New York City's "Love and Heartbreak" event.

way of gathering creative minds and of making a cultural impact.”

Traveling is likewise vital to the growth of this storytelling startup, and Saskia and Stephanie are most experienced in the art of exploring new cultures and countries. “Merely going to a different place will not do the trick,” Stephanie explains. “Be a sponge, take it in, ask questions, learn phrases, make friends. When you really get to know a place and a people, you make it your own. Then, you can also write about it. And even if you can’t travel, there are a thousand other ways to get to know different cultures and perspectives – starting with merely listening.”

Saskia, on the other hand, believes that travel and literature yield some of the same “amazing side effects.” Through traveling and reading, people are better equipped to understand themselves, their cultures, and their own perspectives. “Travel affords you this experience in a very active, hands-on way and literature in a more vicarious and imagination-based fashion,” she says. While it is perhaps too lofty a goal to travel every corner of the world and read every book printed, Saskia believes “we need both methods of experi-

encing life in order to build a richer view of the world and the universe we live in.”

No matter how PenTales expands in the next decade or two, the organization’s young founders promise that stories will always exist at the heart of the movement. “It would be amazing to see people from Tel Aviv, Berlin, and Baghdad all creatively tackling the same ideas. However we grow, we will continuously innovate the field of sharing and consuming stories,” says Stephanie. Saskia envisions a similar destiny for PenTales, as a “hub for global stories in five years, fostering a space for a new kind of cultural dialogue.” Saskia and Stephanie’s ambitious dreams for PenTales leave little doubt as to the success of this exciting new startup, which has revived in little more than a year’s time the literary salon night and initiated a global online exchange of personal and creative stories.

In celebration of our Culture and Travel issue, Stephanie and Saskia share their favorite places to travel:

Stephanie:

For me, this is sort of an impossible question. My favorite place is ever-changing. It is usually the place I most recently visited, although for it to be truly among the top I also need to have felt either very happy or very sad there. So, a place that qualifies would be Ladakh, India. I was there last summer and woke up every morning more in love with the mountains and more excited to go exploring and making the place my own.

Saskia:

There are too many to choose just one, so I will have to name a few that stand out. Our family friends’ 600-year-old house deep in the Alps of Austria; the bright turquoise icebergs of Iceland; my grandmother’s home in Oberbruch, Germany; a friend’s car with me in it traveling through Mexico City half-scared and half-exhilarated; the small lake “Mueggelsee” in East Berlin, which I biked around with my boyfriend last summer; my friend’s pool overlooking the ocean in Panama City; and a tucked-away-on-a-winding-street apartment in Istanbul. To name a few of the amazing places out there. Ah, travel.

The following two stories – Olivia Salazar-Winspear’s “Down and Out in Imaginary Paris” and Jacquetta Wheeler’s “The Story of a Man from a Golden City” – were both contributed by PenTales.

Down and Out in Imaginary Paris

BY OLIVIA SALAZAR-WINSPEAR

When people think of Paris, mythical place names spring to mind: the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Musée d'Orsay, Versailles, the Eiffel Tower.

In Imaginary Paris, every street corner has a view of the Eiffel Tower.

Imaginary Paris exists in films, in literature, and in other people's holiday photos. Even the residential areas, featuring no discernable Paristastic monuments, would pass muster on a Disney storyboard. Pretty iron-wrought footbridges sit atop the canal where Amélie skimmed her stones. Jaunty shop-fronts promise they're not faceless chain stores. Barmen pour lunchtime apéritifs for locals; they'll sell you a pack of cigarettes after hours if you ask nicely.

There's a sheen about the city that makes roughing it here seem so quaint that it's almost glamorous. There's a certain folklore to it, too. Ordinary Parisians like to think they were responsible for kicking the King out of town and reclaiming the streets. Les Misérables taught us that the kids in the shabby chic rags were the good guys.

Hemingway sketched a paupers' Paris of table wine and unheated lodgings in *A Moveable Feast* and spawned a raft of left-bank copycats who are still wandering around the place now. At the place Mouffetard, they're the ones with the concerted faces as they encounter not the gleam of a copper countertop and the soft clink of wine glasses but the warm whiff of cheap kebab meat and the laminated menus of the Haagen Dazs café. I always sensed there was something phony about Hemingway's sparse prose. Slumming it in the Latin Quarter, the young writer also took in trips to the Louvre, strolls along

the Seine, and the odd punt on the horses.

George Orwell wrote famously of being down-and-out in Paris and – to give him his dues working as a kitchen-hand – he really was. In his tragi-comic account of slave labor, Orwell expresses his solidarity with his Parisian brothers-in-arms and pities the lowly dishwashers he works with. I wonder what he would make of the city's down-and-outs today. Most of them sleep rough; some would jump at the chance to wash dishes. Many of them don't speak any French at all.

Suleimane is my neighbor. He lives near that tree-lined canal, the one flanked by cycle paths and bars serving organic wines. Well, he lives there as much as he lives anywhere. I make pantomime angry faces when he drops paper on the floor. He laughs at me and tells me in Afghanistan there are bits of paper all over the floor. I tell him that's not a good thing and he shakes his head grimly and agrees, "No, no, Afghanistan's no good."

It seems trivial to be talking about littering. If I push him for more his tone changes, his mouth sets, shuts, and he flicks the hood up on his sweater. Since we only possess about twenty common words, I've learned to read these gestures. He lowers his gaze. So we talk about whether it's cold or hot (it is cold), whether pomegranates are beautiful or not (they are), and we make sweeping generalizations about whether the staff at the police station are kind or mean (they are mean).

With such forced economy, language becomes elastic; single words swell to be-

come huge recipients of endless concepts. In our language, the word "forbidden" covers: shops that are closed for business, urban areas that are off-limits, non-existent agencies, mobile phones that are broken or switched off, Saturday and Sunday for Westerners, and locked doors.

When I speak English, he laughs and repeats: "Oh my god!" Then I ask him about his god – does he go to mosque? Sometimes. He asks me if I read the Qur'an and doesn't understand when I explain I don't have one. No god, either. No, Allah? But, yes, Allah? No, no Allah.

When we talk about obstacles, risks, fears, and the future we say Insh'allah – god willing – a lot. It's another all-encompassing phrase that can be neatly applied to any aspect of the life he has here, teetering on a razor-edge between surviving and not.

We go to a police station on the edge of town to register an asylum demand. As I leaf through a scrappy file of photocopied papers in a depressingly predictable plastic folder documenting ten months of illegitimacy, I realize it's probably not his first time in this room. I process the names and dates and infractions that make him speak in that guarded, reticent tone whenever we talk about why he came to Paris.

"Is your birthday really the first of January?" I say. "That's cool!" He shrugs. I learn that he shares this birthday with many, many Afghan refugees; the years vary, but they're all worryingly recent. The pile of paper covers his life, more or less, but none of it's valid. No stamps, no

“
...Money, food?
Yes, but not every day.
A bed?
Not tonight, no. But
tomorrow, perhaps.
Insh'allah.”

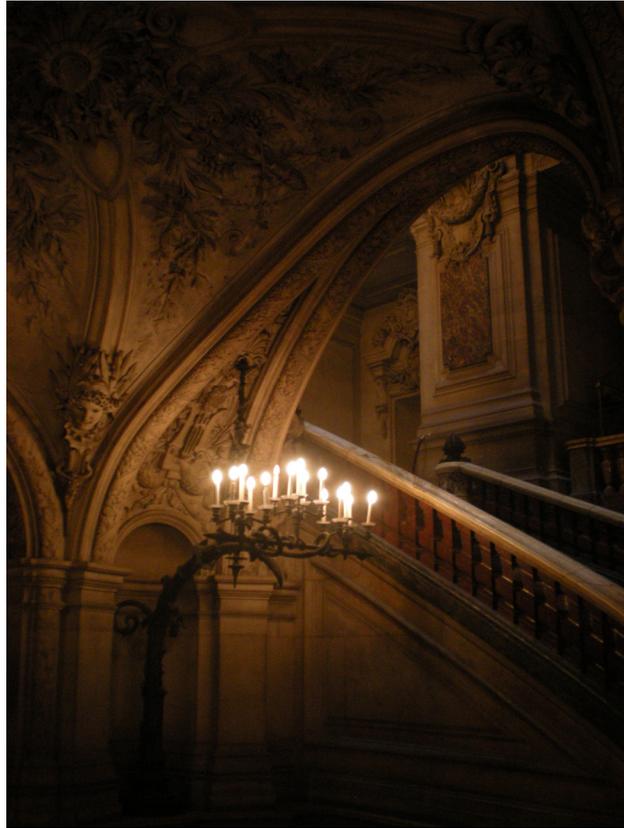
biometric photos, no address. Not good papers.

In the waiting room there are squawking Chechen children, herded by their clucking mothers. There are more white faces than I expected and more women and children, too. But I suppose real asylum seekers aren't played by the same cast of thousands who trudge before our screens on the evening news. I can't hear any languages I understand; there are no interpreters. Staff use a mixture of volume and aggressive stabbing gestures with ballpoint pens to get their points across.

After four hours, we get bored. Our habitual pantomime style of conversation is hampered by our limited stage and minimal props. I offer up some reading material in the form of my passport (good papers). He nods approvingly at the photo page of my passport, confirming that the image is, indeed, me and proceeds to read everything, ponderously and methodically, from the back page to the front, upside down.

Walking home, we stop for a coffee and I'm surprised (and not a little amused) when he pushes a crumpled five-euro note into my hand to give to the waiter. Where did that come from? A friend. Really? It doesn't look like a lie.

Over time, I've learned to identify the half-second pause that precedes an untruth. That afternoon I'd learned about something that wouldn't pass for an adolescence in any other part of the world and a very long, dangerous journey taken in order to leave it behind. But I've never fully understood how he scrapes by, here, now. Money, food? Yes, but not every day. A bed? Not tonight, no. But tomorrow, perhaps. Insh'allah.



PRITHA DASGUPTA – FRANCE

This photo was taken under the grand staircase of the Parisian Opera House.

The Story of a Man from a Golden City

BY JACQUETTA WHEELER



NICOLE BUSINELLI – HUAMANZAÑA, PERU

Manchita was our steadfast companion during a 14-mile hike through the barren desert. Although she only ate our leftover chifa (Peruvian-Chinese takeout) the entire day, she still managed to beat us to the top of the summit with energy to spare.

Once upon a time,

a baby was born into a family in a golden city, where the air sang tunes and camels wandered the streets freely. As the baby grew into a young boy, the world seemed a beautiful place until one day when his parents sat him down and told him they were separating. His mother moved out of the house, and another lady moved in. But she was unkind to the boy, and treated him cruelly. Gradually the boy's golden city became gray and he longed to escape to the green pastures of other lands he

had read about in books and magazines. He longed to escape the cruel grip of his stepmother, and so, as soon as he turned 17, he ran away.

The boy traveled around the world, making friends and taking odd jobs to keep himself going. He had a spirit inside him that always met others with a smile, and he learned about life and the wonders of the world. The boy became a big, strong man. He was kind, gentle, and wise, and from all his travels he'd learned

how to speak several languages. One day, when he'd reached a particularly beautiful country, where green meadows stretched out for miles on end and great buildings stood proud and strong, he decided to stop. He got a job as a translator in the city and started to make some good money. Then he met a beautiful woman, with long black hair, dark skin, and green eyes. They fell in love, got married, and started a family.

The man and his wife soon established themselves in the community and prospered. They had three children, a girl

and two boys. The man was a hands-on sort of dad. He changed nappies without complaining, and spent hours entertaining the children and giggling with them. The happy couple made close friends with all of their neighbors.

It just so happened that one of their neighbors came from the same country as the man, and they got to talking about the part of the world they both came from. They reminisced upon old habits and the customs they grew up with. They talked and talked until they both suddenly felt quite sad. They felt sad because, as much as they had enjoyed their travels and had expanded their minds and were proud of their lives, they missed their golden city. They also felt a sense of guilt. They had prospered in these richer, greener lands, and knew that back home people still suffered. The man suddenly had an idea. He said to his neighbor, "Why don't we go back? We could go and visit our golden city. We could take our families with us, and we could give something back to the people we grew up with. We could build them schools and show them how to dig for water, and then we will come back and continue our lives here."

His neighbor sighed and said, "My friend, I, too, would love to go back, but alas, it is impossible for us both. The King of our land is a very proud man. That we ever left, he took as an insult and therefore a crime. If we ever returned, he would imprison us upon arrival for the rest of our lives. Believe me, I have heard stories of this. It is not worth the risk. However, not far from the golden city where we grew up, I've heard of another place, a mountainous land. It is beautiful there and the customs are much the same. However, the people are very poor, and I think there is a lot we could do there to help. Many other travelers I have met have told me about this place. We should go there instead."

So the man and his friend packed up their bags, and off they went with their two families. Once they arrived in this mountainous land they settled into a big

house, which the two families shared together in the city. They used this as their base and started building a girls' school in a village outside. During this time, the man's wife became pregnant with their fourth child. The two families lived happily for a few months, and the men enjoyed teaching their children the customs of their own childhood.

Then, one day, everything changed. The low rumble of airplane engines could be heard coming from far, far away, and they became louder and louder and louder. Suddenly, bombs started falling from above and the whole sky filled with smoke. Chaos erupted, and fear took hold of the people, and the man and his neighbor and the women and the children all grew very afraid.

Now, these foreign forces came from a land of giants, far, far away that had special powers. These giants were angry because some bad men had come to their country and taken the lives of many of their own. The giants had come to this mountainous land to find the bad men who had killed their people and punish them. They told their citizens, "Fear not! We know where those monsters are. We shall find those who attacked us and we shall lock them up on an island for the rest of their lives, so they can never attack us again. Just you wait and see."

So the giants arrived in the mountainous land and started searching for the bad men. However, they were not used to the landscape, and had great difficulty navigating the mountainside. Whereas they could only take big, heavy steps, the natives were able to scurry, run, and hide in caves and grottos beneath the giants' feet. As they searched and searched, the giants were growing increasingly frustrated. Finally, they hatched another plan. If they couldn't find the bad men, they'd need the help of others. They told the natives that they would give them gold for every bad man they helped them to find.

Now, the natives were very poor, and this gold would help them beyond imagi-

nation. GOLD! Just for finding one bad man? It would end their worries of how to feed their children. It would keep them warm in the winter. It would keep them safe and healthy for a very long time. They were, as one might imagine, determined to achieve this goal.

The natives heard of some strange men who had arrived not too long ago. Two men, two families, living in a big house nearby. They were not from the mountains. They had more money than most people, and they looked a little different.

"These must be the bad men," they thought. "It must be them!" And off they went to find them.

Meanwhile, the man and his neighbor heard that the giants were bribing the village people to hand over men, and they knew this meant danger. They knew they were vulnerable. They were a minority in a country that was under attack whose attackers were spreading fear and greed.

"We must hide!" said the neighbor.

"Yes," said the man from the golden city. "We must get away, but where will we go? Nowhere is safe! We must leave this country as fast as we can!"

So the two families, including the man's heavily pregnant wife, left their house and the school they'd been building and headed through the mountains towards the border. If they could only reach the border, they knew they'd be safe.

But they were hunted down. They were chased and seized by some men in the mountains who were hungry for the gold on their heads. The women and the children were let go. They were of no use, but the hungry men imprisoned the man from the golden city and his neighbor and waited for the giants to come and pay them their gold.

The giants came, paid the gold, took the men, and exclaimed to their people, "Look here! Look what we found! We found the bad men who attacked our land! We told you we would protect you! You are safer now than before, now that we have caught these bad men!"

This is a true story. The name of the man from the golden city is Shaker Aamer. The golden land he was born in is Saudi Arabia. The green land where he rested from his travels is England. The beautiful woman he married is called Zinnira. She is from India. He met her in Battersea, which is where they started their family and where she still lives. The mountainous land where he went to do charity work with his friend, whose name is Moazzam Begg, is Afghanistan. The foreign forces who seized them are the U.S. military. The gold they paid the villagers were bounties of \$5,000, the equivalent of five-years wages in that part of the world. And the prison they were flown to is, of course, the notorious Guantanamo Bay. They went to Afghanistan in June 2001, and were seized in December 2001.

779 men have been detained in Guantanamo since 2001. 86 percent of them got there as a result of being sold for a bounty by Pakistanis or Afghans to the U.S. military.

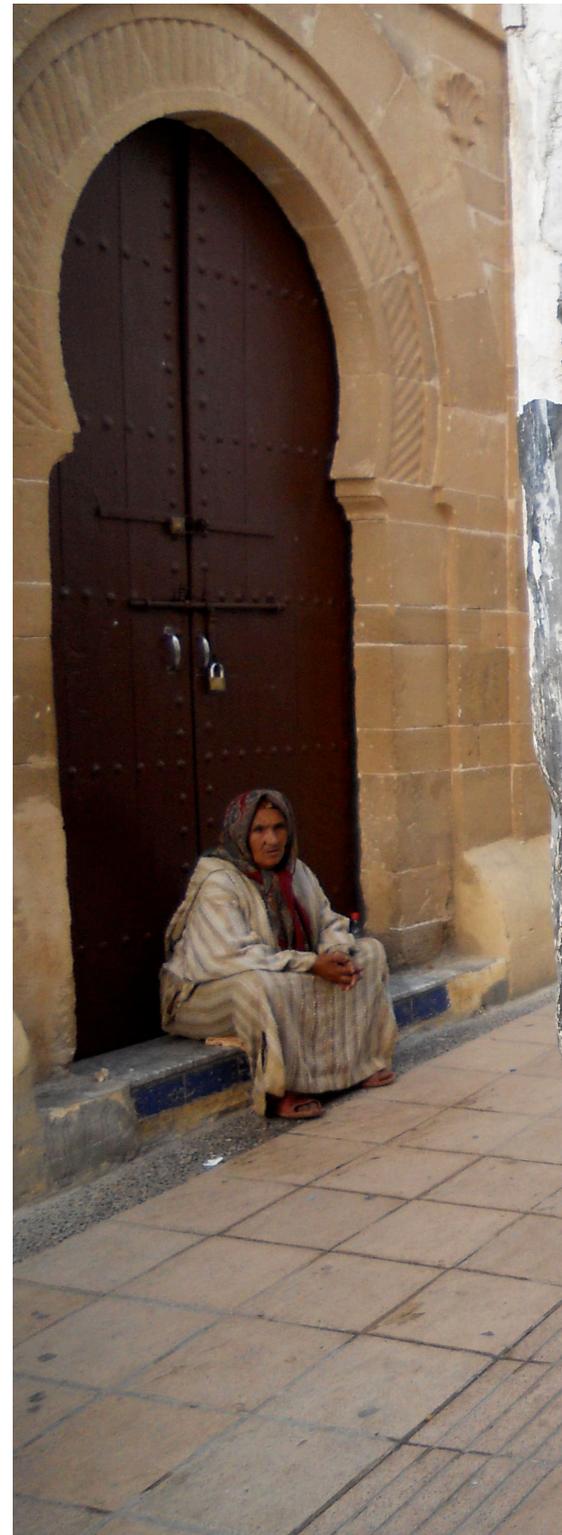
Moazzam was released from Guantanamo in 2005. He held a British passport, which made it easier for our government to get him out. Shaker was applying for British citizenship before his trip to Afghanistan. Shaker is still there. Since his seizure, Shaker has endured torture and human rights violations beyond our imagination, from years of sleep deprivation to exposure to extreme temperatures to sexual humiliation to beatings. One time, he was beaten so badly he had to have his chin and his cheek stitched up.

Shaker told his lawyers a few years ago, "They bring a big stereo, a 250-watt speaker, and put rap and rock n' roll music on so loud for long hours. Sometimes they start dancing. They

bring women to seduce you and try to harass you and abuse you sexually. Sometimes they dress you like a woman and make fun of you. They put nude photos or Playboy photos all over the walls."

His wife lives in Battersea with their four children, the youngest of whom Shaker has never met. She suffers from extreme anxiety and depression, and has been hospitalized several times. Shaker's daughter, Johlina, now 13-years-old, has taken a letter to Downing Street asking them to bring her dad home, but she never received a reply.

Shaker has never been charged with any crime. He has never been shown any evidence against him. His punishment comes from simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and from some hungry mountain people wanting gold from some giants.





HOLLIS BARBER – RABAT, MOROCCO
I passed this scene every morning on the way to work.

Trajet d'immigré

BY JAVIER ALEJANDRO MASÍS OBANDO

On commence avec la pauvreté, la soif, la faim, et la nécessité.
J'envisage mon départ d'ici, mais la pensée seule me supplicie.
Ma mère, mon père, mes frères et sœurs, les laisser me fait mal au cœur.
Tous les souvenirs, espoirs d'enfance sont jetés sans penser à ma malchance.
Qu'est-ce que je puis faire pour rester ici, même si l'éducation ne me bénéficie ?
Pays, tu m'as laissé tomber.

Retomber

Et retomber.

Le désespoir que je décris n'arrête pas quand on atterrit,
Par bateau, par avion, pied nu – finalement, ça vous a ému ?
C'est choquant je sais, inquiétant, troublant je sais,
Mais désormais faites plus d'attention au quai.
C'est moi là-bas, c'est vrai comme ça,
Mes habits chiffonnés, la barbe pas rasée.
Je suis le Maroc et la Tunisie.
Je suis le Liban et l'Algérie.
Je suis bébé, je ne suis pas né.
Je suis enfant et femme enceinte.
Je suis votre fils, je suis votre fille.
Regardez-moi bien, je suis votre famille.
Arrêtez de me voir comme d'un autre lieu,
C'est seulement grâce à Dieu que vous vivez mieux.
C'est ça la condition humaine, donc arrêtez votre haine,
On commence avec la pauvreté, la soif, la faim, et la nécessité
Quand vous en connaissez, voyez, vous deviendrez un immigré.

Journey of an Immigrant

BY JAVIER ALEJANDRO MASÍS OBANDO

My journey begins with poverty, thirst, hunger, and necessity.
I dream of leaving this place solitaire, but it is a thought I think I cannot bear.
My mother, my father, my brothers and sisters: the family part slashes at my heart.
My childhood hopes and memories smashed, prospects of good fortune gashed.
Where will I be, if even a degree does nothing to help me?
My country, you have let me down

Over

And over again.

The despair that I describe does not end when we arrive,
By sea, by air, by foot – go ahead and stare at me all covered in soot.
It's shocking I know, unsettling, troubling I know,
But from now on pay more attention to the dock.
That is me over there, as shaggy as you see, as dirty as a rock,
My clothes rumpled, my face unshaven and unkempt.
I am Morocco and Tunisia.
I am Lebanon and Algeria.
I am a baby, and I am unborn.
I am a child and pregnant woman forlorn.
I am your son, I am your little girl.
Look at me closely, and your family will unfurl.
There, now stop acting like I am from elsewhere,
It is only thanks to God that you do not share my despair.
The human condition is precisely this disparity, so withdraw your severity,
My journey begins with poverty, thirst, hunger, and need.
When these seeds in your life your nation plants, you too will begin the journey of an immigrant.

Hiding in Plain Sight

BY JORDAN REIMER

...“I have to leave,
and I’m never coming back.”

As an Orthodox Jew from New York who spent a semester abroad in Cairo,

I was already well-practiced in the Shia tradition of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). There, I morphed into a Canadian Lutheran whose long hair justified the constant wearing of a bandana to cover my head and whose freeze-dried kosher meals were in fact “specially prepared” for my “severe dietary allergies” (and thus also prevented me from eating in other’s homes without insult).

However, as I prepared to study in Yemen during the summer of 2008 – yes, I am fully aware that I am now on a U.S. government watch list or three – I knew that maintaining this alter-ego was going to be difficult (if not only undesired) right from the get-go. For one, before my trip I needed to inform the school—which booked my ticket—that I would not be able to fly in on Friday night. Secondly, the first day of the program, Saturday, was orientation where we were required to sign forms, buy textbooks, and so on. Beyond that initial hurdle, I discovered that since the Yemeni weekend was Thursday/Friday, the first day in the work week was Saturday and Saturday was going to be a regular school day. (A problem for Jews prohibited from doing work on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.)

As I arrived and immediately had to expose my Semitic origins, my apprehension quickly faded as this fact barely registered with the program’s administrators. Their only reaction was one common to any person unaffiliated with the Sabbath laws: “Oh really, you can’t carry, write,

buy things on Saturday? Why not?” Their nonchalance was so uplifting that I chose to forgo a single room, and instead bunked with three other Americans (two Texans and a Kentuckian), who likewise responded only with curiosity when I informed them that I would be donning phylacteries every morning.

As that first day drew to a close, Sabri, the founder and headmaster, came over to me and took me aside. “I understand that you’re Jewish,” he intoned conspiratorially. “And I just wanted to say that’s okay. There’s only tolerance at my school.” While I appreciated the sentiment, I took early note that if my Judaism was “okay” with him (just okay?), it might not be the case with his fellow compatriots.

Thankfully, everything did go okay. When class started, my teacher was understanding of my restrictions and very comfortably devised a plan to work around them. He and I often enlightened each other on the rampant similarities and subtle divergences in the practice of our respective faiths. One day in class, I was pleasantly surprised when the conversation turned towards the caste system in traditional Yemeni society, and he bluntly revealed that Yemeni Jews were the second-to-lowest class, right above the *akh-dam*, or untouchables. Rather than read us the Middle East party line that “Jews had

“Wait, is it
because I’m Jewish?”

“Yes.”

it so well in Arab countries, anti-Semitism was found only in Europe, and then they all betrayed their host countries by moving to Israel in 1948,” he told us straight out that the Jews faced discrimination, were mistreated, and left the country.

Even outside of the classroom, Yemenis took a pride in their rich Jewish history—a sentiment not shared in other Muslim countries. The few Jewish Yemenis who remain still, unthinkingly, walk around with long distinctive sidecurls and brandish large yarmulkes on their heads. “Jewish silver” (jewelry made by Jewish silversmiths) is recognized as being a cut above the rest and is therefore valued greatly and displayed prominently by merchants in the souk. In almost every city we visited, local residents enthusiastically took us, without prompt, to their village’s “Jewish quarter,” and proudly showed us how well they were maintained despite abandonment six decades earlier. In fact, several brick Stars of David built into the walls of these buildings are still visible and were excitedly pointed out by our hosts. As I fell into a regular rhythm of life in Yemen, my scarlet letter began to fade. And I easily fell back on my second “Other” identity; namely, a Westerner. In fact, I openly conceded my American origins as I took an internship editing a local English-language newspaper, taught English to a



CHHAYA WERNER – VARANASI, INDIA
Snake charmer on the street.

woman who worked for the Yemeni cabinet in the prime minister's office, and made frequent visits to and held regular conversations with shopkeepers eager to help visitors practice their treasured, mellifluous language.

However, in due time I discovered the dark underbelly of anti-Semitism lurking beneath the surface in Yemen. When I was fortunate enough to locate the Yemeni Jewish community, Yaish, a teenager I befriended, told me ominously that I had better be careful and not tell anyone I'm Jewish, a counter-intuitive warning when only one of us had long sidecurls and was wearing a yarmulke.

"Why?" I wondered, having had such positive experiences to date. "Do you feel in danger?"

"Oh no, not at all," he responded genuinely, as if he were surprised by the question. "But just don't."

Of course, anti-Jewish sentiment doesn't always have to take a menacing form. On a day trip to Aden, I met an English-speaking Yemeni who, after inquiring about my marital status and then proceeding to introduce me to his daughter ("This one, she lives in Canada, speaks English very good")—always an awkward exchange, but one exacerbated when one person is a Westerner and the other is completely covered head-to-toe in black— informed me that Islam will soon control the world. Not in any dangerous sense, mind you; rather, the "peace and harmony of the *real Islam*" will prevail. When I asked if he therefore supported the local Islamist political parties, he demurred, telling me that they, together with secular president Ali Abdallah Saleh and the rest of the world, are "controlled by Jews." Without missing a beat, he then invited me to his house for dinner.

But my electroshock out of this religiously tolerant Shangri La and transportation back into the real world happened when I next met with my tutoree. Given the trip to Aden, I had to reschedule our meeting to Saturday. Recalling how

flexible my administrators and teachers were with my Sabbath day limitations, as we sat down I blithely informed her that today I would not be able to write in her notebook because it's the Jewish Sabbath. She looked at me quizzically, startled, and began, "Well, I can't either..."

I immediately cut in, "Oh, are you Jewish too?"

"No," she responded and then let loose a soliloquy in Arabic that I could not possibly understand in full but boiled down to something like, "I have to leave, and I'm never coming back." As she gathered up her things, I hesitated, dumbfounded, and asked, "Wait, is it because I'm Jewish?"

"Yes."

As she walked off, I couldn't help but laugh at my first real honest-to-goodness anti-Semitic experience. A friend tried to console me by rationalizing that since all Jews are naturally Zionist spies, she might have been wary simply because she works in a prominent government office. A Mid-Eastern version of "it's not you, it's me," perhaps.

As I struggled with the incident throughout the day, I spoke about it with my shopkeeper friend Muhammad, now being careful to tell him the story of what just happened to "my roommate, the Jew." He took it in stride, sympathizing with the Yemeni woman, and explained to me that in Yemen, there is a perceived difference between Yemeni and Western Jews. Yemeni Jews are Yemenis first, sharing the same history and culture, trials and tribulations, of their Muslim counterparts and are therefore deserving of tolerance and respect. However, to Yemenis, Western Jews are naturally all Zionists, in contra-distinction to Yemeni Jews, who were forced to leave by the Israeli government. Since Zionists (Israeli or not) are naturally the enemies of Islam and the oppressors of the Palestinians, all Western Jews are suspect and therefore should be shunned. (Apparently, the head of school's indulgence to being "okay" with my Judaism was a much bigger concession than I

had originally conceived. Indeed, it was borderline treasonous.)

As someone who grew up in the yeshiva day school system, this bifurcated approach to the Jewish people contradicted my education, as I had always perceived Jews as one people scattered to the four corners of the Earth after the Babylonian and Roman exiles. (Of course, the Yemeni Jewish community may precede either exile, but that is beside the point.) We are taught to think of ourselves as Jews first, with only incidental nationalities and loyalties to our countries of citizenship. Indeed it is that unity of peoplehood which has sustained us and allowed us to maintain contacts and basic similarities throughout the Diaspora over hundreds of years.

But beyond that, I still felt unsettled. The chance to tutor a Yemeni in English and reveal myself to be a Jew had the potential to be a *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of God's name). Indeed, out of all the students, only the Jewish one volunteered his time and energy to teach a woman English for nothing in return. But moreover, it made me question my relationship with Muhammad, with whom I had grown particularly close. While I appreciated his candid explanation, how could he and I truly be friends if my very identity was a cause for revulsion? Could our relationship even be considered a friendship if I had to hide who I was? No matter how close we were, with just two words from my mouth he'd never speak to me again.

Literally the next day, as the summer program came to a close, a fellow student took me aside, as had Sabri. "I hear you're Jewish Orthodox," he began, no doubt having heard of the incident the day before.

Oh no, here we go again.

"That's great, man. I really admire the fact that you would come here. It must be really hard for you..."

Apparently, there's never an opportunity lost for *Kiddush Hashem*.

Crossing

BY ZAHAVA STADLER

In this well-structured city
of designated bicycle lanes,
I prefer to walk
counterclockwise
along the Ring A10 highway
and then cut diagonally
across the grassy island
muddying my sneakers
and shocking the orderly Dutch
as they pedal by
in perfect formation.



CHLOE FERGUSON – SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

A tilted perspective captures the intricate, dizzying details found where the outer walls of a pavilion meet the inner roof.

On Monday,

I go through the week's vocabulary with the fifth grade class I teach in Varanasi, India. The second word on the list is "impossible." *Kya matlub, Ma'am?* they ask me. What does it mean? I try to explain in English.

"Impossible means that something is not possible. That means, you can't do it. At all. So it means...not... possible..."

The English explanations work better for some words than others. Since their faces are still blank, I resort to a Hindi translation.

"Ho sakta nahi hai," I say.

"Oh! Sakta nahi hai, nahi sakta hai," they repeat to each other.

"So, for example, if I tell you, Pradyum, that you have to write a whole copy, a journal that fills all these pages—" I say, flipping through the pages of his notebook "—in five minutes, go."

They laugh.

"You would say, 'Ma'am, that's impossible,' right? I can't do it, it's impossible."

Impossible. They like the word, and the example. I wonder if I'm going to hear it during tests or about future homework assignments, and I grin. It's good for them to have vocabulary to complain with.

We move on to the next word, but for the rest of the day my mind keeps returning to this one. Impossible. What does it mean? What examples are there, really? What is impossible? I learned as a kid that "nothing is impossible"—isn't that why I had the guts to come to India? To step up and claim I could be a teacher before I'd

finished my time as a student? To leave my home and family for an entire nine months to do something completely unknown, to live and eat and breathe unknown, and learn to like it too—I came because I believed, no matter how different or crazy or difficult, that it was not impossible.

My experiences here have constantly pushed that boundary, waving my previous assumptions in my face and proving that something I had assumed impossible could and did actually happen.

A mouse in my room, at first a dirty and slightly frightening intruder, now a cute roommate. Impossible for me to just accept a mouse living in my room and pooping on my pillow, but we have worked out a schedule between us and really the only problem is when I disrupt our time-share program by being in my room in the afternoon.

A litter of six puppies—dirty and flea-bitten from the day they were born, cute faces and wagging tails unable to hold off skin diseases. Three dead and a fourth one dying—killed by motorcycles, starvation, other dogs—each body in its turn sprawled on the garbage heap till morning, when they're taken away with the plastic bags and the food the cows didn't eat. And so it goes with dogs all over the city. Impossible—I wish.

Me, a scoffer of gaudy clothing and skeptic of pink since before I can remember, buying and wearing a flaming pink sari for an entire day, and not feeling awkward or uncomfortable at all. Impossible. Where did this confidence come from?

All the little gullies and twists and turns, and even then, the larger streets that all looked the same with their rows of billboards. Taking me on a tour my first day in Banaras, Joe told me I'd learn my way around pretty quickly, and I laughed—Impossible—I have a horrid sense of direction, and there aren't even street names I can memorize! Yet I feel more comfortable navigating and giving directions here than I did at home.

A three-foot-tall Shivaling made of solid mercury—Impossible—pure mercury is liquid at room temperature, no matter how much time and faith you put into it. It must be an alloy, a compound, a joke, yet Swami-ji is so sure that this long alchemic process created something "western science" cannot, and the mercury in his temple is not only solid, it's safe to touch.

A class 7 student, with a constant sunny smile, healthy one afternoon and dead "of cold" the next morning—Impossible—as we tell his classmates the sun is flinging heat on our faces. Even the later diagnosis, a fever caused by some infected cut, cannot explain a mother who wails her mourning song or an older brother who now bikes to school alone. That they, and all of us at school, should be left with this gaping hole where our friend and student once stood—Impossible—please, God, make it impossible.

The Ganga River, curving serenely across my view. Dark gray and animated during a storm. Harshly shining in the middle of the day and disappearing into the otherworld of mist at night. Despite all



GABY STEMBER-YOUNG – FANG, THAILAND

The two girls smiling at each other are sisters and the best students in the school. You can see a lesson in the Shan language on the white board and the Thai alphabet on the wall in the colored circles.

the trash and sewage dumped into it, so pure and holy for the people of Varanasi—Impossible—how can beauty and faith make the water clean?

The idea that in just nine weeks I'll leave Varanasi, my school and work and family and friends—Impossible—there's so much more to teach, to explore, to try. How will we ever pack up and go?

It hasn't been easy to accept what I thought was impossible as true; some

things I still struggle with, and maybe always will. I do believe it's a gift India has given me, to take these beliefs I didn't know I had and turn them upside-down, to show me just how possible the "impossible" can be. After all of this, I think I'm now even less sure about what the word truly means. For my class though, I have just one example: Impossible is me being unchanged by my time in India. Impossible is me forgetting you.

The Asian Unicorn

BY TING GOU

I.

There is no time for introductions.
The shock of my body on you

startles even my bare-teethed
intentions, my good-girl mane.

The same legendary surprise
came upon the hunters on sight

of the saola, the Asian unicorn,
so rare that a paradoxical

name was required to imprint
its strangeness on people in cities

far from the underbrush and yellow
eyes, the wet black snout.

You go with it because I'm a girl
in a tight black mini, and you

don't question such things, ever.
With enough alcohol, I become

believable. My mouth is a gramophone
on a motion switch, triggered to sing.

II.

Three weeks ago, I was lost.
I wandered into a restored courtyard

from 1920s China, complete with life-size
replicas of its inhabitants,

sandwiched between two overcharging
restaurants in a commercial alley.

Mr. Ying and his aristocratic family are
enjoying an afternoon of leisure,

spread out in four congruent
buildings with the same layout—

public spaces on the first floor,
private rooms upstairs.

A study in one,
the master bedroom in another,

a white boudoir
and a vanity mirror. Then—

the shock of his son's bridal bed
next door, so finely red,

even the furniture blushed.
By the wall, a prim gramophone

began to play American jazz
when I touched it.

Decked out in pure white roses
or englamoured in bright

bold crimson, the act still
remains. In two adjacent houses,

father and mother, groom and bride
lay side by side with nestled

expectations, heirs on the line.
What about what she wanted,

the obedient bride?
What was at stake for her?

A little privacy, a breath of air,
the chance to see her skin glow

with something that could
signal want or a near replica:

*Though night is opaque,
my dearest one, can you please*

*cover the window?
Your parents might be watching.*



VICTOR LI – GANSU, CHINA

A minority woman is carrying her child on her back. The child and the man in the background are showing disapproval.

III.

My love, what of this night
is ours?

Your nose so close to mine,
in a room couched in expectancy.

Place the inkbottle of your hand
on my back. Paint patterns of wilderness.

We're becoming more awkward;
we're becoming more resplendent.

Whatever gun we're running towards,
the bastards will lose just as much.

Think of an image.
Then, add sound.

Think of an animal.
Then, add blood.



OMOSHALEWA BAMKOLE – VIETNAM

Women of the Black Hmong people in North Vietnam. These women accompanied several of my classmates and me for several hours, as we climbed hills and descended into valleys. By the end of the trip, I had purchased several items of their handmade jewelry and a small handbag, as well as talked with them about their lives, language, and culture. The woman in the center is 60-years-old. She began selling wares when she was quite young, around twelve years of age. She has met and spoken with people from all over the world, like French and Germans, even though she's never left North Vietnam.

Rediscovering the Homeland

BY NUSHELLE DE SILVA

This summer, armed with funding from the University for a summer community service project, I joined Citizens' Initiative, a group of people who are currently collecting funds and doing volunteer work to better the lives of those in Sri Lanka who have been recently rehabilitated after the war. Travelling from the south to almost the north of the island, I discovered I knew very little about the island I call home – or the inhabitants who are my country-people.

As we hurtle further into Mullaitivu, the surroundings begin to appear strangely wild. I am not sure whether it is because we are in the dry zone of Sri Lanka, where the land seems to have a harsh and tight-lipped look or because the terrain is so unfamiliar that I feel as though we are in a foreign country. Stones from the dirt road rattle against the van, and yellow tape on either side of the path feebly separates demined land from areas still riddled with “battas” – a colloquial term for landmines. We see trees and a few roofless shells of buildings riddled with bullet holes. I try to imagine the realities of years gone by – some of the heaviest fighting during the thirty-year civil war took place here – and wonder what it must have been like to have shells exploding around you as you ran for life. I can't quite do it; the land looks too quiet. Perhaps my imagination has been too sheltered to make this leap. I realize that I find it a little odd to think about the fact that the war is no more. I have become so used to it, like static in the background, not overtly affecting my life yet always influencing it, that it is strange to think it really is over.

The adults (all three wildlife enthusiasts) animatedly discuss the possibility of seeing leopards, elephants, bears, and cobras, and I realize that I am right – this is

a wild land of which I have seen precious little. While I have certainly visited some of the island's wildlife reserves in the past, I muse over the challenges facing people who live and survive in uncomfortably close proximity to these animals.

The sparse vegetation becomes denser as we drive further north, and we briefly pass through a forest. This area has been under the control of the recently defeated separatist outfit, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), for nearly the entire duration of the war. In some ways, it really is a different country. I wonder what it must be like living with radicals who believe that the only means of securing equality is through fighting for a separate state, and what it must mean now to live in an era where that separate state is not going to become a reality.

We reach the tiny village of Chiradikulam at 11:30 A.M., after eight hours of being on the road. Each cluster of villages of those who have been recently rehabilitated is overseen by a small army unit. We will be staying within the army encampment, at Major Nilupul's lodging. It is tiny and sparse, but exceedingly neat, and consists of only a small sleeping area, a smaller bathing area, and two open balconies that overlook a river. I am just beginning to discover that this tiny village is a treasure trove of incredible stories, and here is part of Nilupul's, told to us with justifiable pride:

In 1991, during a skirmish between the army and the LTTE, the Major (only 21-years-old at the time) was shot by a sniper. A shot to the head or heart brings instantaneous death – the bullet hit him on the left side of his chest, puncturing his lung. Everyone thought, of course, that he was a goner, until they saw him moving feebly. Upon rushing him to the hospital, they discovered what he himself did not know – Nilupul has dextrocardia, a congenital defect in which the heart is situated on the right side of the body.

He refers to the army boys as “la-mai” – meaning children. Looking at their faces, I think that this term of endearment may be disconcertingly apt. Many of them look as though they are barely out of their teens. They are probably my age, but I cannot conceive of myself or any of my friends in uniform, risking death, contributing to the war's end, and then co-existing for months with rehabilitated villagers who most likely sympathized with the other side. It seems a bizarre sequence of events, and again I am struck by how the life experiences of many of my country-people are poles apart from mine.

We walk over to the shady area where the playground is to be constructed, in sight of the roofless community center that will soon be rebuilt to include a pre-school. We begin work by inspecting the tires we will be using to build it. The tires are a little more decrepit than we had expected, and the tidy little plans I have drawn up beforehand will not be as useful as I had thought. While we get off to an awkward start, things pick up as we gesticulate to the villagers, using the few words of Tamil that we know, while the army boys fill in the gaps. Everyone sets to work with vigor, although the villagers are somewhat mystified by our revolutionary recycled

building materials.

After lunch, the grounds become a hive of activity, and I manage to capture some absolutely heart-warming pictures of villagers and army personnel working industriously side-by-side to paint the tires a motley assortment of colors. It is an almost utopian moment, and I dare to hope that Sri Lanka's wounds can heal. The tires are decorated with stripes and zigzags and spots and begin to take on an endearingly garish look. Three swings are set up on the neighboring trees, and the smaller children scramble to play on them almost immediately. (By the next day, some of the army boys throw any feelings of self-consciousness to the wind and are swinging away happily themselves.)

The villagers have a tendency to paint everything red and yellow – the colors of the LTTE – and we add as much blue and green and lilac as possible to neutralize the color scheme. I am somewhat pained, as an architecture student, by the lack of Order and Method in which the tires are decorated, but the villagers – especially the children – are far from troubled by this fact. By a series of happy accidents, the playground becomes three “parts” – stacks of different heights, half-sunk rings to jump over or crawl through, and a wobbly-looking explosion in the middle. (It looked quite sophisticated in the plans I brought, but when there is no electricity to use a drill one is forced to improvise.)

By evening, the playground is largely complete, except for the little playhouse we are constructing out of dismantled bunkers. I burst with pride at how it has turned out, and the soft yellow evening light makes it look lovelier. I note that our village volunteers are army personnel and village boys, and the only females working on this project are, well, us. Towards the end of the day, however, two little girls shyly sidle up to observe us at work, and one joins in when tempted with a paintbrush. I count this as a small victory.

As the day draws to a close, I am covered with paint, smell strongly of kerosene

oil from when I tried to remove said paint, and am ridiculously grubby and dusty. Allowing the village boys to paint my jeans different colors has not helped my dignity much, either. I discover that bliss is taking a cold bucket shower in Nilupul's bathroom. Little tree frogs peer at me from the soap rack and the walls, and jump on to the flimsy shower curtain just as I am about to push it aside. As I shower, I am nervously convinced that I will either tread on one by accident, or scoop one up with my bowlful of water and pour it on my head.

Tuesday is a much shorter day, given that we have a long journey home. In the morning, we hand out packets of seeds that have been donated, finish work on the small playhouse, and make lists of villagers who would like to keep livestock and poultry – if we can find the funds to help them out. We also begin work on the village community center, damaged and roofless like every other building in the area, finally entrusting the villagers and army officers with construction drawings and supplies to continue building.

After lunch, we begin the long journey back home to Colombo. I doze fitfully, and wake up to find we are almost back home. Suddenly, the city seems surreal and I am strangely startled by the things I have always taken for granted – bright lights, tarred roads and the short, squat concrete jungle that is the capital.

It is disconcerting to realize that my life in Colombo is not so different from



GABY STEMBER-YOUNG – FANG, THAILAND

Orange plantations behind the school on the hillside, and the Thai flag flying above.

the lives of my friends at Princeton, and that I identify so much better with people from the other side of the world than with people whose homeland I share. I am embarrassed by the thought that while I entertained lofty visions of bettering the lives of my people, I had not the faintest inkling of how they lived and that their life experiences were incomprehensible to me. I say I have lived through Sri Lanka's war years, but I haven't. They have. They have lost their homes and possessions; they have had children taken away to be soldiers; they have run from gunfire and seen loved ones die in front of their eyes. I try to recall the most excruciating experiences I have ever had, and can only think of sunny days and smiling faces.

The experience of spending a mere two days in Chiraddikulam leaves me with a sense of estrangement, and I find I cannot live my city life with quite so much complacency as before.

A Taste for Spice

BY LIZZIE J. MARTIN



GABY STEMBER-YOUNG – FANG, THAILAND

Kids, the children of Shan migrant workers from Burma, having their lunch meal. The lunches are paid for by the Blood Foundation, along with the teacher's wages. These lunches are often the best meal of the day they get, and they start by saying grace, feeling sorry for the poor people who have nothing to eat when they are only a step away from starvation themselves. We buy them big 5-kilogram tins of biscuits which the teacher gives them in handfuls when they come in to school in the mornings.

Pass the chili sauce.

I know you didn't expect to hear that from me. I know that we've eaten together at Mexican restaurants, and you've watched me avoid the salsa. I'm sure you've seen desperation in my eyes when I ask for water after eating something with too many onions or too much pepper. You were probably there when I was preparing for my trip to India, too, and I bet what comes to mind is that list I made of ways to deal with food that is too spicy – milk, bananas, bread, gasping frantically, etc.

But that's different now. One night, I went out to dinner and found that the food was not spicy enough. Yes, I reached for the pepper and the salt, the whole onions, and finally the pickle, which is a magical, neon orange Indian sauce that literally opens your sinuses when you look at it.

And then I wondered what exactly living in India for nine months did to me.

There's something about being relatively independent in a place where you only kind of speak the language, I guess. There's something about taking sleeper trains to the Taj Mahal or riding a camel through a desert in Rajasthan. There's something about squeezing your bike in between a cow and a school bus that is actually a rickshaw packed with children lined up like crayons in a box being pulled by a man who is a little bit thinner than the last ironing board I encountered. There's something about drinking mango smoothies on the street and planning a trip upriver for some swimming in the Ganga and elbowing your way into a temple at five in the morning. And there's something

about India, something about the way that people live. Something overwhelming, something bigger than words, something that doesn't fit neatly in between capital letters and periods.

It's extraordinary, really, how extraordinary things are. Imagine a flash of hot pink salwar peeking out beneath a dark burka. Picture a teenage boy on a motorcycle with knitting needles for his mother clamped between his teeth. Close your eyes, and see mustard fields with miles of golden flowers. See the woman in a sequined sari with a basket of water buffalo chips balanced on her head, and see the woman next to her with a television on hers. Remember those stiff-necks, those slow steps, and the way they never look down. Watch the kites dance over the city

and realize that there isn't a breeze. Drink chai standing on a street corner. Listen to the bells from the temple next door. Smile at the rickshaw drivers who remember you, "Hello madam! Ravidaas Gate, for the bus, na?" Check on that shopkeeper who had a headache last week. Teach English classes on straw mats under mango trees, gesturing wildly, letting your hair go wild in the hot wind, and laughing with your students when they make their first jokes in a language they've never known before. Dance when there's a festival going on and they are blasting the same song – "Har Har Mahadev!" – from speakers on every corner. Listen to a sitar concert and feel that familiar "Kya bat hai!" bubbling up in your throat, an uninvited exclamation of awe, "What a thing!"

Imagine being stricken with awe, constantly. Imagine teaching a woman to crochet who can only use one of her hands; imagine the way she grips the hook in between her toes as though it's nothing,

and then picture the neat rows of her first project – a hot pink purse. Imagine realizing that limitations aren't that limiting after all, as long as you don't let them be. Imagine that there is nothing – absolutely nothing – that you can't do.

When I got off the plane in New Delhi, I found myself tasting culture in the same way I sampled dishes at dinner: tentatively for the first few months, asking myself if this bite was safe, if it tasted good. I spent a lot of time saying, "Not too spicy, please." At the end of the year, however, I put chili sauce on everything. I drank pomegranate juice and ate omelets from street vendors. I no longer peeled my apples, and I tried anything my friends brought from their villages, especially if it was spicy. This didn't indicate a lack of caution, however; it spoke to a newfound love of discovery and a perpetual desire to live extraordinarily. I traveled India the same way; for the first few days, I moved with my bags locked, my arms crossed,

and my eyes on the uneven pavement, but after a few months, I tried to be willing to bike anywhere in the city, attend any event, teach class in any location – even the sand under the playground – and listen to any story.

It is difficult to make peace with the fact that I don't know when I will get to return to the color and music along the banks of the Mother Ganga-ji. It is difficult to consider how far away that world is – 7500 miles, give or take – and just how incredibly different it is from the one I live in now. It is difficult to realize that I can never adequately thank all the people who made me laugh, made me practice my Hindi, made me realize how beautiful this world is, and helped make who I have become.

I'm not actually sure how much I changed during my time abroad – we can talk about that later – but I do know that my life in India was anything but mild.

ALICE SU – VIETNAM

This was taken at the memorial of the Khe Sanh Massacre. I had to promise that I would buy a pin in order to take a picture, and then he wouldn't give me the pin, insisting on my paying more and more and giving me just one of the little pieces of metal. I was a little thrown off. Still he haggled and bargained and begged. In the end I just gave him all of my change and left. It was only 50 cents to me, but he wanted it so desperately. In the middle of a day when we'd seen so much devastation, I couldn't be angry.





CHAD WIEDMAIER – COSTA RICA

These are leaf cutter ants. They were in groups of many thousands, carrying leaves as far as 100 yards to and from their nests.



DANNY GROWALD – PANAMA

Traveling in the remote and dangerous Darien Gap, we hiked to a village of six houses on stilts that lay deep within the rainforest, having been told that it was an Emberá (Panamanian indigenous tribe) community. We discovered on arrival that it was not, but ended up hanging out in the house of an old couple who sold us plantains to fry up a plate of patacones. The contrast of the palm-slat floor and the weathered foot stood out to me, and I took this shot as the abuela was picking weevils out of a bowl of rice.

Guayaquil, Ecuador Summer 2010

In addition to cebiche y su mercado artesanal, Guayaquil is known for its iguanas. An extremely resilient species, iguanas can thrive in a variety of climates, and those that inhabit Ecuador are particularly suited to the equatorial environment de aqui. As is the case for all cold-blooded animals, the body temperature of the iguana depends upon exterior climate conditions; thus the outside world determines how the iguana will behave. That is what it means to adapt—like the iguana, I have learned to take Guayaquil's unfamiliar cultural climate as the standard to which I adjust my own behavior.

Here are some of my favorite things about Ecuador that, when taken as the norm (as they have to be), have forced me to reevaluate my North American way of looking at the world:

Having a maid is weird—it is weird to me not only that her job obligates her to enter my room freely and touch all my things and do stuff like wash my underwear, but also just the idea that someone is so openly acknowledged to be of lower class. There is no reason that she has earned my respect any less than her employers have, and if anything, she is the one who does everything so I feel like I should respect her more.

The distinction in verbal conjugations between you formal and informal exacerbates my distress, by emphasizing that I am speaking to her as though she were beneath me, using the familiar form with her knowing full well that she will use the formal tense with me. I hate the formal tense. I accept using the formal tense with people who are older—that is a good rule—and I understand, for example, when I use the formal conjugation to address the mu-



MIA TSUI – BAÑOS, ECUADOR
Cascada Pailón del Diablo

sicians and they use the informal conjugation to address me, because I am just the dumb intern whereas they have earned my respect through their musical prowess or whatever. But with the housekeeper, who is older than I am, it is just silly because I have done nothing to earn her respect and honestly she has earned my respect plenty. Only after passing a few hours in the kitchen making empanadas with her when she began to call me “tu” did I feel as though she truly considered me an equal.

Half the time when I am trying to figure out whether to use the formal or informal form to address someone I wait and see how they address me—but then I realize that just because they address you one way or another doesn't mean that that is how you should address them, but that would just make so much more sense—why should you be more respectful towards someone than they are to you?

On the other hand, I am super im-

pressed by other people's ability to use the two conjugations properly. Conjugating is so hard! From distinguishing between the different “yous” to also figuring out the subjective, everyone here with way less education than I have been fortunate enough to receive can perfectly execute the subjunctive and understand it on a deeply fundamental level – that is a kind of intelligence that we in the United States have not been raised to possess.

I am pretty sure it is not the law to wear seat belts in the back because no one does and half the cars don't even have them. Also, sometimes when you park your car you leave it in neutral and then these randos on the street (because there are always randos on the street that sit there and watch your car and then when you drive away you are supposed to give them a small tip) push the cars around so that it is easier for the next person to park or so that more cars can fit. So then you are

just walking down the street and there is a dude pushing the cars around and you are like “WHAT.”

No one can type! They all type with one finger on each hand, and also the keyboards are a little bit different to make it easier to do accents and whatnot, and sometimes when I try to type things I end up opening six programs and doing things that I do not mean to do. And for the life of me I cannot figure out how to make the @ sign.

Working in the orchestra it is great to hear all of the musicians call each other Maestro all the time. It is quite common that people address each other based on their position of work: abogado, economista, socio, cualquier cosa. But it is totally rad that all of the musicians running around call each other Maestro, and all of the administrators call the musicians and each other Maestro as well. This must have positive effects on their psyches.

Everyone is obsessed with soccer, and have soccer paraphernalia in their cars and EVERYWHERE. All of the staff at the Orquesta wear polos embroidered with the OSG logo, but then a bunch of them also have the shield for their soccer team (the most popular one is Barcelona, which is yellow, and a lot of them wear bright yellow polos for this reason) embroidered there right next to the official logo, as though it were part of the official uniform. They take this SO seriously!

The orquesta is super diverse, with people from all over South America, Europe, Russia, and North America—the director is from Armenia (his count-offs are funny: un, dos, tres, qvattro)—and it is crazy that they are all here speaking Spanish! Half the time, even when I meet someone from the U.S. or another English-speaking country, we still speak in Spanish!

There are about nine pregnant women in the orchestra, which is pretty remarkable. The way they treat women is so interesting, because on the one hand they definitely have plenty of preconceptions about the strength and physical abilities of a woman (which I do my best to challenge), and all of the women of the older generation do lots of cooking and don't work (which is another reason that it is weird to have a maid, because if the maid does all the housework, then the woman literally has nothing to do; bueno, retired old men also don't have that many obligations). But on the other hand, there are tons of women in the orchestra and nobody thinks at all that they might be inferior to the men. The women are pretty evenly distributed throughout the instruments. While the first violin and viola are both men, the first cello is a woman, and the tiniest girl in the orchestra plays timpani and cymbals, and no one says a word about how it might be strange for a woman to be playing those instruments.

In general, they have no qualms about acknowledging and accepting obvious physical characteristics. For example, if someone is Chinese, it is very common to refer to them as “chino”—there are no negative connotations associated with this, it is just a manner of describing people. They are also very upfront about calling someone gordo—telling them that they are gordo or that they look gordo. And if someone is like “Oh man, I look so fat” rather than being like, “No, don't worry you look great,” they are like, “It's okay, you just had a baby.”

The ages of the musicians vary a lot, too. There are people in their late teens, a solid contingent of 20-somethings, lots of 30- and 40-year-old people, probably a few that are 50 or 60, and one violinist who is over 80! So everyone just sees

you as a musician and not a foreigner or a youngun or anything, which is both terrifying and liberating—I am used to being treated like a student, where people cut you some slack, which is nice, but they also expect much less of you.

It is not considered impolite to ask someone how old they are, or for everyone (including men) to discuss womanly issues. It doesn't bother me, but it still surprises me every time. It is also always the youngest ones who tell me that I am jovencita. Someone will ask my age, and I will respond, “Twenty-one,” and they are like “Oh my god. I am so old,” and I am like, “Really? How old are you?” And they respond, “Twenty-two.”

Unlike the iguanas, I find myself less adapted in the morning than I had been the night before. The little things you barely perceive—you do perceive them, but at first it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what they are and what it is that is different—to which you had accustomed yourself before falling asleep are upon awaking again novel and unexpected and unfamiliar. Likewise the language, with which you had become somewhat at ease the night before, is again uncomfortable and your tongue clumsy.

It is strange to realize that each day you have to start the process over, to find that each night, you have adapted a little more, but each morning, you are a little less adjusted than you had been the night before. And even though everything is still a little unfamiliar, one of these days I, too, will be green and scaly and fluent in Spanish, basking contentedly in the Ecuadorian sun.

This is an excerpt from Mia Tsui's blog.
To read more, visit
<http://jmtprominombre.blogspot.com/>

Untitled

BY SHANNON TOGAWA MERCER

A door without a key is a very different thing
from a key without a door.
Like a song without a singer, or a dance without a floor.
The rain has been out for days.
Four days ago I released four birds into the rain.
The four birds swam through with their wings and became
four shoes in their mud-stained holes. Mud holes in mud puddles
in the shape of shoe prints.
Walking in those shoes I stopped at a manhole.
Whole men draining into manholes in the morning for work
and draining out in the evening. It works, this drainage.
New age noise from behind the grate
and gifts that I gave from behind the prison gate turned into
four birds. Those four words were key.
Gateway words. Doorway words.



ISABEL PIKE – NORTHERN UGANDA

This summer, I went to a traditional marriage ceremony in North Eastern Uganda. The guests had to wait on the side of the road for the groom's car to arrive. I wandered behind a modern church and found this group of children playing underneath the shade of old, gnarled flame trees. The church in the background is now used as a classroom. It is filled with long desks and piles of broken tiles.

Montreux Sunset

BY SOPHIE HUBER

The hot night holds flowers,
a trellis webbed with colors,
bankers in black on the terrace
pared by the porous half-light.
They draw with smoke their orbits;
there, hung in the night,

a lake. And the swan
is pausing on and on.
The salver quavers, a loose
flan. In our toy star,
we're all up from under,
supported by the dark.

I'm hurt by waves, the shape
of waste. Some ill mistake:
our faceless shape; the fable,
an unread page, erases.
Follow someone's wake
back to the matrix.



ASHLEY EBERHART – SIOUX NATION

After withstanding a surprise thunderstorm minutes into the Grand Entry of the annual Batesland Powwow in Pine Ridge, onlookers were rewarded with the privilege of watching dozens of traditional Lakota dancers against the dramatic backdrop of a misty sunset overtaking the endless Sioux sky.

Mocking Time

BY MARK MAHERNOFF

You imagine that old man
(slumped on a leather lounge
in the posh shopping mall)
is dreaming about an old man
he saw years ago,
slumped on a park bench
or waiting for a bus.

You're in a slump before work,
knowing the mind might be
muscular and supple,
involved in a sexual act,
while the body has a paunch
hanging over its belt.

You imagine a child
staring, bewildered by your age
and how you got there.
The child cannot envisage
such a journey
while he or she is on it,
playing Ring around the Rosie,
mocking time.



JASON RAMIREZ – GHANA

This photo was taken on the morning of the World Cup match between Ghana and the USA. This girl lives in the fishing slum of Jamestown, which is a district in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

On Hearing a Child's Laugh

BY KATHERINE J. CHEN

A couple behind me remarks on the timbre
of her sopranic trills – the beginning
of a coloratura, the notes staccati
and jubilate. The man wants to impress
his woman, likening a child's laugh
with an aria from *The Magic Flute*.
He says, "Der Holle Rache kocht
in meinem Herzen," which the woman
doesn't understand. *Hell's vengeance
boils in my heart*. What could a child know
about Hell or vengeance?

A child's laugh is not staccati
or bel canto. It is like a mist of bubbles
rising a hundred meters into blue; a crested lark
perched on the edge of a precipice whistling
at yellow grass; the patter of pointe shoes
whispering across a stage; like the moment
a dancer begins to walk en pointe at
twelve years old, standing on wood, oblivious
to the bunionette that will form on her
little toe, the bursitis that will catch onto her
immature tendon, the purple contusions that will
blossom against her toenails.

Child, you are not a flat-foot. One day, you will walk
on wood and learn to kiss your bruises. You will
never laugh like a bird again.

Her family is plotting to kill her.

Aukse's figured it out, and knows they're meeting at night in the basement, discussing details. Ropes are involved. Aukse listens at the top of the stairs, eating candy, chewing the caramels slowly, without much enjoyment, perhaps like a cow might eat hay – chewing to stay alive.

At forty-five Aukse is an old maid. In Lithuanian, sanmerge literally means old girl. Old girl is worse than old maid. Aukse, born in America, has parents from Lithuania, and is fluent in the ancient language. She hears them plotting to kill her. "She will fall," her aunt says. Her mother cries, saying over and over, "She is my daughter." Her uncle says nothing. Lithuanian men are like that: mutes.

Aukse is visiting the old stone house which overlooks the Hudson River, the house where her mother lives when she's in New York. Albany is close by, a city her mother detests for its Soviet look: concrete, ugly, government buildings. The river, the green pastures, the stonewalls, are what originally brought her parents to this place. It reminded them of their homeland. Aukse's father is long dead, and her lonely mother either has family shipped in from Lithuania for long visits, or goes to Lithuania for months at a time, back to her home and life – the life before those nasty Soviets.

Her aunt and uncle are down in the basement and Aukse's mother is finally agreeing to the murder. Another detail surfaces: A cow is involved. Ropes and a cow. They are convincing her mother that Aukse must die. Her mother keeps crying as her aunt explains, "Aukse is a depressed daughter. Just look at her, the way she eats candy all day, sleeps in the afternoons, and what about the time she took all those pills? One day she will kill herself, disgrace you. Paskui kas bus? What will happen then? We will make it look like an accident."

"Accidents happen," her mother says.

Is Aukse imagining this? Sometimes she thinks people say things to her, like that time a man in the elevator asked her to press the elevator button to his floor, and she understood him to ask her out on a date.

Aukse tries to be quiet, there at the basement door, but with her large feet it's difficult, the floorboards creaking as she shifts her weight. She does not quite believe what she's hearing, but it's happening, sure as the candy she's eating, and terrified she finally goes to the guestroom, locks the door, and calls her friend Frank.

Frank is her neighbor in Manhattan, a man who lives next door to her in their apartment building that overlooks a convent. Frank runs a cat rescue shelter in his apartment and loves Aukse, calling her a vision of beauty. Silly, stupid man, she'll tell him, but he will force her to look at herself in the bathroom mirror. Just look, he'll say, and her big blue eyes stare at herself, then at him. "You're a beauty, a pagan blonde," he'll say and Aukse will focus on his reflection, his ugly sad face, and she'll think, to him I'm beautiful. But he has the face of a rotting log. It is both sad and endearing, as she loves him so much and can look past his face and deep into his soul. Love is like that and it's a pity most people are too quick to judge.

"My family is going to kill me," she tells Frank.

"You're a wild girl with a wild imagination. When are you coming back to the city?"

"Listen Frank. Are you listening?"
"Sorry, I'm here. That was my cat, she stepped on the phone. I'm listening."

"I think they are going to have me trampled to death by a cow. They're going to tie me up with a rope."

"Who?"

"My aunt and uncle are visiting from Lithuania. I heard them. They're going to murder me."

"Aukse, if they kill you, you won't have to kill yourself."

This is true.

She's threatened suicide many times, and confided this to Frank,

yet now, faced with it, she doesn't want to die. Suddenly her body is worth keeping around. Suddenly her loneliness isn't all that bad. And her job? The job that is boring, sad with its view of Ground Zero and those dirt mounds and endless trucks going back and forth, isn't all that dismal. At least she has a job.

Frank always makes her think and appreciate her life, and sometimes Aukse thinks that ending up with a straight man is stupid. It's a gay man like Frank who you want to grow old with. After their long conversation, which then goes on to the topic of cats, Aukse's cats in particular, because when she visits her mother near Albany, Frank takes care of her cats, reads all her notes, and does as instructed, she feels somewhat calmer. Frank is her lifeline. She was completely alone until they met. It was shortly after he moved in with all those cats, and when she had gone to knock on his door to find out what all the meowing was about, that he made her a pot of coffee. No one ever made her coffee. No one looked at her the way he did. He asked her to sit down and explained about his small cat rescue organization, and he gave her a pink t-shirt and she yelled out, "I love pink!" He asked her to adopt one of his cats – an old cat that had no teeth and

could barely walk. “I’ll take two!” Aukse yelled out excited. It was the first time a man ever gave her anything in her life.

Now, sitting on the guest bed Aukse misses her cats, her life in Manhattan – her apartment windows which overlook a tree and the convent yard. She digs into the large pocket of her handmade knit dress, and pulls out her bag of candy. There’s only one piece left. In her suitcase there’s more and she gets her stash and begins the calming process of unwrapping each candy and putting it in her plastic bag. They are Karvutes, Little Cows, caramel candies that are soft and chewy. The wrappers are the best part – a cow, standing there, alone, much like Aukse herself. She keeps the wrappers, flattens them, and she dreams about making some sort of art piece one day. The problem is that she is not an artist. The problem is that she’s not much of anything.

A knock at the door snaps her out of her thoughts. She knows from the knock that it’s her mother. Her sad mother who longs for the part of the year she returns to Lithuania, beautiful Lithuania – its castles, forests, the green meadows, and rivers running through it, rivers of blue water that travel to the Baltic, its shores wide, calling out, dunes dreamy and reaching as far as the eye can see.

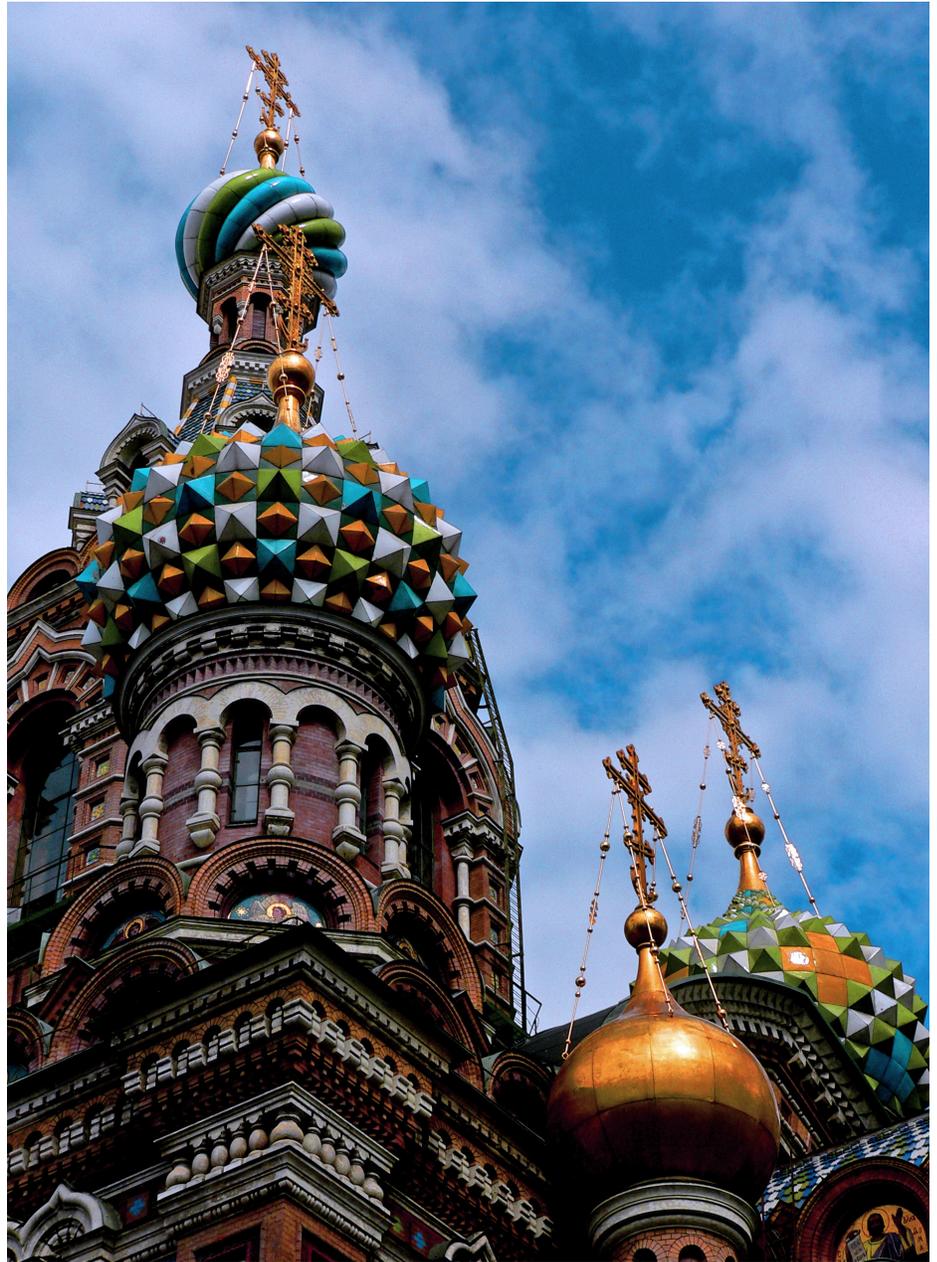
Her mother comes into the room and looks at her daughter, studying her. Aukse hates that look. “What?” Aukse says loudly, but she says it nicely because your mother should always be respected even if she is disappointed in you and possibly plotting your murder.

“We ask you to come downstairs for dessert.” It is a formal way of asking, the way it is done in Lithuania, as meals, especially desserts, are like attending a concert, or going to a museum – something special.

Aukse gets off the bed fast, puts knitted slippers on her feet, her feet which her mother is staring at, no doubt wondering how they ever grew so large. Dessert. There’s nothing better than dessert, the highlight of an evening, a table spread

ANDREW SARTORIUS – ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

This is St. Petersburg’s Church on the Spilled Blood, built on the spot where reformist Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 by anarchists. The multicolored onion domes, elaborate gilded crosses, and complex religious ornamentation on the facade are typical of the Russian Orthodox style.



with crystal plates holding rich cakes, thick with butter and fresh sweet whipped cream. Aukse is dying to run downstairs and begin eating, but her mother’s blue eyes are fixed on Aukse, those blue eyes just like her own, but bluer, like the deep sea. Her mother is smiling now. Her mother, a former nurse, hardly ever smiles.

“Your teta and dede have a gift for you,” she says.

“What gift?”

“A special gift.”

“What is it? What gift?”

“It’s a surprise,” she says, still smiling, her teeth so white, so small, so perfect.

When they get downstairs, the dining table set with desserts, cakes, Teta and Dede, aunt and uncle, are sitting there, an envelope placed in the center of the table, a vase of roses pushed aside, the overhead crystal chandelier creating a spotlight.

Dede says nothing.

Teta, wearing her tiny schoolteacher eyeglasses begins to chatter about her classroom in Lithuania, the horrible kids, the disorder, the way kids these days do not focus on schoolwork.

"It is from too much sugar," Teta says.

Aukse stares at the envelope but waits. She eats a slice of cake.

"Too much sugar," her mother agrees. "That is the problem with children."

Dede says nothing.

Aukse thought the gift would be a linen towel, or a necklace of amber pieces. These are the customary gifts. The envelope intrigues her. Perhaps there is cash inside. In her mind she's already spending it – donating it to an animal shelter.

After they eat, drink tea and cognac, Teta stands up. There is a look in her eyes, authoritative. And it's Aukse's belief that all teachers hate teaching and hate kids, secretly wanting them dead. Aukse has never met a teacher who didn't complain, never known a teacher who actually likes to teach.

Teta finally gives Aukse the envelope and inside is a folded sheet of paper, and on it, the words: A Gift to Lithuania.

"You'll be leaving with us next week," Teta says.

"Next week? Why? I can't."

"Aukse," her mother says. "Be grateful for the gift. Your office will be happy to give you time off to be with family."

"I don't know."

"You should know," her mother says.

"Know what?" Aukse says.

Dede almost says something, but then looks back down to his plate.

The next day Aukse asks her boss for a week off, explaining that she needs to visit family in Lithuania.

"Where?"

"Lithuania. That is where my parents and family are from," Aukse says quietly, as calmly as possible. How many times has she told her boss about the tiny country?

"Yes, of course. Where is that again?"

"Northern Europe. On the Baltic sea, across from Sweden."

"Ah, yes, of course Aukse. You have vacation time, use it."

"Are you sure?"

"Go Aukse, enjoy."

That night, doomed to her fate, knowing that they'll murder her in Lietuva, Aukse packs her bag. It's March, still deep winter, there will be a lot of snow. She takes her heavy jacket, a sweatshirt, thick socks, her wool sweaters, thick tights, big boots, knitted caps, scarves. When Frank comes over he asks where she's going.

"To Lithuania. Next week."

"You never go this time of year."

Just last month Aukse told Frank she wanted to kill herself. He'd found her crying, curled up on the floor. "I have nothing," she said. She had nothing. The pendulum of feelings: I have a lot, I have nothing, swings like crazy in Aukse's head. Of course, much of it is influenced by her mother, her mother swatting the pendulum with each phone call, each time they see each other. It is Frank who stops her from crying, helping her each time, always telling her this:

You have yourself.

Now with her murder, Aukse's own family plotting it, Aukse doesn't want to die. Not today, or next week. It's quite different when others want you dead, see you as a loser, disposable. It is a validation of your worthless feelings. Her mother, her teta, her dede are holding that pendulum tight.

Frank watches Aukse and helps himself to the candies set out in a glass dish.

"So how will I know if you've been murdered?" he asks.

"I won't be back," she says. "It's that simple."

"I can't believe they'd kill you for being an old maid."

"Sanmerge," she corrects him. "I am a disappointment to everyone."

"Is that what they do in Lithuania, murder people for not marrying?"

"No, of course not. But it's my family's plan. I'm sure of it. They hate me. I have no career. I've disappointed them."

"Don't forget your PETA shirt," Frank says.

"Oh, I'm planning to wear it on the plane. I love my PETA shirt."

"You'll email me, right?"

"Every day. There's an Internet café on Pilies Gatve. Start worrying if you don't hear from me."

"But we still have a week together, right?"

"Yes," Aukse says. "I'm just packing now to get it over with."

"What about your mother?" Frank asks. "She loves you."

"She's in on it."

"I can't believe this shit."

"Yes, it's shit. Now help me squish my boots on top."

"I guess it'll still be cold there."

"Snow, freezing."

"No shit."

"That's right, shit. I will leave you a note about my cats."

"I know the routine."

"If I die, keep them."

"You won't die."

"You never know," she shrugs, zips up the bag. "The plane might crash."

The flight to Finland is long, but Aukse drugs herself with the Valium that her mother gave her, feels herself drifting to sleep, her head resting on Teta's shoulder. Aukse imagines this is what death is like. A simple sleep. She hears Teta say something nasty to her, so Aukse turns to look over to her other side, to Dede. He says nothing. He reads a book of poetry.

This is the time of the flight over the ocean, the vast ocean, the endless hours of nothingness. Aukse wants Teta to vanish. No one would miss her, not her students, not Aukse, and certainly not Dede. It is said that Lithuanian men are pummeled by the strength of Lithuanian women. Even though Dede is a doctor, Aukse knows that all his decisions, both at the hospital and at home, are made by women. He is a good man, caring, quiet. His voice is of women though. That's the way it is in this culture.

“ ... Not all women have careers and relationships. Surely there can't be anything so wrong with just being a person. *Isn't that enough?* ”

Late that following afternoon, in the apartment off Castle Street, its view of church tops, narrow curving streets, Aukse, Dede and Teta sit in the kitchen wearing sweaters, eating hot soup and drinking brandy with tea. Aukse is feeling better now, convinced of her wild imagination. She's already unpacked her things in the guest room, feeling at home in the beautiful Vilnius, as she often does when she comes here. Although born in America, coming here must stir something in her DNA, the feeling she is home, a link in her blood and cells that is like a long trail. It leads to this place, the city with its golden statue of Mary, the gates of dawn, the castle built on top of a hill, overlooking the city like a giant stone eye.

Aukse sips her hot soup and thinks about going for a facial, to the spa with its sauna. And then for coffee. She'll go to the plaza and sit at a tiny table overlooking the street and the chocolate shop, and she'll drink delicious black coffee with sugar. She is happy. She has all but forgotten about the strangeness of this sudden visit.

Teta has a box of sweets. It was the necessary stop from the airport. Straight to the bakery and now she opens the box and they all look inside excited. Aukse digs in. "Eat up," her teta says. "Then it's early to bed for all of us. Tomorrow is a big day."

"What big day?" Aukse asks. Snow-covered streets in mid-March can't be big days. It will be Sunday. There will be the customary visit to the cemetery to visit ancestors. There will be the stop to the flower district for roses, pine wreaths, and candles. The tombstones will have to be

decorated, the snow pushed aside, candles lit. Afterwards there will be hours spent drinking coffee in a café, then walking, buying chocolates, stopping to have beer.

"I've made plans. We'll be going to the countryside early in the morning."

"Where? What do you mean?" Aukse asks.

"Not far, about an hour away. There is a farm, and some family I'd like to visit. I don't think you've ever met them. You'll like them. They have a dairy farm."

"With cows?"

"Yes, with cows, of course."

Aukse feels sick. She looks over to Dede for signs of his involvement in this murder plot. She feels herself getting dizzy, terror and doom filling her.

"More hot tea?" Teta asks.

"Why do I have to go? I don't think I want to."

"We thought you loved animals.

There, look at the shirt you're wearing. We know that word, pet."

"It's PETA, not pet. And I don't want to see a bunch of dairy cows."

Teta sighs and looks over to her husband. Aukse prays to hear him, just once, stand up for his niece. Could he really be a part of this? Surely he can understand Aukse's life. Not all women have careers and relationships. Surely there can't be anything so wrong with just being a person. Isn't that enough?

"It'll be freezing in the country," Aukse finally says.

"We'll dress warmly," her teta says, smiling, no doubt seeing Aukse as just an unruly classroom brat. Anyone in front of

her must blur into a classroom child.

"What about the cemetery?" Aukse asks. It's her last effort to stay here in the city. "Sundays are for cemetery visits."

Teta begins clearing the plates, pouring one more glass of brandy, tells her, rather matter-of-factly, "There are cemeteries in the country. We have family buried everywhere. Don't worry. We will get to see the dead."

Aukse rushes out to the Internet café. She tells Teta that she is going to buy postcards for her coworkers. As if Aukse's coworkers care, as if she would ever send them such a pretty postcard – with photos of the great dunes, the sea coast, windmills, the green pastures overlooking the great river, sheep dotted here and there, sheep which are soft, kind, and very smart.

Aukse trudges through the snow-filled street. They do not plow streets. Often people use sleds, the strongest pulling the elderly, the children, the husband. Aukse comes to the plaza with its fountain, now covered in snow, makes a right turn to another narrow street, then gets to Castle Street. Shops are already closing for the evening and by the time she gets to the Internet café, the man behind the counter announces that he, too, is closing up. Aukse pleads, telling him she is from America and that use of the computer is a matter of life and death.

Aukse writes Frank and tells him her time is up. Tomorrow is the day. She gives him the name of the town where they'll be going. She warns: You may not find me. There is a lot of snow. She ends the email simply: I love you.

The next morning Aukse wakes up early, heart pounding.

The room is cold. The wooden art carvings on the wall, scenes of warriors and horses during long-ago wars, suddenly are looming like a bad omen. Men with armor and holding swords. She is frightened. She tries to comfort herself with the sunlight coming into the room. The sky is a brilliant clear blue, the sun strong on the balcony, streaming through the large window and into the room. At breakfast, rich with mushroom pancakes and steamed salmon and thick black coffee, Aukse is aware that this might be her last meal. Teta is humming a traditional song. Dede eats. The clock on the wall ticks loudly.

The car has been dug out of its parking spot and Dede has driven it to the front of the building. Aukse wants to get going, is both convinced that her family could never kill her, and at the same time convinced that she'll die. Aukse holds the picnic basket, the pastries, and fresh doughnuts with powdered sugar, big as fists. There is a bottle of wine, rolls, black bread with butter slices, and chunks of cheese. Aukse pushes snow off the car roof. Dede pops the trunk open. Aukse sees a rope. It is a thick rope, coiled up, placed in the center of the trunk.

Aukse wants to slam the trunk door and run. She wants to run to the nearby crowds walking on Castle Street, filled with music from nearby cafés, flutes, incense pouring over the sidewalks from nearby churches. But escaping family is impossible and before she knows it, Aukse is in the back seat of the car, Dede and Teta up front in their sunglasses. "Speed up," Teta says. Dede does as told. Snowy as the streets are, he accelerates and they pass through the city, onto a bridge and out into the countryside.

The car has no heat and Aukse tries to focus on keeping warm, blowing on her hands, moving her toes. This helps somewhat, as her thoughts keep jumping

forward, to what is ahead. Lunch will involve the rope. They will find a strong tree branch, make a noose, and hang Aukse. Dede will lift her, and Teta will pray and ask for forgiveness. "Aukse is useless and better off dead," will be Teta's words. "God take her into heaven and forgive us." They will hang and leave her swinging from the tree, the wind pushing her back and forth like a pendulum. That damn pendulum that seems to be a symbol in Aukse's life. They will look at her once more before getting into the car and driving away.

Yet, hadn't they mentioned an accident? A hanging couldn't be an accident.

It is a slow trip toward the west, then up past miles of forest, then on to a road that goes deep into the flat forest. Aukse feels herself getting closer and closer to her death. She closes her eyes and sends her cats telepathic love. She will finally see her father again. Her dead father will probably greet her. He's probably already waiting. Aukse takes out a handkerchief with its pattern of roses, which her mother embroidered, and she cries, quietly, helplessly.

They eat lunch. The sun is bright. There's a wood table, a spot where people must gather and rest in late summer and fall, while looking for mushrooms, brimming baskets set on the table as they drink tea or hot black coffee. Here, trees are blocking the north winds and it doesn't feel as cold. Snow has been swept away by the shovel and broom that Dede brought along, and they are in a dugout of sorts, the table covered with a cloth, its design embroidered tulips. They drink wine and eat. Aukse tries to drink as much as possible. Wine is always a good tonic. Iced cold beer is even better. It is early afternoon and Aukse all but forgets about her foolish thoughts. No one is planning to murder her. What she heard in the basement was wrong. It is much like being in the office, hearing snippets of something, convinced your name is spoken. The mind is tricky. The mind is dangerous.

Coffee is poured, still steaming and

hot and for a second, life couldn't be better. "Beautiful," Aukse says out loud, in English, to no one in particular. She inhales the crisp arctic air. The sun is strong, spring is near, and the cold feels so good. Tomorrow she'll be at the spa and then visiting the folk museum. Perhaps Dede will join her, as he works at the hospital on Summer Street, a hospital for the insane. There, he is the director and often leads patients on his lunch hour to the museum. He enjoys seeing them smile, enjoys showing them the museum's treasure – a lock of Napoleon's hair. Yes, Aukse will have a good day tomorrow and as she dreams about her future, her little vacation, a wind picks up. Snow begins to fall from the pine boughs and it suddenly becomes a wind blizzard of snow, the sun still out, and everywhere Aukse looks, it is like crystals falling.

They pack up the car. Next stop is the farm and visiting family. There they will do the customary thing: Take a small walk, discuss the weather, and later sing and then dine into the late evening.

As they drive Teta tells Aukse more about the farm. "They have pigs, too. And sheep. You like that sort of thing with that group you're involved with."

"PETA," Aukse yells out.

"Yes, well, I can take a picture of you with a nice cow."

"Why a cow?" Aukse asks, but her teta, sitting in the front seat, does not turn around. The back of her head is a knitted hat, her thick neck, her shoulders.

"I brought a camera. I will take a photograph of you with the cows. I'm sure your friend in New York will like to see you next to one of our pretty cows."

"Frank. My friend's name is Frank."

Aukse survives the tree-hanging theory, but perhaps she is heading for a worse fate. Trampled by a cow. She loves cows, could never eat one, and suddenly the reality of her being trampled by one is so real, so overwhelming, that she can hardly breathe. Teta will use the rope in

the car to tie her ankles to a fence post so she can't run, escape. A stampede of cows will be a horrible way to die. How could her mother let this happen? Aukse thinks of their goodbye, her mother at Kennedy Airport, tucking good-luck amber in Aukse's pocket, kissing each cheek, looking into her eyes.

They drive for a long time, but maybe it just feels long, as time does when you are heading into the unknown. Dede finally slows down, turns off a big road and on to a series of smaller roads. They finally stop at a small cemetery surrounded by traditional carvings – a wooden fence, a shrine carved into the figure of a sad, distorted Christ. Sitting there all hunched over, a crown of thorns on his head, he is known to protect, to take away worries from those left on Earth.

Inside the fence they visit the tombs of several ancestors. Teta points to this and that, giving a little background, boring Aukse. They stand there for quite a while and Aukse is suddenly overcome with such love for this little country. How so many generations later, a tiny group of people will stand in snow and remember things – how this particular great aunt loved to read poetry beside a window overlooking the sea. Aukse wonders, if she is buried here, in the land of rain, what will people say of her?

Her teta is now lamenting that they have nothing to leave – they didn't bring flowers or candles. This is very unusual. Why would she not have brought candles? Is this stop at the cemetery simply to show Aukse where she will lie? Is this Aukse's future resting spot? Teta announces that they must go. It will be dark soon and the living are waiting. It's then that she points into the distance. Aukse sees a house. It seems very far away, and her teta is telling them that they'll leave the car here and walk. Walking is good.

"There's too much snow," Aukse says, but Teta is already on the way, a quick stop at the car to get her bag and camera.

When they reach the farm it's almost dark.

There is a barn, a fence around it with some cows eating hay. The house is further down the road, lit brightly, smoke rising from behind it. There is probably a bonfire, music, and drink waiting, and Aukse wants to just run toward the house. But Teta has stopped at the fence and holds up her camera.

"Go Aukse. Go in there and pose with a cow. I'll take your photograph."

This is how it ends. In Lithuania, on vacation, killed.

Aukse opens the latch on the gate and enters the snowy field. She feels somewhat better knowing that the rope was left in the car. At least they won't have her body dragged to death.

Aukse walks slowly toward the cows and doesn't look back. She gets close to one cow, right up to the massive head. Teta's voice is shrill. She is shouting something Aukse can't hear. She is too far. Perhaps Teta is saying turn around, smile for the camera. But as Aukse pets the cow, standing close, too close, the cow lowers its head to pick up hay off the ground. The cow then lifts her head, hitting Aukse with all her massive force, knocking Aukse backwards, and into the snow.

Aukse's father comes down from the sky. He floats above her, his filmy wild white hair forming a halo around his head. He begins to speak, telling her she is a loser, knocked unconscious by a cow. Aukse reaches out for him. But then she

hears another voice. Soft and warm as a cow's breath, Dede is now talking, asking over and over, "Aukse, can you hear me? Aukse, can you hear me?"

"Viskas bus tvarkoj," Everything will be alright, Dede is telling her. And indeed it will, because she then hears Frank's voice telling her he loves her.

Aukse doesn't need voices of men: dead or living. Slowly she begins to hear her own thoughts, melting down from her brain to her throat, pouring down and over her. She sits up and her dede is there, his words pouring out of his soul and heart, the way love does. The cows have moved away, but are still close by, standing in a group, watching her, and Aukse is grateful for them, those sweet eyes looking at her. Evening has come and unlike the twilight of summer in this land, winter nights come on fast – dark and eerie. Aukse is anxious to get into the house, to a warm dinner of broth and vegetables and good black bread. There will be cakes and pastries. Her dede is a doctor and all will be well. They will probably spend the night in the house, under thick duvets, a cup of chamomile beside the bed. If there is a phone Aukse will call Frank. If not, she will close her eyes and think about her tiny apartment in Manhattan and her cats. We don't always die in accidents. We don't always hear correctly. And now, Teta's large hand feels so good, so warm. Thoughts of murder can ultimately lead to good things.

First Timers

BY INK

When we meet,
after years of reciting Sonnets from the Portuguese
across both sides of our ocean,
the first thing on my mind will be a cup of coffee
in a Parisian café,
a drink that tempers satisfaction
with patience
and caffeinates discussion
till nightfall.

My proposal will be silent,
witnessed only by the stars
hidden behind your eyes,
outshone by the singing streetlamp
across the street.

But I have no doubt you'll hear it.
I have no doubt you'll hear it.



MIA TSUI – RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
Mais que Cinzento, Copacabana Beach

A Chorister's Logic

BY CHLOE DAVIS

To church I go in ruff and robe,
Eyes bright, prepared to sing.
I wake up with the golden sun
To hear the bells that ring.

All other days are rarely mine.
To class I'm forced to go.
"Kings and queens!" they shout at me;
Each monarch I must know.

There's Egbert, then the Ethels:
Ethelwulf, -bald, -berht, and -red.
Then Alfred, Edward, Athelstan,
Edmund, and Eadred.

Eadwig, Edgar, Edward Saint,
Then Ethelred again!
They plot to overcome us
With their silly Saxon names.

Professor says that God himself
Desires we know these things.
Professor finds his books and words
Beauteous as bells that ring.

But I prefer to learn the notes
Of Howells, Byrd, and Boyce.
And with good reason postulate
That God approves this choice.

God waits all week in Heaven,
Not a note of song he hears.
'Til finally on Sunday,
We groggily appear.

We don our ruffs and purple robes,
We gather by the door.
Into the stony nave we go,
Across the ancient floor.

Arriving at the quire,
See the organ pipes like saints:
Silent, staunch, and strong they rise
Beside the stained glass panes.

But as the organist begins,
Staid saints are brought to life.
The notes of Howells's "Te Deum,"
Fill with light the silvery pipes.

And when we lift our music high
And carillons do ring,
God is cheerful once again
To hear his angels sing.

CONTRIBUTORS

Katherine J. Chen is a junior at Princeton University majoring in English and pursuing a certificate in creative writing. She enjoys going on chocolate binges, listening to opera, and watching Broadway shows she can't afford.

Chloe Davis is a junior psychology major at Princeton University. She dances with the Princeton University Ballet and writes for the "Street" section of *The Daily Princetonian*. For seven years, Chloe was a chorister at the Cathedral of St. Phillip in Atlanta, Georgia under the direction of Bruce Neswick.

Jesse Doyle has just finished up Bachelor's degrees in Media and International Studies with a Diploma of Languages in Spanish at the University of Adelaide. He is passionate about playing guitar, drifting aimlessly, and singing slightly out of tune. When he's not working to pay off his bad American debt, he spends his time contemplating how he could possibly make a career out of his three favorite hobbies. Joining a nomadic Mexican Mariachi band is proving to be the most likely option at this stage.

Ting Gou is a senior from Atlanta, Georgia, majoring in molecular biology and writing a separate creative thesis. She lives in Spelman with awesome people who have been her roommates since freshmen year. She is also co-editor in chief of *The Nassau Literary Review*.

Alexandra Hay is an English concentrator at Princeton University who hails from beautiful Long Island, New York. She studied abroad last semester in England, where she spent most of her time hunting down all the places that appear in *Harry Potter* movies.

Sophie Huber is a junior at Princeton University from Washington, DC. She is majoring in comparative literature.

Ink is a New Jersey author who appears irregularly and without warning in various spots throughout the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania area and even more sporadically in literary journals and magazines throughout the world. See more of his work online at www.inksblot.com.

Mark Mahemoff has published three books of poetry. He plays drums and percussion in various musical projects. Because neither of these pursuits provide enough money on which to survive, he works most days as a couple's counselor. He lives in Sydney, Australia.

Lizzie J. Martin is a freshman from North Carolina. She spent nine months last year doing service work in India with the Princeton University Bridge Year Program, and she is a firm believer in Dave Eggers's assertion, "What matters is that you do good work. What matters is that you produce things that are true and will stand."

Shannon Togawa Mercer is a senior in the politics department at Princeton University. She is decidedly unwelcome in hipster coffee shops.

Javier Alejandro Masis Obando was born and raised in Cartago, Costa Rica, and is currently a Maryland resident. He enjoys playing football ("soccer") and the drums. You may spot him on campus wearing a head of long brown wavy hair.

Jordan Reimer is a Master's student at the Woodrow Wilson School. He graduated from Princeton in 2008, majoring in politics with a certificate in near eastern studies. He speaks Arabic and Hebrew and has studied abroad in Israel, Egypt, and Yemen.

Olivia Salazar-Winspear lives in Paris where she works as a journalist. She enjoys reading her horoscope, writing postcards, and pretending that she can speak Esperanto.

Nushelle de Silva is an architecture major at Princeton University with certificates in urban studies and theater. She will return to work with Citizens' Initiative for a year upon graduation.

Zahava Stadler is a senior at Princeton University from Hillside, New Jersey who is majoring in politics but has had a secret longing to take creative writing classes since her freshman year. Now enrolled in introductory poetry, Zahava is moonlighting by writing for *Prism* and attempting to make up for lost time.

Brighton's West Pier, a Victorian structure that burned down in 2003. The skeletal remains have been left in place for now, and they make a stark contrast against the rest of Brighton, which is a fun and colorful beach town.



Gaby Stember-Young is a student at Westminster Choir College. When not playing saxophone with the Princeton University Band or singing with the Princeton University Glee Club, she enjoys musical theater, traveling, photography, and playing with adorable kittens.

D. S. Sulaitis is the recipient of two New York Foundation for the Arts fellowships in fiction. Her short stories have been published in *Boston Review*, *Inkwell*, and *Painted Bride Quarterly*. The winner of *Boston Review*'s 11th annual fiction contest, Sulaitis has also been published in W. W. Norton's anthology *My Father Married Your Mother*. The short story printed in this issue is part of a collection-in-progress titled *A Distraction*.

Mia Tsui belongs to the world.

Chhaya Werner is a freshman at Princeton University who traded her life for Integrated Science. She is trying to learn to dance again and thinks the squirrels on campus are insane.

Jacquetta Wheeler has had a career modeling in the fashion industry for ten years, but for the past year she has been concentrating on her work for Reprieve, a London-based human rights charity. She enjoys writing and has a blog on Vogue.co.uk, which she often uses to promote worthy causes such as getting innocent men out of Guantanamo Bay.

Lucie Wright is a freshman at Princeton University potentially majoring in near eastern studies with a global health and health policy certificate. She loves to sing, run, and aspires to be a Gilmore Girl.



BENJAMIN BURTON – PANAMA

Our biology class came across this magnificent green macaw while traversing the mountainous terrain of the Azuero Peninsula on Panama 's Pacific coast.

PRISM MAGAZINE IS LOOKING FOR PIECES THAT
"INTERROGATE THE WORLD"

SEND YOUR ESSAYS, SHORT STORIES, POEMS,
MUSIC, ARTWORK, AND PHOTOGRAPHS TO
PRISM@PRINCETON.EDU