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**The news items** in the right column were taken from “The New York Times”

**Cover** by Sebastiano Buonamico

“Here-notes from the present” is written so that it can be read “as a novel”: from the beginning to the end in sequence. This is **an invitation and an exhortation** to the reader: many diary pages make little sense if not read immediately after the previous ones and before those that follow.

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# Caregivers

by Massimo Parizzi



Filipinas, caregivers. That's the equation in every country they emigrate to around the world. For many, this equation is true. In Singapore, South Korea, China, Taiwan, the United States, Canada, throughout Europe: everywhere that women from the Philippines go to work, most of them take care of old people, children, homes.

And even more so, much more so, that's the equation that is made in the mental images and language of the people who live in those countries. To the point that in Italy, one sometimes hears people saying "my Filipina" to mean "my maid", in reference to someone who isn't Filipina in the least, but Indonesian or Mauritian, say, or even Ukrainian or Moldavian. Ethnicity as a profession.

It's not that different from the era when the figure later termed *donna di servizio*, "cleaning woman", and then *collaboratrice familiare*, "domestic helper", was called *la donna*, period. Gender as a profession.

In the latter case, one thing was clear: she was "the woman" so that her employer, the lady of the house, could be just that, "the lady". It underscored a class difference. Was her employer aware that this entailed conceptually stripping herself of a fundamental aspect of her nature and handing it over to someone else? That she was distanc-

ing herself from the idea of being a “woman”?

The vast majority of the time, of course, she was not. These are things that culture does through people. Over their heads, albeit inside them. And someone, I can't remember who, once wrote that calling the person paid to do housework “the woman” reflected an urge, or even eagerness, to leave nature behind. To be wholly and solely culture. Ladies and gentlemen, not men and women. Just as, in practical terms, one left behind certain fundamental needs by paying others to shoulder them: some portion of the care that is demanded by daily life, by a home, children, elderly parents.

Ethnicity is also a fundamental aspect of one's nature. Whether it counts a lot, a little, or not at all (an entirely different question), you can't choose it, and you can't reject it. And when it is equated with a profession, it too is paid for. And bought and sold. It has a market price. It's a commodity. This is not a metaphor, mind you: in the international division of labour, in terms of supply, demand, and the agencies that mediate between them, that's literally how it is. Being Filipina instead of Indonesian, like being a woman instead of a man, means being one kind of commodity instead of another, a different category.

There is no lack of studies on this. To cite just one, in “The Construction of Global City: Invisible Work and Disposable Labor” (on *Caring Labor: An Archive*, November 20, 2010), Da Li and Fang Liang write, among other things: “Carework is not only gendered as women's work but also is associated with nationalized stereotypes. [...] The recruitment agencies actively participate in

the process of creating gendered and racialized stereotypes of migrant workers through recruiting and matching. In addition, the agencies pass the gendered and racialized ideology on to the employers, as well as the ‘tips’ for stereotyping, controlling and disciplining workers”.

Ok. That capitalism turns everything into a commodity, something that is bought and sold, and thus has a price tag, is no major revelation. We’ve known that for a long time. Just as we know that everything thus becomes a “thing”, at least in the sense that everything is treated and valued in a similar way to the things, the products of hands and machines, that humans have always traded.

Is there something else going on here? I don’t know, but let’s retrace the process. There are people, millions of people, who due to certain fundamental aspects of their human nature, ethnicity, gender, are equated, in practice, and even more so in language and mental images, with a profession. Actually, no, make that crammed into one. Filipina means caregiver. Woman means maid. It’s a process of extreme, drastic impoverishment. A world that contracts.

And the substance of this profession, this commodity, this “thing” that is bought and sold, is taking care of life. A sphere of human activity that is extraordinarily rich, in the activities, the feelings it entails. A universal sphere that defies all contraction; a sphere that we all share, in every time and place.

# Diaries from October to December 2010



*Nueva Ecija, the Philippines, October 1, 2010* **Rommel Bondoc**

I remember the day when I was about to defend my thesis in college. That very same day, my aunt Anita was leaving to work in the United Arab Emirates. She was accompanied by another traveler that used to work as a public elementary school teacher somewhere in Nueva Ecija. Both of them would be working as domestic helpers. It was then that I began to wonder what would happen after I received my diploma. My promise was that I would never leave the country to be one of the Overseas Filipino Immigrant Workers (OFW).

I didn't realize then that I would be the first one to break that vow. It was in the 2003 that I was awarded a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. In 2007, after five years of struggle to find a decent, well-paying job in Manila, I began to say to myself again: "With this salary I receive every month, I won't be able to buy the things I want". The salary I was receiving at the time, to be honest, was just enough for myself alone. I would not have been able to spare some and give it to my parents or even to my brother who at the time was getting his education in a private college in the province. It was not even enough to put aside any savings. Sometimes not even enough to sustain my daily expenses and

basic needs like food, clothing and shelter.

So, I decided to work in the Middle East. My first assignment was in Saudi Arabia, in Dammam. I spent sixteen months there, earning tenfold the amount I was receiving while working in Manila. When I had my first vacation last April, I arrived at the NAIA [Manila Ninoy Aquino International Airport] and was welcomed by the smiling airport staff shouting the words: “Mabuhay ka kababayan! Bagong Bayani ng Bansang Pilipinas”, “Long Live the Kababayans, New Heroes of the Philippines” [“kababayan” is a Tagalog word that means fellow Filipino, countryman, or townmate]. I was surprised and of course, I must admit, those words are nice to hear. They made me a little bit prouder than I was about being an OFW. But the question is: how do Overseas Filipino Workers (like me) become New Generation Heroes?

Most of these OFWs belong to the “laborers and unskilled worker group”. This is the case of my aunt and her friend who left years ago to be domestic helpers. Her teacher friend traded the honor of serving and educating our children to do dirty jobs like toilet cleaning and stuff like that. During my stay in Dammam, most of the OFWs I was able to come in contact with were laborers and unskilled workers, like helpers at construction sites, waiters, dishwashers, hairdressers, etc. Needless to say, we have so many unemployed, unskilled laborers even here in the country right now.

Sometime in February 2007 I attended my PDOS (Pre Departure Orientation Seminar, intended to educate aspiring OFWs about the conditions, rules and laws, traditions and customs, do’s and don’ts of their country of destination). I must admit, I

*From 1946 to 1948, American public health doctors deliberately infected nearly 700 Guatemalans—prison inmates, mental patients and soldiers—with venereal diseases in what was meant as an effort to test the effectiveness of penicillin. American tax dollars, through the National Institutes of Health, even paid for syphilis-infected prostitutes to sleep with prisoners, since Guatemalan prisons allowed such visits. When the prostitutes did not succeed in infecting the men, some prisoners had the bacteria poured onto scrapes made on their penises, faces or arms, and in some cases it was injected by spinal puncture. The revelations were made public today, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius apologized to the government of Guatemala and the survivors and descendants of those infected.*

did not understand the whole seminar neither the discussion nor the orientation topics. The speaker was a bit lousy in her command of language. At the end of the seminar, she was asking, “did all of you get the point of the seminar?” Discreetly I whispered, “Almost, but not all of it”. I asked that very same question to an aspirant. She was aspiring to be a nanny-cum-housemaid in Jeddah. To my awe, she said: “Hindi rin e saka pakialam ko ang importante mapirmahan yun certificate ko para makaalis na” (“I didn’t understand either. Like I care about it! I just want my clearance to be signed now so that I can proceed to the airport”).

Are you a hero then? ‘Cause I’m sure not!

## Toiling Far From Home for Philippine Dreams

by Norimitsu Onishi



Mabini, the Philippines. The larger houses, barely inhabited, many of them empty, belong to overseas workers who plan to return here one day. Despite their absence, the workers have contributed money to help build roads, schools, water grids and other infrastructure usually handled by local governments. They pay for annual fiestas that were traditionally financed by municipalities, churches and local businesses. Thanks to their help, Mabini became a “first class” municipality last year in a government ranking of towns nationwide, leaping from “third class.” In one village nicknamed Little Italy, where a

“The New York Times”,  
September 18, 2010 (ex-  
cerpts)

quarter of the 1,200 residents are working in Italy, the overseas workers paid 20 percent of the cost to construct a public hall. Remittances, which the government says have been rising sharply, now account for more than 10 percent of the Philippines' gross domestic product. The payments are also the main factor driving the country's recent economic growth, which would have otherwise remained stagnant. The national government has highlighted the positive effects of the OFW economy, calling the workers "heroes" and presenting awards for the model OFW family of the year.

About 15 percent of the 42,000 residents of Mabini, about 80 miles south of Manila, live overseas—typically working as maids, nurses or service workers—compared with an estimated national average of 10 percent.

One recent morning, Jocelyn Santia, 40, was packing her bags after two months of vacation here to return to her job as a housekeeper in Milan. She and her husband, who died six years ago, began working in Italy 20 years ago after being recruited by an employment agency. Her grandparents and a brother raised her four children here, though the two eldest now attend college in Italy. Her sacrifice, she hoped, would yield good, white-collar jobs for her children. But with her departure—and yet another separation from her two younger children—looming before her, she expressed bitterness about having to leave her family. "The economy is bad here, salaries are low," she said. "It's the fault of the government that so many Filipinos have to go abroad. If there were good jobs here, why would we ever think of going abroad?" Nilo Villanueva, the mayor of Mabini,

said he had often heard this criticism from overseas workers. Mr. Villanueva was elected in 2007 by campaigning in Italy.

Most overseas workers here send their children to private elementary schools, which have smaller class sizes and offer richer educational and extracurricular programs. At the private Santa Fe Integrated School, which charges an annual tuition of \$370, 80 percent of the 250 students are children of overseas workers. About half have both parents overseas and are being raised by relatives or housekeepers, said Louella D. de Leon, the principal.

Kate Michele Mendoza, 12, and her sister Christina, 8, are typical cases. With their parents working in Italy since Kate Michele's birth, they live with their grandparents and two cousins, whose parents work in Oman. The parents return here once a year, staying one to two months. "We go malling when they are here," Kate Michele said.

Ms. de Leon said that while the children of overseas workers were better off financially, they lacked discipline and scored poorer grades than the children whose parents were present. "The kids of OFW's have everything in terms of gadgets—the latest cellphones that you can't even find in Manila—and they have bigger allowances than even the teachers," Ms. de Leon said. "But they have an attitude. They are arrogant." "I don't understand their parents," she added. "They are working as maids in Italy and they hire maids here to take care of their own children."

Atikha, a private organization here, provides financial literacy programs for overseas workers who, here in Mabini and elsewhere, tend to invest in houses and vehicles that remain unused

for years. Ella Cristina Gloriano, a personal finance adviser at Atikha, said overseas workers often incurred debts overseas to build their dream houses here. “That’s one reason why many of them can’t come home,” she said. “They have to keep working to repay their debts.”

In the Pulong Lupa neighborhood, about half of the houses belong to absent overseas workers. No one answered the doorbell at several houses, but a caretaker, Jovel Bonapos, 16, appeared at the gate of a large pink house. The house, he said, belonged to a couple and their four children living in Italy. They visited only once every two years, staying up to two months each time. The house had four bedrooms and three bathrooms, and it is “completely furnished,” he said.

In a large house not too far away, Lorena Sawali-Baquillos, 37, lives with her three children while her husband works as a seaman. Ms. Sawali-Baquillos, who leads a small organization of OFW families, said she understood the motivation behind building the Italian-style houses. “Filipinos are stuck on status symbols,” she said. “After the sweat and tears of working in Europe for many years, they build a big house to show the fruits of their labor.”

“But it’s weird,” she added. “How can you enjoy your house if you can only see it in photos? The houses have huge beds, even though they may use them only a few weeks a year. They’re fully furnished with plasma televisions and ovens, but there’s no one to bake a cake.”

*Arctic Bay, Canada, October 4, 2010*

**Clare Kines**

Winter descended on us this past week, not on cat’s feet like Carl Sandberg’s fog, but on grey

skies and a cold southeast wind. I am so not ready for winter this year. It's not that it is unexpected. This is the beginning of October, and winter could have arrived anytime from the end of August on. This is the High Arctic after all, it is the wrong place to live if you aren't expecting to experience winter.

I'm just not ready. My blood isn't adapting and it feels colder than before. I've got renovations to do, and have to do a lot of the sawing etc. outside. My yard still isn't emptied of the previous owner's belongings and I need to get my shed and stash of lumber here in their place. And my loon is gone, the ponds are frozen.

On the other hand, my new exterior doors are in, and the house already feels warmer. My blood will adapt and I'll eventually switch to anticipating the arrival of migrant birds instead of feeling hollow that they're gone. And I still have Ravens to entertain and accompany me.

But the sky is grey, and the ocean is a colder grey. Perhaps a few sunny days before we lose the Sun in a month's time will get me ready, get my blood adapted for the winter that has pounced upon me.

*The United States, October 5, 2010*

**Cindy**

Today a friend and I [a Muslim girl] met with the university director about a program that potentially interests my friend. At the conclusion of our meeting, the older, Eastern European professor inquired: "Do you shake men's hands?" Me: "Yes, and we hug them too. Care for a hug?" Awkward silence.

The election process has been going on in our country for months. It is one of the hottest news events with all the people and news channels in our country.

In the city, the candidates' photos are everywhere. The city looks different from any other time. Some photos look good, some not. Some photos have been colored over by people who don't like them. That isn't good.

Every night my dad was being invited somewhere for a gathering of the candidates in my province. I was not happy for my dad to go to such places, because I was afraid that something might happen; security was not good and every second there was the fear of something happening, especially kidnappings and attacks. We all heard of it happening. It seemed whenever there were gatherings of people, attacks happened. Or people were killed for promoting their candidates. Finally the day of the election [September 18] arrived, and we were all given the day off from the office. All the families gathered together in their homes. Early in the morning while having breakfast, my family talked about the election, who we would vote for, which candidate was good and which not good. We were not sure whether to go vote or not to go. But then my dad asked all of us to get ready, and go vote.

Although we were afraid and worried, we got ready, left home, and walked to our nearest school, where the voting was going on. There were a lot of people and the area for the women was separated from the men. I was afraid. I wanted to hurry and finish our voting so we

*Afghanistan. In recent years, dozens of family members and close allies of President Hamid Karzai have taken government jobs, pursued business interests or worked as contractors to the United States government, allowing them to shape policy or financially benefit from it.*

could go back home. But thankfully nothing happened.

My mom, my sisters, and I joined the other women in the women's lines. While we waited we talked with other women, asking who they liked and who they were going to vote for. Some women answered, but others would not tell who they were going to vote for. We had to wait about ten minutes. When our turns came, we went and voted for our choice of candidate. I felt good; I had the freedom to vote for the person of my own choice. [...]

*Cercola (Italy), October 12, 2010*

**Salvatore Aiello**

It's not true that if you have had a full working life it cuts you off from the rest of the world and leaves you unprepared for the following stage. I am discovering that there exists a world, a positive one, apart from the world of work in the narrow sense. It's the world that revolves around your home, your family and yourself.

I'm fortunate to have a young family, which is proving to be very useful in helping me face the "post work-dependent life". I won't use the word retirement because I don't consider myself a retired man in the commonly accepted sense of the word. My having young children and a youthful wife (I've just turned sixty) means that I'm so busy that there are never enough hours in a day for me to fully dedicate myself to them, to our home and to myself. It's a very busy life, packed with trips to the market and supermarket, cooking, ferrying the children to and from their schools (junior and senior high) doing various chores in the home and outside. I'm also fortunate

*October 10, Tel Aviv.  
The Israeli Cabinet has approved an amendment to a citizenship law that requires new citizens to declare their loyalty to a "Jewish and democratic state".*

nate (perhaps I'm exaggerating a bit?) to have lived almost eighteen years on my own, as a migrant. And I had to face all the discomforts of a single man's life on my own, since this was at the beginning of my migrations.

If I have to be sincere, and I will be, I do miss the hectic life of the world of work, of my world and my way of working. And it couldn't be any other way. Up to thirteen hours a day, always in the office, with an ever-increasing load of responsibility, and only four days off sick in over 33 years of work.

Now I'm at home. There's another way of organising your life, the discovery that, perhaps, you were being superficial when judging this world. It's a type of life very different to that of a single working man. Then I only had myself to answer to for the organisation (or disorganisation) of the household chores. What I left in the morning would be there to meet me in the evening; in the meantime nobody could discover the "dirty secrets" of my house. Today, between the morning and the evening, it's the other members of the household who go out one or more times during the day, and they expect me to do my part. And I have to be there ready for them because each of us has a well-defined role (husband, wife working, children studying), individual tasks (managing the home, work and studies) and their own targets to reach.

But, in the end, come to think of it—has anything really changed? At work in the company office I also had a well-defined role, I was surrounded by people with well-defined roles and tasks, I was working with targets to reach...

*Bologna, Italy, October 15, 2010*

**Marina Girardi**

I know who is playing that flute, that gentle stream of music that floats through the traffic in Via Rizzoli, through the shuffling of people, through voices muffled by the thin rain, until it reaches me sitting and painting between the shop windows of “Maison du Monde” and the optician’s, huddled against the easel under the shelter of a rainbow-coloured umbrella I bought from Anthony, a young man from Cameroon.

Patrick is from Cameroon too: he came to Italy to get a painting degree and become an art teacher. He stopped to look at my drawings, showed me a picture of one of his paintings in shades of orange, and told me about the thirteen years of exploration it had taken him to achieve that result.

I had not tread the paving of Via Oberdan with my stool and brushes for months, so I was pleased to be back on the street and the street seemed happy to have me back, despite the fact that it would not stop raining.

This morning it was not raining yet, and Paki stopped to say hello, followed by Guido and Giuseppe. They were each riding their own old bicycles and our conversations all seemed to get stuck on the fact that there is no money. Paki needs it to finish the floor in the warehouse where he lives, which he wants to turn into a gym for drama and juggling. Guido is struggling with publishers who have not paid him for the book covers they commissioned. For a year now, Giuseppe has been waiting for a scholarship which would allow him to work as a researcher in Holland. “People do live well there, Marina,” he said as he hugged me and left.

*October 13, Copiapó, Chile. Sixty nine days after their ordeal began, all of the miners trapped in a hole a half mile under Chile were delivered to the earth’s surface. When they feel stronger, they may return to lives filled with gifts. Leonardo Farkas, a Chilean businessman, has already written checks of 5 million pesos, or about \$10,460, to each of the 33 men. A Greek mining company has offered a free one-week vacation to Greece for each miner and a companion. Family members said they had also been invited by two European soccer teams, Manchester United and Real Madrid, to visit their stadiums. Real Madrid had already sent 33 jersey—signed by players and with the words “Have strength, miners” printed on them—to the miners while they were trapped below. The Manchester United legend Bobby Charlton, the son of a miner, has sent a recorded message to the Chileans inviting them to Old Trafford, while*

Even Laurano, a man who walks by and stops at least two or three times whenever I come and paint in Via Oberdan, talked to me about money and those who steal it. “Bankers are the real bastards,” he cried out, spitting a hail of saliva all over me. He came back later and offered me a bag: “Would you like a present?” It was a small, blue and white, hand-painted china pot with the words “hot pepper” on it. “Just like you!” Laurano told me with a smile, and left.

I know who is playing that flute. It is the young man with a blond beard and eyes drained by dope. It is a stream of music that comes from far away, from the other side of Via Rizzoli, from further away, from the woods, or from the mountains.

*The Philippines, October 16, 2010*

The rain was strong today! It was frightening. It’s around the same time of the year as typhoon Ondoy, and I’m getting anxious because things might grind to a standstill again, a whole metropolis paralyzed, cold, and relatively hungry. Cross your fingers, grab the water you can, stock reserves, plant things.

But I have to say that the garden looks great! It gets so lush around this time. In particular, a clump of cogon grass that we have not been touching is huge! About three times taller than me and flowering. It is a source of amusement outside. Our goat is pregnant, and her stomach is moving. She is really about to extrude a baby, and I’m really excited. The rain is complicating things, because they hate getting wet, and their shed cannot protect them from side sprays. We

*the former Argentina coach Diego Maradona sent a message saying that the miners’ liberation after 69 days underground “was proof that miracles exist and you are one of them.” Adriana Barrientos, a reality show personality in Chile, offered to do a striptease for each of the 33 miners.*

**Bea**

*Copiapó, Chile. Thirty-seven years before the mine rescue, almost to the day—in the predawn hours of October 17, 1973, a few weeks after the coup by Augusto Pinochet that ended the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende—military personnel murdered 16 men near Copiapó, including some who worked for Chile’s state mining company.*

were thinking inside the house, but what a mess that would be.

And things are flowering! I don't remember so much color during the rainy season.

*Singapore, October 19, 2010*

**Emily**

“If you have a domestic helper, you'll have a headache. But if you don't have a domestic helper, you'll end up with a handache and backache.” That's how I look at it. Obviously, I'd rather have a headache than a backache. So, I choose to live with the teeny-weeny problems of hiring a domestic helper.

As a matter of fact, my biggest headache does not lie with our helper *but* with Daddy V. We often argue about how we should manage our helper. He thinks that I'm too lenient and I think that he's overly demanding. You get the picture?

We're currently with our second helper (her name is Pin). She has been with us for eight months now. I would say that she is a hardworking and honest worker. I would give her a B+ in most categories. The only flaw is her speed; she is not as fast as my first helper, Niti.

We were very lucky to get Niti (our first helper) to work for us for two years. She's really amazing—efficient, smart and highly alert. She has all the qualities that I look for. But now, we know that we can't compare the two of them as they're completely different individuals.

Pin has been struggling to keep up with her workload but she never gives up. It's the same amount of work that Niti used to do, actually. To improve her performance, I feel that we should

*Washington. Nearly four years after the federal government began a string of investigations and criminal prosecutions against Blackwater Worldwide personnel accused of murder and other violent crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, the cases are beginning to fall apart. In September, a Virginia jury was unable to reach a verdict in the murder trial of two former Blackwater guards accused of killing two Afghan civilians. Late last year, charges were dismissed against five former Blackwater guards who had been indicted on manslaughter and related weapons charges in a September 2007 shooting incident in Nisour Square in Baghdad, in which 17 Iraqi civilians were killed. Federal prosecutors have failed to overcome a series of legal hurdles,*

reduce some of her workload. If we continue to stress her, she may eventually give up. Most importantly, I want her to feel happy working with us and not overly stressed.

Daddy V. has a totally different way of thinking. He refuses to lighten her workload and he feels that we should continue to pressure her to work faster. Otherwise, she will potentially become lazy. If she is unable to complete her work, she'll have to sacrifice her own rest time. "Learn the hard way," that's what he's always said.

Stress will only create adverse effects because she doesn't know how to handle it. I don't understand why he won't listen to me.

*including the difficulties of obtaining evidence in war zones, of gaining proper jurisdiction for prosecutions in American civilian courts, and of overcoming immunity deals given to defendants by American officials on the scene.*

## **From a Maid's Diary**

by Jazeann



*Singapore, April 30, 2007*

I was introduced to my American employer by a friend who used to work part-time with them. They decided to hire a full-time maid because they were having another baby (which I didn't know about). Having been with a local family for four long years, I decided to move into a new environment. The thought of getting every Sunday off with my new employer excited me (I managed to get a twice a month off from my previous employer). Plus the fact that I'd have no more curfews. My previous employer imposed this rule on me that by five pm I had to be home to cook or feed the children.

Some employers have this kind of practice, which I find ridiculous. I use to hear maids grumbling at the bus stop at four pm saying how short the time was for them. They wished they could stay out longer and not be rushing home when the sun was still shining brightly... I was in the same boat as them, so I know how it feels. The thought of not rushing to the bus stop again at four pm makes me smile. I was looking forward to attending every Sunday service in our church and being able to see my friends on weekends. We go to the same church on our days off.

My new employers were a young couple with five- and two-year-old daughters. The man was working but worked at home some days, he worked for an American newspaper as a financial columnist, while the lady was a stay-at-home mum for the kids. He traveled for work once in while. They seemed like a nice couple when I first met them. They preferred me to call them by their first names rather than sir or ma'am. Which I felt was more appropriate, as our age gap was not that much. I was the same age as my male boss, my female boss was two years younger than me. I will call them Pete and Shar (names changed to protect their identity).

I had no idea what my job would be aside from helping her to look after the girls. I was given the instruction to focus on the children. Not to worry about cooking, cleaning or laundry. My head started to get muddled as soon as I started working with them. Shar expected me to be around while she played with them, so the girls would get to know me. Fine for me (but not long). Feed the children when they were hun-

gry, not necessarily wait for proper meal times which are breakfast, lunch and dinner. For them, a meal is a snack. And let them feed themselves, which was kind of weird to me (maybe because I used to spoon-feed my previous employers' kids).

Naturally, food got all over the floor, not into the children's mouths. When I attempted to help feed them, Shar would say it's ok, they can feed themselves. Maybe she was trying to teach them to be independent, but for goodness' sake, these kids needed to eat properly. Every meal time, the kitchen was a whole mess, food thrown all over the place. This was maybe kind of normal to them but it was killing me. I am a very tidy person and was doing my best to keep this house as tidy as much as possible, but with these two food-throwing kids it was impossible. [...]

Pete was the nicer of the two, when he was around he would ask if I'd eaten or he would take the kids out so that I could rest. Of course I wouldn't be resting, 'cause I'd still have to do other things at home. With two kids throwing everything around inside the house, the place obviously needed tidying up if there is a chance. If there are so-called messy people, Shar was one of them. I'm not sure if she even know how to clear her mess, but I'm sure I didn't see her making an effort to practice. The sight of her used underwear on the bathroom floor made me squirm. Why couldn't she just throw it in the laundry basket?

My temper was thinning everyday, and so was my patience. I tried to ignore her weird behavior, thinking that maybe it was part of the mood

swings caused by her pregnancy. But one day she made me snap when she accused me of hitting her eldest daughter. The elder daughter would suddenly cry for no apparent reason (she did that all the time). And every time, Shar would ask me what I did to her. For God's sake, I've never lifted a finger to anyone, how could she suspect me of hitting this small girl? [...]

*Singapore, May 28, 2007*

My new family (boss) is going away on a short trip to Phuket. They left a couple of nights ago. There was some hysteria and confusion while they were packing stuff that they needed to bring. This is not a surprise to me anymore, it happens every time they go away.

The lady boss will lay out a few dozen clothes on the bed along other stuff and leave them there for hours before she chooses what to bring. If they are away for, say, five days, she will bring three pairs of clothes per day. So you can imagine how many clothes she brings all the time. She will pack five pairs of flip-flops, one of sandals, one of evening shoes (in case they go bar-hopping). Her swimsuit must be different every day. Why can't she just bring one and wash it after using it, then wear the same one the next time they go swimming? She has this annoying practice of fishing clothes out of the laundry basket and asking me to wash them because she needs to bring them with her. She has thousands of clothes in the closet, why does she need to bring the ones she wore the other day?

The teenage daughter is the same as her mom. The daughter doesn't wear anything except Roxy, for her they're the coolest clothes ever. I

remember buying her a different brand of clothes, she didn't ever wear them. What a shame... She also packs three pairs of flip-flops, three different pairs of shoes, one of trainers in case they play tennis. So you can imagine the bulk of their luggage. I really hope they don't lose their luggage. The father and son are easier, they're not as fashionable as the two ladies.

With the bulk of clothes they packed, I can see myself spending two days doing the laundry, plus another whole day ironing and putting away all the clothing when they come home. I have to prepare myself mentally and physically for that. [...]

I went to Jurong Bird Park yesterday with a group of friends. I've been there a couple of times already, but the reason for going there this time is to take photos of the birds. Photography is one of my favorite hobbies, I have taken photos of birds before and I love the color of their feathers. [...] When we reached the park around noontime, it was all bright and sunny. Only to become cloudy after the bird show. After a brief walk around the park we went straight to the amphitheater to find a good spot under the middle of the canvas canopy. I admired how they perched the canopy in a cave-like way in the heart of the park.

Going to a park with a group of friends was not a good idea after all. Everyone wanted to go in a different direction. I wanted to go in the lory loft so I could have a close look at the birds and be able to take close-up photos of them. That didn't work because my friend dragged me to the waterfall aviary (it's a manmade waterfall,

but they did a good job by making it look like the real one). I managed to take photos of flamingos, pelicans and other birds. Only to find out later that all my shots are blurred. My friend accidentally changed the setting of my camera when I asked her to take a photo of me. I was really pissed when I found out about it. I will never let anybody touch my camera again. I want my 16 dollars back.

*Singapore, November 21, 2008*

There are probably 80,000 Filipino maids in Singapore and maybe 80 percent wash their employer's car, if not every day, then twice a week or maybe once a week. My question is... is washing the car our responsibility? As far as I know, we are employed to do housework and childcare jobs, but washing cars? Isn't that supposed to be a man's job? Why can't employers wash their own cars? They sit and sip coffee or read a newspaper while we wash their cars?

Some unlucky maids are being paid 300 dollars a month for housework that includes cooking, taking care of children, laundry, marketing, ironing, etc. Our work starts at five am while our bosses are still asleep, and our work finishes (if we are lucky) at ten pm when our bosses go to bed. Some even work till two am, sleep for three hours, then wake up at five am. How ridiculous is that? Some work for their employers' relatives during the day and work at their employers' place at night. [...]

If they want us to wash their cars, why can't they pay us extra at least? Or do we have the right to ask for a fee for washing their cars? Can the Ministry of Manpower do anything about this,

or does it let employers relax and sit while we wash their cars? How about asking that we rest after we wash their cars. I doubt it. I know some employers who ask their maid to wash the car quickly so she can feed the baby or go to the market or make the beds or do the cooking or do the laundry or God knows what else. In their eyes, maids are not human, maids are machines. [...]

## An Advertisement



The “Film Development Council of the Philippines” presents *Emir*, a film by Chito Roño, the biggest original Filipino musical written for the screen. It tells the story of Amelia, a Filipina from Ilocos who decides to work abroad to help her family. She takes care of a future crown prince—Ahmed, the Sheik’s son—rearing him, and in the process, introducing the young boy to the culture, values, and language of the Philippines. More than a nanny, Amelia acts as Ahmed’s surrogate mother and is even willing to offer her life to ensure his safety. Her journey reveals, through words and music, the life that overseas Filipino workers live—their struggles to have a better life, their dreams, and the hope that someday their hard work will finally be rewarded. *Emir* is thus far the only movie to take on the heart and soul of the Filipino through our innate love for music. It is a tribute to our OFWs, the hands that work, and toil in foreign

lands, and yet have one home, one heart and one spirit. Starring in the film is “Are You the Next Big Star” winner Francheska Farr.

*Singapore, October 25, 2010*

At the playground yesterday morning, I met my neighbor who is staying on the tenth floor. She is a very nice lady. Her daughter, Wen, is one year younger than Little Edison and they enjoy playing together at the playground.

While the two kiddos were playing, we sat down and had a good chat. It had been a few months since we last met. She used to be in the same situation as me—we’re both working and we send our children and helpers to our mother-in-law’s place every morning. Both our helpers are from Indonesia too.

However, her situation changed three months ago. Her Indonesian helper has left. Her diabetic father-in-law has been very sick and her mother-in-law couldn’t help to take care of her daughter anymore. So, she employed a Filipina helper to take care of her daughter at her own place. In other words, she is leaving her daughter to the care of the helper while she and her husband go to work in the morning. There is no one else at home during the day, except the helper.

Thankfully, her Filipina helper is able to take care of her daughter independently. She is also able to do housekeeping, washing and ironing while her girl is napping. She can even cook lunch for her girl. She will turn on the tv for the girl while she cooks in the kitchen. In the evening, she will prepare the food for dinner. When my neighbor reaches home at six pm, she

**Emily**

*October 22, Haiti. A cholera outbreak in a rural area of north-western Haiti has killed more than 150 people. In the next few months, the epidemic will kill thousands of people.*

*October 22, China. Thousands of Tibetan students in western China have protested against proposals to curb or eliminate the use of the Tibetan language in local schools, and to shift school instruction fully or almost fully to China’s official language, Mandarin.*

will take over her daughter while her helper cooks the dinner. How wonderful! [...]

I'm still not brave enough to leave Little Edison alone with my helper at home. It's not about lack of trust, but I don't think she can handle things on her own. If an accident happens, she may not know how to handle it, i.e., lack of basic first aid knowledge, use of medication, safety awareness etc. Whenever my parents-in-law are away, I'll apply for leave to stay at home with Little Edison. I may be over-protective, but again, some accidents are irreversible. As much as I can, I will prevent them.

Just to quote one simple example of safety awareness. The helper is carrying Little Edison while I was making payment at the cashier counter in the supermarket. A man standing behind me was coughing. My first helper, Niti, would have immediately walked away with Little Edison to avoid catching the germs (without being told). My second helper, Pin, will continue to stand in the same location and wait for me to complete my payment.

You see the difference? Niti has good safety awareness, but not Pin. It takes time to train her in this area. A lot of things are common sense to us, but with our helper, we just have to explain to her so that she understands our concerns. [...]

*Bologna, October 26, 2010*

**Marina Girardi**

As she sips her cappuccino holding the cup in her gnarled hands, the old lady sitting next to me rocks on her stool and sings an old-fashioned song: *Non ti scordar di me, la vita mia è legata*

*a te...* A stout woman with a Russian accent cleans her mouth with a handkerchief and scolds her as if she were a little girl.

It is raining on a Tuesday morning, and I try to put these hectic moments on hold for a little while, sitting in a café. “Clìò underwear, tights, swimming costumes” yells a shop sign on the opposite side of Via Murri.

The newspaper crime page is full of apparently unmotivated episodes of violence involving people who had never seen each other before and had only met by chance outside a disco, on the underground, in a shop. A Romanian nurse was punched, a seller of *piadine* who had served a cold sandwich was kicked, a Chinese shopkeeper in the Bolognina district got beaten up.

Last Saturday I was sitting along Via Oberdan trying to paint a big whale. I occasionally go to paint and sell my artworks in that corner of the city, but for the first time in years the police came and ordered me to get up and leave. One of the shopkeepers had called them because of the racket a few minutes earlier.

Francesca, a young woman who lives on the streets with her big white boxer, usually begs for money in that same street. That day she had come up to me, stood a few inches from my face and started insulting me hysterically, intentionally tapping her cigarette ash on my sleeve. Actually, instead of begging as usual, Francesca has now been drawing and selling her small artworks to passers-by and cannot stand being in competition with me painting just a few yards from her. “You’re being abusive,” I told her, trying to keep calm. “Not as abusive as you are to me, since I live on the streets and survive on small

*October 27, Mogadishu. Somalia’s most powerful Islamist insurgents, the Shabab, executed two teenage girls after deciding they were spies. The two teenagers—one 18, the other 14—were shot by firing squad in the center of the town of Beledweyne, near the border with Ethiopia. Pickup trucks with big loudspeakers drove into the town, ordering the residents to watch the execution.*

change,” she shouted back at me raucously. A few days ago, I was at the station in Prato waiting for my connection back to Bologna, when a boy responded to a man who had refused him a coin by swiftly drawing a spray can from his pocket and spraying it into the man’s face, his blue eyes dilated with rage. A few drops of the irritant liquid even reached my throat as I walked to the platform. Petrified, I watched the boy ride off on a bike amidst general indifference. Only one man with just a single tooth in his mouth and a toupee badly placed on his head came up to me and hissed: “Did you see that? What can one do? If you get too close, you risk getting knocked dead” Then he asked, “Have you got a boyfriend?” “Yes,” I replied. “Then love each other, that’s what counts!”

*Padua, Italy, November 4, 2010*

**Marco Dalla Dea**

I’ve learned that animals are the first to escape when the floods come. Ladybirds crawl up walls. Cats climb up high. Labradors swim towards the roadside verges, as do moles, surprising long-distance swimmers just breaking the surface of the water. Not so cows. Cows sink. “They drown on their arses” explains a farmer, tears in his eyes. He’s trying to save the dairy cows from his family-run farm. “They can’t close their anal sphincters, so they fill up with water, and go under.” Truth or legend? I don’t know, but you hear all kinds of strange stories during floods. And the people? They try to salvage what little they can, before escaping.

We are in Casalserugo, in the province of Padua, exactly twelve kilometres and one hun-

*November 2, Washington. Republicans captured control of the House of Representatives and expanded their voice in the Senate, riding a wave of voter discontent as they dealt a setback to President Obama just two years after his triumphal victory.*

dred metres away from Piazza dei Signori, the centre of that main town of the Veneto region, one of the richest towns in Italy, but now it seems worlds away. At 10 in the morning on Tuesday, November 2 there are already sixty centimetres of water in the lowest-lying areas of the district. And the level is rising. The river Bacchiglione, heavily swollen with the floodwaters, has broken its banks. A gaping hole: fourteen metres of banking have collapsed, and the river is gushing out. From there to the houses is just a stone's throw away. At 11 the muddy water is lapping at the doorsteps of the houses. At 12, the people say goodbye to their best sofas in their front sitting rooms.

The Genio Civile engineers try to patch up the hole with rocks, earth, whatever is lying around. After the first attempts it's clear that there's nothing to be done: "Too much pressure! Too much pressure!" shouts a fireman, one from the Marche region, sent here to lend a hand. The Genio Civile, more composed, simply stand and shake their heads. Between 10 am and 1 pm twelve lorries come and go full of rocks and earth, which they dump into the gap—the river gurgles a while, arches its back and sweeps it all away. Lorry-load after lorry-load, the story is the same: "Too much pressure! Too much pressure!" When evening comes, the hole is over 45 metres long, as big as half a football pitch.

There are some 150 to 200 houses in the immediate vicinity of the hole. But the area in danger is wider, there's talk of more than 1500 people affected, some of them elderly. Families are evacuated to the community sports centre of Casalsérugo from 5 am onwards, but at 10 the water is

getting too close and the counter-order arrives: “The river bank is giving way. We’re taking you all to Legnaro”. But the people don’t want to go. There are their homes to be saved. Attempts are made to hold back the water. What is needed are barriers, bags of sand. But there isn’t anything. “If you can, make do with what you’ve got, because I’ve got the feeling there’s no help coming...” says a dismayed policeman behind the wheel of a Fiat Punto, struggling to get clear of the water.

He’s wrong, but only partly. Shortly afterwards, in fact, the Civil Protection workers unload jute sacks with “Magistrato alle Acque di Venezia” [Venice Water Authority] stamped on them. “These ought to protect you from the water.” “Right, but the sand? What are we supposed to fill these bloody sacks with?” They don’t know. “Try ringing the Town Hall!” suggests the mayor of Casalsèrugo Elisa Venturini, who is shattered after staying up all night in a Land Rover of the Genio Civile. “Mayor Venturini, haven’t you got a radio transmitter? Couldn’t you call somebody?” “Radio? What radio?! We’ve got our mobiles, when we can get a line...”

Everyone does the best they can, up to their knees in water, moving furniture and elderly folk. Each one doing his own thing, typical of the Veneto region: “These ‘ere ‘ands can shift nigh on 50 sandbags” says one man in Veneto dialect, as his house drowns in the water under his very feet. There’s a total lack of coordination. Nobody knows anything. There’s no information. Roads are closed, then re-opened. The firemen aren’t locals, and if asked “Is Via Sperona open?” they tell you: “I’m from Ancona, I don’t

know”. Neighbours help each other out. One salvages a plasma television, the other tries to move his car. “Too late, it’s stuck in the mud, I can’t see where the ditch is any more” says M.D., who abandons his Fiat Punto Evo. “Here’s hopping the mud doesn’t come up too high...”

The sacks of the Civil Protection continue to float around, empty, until N.F., a local building materials dealer, opens the doors of his warehouse to the people: “Take it away, use everything you need”. Now there’s the sand for the sacks. Now they can try to shore up some of the doors. But it’s 12 o’clock, and the water has reached window level. And, of course, there’s no stopping the water. Sandbag walls give way. The tide of muddy water advances, creeps up over the porches, seeps right into the houses [...]

“Everybody, keep calm!” someone shouts from a white van. “But do we have to leave?” they ask in return, up to their waists in water, dressed in their best coats, a cat under an arm. “We don’t know!” comes the reply from the van: “They haven’t given us any orders. Look, all things considered it would be better if you left, but first you should put some sandbags in front of your doors...”

Between November 1 and 4 in the province of Padua, over 2000 people were evacuated. There were over 5000 in the Veneto region as a whole.

*Bologna, Italy, November 12, 2010*

**Alba Ciarleglio**

Porta Saragozza is what is left of the ancient walls; it was reconstructed in the 19th century and marks the end and beginning of the longest portico in Europe, or maybe in the world: 666 numbered arches stretching two miles.

Inside the walls, the porticoes hold up a pulsing architecture of unpretentious, elegant, low buildings in typically Bolognese colours, such as autumnal yellows and reds. Outside the walls lie aristocratic mansions with front doors, halls, courtyards and monumental staircases leading to luxury homes.

That is where the numbering of the arches begins. You are still in the heart of the city: banks, cafés, bakeries and shops in the still-flat part. The portico winds up the hill, skirting private villas and public gardens and becoming steeper and steeper, less crowded and quieter with every arch.

Its final destination is the Sanctuary of the Black Virgin, the Virgin of San Luca, the legendary symbol of the city. Ever since the 18th century there have been infinite tales and prayers and people telling never-ending rosaries for themselves and their children.

*May I give birth to a healthy baby, do not let me die in labour, may he come back from the battle and recover from pneumonia, do not let him catch Spanish flu, may he return from war and find a place to stay, and may the ship bring him home, may God welcome him in Heaven, may he pass his exam, do not let him go insane, may he take the path to faith, find land to till and a fire to warm him, may he die without pain, may he find a job...*

It was raining today, and it would have been hard to take the uphill walk I usually enjoy in the morning, through the parks that border the arches and look out over the city. So I decided to walk up to the sanctuary under the porticoes, sheltered from the bad weather.

*November 6, Nairobi, Kenya. More than 600 women and girls were recently raped along the Congo-Angola border during a mass expulsion of illegal immigrants. Many of the victims said they were locked in dungeon-like conditions for several weeks while they were raped repeatedly by security forces.*

Arch number 50. The church of San Giuseppe. Since I came to live here, this is the third monk to have served as its deacon. From early morning on, the garden in front of the church hosts all the surplus humanity, that is those—mostly Slavic here—who have been left out. Stocky blond men who spent the night drinking ghastly beer to take the edge off of life. There are a few women, maybe wives or mothers. In any case, daughters.

Until just a few years ago, a philanthropic monk used to collect food and blankets for the poor, and an active, supportive community had formed around those actions. Inside the church, a basket collected the food offers. But then some parishioners living on a nearby hill complained about the inconvenience of all that coming and going. The monk campaigned and articles and opinions appeared on the local newspaper, but in the end he was forced to leave. Now he is in Porretta Terme, a spa town in the Bolognese Apennines.

Sometimes places have lingering reflexes, like severed limbs even when the limb is no longer there, and the poor are still here, in the garden, in front of arch number 50, at the San Giuseppe bus stop, drinking very low-quality beer.

Arch number 73. A newsagent's. Maria, a Romanian woman, sells a magazine made by the homeless called "Piazza Grande": a business created to grant begging some dignity. She wears a reflective waistcoat with the word "authorized" on it. Hardly anyone buys the magazine: they leave a donation but do not take it.

Arch number 85. A bakery. Elena, Maria's sister: same job, same waistcoat. She asks me for something more, she has to leave, she has to buy cough syrup for her little girl: lies which are less dra-

*Mosalsk, Russia. On a lane where geese waddle through muddy puddles, a brick building holds crate upon crate of this region's one precious harvestable commodity: human hair, much of it blond. For the global beauty industry, this is golden treasure. "Nobody else has this, nobody in the world," said Aleksei N. Kuznetsov, the building's owner. "Russian hair is the best in the world." Buyers of human hair flock to poor regions like this. Cash in hand, they pay small sums for a head's worth of tresses sheared from women who often have few economic alternatives. Long sought for wigs and toupees, human hair is now in particularly high demand for hair extension procedures in more affluent countries. The largest market is the United States. African-American women have long worn hair extensions, but the trend among women with lighter hair has been popularized by celebrity endorsements from the likes of Jessica Simpson and Paris Hilton. "It's not hard to understand why people in Ukraine sell their*

matic than the truth, but she sells us what we want, nothing more, nothing less.

Arch number 102. A very good-looking, tall young African man is standing flattened against the columns; surely he has no residence permit and is ready to run away in case of danger.

Arch number 175. Jacob has been living “here” around the park for seven or eight years now; he is Dutch and I do not know whether he is retarded or mad. He does not speak a word of Italian, he is about thirty, and when he arrived he was very good-looking: six foot tall, long blond curls and deep blue eyes. Now he is always drunk, his teeth are rotten and every so often he is found with a battered face after a bad fall. In his own manner, he tells you that he gets beaten up by those who want to steal his meagre possessions. Lots of people bring him clothes, blankets and food. Sometimes he is at the traffic lights and, following some logic of his own, he wipes the back screens of cars; someone else cleans the front ones. A sort of division of tasks.

Under arch number 175 there is also a very busy public library. For some time now, when it opens, many people have been going in there to warm up, use the bathroom, or get coffee from the vending machine; they are invisibly poor: they still wear dignified clothes and carry a few things in a backpack. A librarian told me, or I would not have realized: globalized sports clothes standardize everything and everyone, so you need a trained eye to notice the difference.

Arch number 200. There is a small group of African boys selling handkerchiefs and socks to passers-by.

Arch number 325. At this point, under the hill

*hair a hundred times more often than people in Sweden,” David Elman, a co-owner of Raw Virgin Hair Company, an importer based in Kiev, Ukraine, said.*

*“They are not doing it for fun. Usually, only people who have temporary financial difficulties in depressed regions sell their hair.” Here in Mosalsk, a 16-inch braid, the shortest length a buyer will consider, fetches about \$50. Mr. Kuznetsov’s company here, Belli Capelli, is the largest business of its type in Russia, with annual revenue of about \$16 million. “This is capitalism,” he said. “The people with money want to distinguish themselves from the people with no money. The person with money wants to look better than the person without money.” American customers are typically unconcerned about the origins of extensions, said Ron Landzaat, founder of Hair Extensions Guide, a trade group in Santa Rosa, Calif. “They are concerned about their looks more than anything else.”*

portico, one can only reach the sanctuary. It was early morning and Albino was still sleeping under the portico, in front of a flight of stairs. I shortened my dog's lead so that it would not sniff at the man. His shoes were tidily paired; his bed is made of cardboard and when he is not using it, he puts it away, perfectly fitted into place between the wall and the handrail along the staircase.

Arch number 421. A man, maybe from the Philippines, was sitting on a step eating tinned food. There was already a crowd of joggers, much more numerous than the worshippers, and not all that different from them, even in their clothing: Nike shoes and waterproof jackets; there were lots of Asian Catholics and a few Eastern European women.

There is one last flight of steps before getting to the sanctuary. I was exhausted, and not only because of the climb, but there is a cross up there, and one has to touch it, otherwise it does not count; by touching the cross one certifies one's vow. There, touched: now the Virgin Mary knows it.

Arch number 666. A whole family of beggars always stands in front of the church entrance. According to a legend, arch number 666, a number that represents the devil, was designed and built because, from the top, the portico looks like a snake, which is the symbol of sin. It has always seemed to me as a weird thing or an architect's joke.

Beyond the wide openings in the building the horizon unfolds; a cold world is raining outside, sings a poet of our era. Those who reach this point have something to ask for or to expiate, or

they just want to keep fit and do not pay attention to what this urban shell hosts. Or maybe they do, but need to avert their eyes, and I do not blame them: it really is hard to penetrate it, as one risks being overwhelmed.

But this is just a linear story, a rosary telling; other architecture holds stories like these all over the world. Someone, in the period when I was born, told us that everybody would achieve wealth and everyone would have everything, but something has gone wrong.

*May he find a job, achieve his goal, get his residence permit and find hospitality, do not let him give in to despair, may the light guide him, may he have bread every day and find shelter...*

## **Persons/Non-Persons. Reflections on an Ethical and Pedagogical Dilemma**

by Gianluca Giachery



*People always hated foreigners.  
It's the American way.*  
Woody Allen

1. As sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has repeatedly affirmed, modern Western history is built around three key ideas: order, cleanliness, and purity. While it is true that ever since Hobbes, the concept of coexistence has necessarily been linked to a social contract that can keep the community's potential ungovernability in check, the very nature of contemporary capitalist societies requires a constant focus on individuals, and on

controlling them, in an attempt to construct pervasive methods of discipline for the masses.

The outcome of this entire process is a massive contradiction between the endogenous need to make commodities, capital, and people circulate as much as possible, and the other, equally powerful need to control this circulation, creating ever-tighter restrictions on who can and should move around freely and what can and should be traded.

What is constantly at work, in short, is an enormous mechanism of inclusion and exclusion in which individuals play an even more significant role than commodities, and whose openings and barriers, moreover, lead to lingering questions about the meaning of words such as individual, person, community, citizenship, freedom.

To take up Bauman's initial suggestion (an idea that American sociologist Erving Goffman had already analyzed in depth in the 1950s) one could say that the cult of perfection—and above all, of cleanliness—is linked to the illusion that our societies are essentially self-referential systems, which do not require any exchange, any intrusion from the outside, except from a position of superiority and command. Superiority and command which are aimed at radically erasing all diversity.

We're saying nothing new here, since as early as the '40s, Theodor Adorno and other scholars were dissecting the formation of the "authoritarian personality", suggesting that it was engendered precisely by developing a paranoid sense of fear and suspicion towards others. As Adorno writes, "People who adopt [a willingness to connive with power and submit to it] more or less

voluntarily are placed under a kind of permanent compulsion to obey orders”.<sup>1</sup>

What is more interesting, however, is the notion that a social system, in order to be stable, must automatically reject certain elements inside it that cannot be tolerated. This is what Roberto Esposito clearly defined as the “immunization paradigm” of the social structure: it is precisely through a framework of inclusion/exclusion that the rules of adherence or non-adherence to certain conditions of social co-existence are established.<sup>2</sup>

2. Delving into the hidden or perceptible mechanisms of social manifestations thus means, to paraphrase Elias Canetti, entering the “secret heart of the clock”. It means remaining on the surface of events, lingering on the threshold of appearances, and deciphering the secret logic of what is considered obvious, of the commodity that, so cheaply sold, can become a troublesome, rejected element to be eliminated. It is a matter, as Goffman has always said, of analyzing social performances. It is also a matter, as Michel Foucault has demonstrated with equal clarity, of attempting to fit these performances into the interplay of powers that encounter each other, repel each other, absorb each other, reject each other and complement each other. The West has built its modern history on these manifestations, on these refusals, on these rejections.

It is not just a question of power or powers. It has to do with the construction of individuals, of the rules governing social behaviour, of the outlook that underlies regulatory law and that is connected, moreover, to the meaning and perception of justice and freedom.

<sup>1</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Education after Auschwitz*, in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. H. Pickford, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> See Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita*, Einaudi, Turin, 2002.

The passage from the individual to the collective has constituted a drastic shift in Western capitalism's rules of dominion. The thin boundary separating the concepts of right and wrong, normal and abnormal, good and bad, in short, all the categories that shape our perception of daily life, is a point of friction between forces that are often invisible, but that establish our sense of adherence to a certain social model.

This line has to do with the concepts of person and non-person, of the citizen, of the non-EU citizen, and finally, of the undocumented immigrant. Actually, these are all metaphors revolving around an issue that has absorbed jurists, philosophers, sociologists and pedagogists, especially in recent years. It is an issue, moreover, linked to a sphere that Foucault pointed to as essential for understanding the dynamics of controlling the masses, i.e., *biopolitics*.

Starting with the definition of "reason of state" in the modern era, Foucault identifies the role of the police as an instrument created to govern, control and define the normalization of the masses. He writes<sup>3</sup> that it "appears as an administration heading the state, together with the judiciary"; and that it "includes everything. But from an extremely particular point of view. Men and things are envisioned as to their relationships: men's coexistence on a territory; their relationships as to property; what they produce; what is exchanged on the market".<sup>3</sup>

Control of the masses, of the community, of birth, life, and death, based on an all-encompassing viewpoint: that is the most obvious meaning of the concept of biopolitics.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Omnès et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason*, in L. Kritzman (ed.), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, Routledge, New York, 1988, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> To further clarify the

3. This serves, naturally, to define the difference (not merely legal) between person and non-person. A few years ago, the sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago published a study emblematically titled *Non-Persons: The Exclusion of Migrants in a Global Society* (IPOC Press, Milan, 2009), in which he tries to analyze the foundations of the social construct whereby an individual—in public perception—may come to be considered an “outsider” or, on the contrary, to be part of a given context.

No less important, in this regard, are the reflections of philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben and Esposito himself, or even jurists of the caliber of Stefano Rodotà.

The American philosophers Peter Singer and Hugo Engelhardt (who deal with issues related to bioethics), in delineating the difference between person and non-person, affirm that: 1. not all human beings are people; 2. not all people are human beings. Stopping to explain certain categories in this construct, they write, for example, that: 1. the adult is a *full person*, 2. the child and the sick adult are *semi-persons*, 2. the terminally ill patient is a *non-person*, 3. the madman is an *anti-person*.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of person that was laid out, in the contemporary era, by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (which Jacques Maritain examined in depth), would thus seem to have been irredeemably amended. The subject loses what one could call his apparently inviolable centrality, irredeemably becoming part of the social and legal normativity of the individual who may or may not be invested with certain rights that are sanctioned, recognized and shared.

meaning of police procedure which took shape in the 1600s and 1700s, Foucault writes: “In the 17th and 18th centuries, ‘police’ signified a program of government rationality. This can be characterized as a project to create a system of regulation of the general conduct of individuals whereby everything would be controlled to the point of self-sustenance, without the need for intervention”. Michel Foucault, *Space, Knowledge and Power*, in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984, p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, see Hugo T. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996.

What does it mean to be a “full person”, a “semi-person”, a “non-person”, or an “anti-person”? It means, on the one hand, entering the normativity of a certain legal plane; but it also means, from an ethical and social standpoint, highlighting the substantive difference between those who have (or can have) some kind of power within a social context (even merely by being recognized as belonging to that context) and those who instead do not have that power.

From another standpoint, while the concept of citizenship seems to guarantee the applicability of certain rights (the inviolability of privacy, protection from the violence of vested interests, access to certain spheres of the welfare state), this guarantee melts away like snow as soon as an individual is considered a non-person, i.e., someone not invested with any rights or power.

As Martha Nussbaum has emphasized, the transition from individuals to persons is constantly compromised by considerations that are not ethical in nature (if it is true that ethics always try to reconcile the interest of the individual with that of the community) but rather moralistic. And to us, this seems to be one of the remarkable contradictions in modern-day capitalist societies.<sup>6</sup>

4. The “migrant” who lands on the coasts of Salerno or Sicily, seeking to evade the clutches of the Bossi-Fini law (i.e., being immediately placed in an expulsion center, identified, and sent back to his country of origin) is, by definition, a non-person. He has no rights, because, in his situation, all rights are suspended to make room for the power and violence of the law that certifies his non-existence. Even more paradoxical is the

<sup>6</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, *Giustizia sociale e dignità umana. Da individui a persone*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002.

fact that, though he exists, in legislative terms he is suspended in a sort of limbo that does not allow him to advance any claims. Residency permits, expulsions, identities not recognized as having rights, imprisonments justified only by processes of social exclusion: these are the result of an across-the-board suspension of the very concept of personhood that rules out any chance of being considered a “life” worthy of living.

To take up Esposito’s theme of the “immunization paradigm”, the migrant is the negative that must be kept at bay, but that, paradoxically, the social order cannot do without. First, because he represents an ongoing form of resistance to that order, and moreover, because that legal status of having no rights makes him the *homo sacer*, the sacrificable man that Agamben describes in his analyses of the banality of evil that in recent times led to Auschwitz.

“The negative,” writes Esposito, “that which contradicts order, norms, values, is taken on not only as an indispensable element of human history in all the singular or social configurations that it assumes periodically, but indeed as history’s productive impulse”.<sup>7</sup>

The very notion of the individual is thus radically stripped of power.

The foreigner, the other, the outsider, the immigrant become social figures that can be tolerated only if they pay the price of a negativity that hinges on the contrast between exclusion and inclusion. To see itself as a community, a community must constantly have an “other” that can be pointed to as alien to its own specific context.

<sup>7</sup> Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008, p. 47.

While on the one hand, this hints at scenarios that are rather disquieting from an ethical and political standpoint, on the other, it helps reveal the true meaning of what Foucault called the normalization of society. Rules, regulations, codes and statutes are useful in that life is no longer “bare life”; it is nailed down, i.e., subjectified, starting with the simple but efficient principle of identification. Every subject, to be considered such, must be individuated; that is, brought into the explicative sphere of his or her normative potential within an intricate tangle of codes and procedures.

The migrant, for instance, as a bearer of bare life, becomes unclassifiable, but for this very reason, necessary for the production of social deviance and the rejected elements that generate the unproductivity of the norm.

5. To further clarify the scope of the person/non-person question, one can cite two examples that have recently been in the headlines.

The first case. Between August 20 and August 26, 2010, by means of an urgent government decree, some 850 Romani were expelled from France (despite being full-fledged EU citizens), while French Immigration Minister Besson stated, in reference to the “so-called Roma”: “The dismantling of illegal camps in August has accelerated a structural and regular process” (ANSA, 08/20/2010).

Although the measures taken by the French government sparked conflicting reactions, including an emergency EU investigation into human rights violations, the forced repatriations did not cease; rather, they made evident what we defined earlier as the suspension of all individual rights.

This affair naturally highlights the two-sided nature of the concept of “person”, because in this sense, the Romani individual is the other, the outsider, who can be sacrificed through mechanisms of power that revolve as much around the principle of potential exclusion as that of an inclusive tolerance—which in and of itself, becomes a mechanism of subjugation: if you want to stay in our country, you must adapt to its normalizing rules.

The possibility of decoding the person as the manifestation of absolute otherness is thus turned into the yardstick of a power that always relies on the blackmail of forced adaptability.

This brings up a question that in some ways seems stupid: if the concept of personhood is universal, as is the concept of rights, then why are the Romani being kicked out of France? It could be answered in two ways: 1. there is no universal concept of personhood at all, let alone of rights; 2. the Roma are being expelled (and thus persecuted, although the term may not sit well with the self-righteous) because in the collective imagination, they mar that sense of order, cleanliness and purity that is the surrogate mythology of our narcissistic societies.

6. I would like, at this point, to bring up the second example. In mid-December, Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister, Wayne Swan stated to the press that “a people smugglers’ boat has crashed into the rocks”. A wooden vessel, primarily carrying individuals from Iraqi and Iran, crashed on the coast of Christmas Island, causing some fifty deaths. Obviously, the question here is not the scope of human smuggling, which in recent

decades has grown larger and larger, parallel to the worsening of poverty or conflict in some regions of the world.

The question is a different one: what is the value of those lives? If one sticks to the discourse of universal rights, these people, who ought to be considered full-fledged individual subjects, reveal the unstable nature of this universal principle.

If, instead, the contrast between person and non-person expresses—in its immediacy—the foundation of the ideology adopted by Western societies, then one is left with a deep sense of inadequacy when it comes to the concepts of life, rights, and freedom, both individual and collective.

By this we mean to emphasize, even more, the essential aporia that lies at the heart of liberal societies and the globalized world (globalized only for some). Western societies, in other words, are not “open”; rather, in accordance with the principle of immunization described by Esposito, they remain substantially closed when a foreign body tries to enter them.

Life, to be considered life, must have a *value*. Now, this value cannot be considered absolute, because it has to do with laws, codes, statutes and procedures that establish a body of knowledge *of* and *about* life, working to construct that *sovereignty* that no longer belongs to the individual but to the community.

“If life is abandoned to its inner powers, to its natural dynamics,” writes Esposito, “human life is destined to self-destruct because it carries within itself something that ineluctably places it in contradiction with itself. Accordingly, in

order to save itself, life needs to step out of itself to constitute a transcendental point from which it receives orders and shelter”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

The fact that this order lies in the sovereignty, power, codes and regulations of a social context is significant insofar as subjectivity loses the defined and definable boundaries through which the West has structured it, at least until Auschwitz. Moreover, this restores the focus to the value that a life can have, since by definitively breaking out of the natural mould of the constituent identity it belongs to, it becomes a problematic element that must be regulated and normalized. Everything that does not fit into this normalization is either tolerated, in an attempt to erase all differences, or, at worst, is simply ignored.

## Refuge

by Chandra Livia Candiani



my refuge  
my swallow without head or tail  
pure flight;  
where to turn  
having neither home nor pace  
to which wings entrust oneself  
in the space without language of the limit  
at which fire to warm  
the hands without a body.  
to entrust oneself blindly to the fall  
of a groundless flight  
to entrust oneself

without destiny,  
refuge  
swallow without head or tail  
pure flight.

*Milan, Italy, November 16, 2010*

**Stefano Oltolini**

Lambrate Station, late afternoon on a muggy grey Tuesday in November. Grey sky, grey people, grey trains. Late, as usual. Every ten metres there's an LED display transmitting three adverts, always the same ones in rotation. Very loudly. Without stopping. Always the same ones. It's impossible to escape from this overkill. After a few minutes you start to hate the music of the adverts, the products they're selling, the violence and the vulgarity they are attacking you with. But you can't do anything about it. You've become a Compulsory Consumer. And you ask yourself what the point of it all is.

*Israel, November 17, 2010*

**Sarah Smile**

This morning, as I was walking the aisles of the grocery store, adding way more items to my cart than I had on my list (why does that always happen?!), I bumped into my neighbor and friend whose son will soon be entering the army in the same unit as D.B., my son. Another two weeks, to be exact.

I said to her with heartfelt empathy and compassion, "I've been thinking so much about you. I remember this time, before my son went in." Knowing this was not her first son to enter the army, but it is her first son to enter an elite unit. She answered, not really looking at me, distracted by which bread to choose, "Oh thank you. I'm

*Haifa, Israel. Seven years after Rachel Corrie was killed in Gaza by an Israeli military bulldozer she tried to block, her parents sit in an Israeli court in Haifa. Their civil case claiming the intentional killing of their daughter began in March. A student, Rachel Corrie, then 23, joined the International Solidarity Movement, and moved to Gaza to help prevent Palestinian house demolitions.*

just not thinking about it. I can't." And walked away. To which I called after her, "Well, I'm feeling it for you then." She looked at me. Said thank you with a quizzical look on her face, and moved on. [...]

*Jerusalem, November 18, 2010*

**Federica Faggioli**

J. is 24, not very tall, with a shaved head, muscular shoulders and deep green eyes; he was born in London and lived there until five years ago. He is a soldier in the Israeli Army, but was not assigned to a checkpoint or an office: he is in the special forces, in the Golani Brigade's Battalion 51.

*Several manufacturers and research facilities are changing the face of the battlefield with robots designed to help transport equipment, gather intelligence and attack enemy forces. Distinguishing friend from foe is especially challenging.*

We met him one night at a Thai take-away in West Jerusalem. When he came in, Ale and I looked him up and down: he was in his uniform, with a gun bigger than himself slung around his neck; he put on airs with that thing, but looked rather ridiculous to us. He changed the TV channel and switched to the football. When he became aware of our not particularly friendly looks, he apologized. Actually, what really annoyed us was not the match, but that sort of bazooka slung over his shoulder. Sam chatted him up, talking about football, and the atmosphere immediately relaxed. Usually, we only get a chance to talk to soldiers within the context of the West Bank, which is not very relaxed, so any chance for conversation outside the village is precious.

We told him something about ourselves and what we do: we are members of Operation Dove and the Christian Peacemaker Teams. He seemed interested, and when we were about to leave, he gave us his phone number in case we needed anything or simply wanted to chat.

“I was born Christian, too,” J. began on our second meeting. However, when he was six he was adopted by a Jewish family because his mother suffered from serious mental problems. He arrived in Israel when he was not yet nineteen, alone, looking for something he himself could not quite define, maybe just the feeling of belonging somewhere. After a few years on a British passport, having to leave the country every three months when the visa expired, he decided to take the leap and become an Israeli citizen: he got a passport and had to do National Service.

“Why?” I asked. Mainly to pay back the family who had brought him up like their natural son. “I feel it’s my duty to serve the Israeli people, those who have loved me.” We could tell from his voice that he was uneasy, as if he were forced to act out a script and the part he had been given did not suit him. He would rather talk about football or Italy than about what he is going through. “It’s too hard to explain, you wouldn’t understand,” he said.

Every so often we get in touch by text or e-mail and he updates us a bit. After the Gaza War he called because he wanted to meet us, but was not sure whether we wanted to see him too. He had injuries to his head and one of his arms: he had been driving a tank when something had exploded nearby and he had not got out of the tiny compartment quickly enough. He feared we would judge him, and it was really hard for me not to do that, not to let rip against him and accuse him of the crimes committed by the whole army! I tried to listen and look into those shaken eyes that spoke for themselves: “I’ve seen and done things I’d never have imagined in my whole

life, I've already been through hell! If they were to transfer me to the Lebanese front, I'd give up everything and go back to London!" "Why don't you do that now?" I asked him. "Can you imagine leaving your family behind in dangerous circumstances? My mates trust me, I can't leave them alone; you can't understand what refusing National Service means in our society: I wouldn't even be considered worthy of a wave goodbye and I'd break my Mum's heart!"

We met again in Jerusalem for Passover and he seemed more disheartened than tired: he had just emerged from two weeks spent in prison for disobeying a military order. He had refused to shoot a man on the Gaza border. I could not help smiling, as I was delighted with his decision. "No comments, please, I only confessed it to you because I knew you'd understand, but I'm ashamed to tell my family, they'll think I'm a coward!" Then, looking strangely pleased, he told us he was not leaving the base for at least a month because he was going to practise with explosives for a period. "How can you be happy at the idea of handling explosives?" I asked him. He hushed me at once: "Can't you understand? Training at the base gives me a chance to keep away from the front for a while, and then my Mum will be proud of me again!"

*South Korea, November 23, 2010*

**Cheryle Rose Ala-Jeon**

There's tension between the two Koreas right now. Apparently North Korea fired several rounds of artillery shells on a South Korean island a few hours ago. Of course South Korea fired back because this time North Korea attacked civilians.

The military and police force is on “red alert” and I can’t keep my eyes off the Korean news even for a second. To be honest, I’m scared not for myself but for my little Zach. If all these things happened before I had my little Zach I wouldn’t be scared and would probably continue believing my husband and thousands of other Koreans out there when they say “It’s nothing!” Most Koreans are used to the on-off conflict between the two Koreas, so when conflict arises they just ignore it and say it’s just a propaganda. But I’m a foreigner in Korea, and most of all, I’m a mother now, and the safety of my child comes first. I can’t help but pray that God will not allow this tension to escalate further.

*November 20. Pope Benedict XVI has said that condom use can be justified in some cases to help stop the spread of AIDS. The one example he cited as a possibly appropriate use was by male prostitutes.*

*Mosul, Iraq, November 27, 2010*

I got an SMS from my mom saying that my relative K. was kidnapped and the kidnappers are asking for a ransom which he and all of the family can’t cover (\$750,000)! I had to read the message three times to realize what she was saying; I paused and needed time to realize the problem we’re facing...

K. is 60 years old with a serious heart problem, and was very sick the day he got kidnapped. We had a frightening time, I couldn’t concentrate on anything. [...] Whenever I visit my grandma I see her praying and crying, and whenever I look for grandpa I find him in his room, also crying. The situation in K.’s house was horrible; his five daughters were just weeping and crying, we thought we’d never see him again, we don’t own enough money to get him released. My dad and grandpa stayed with them every day, we were

**“Sunshine”**

*Iraqis who fled the height of the war and then returned are leaving in a second exodus, fueled by violence and unemployment, that shows how far Iraq remains from stability and security.*

all praying day and night.

The kidnappers at first gave us three days to prepare the money, or they'd kill him. K.'s brother-in-law was the negotiator, as someone needed to talk with the kidnappers and try to reduce the amount they were asking for, and ask to extend the time we had. [...]

One day left, and the negotiations hadn't lead to any deal. K.'s son asked us to collect as much money as we could, my dad and mom started to call our relatives, even the distant ones, and call our friends, and I started to email our relatives abroad.

My grandpa knew "they" were asking for a lot of money, but he didn't understand how much it amounted to in Iraqi dinars; well, I had to lie (a white lie), I used to grab the calculator and pretend to use it and say that we were close to the money they wanted to make him feel better, and he believed that, but the truth is we weren't even close to a quarter of the amount. [...]

I'd put my head on the pillow at night, and start to wonder, is K. hungry? Are they beating him? Is he even alive? Will I hear his loud laugh again? The whole family is standing by each other, supporting and comforting each other, but who's comforting him? [...]

When they called, the negotiator "N." told them we didn't have that much money, the kidnappers told him that they were going to kill K.; N. replied "may God bless his soul" and ended the conversation; they didn't call for hours, what long hours they were for us.

It was a miracle when they agreed to reduce the amount of money. They had two choices: either to kill K. and get nothing, or release him and

*"There's no security here. I was near a female suicide bomber a couple months ago. Then I was in my brother's truck when insurgents opened fire on a bridge. My friend was killed in front of me with a knife." Amar Al-Obeidi, who fled Iraq once, and plans to do so again. ("The New York Times", November 27, "Quotation of the Day")*

take whatever we had. The amount was still huge, but we could afford it, everyone participated, even distant relatives gave a lot of their savings.

We paid the money, and the kidnappers said K. would be released at noon. My grandpa felt really glad, the family decided that it would be better if K. and his family came and spent few days in our house. My mom, grandma, and I started to cook for lunch, we made many dishes, feeling excited and anxious to see K., then we started to wait in the garage.

Lunch time came and nothing happened, and we waited for hours and hours; at 5 pm we went inside the house. The sun started to set, and it started to get darker, and night fell. Grandpa went to our neighbor, they talked about something, then grandpa came to the house, took a blanket and torch with him and left, without saying a word. He started to look for his brother's body in the streets and garbage containers, with his heart full of sorrow and feeling terrified that he might find the body of the brother he raised like his son. My mom called doctors she knows but they assured her that they hadn't received a body with that description at the morgue. [...]

As it was getting darker, my family members started to lose hope of seeing K. again. My dad would call us from their house every now and then and just say "nothing new"; at every ring of the phone everyone would fall silent and freeze. The phone rang and this time my dad had new news, he told my mom that uncle K. had finally arrived and they were on their way to our house.

My mom, grandma, sister, brother and I were

waiting in the street. I was feeling anxious to see him, the adrenaline reached the highest level ever, I could barely stand on my shaky legs, but this time, it was from excitement.

As we saw the headlights of the car getting nearer and nearer, I can't explain in words the gratitude I felt to God; finally, everyone could feel relieved, or at least that's what I thought!

When uncle came out of the car he started to hug everyone and weep; I was looking around and everyone was crying, men, women, old and young. [...] I'll never forget the sight when we got inside the house. K. couldn't stand up to reach the sofa, he sat on the floor with his daughters around him hugging and crying.

K. started to talk about the long days he spent when he was kidnapped. In that moment, I realized that Iraq had reached the bottom. There's nothing worse than the situation we are living in. Through my old posts you know about the hard times we went through during the war, and despite that, I had hope for a better tomorrow, but this latest event made me feel desperate.

I know you're wondering why the national guard and police didn't help. We were told by the national guard, when dad reported the kidnapping: "Those people, the kidnappers, are serious, try to negotiate with them, and leave us your phone number". They didn't inspect houses or try to get evidence from witnesses, or do anything. Unfortunately they're fighting to survive, not to protect us; all they care about is to stay alive and receive salaries. We're living by miracles.

I thought that finally we could feel relieved, but K.'s kidnappers had given him a couple of weeks to find an extra \$220,000. It was shocking news.

K. and his big family stayed in our house for two weeks. When the period was nearing an end, we felt so afraid, we felt in danger too since they were staying in our house. We've heard about people getting kidnapped in the middle of the night inside their house, and kidnapers throwing bombs to blow open the doors, and with such stories, it was like an endless nightmare. [...]

I was too afraid to dare think what would happen to all of us if K. didn't give the money. There were weird faces around our house, and they were watching us closely. [...]

On the final day, "they" called K. and threatened to kill him and blow up the house, but K. didn't have any more money, nor did all his relatives. After hours of negotiation, they agreed to reduce the amount to \$20,000 and K. had to pay.

I pray for the day we get rid of these terrorists and kidnapers.

*Manila, November 27, 2010*

**Noemi Tasarra**

Do I look like a nanny? If nannies are supposed to be as sexy as Fran Drescher, then I should be flattered, I guess. If I had a dollar for each "proposal" that I have received in the past month, then I would have... well, enough to buy a couple of beers. Seriously, though. I just received another message on my MySpace inbox—different name, similar details.

"Hello Madam, I'm (insert name here) from the United Kingdom (London). I'm here seeking a nanny to take good care of my two lovely daughters of 11 yrs and 7 yrs, I am a contractor and I travel a lot so I need someone who can help me take care of my daughters, 'cause I'm always out

of the country and my last nanny just got married. She left, so I need a replacement as soon as possible. If you are really interested, I will pay you (2,400 US dollars) monthly, tax-free, I will provide accommodation and food as well, and I will be responsible for your travel expenses and flight ticket. If you are interested, please send your resume to my personal email address (name @ymail.com), and we can start from there. This is not my account. I'm using a friend's profile to search for a nanny 'cause this was where I found my last nanny, so please send your response to my personal email address. Regards."

Some even go as far as to say they want a Filipina nanny, and go on to extol our virtues. I am like, "C'mon! You think I am that stupid or desperate?" I think it's funny, but I also see it as a sad reflection of the nature of some people and their perception of Filipinas/women in general. Do you think people still fall prey to these scammy offers? Oh, by the way, I have a job, thank you very much.

*Singapore, November 29, 2010*

**Jazeann**

I met this guy over the Internet about three years ago. We started by chatting online and got to know each other well. He is single but living with his Australian girlfriend. He has a full-time job but works at home most of the time. I never dare to ask him what exactly his job is all about. Although he did mention something to me about a trading job, and so I assume that he is a trader. Anyway, that doesn't concern me.

We met in person in one occasion to see each other face to face (although we'd already seen

each other cam to cam). We met in Starbucks, he seemed like a nice guy, average-looking guy, not so tall and soft spoken. He talks sense, he laughs at my jokes and I laugh at his jokes. We became good friends after that. We chat online almost daily, talking about the weather and everything under the sun. I never dare to bring up the topic of his girlfriend.

He knows I'm working as a maid but that doesn't bother him. I'm older than him and he doesn't mind, I'm just an average-looking girl and he doesn't mind. I'm just glad that there is one person who has not gotten tired of talking to me all these years. When he and his girlfriend go away for a holiday, he tells me to be good and we'll talk when they get back. He tells me about their trip when they come home. He allows me to tell stories about my work and family. He gives advice if I ask him to, he asks me to take a break if I say I'm tired. I sometimes wonder why a educated, young, good-looking Australian guy doesn't get tired of talking with me. Sometimes I've asked him if he is not bored talking with me. I'm not a office girl, I don't have a established career, although I have a college diploma.

When I first came to Singapore in the middle of the '90s I thought it was easier if you apply as a domestic helper. My plan was to come here as tourist, apply as a domestic helper first just to have a roof and free food while looking for a job that I want. Unfortunately, that didn't work. The Ministry of Manpower has regulations about domestic helpers. Once you come here as a domestic helper, you can work only as a domestic helper, and you can't change your job!

*Since the first intifada of the early 1990s, more than a million migrants from the developing world have come to Israel to replace the Palestinians, who were the country's original source of cheap labor. At least 250,000 foreign laborers, about half of them illegal, are living in the country, according to the Israeli government. They include Chinese construction workers, Filipino home health care aides and Thai farmhands, as well as other Asians, and Africans and Eastern Europeans, working as maids, cooks and nannies. But even as foreign workers have become a mainstay of the economy, their presence has increasingly clashed with Israel's Zionist ideology, causing growing political unease over the future of the Jewish state and their place in it.*

He and his girlfriend are now married but we continue our friendship. Three years on, he is still there greeting me when he sees me online. I am grateful that there is one person who doesn't look down on people like me and I'm forever thankful.

## **On Filipino Dreams and Middle Eastern Routes**

by Claudia Liebelt



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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14672710802505315>.



























# Foreign

by Ingrid Coman



Here you are: head bowed, wings bound up in an apron  
hastily checking your pockets for a place to stow your fears

Everything with a new name you can't get your mouth around  
as if every word were a bitter pill.

Stamped forms and queues, borders and entry quotas  
your drowned hopes swirling down a toilet drain

that must be scrubbed, bleached, like an ancient ritual  
that must be gouged and spurned like an enemy eye.

Your clothing in a bag among jumbled memories  
your language in a drawer among the things that you don't use

And you look around for a church where you can whisper a prayer  
and some God willing to listen to your foreign voice.

What a strange taste, this bread kneaded out of water and rancor  
What a strange affair, this life loaned out by the hour

I've seen you on that bus writing poems at dawn  
back bent over a page like a snow-white banner.

Foreign, you? What's foreign is the hour of this concrete temple  
that brings us old into the world with time dying inside.

Let the water sluice down on these dark minds of ours  
and wash the story clean of past and future blame.

Call back the dreams left to languish there, in the deepest well  
and pour a little bleach on the spirit of this world.

*Shenzhen, China, November 29, 2010*

**Rachel Ekitzel**

On Thanksgiving Day I bunked off classes and went to meet our domestic helper in Macau. Jacky, our Filipina maid couldn't get another visa to return to China so I was meeting her to give her plane fare to return home.

I'd never been to Macau before, but it is an hour ferry ride from the port, five minutes from my apartment. As we left the port, I could see my apartment complex (small whitish ones), the Shenzhen Bay Bridge to Hong Kong and the distant skinny high rise apartments of the Ha Tsuen neighborhood in Hong Kong, barely visible through the suffocating South China smog.

As I rode the ferry I got to see the industrial side of Hong Kong: gas banks, electric power stations, and the oyster beds of the Pearl River Delta. I passed many container ships heading all over the world: Panama, Los Angeles, Hamburg, Sydney, Columbia etc.

I waxed philosophical about all the things humanity has accomplished and yet the tender thread that we still hang by. A situation that was at the front of my mind since the bombing in South Korea two days prior. We have done so much, I live in a place that sends products to all ends of the earth at record speed, but malaria still kills children, millions per year, and no matter what we will grow, love, age and die.

Somber I know, but the power and the beauty of all we have done is a result of our fear of mortality. We want to do so much, make so many things, experience more and more, create more and more, because we all know our time is finite. Out of my thoughtful mood, I arrived in Macau

for the first time, breezed through immigration and met Jacky, our maid. We had lunch/dinner at the Sands Macau, I had sushi for Thanksgiving day. And I saw a Michael Jackson impersonation concert. I missed my first ferry trip, so I bought the next departure, and found a toy store in the ferry terminal! Optimus Prime! Star Wars Legos! and Board Games!

*Afghanistan, December 1, 2010*

I live in fear. Because I married the man of my choice instead of my cousin, when a knock comes at the door my husband and I don't dare answer. When we leave the house, we only hope we can return in the evening. Covering my face with a black veil, avoiding contact with my friends, hiding myself in public makes me feel alone and mad. I am fifty years older inside than I am on the calendar, and so very tired of the war in my life.

Current life is a cancer for me: when I take care of one problem, another grows. When that problem is a bit solved, the other is waiting. The biggest problem is my uncle, the father of my cousin, who is a storm of torment in my life. He continues to follow me and remind me that he is there for revenge. I guard myself when away from home. I must work to take care of my life. My husband earns only \$30 a month.

My mom is another concern. She left the country out of fear of my uncle. She needs an urgent operation, but due to my own problems, I couldn't afford to pay for that. Her harsh pain has been beyond her tolerance and she has wanted to end her life.

**Anonymous**

*Herat, Afghanistan. The hospital here is the only medical center in Afghanistan that specifically treats victims of burning, a common form of suicide in this region, partly because the tools to do it are so readily available. Through early October, 75 women arrived with burns—most self-inflicted, others only made to look that way. "Violence in the lives of Afghanistan's women comes from everywhere: from her father or brother, from her husband, from her father-in-law, from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law," said Dr. Shafiqqa Eanin, a plastic surgeon at the burn hospital. The most sinister burn cases are actually homicides masquerading as suicides. "We have two women*

My in-laws are worried for our safety. If anything should happen to my husband, I would be to blame. My brother-in-law is reacting like a new uncle. He thinks I am a cheap woman who deceived his brother. He says I must make peace with my uncle or else stay at home and never go out. He told us to leave our current house and live with them instead. I agreed; otherwise, I fear he would contact my uncle and give me up to him.

I respect my in-laws because my husband is a kind man. He never cares what others say about me. He consoles me, is patient with my problems, and gives me hope that we will find a solution. But my in-laws think I am a high-flying woman, a selfish, ignorant lady who values only her own desires and disrespects her family by marrying without permission. I have to have a baby; it is a question of must. To obey my in-laws, I would love to have a child; I would love to bring a change to my life, but I don't want my children to have to share my destiny. I can't bear to think my uncle might kill us and continue his enmity against my children because I didn't marry his son.

I can't share my personal situation with legal officials because my uncle has connections and the winner is always the one with more money to bribe. If we were to leave for a neighboring country, we wouldn't be able to afford life. I can't share what is going on with my closest friends because they blame me for forgetting I am a woman and choosing my own husband, ignoring the customs. I am proud of my strengths, and that I stood up against everything. But I am destroyed inside; my soul is hardened. And I think my

*here right now who were burned by their mothers-in-law and husbands," said Dr. Arif Jalali, the hospital's senior surgeon. Doctors cited two recent cases where women were beaten by their husbands or in-laws, lost consciousness and awoke in the hospital to find themselves burned because they had been shoved in an oven or set on fire. At least 45 percent of Afghan women marry before they are 18; a large percentage before they are 16. Many girls are still given as payment for debts, which sentences them to a life of servitude and, almost always, abuse. Doctors and nurses say that especially in cases involving younger women, fury at their situation, a sense of being trapped and a desire to shame their husbands into caring for them all come together.*

critics are right. I must deal with the cost of losing my poor mom. I bought my freedom, yet I can't breathe. I bought my freedom, but not my happiness.

My husband reads the stories of famous men to me at night and he recalls my own energy. I am waiting for the day when I can get my master's degree, and then open a school of ideology and teach our people to respect human rights so that the next, next, next, next, and next generations won't have our destiny.

It is childish and silly, but every morning I open my notebook and list new desires, hopes, and plans for my unknown tomorrow.

*Columbia, Maryland, December 2, 2010*

**Laila El-Haddad**

Sometimes, when I am deep in thought while performing some banal task like folding the laundry, I wonder what memories Yousuf will harbor from his brief but continuous trips to Gaza. Will it merely be waiting on borders? Will it be factional infighting that scarred our living room windows? Or spontaneous artillery shelling that scarred our nightly slumber? Eight hour electricity outages? Or maybe he will simply forget Gaza as he becomes more and more immersed in suburban America, the way we all slowly forget a place it when it has no presence on our air waves. You can never really get a straight answer out of six year olds—you never know what they are thinking. So I let him live and “experience” Gaza for it is, the reality, the beauty, the horror, without trying to prod and poke and mold his experiences for him. I tried to get him to keep a writing journal this summer, but he was too hot, most

*“I know times are tight and cuts are needed, but you can't cut human lives. You just can't do that.” Flor Felix, whose husband, Francisco, 34, was denied a liver transplant because of state budget cuts to Medicaid benefits in Arizona. (“The New York Times”, December 3, “Quotation of the Day”)*

of the time, and too busy watching cartoons or swimming the rest of the time.

Yesterday were parent-teacher conferences at Yousuf's school. Yousuf is a stellar student, told me his teacher. She was stunned, in a good way, to learn we only speak Arabic to him at home. [...] What about class participation, I inquired—is he shy? “Oh no—he is quite the chatterbox—he likes to share just about everything he does, all the extra-curricular activities, bowling, swimming, karate...”

Later that day, I asked him what else he shared with his class. “Did you tell the class about your trip to Gaza this summer?” I asked. “Yes! I did” came the enthusiastic response. “Oh really? And what did you share?” I continued. “I told them how I got to go to the stores by myself! I also told them I saw a soldier. But I don't remember—was he a Jewish soldier or Palestinian?”

I smiled. Yousuf remembered Gaza. And for him, the highlight of the trip there, the memory he kept, was the fact that he was able to walk all the way to the store two blocks down the road, down from the bank, across the fading election posters and the ever-present donkey tied to the orange Municipality trash bin with “Sharon” spray-painted on it, with his little sister, and buy things by himself from the shopkeeper that knew him when was a fetus in my womb, and then a nursing babe in my arms.

It was this memory that he kept, despite the suffocating summer heat that enveloped us with no reprieve, despite the twice weekly shelling that shook the city streets he shopped on, despite the fact that his father was unable to come with us.

*Calls to prosecute the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, mounted this week as his organization began releasing documents from a cache of 250,000 State Department cable—its third major disclosure of United States government secrets this year. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. has confirmed that the Justice Department is examining whether Mr. Assange could be charged with a crime, but legal scholars say that such an effort would encounter steep legal and policy difficulties. Amazon canceled its relationship with WikiLeaks.*

*Uijeongbu, South Korea, December 8, 2010*

**Cheryle Rose Ala-Jeon**

I've been waiting for the first big snow day for ages since the weather got chilly out here. I wanted my little Zach to play in the snow and experience the beauty of snowflakes. Unfortunately, the big snow happened today... when my little Zach is coughing like a dog and down with a cold.

After picking him up from the daycare, we had to walk all the way to the bus stop (we can actually walk all the way to our house, but I preferred riding the bus because it's dangerous for little Zach to walk around the snowy and slippery neighborhood). On the way to the bus stop, Zach couldn't stop admiring the snowflakes and he even did his best to break away from me just to experience the snow all by himself. Also, he couldn't stop shouting "Snow! Snow!" I gave him a few minutes to enjoy it, but after that we went to the hospital for his check-up... Too bad!

*"That sounds like good news to me." U.S. Defense secretary Robert M. Gates, after Julian Assange, founder of the WikiLeaks Web site, surrendered to British authorities. ("The New York Times", December 8, "Quotation of the Day")*

*American officials exerted sustained pressure on Germany not to enforce arrest warrants against Cia officers involved in the 2003 kidnapping of a German citizen mistakenly believed to be a terrorist, diplomatic cables made public by WikiLeaks show.*

*Arctic Bay, Canada, December 16, 2010*

**Clare Kines**

I love mornings like this.

The sky above is still inky black, and dotted with the twinkling pinpoints of the stars. Hanging high in the southern sky the bright jewel of Venus. Night, and yet the horizon is glowing with the light from the hidden sun, the dark indigo fading to a grey blue tinged with amber.

The light from the still retreating sun reveals King George and the rest of our rugged horizon, silhouetting them against that starry background. Out on the ice a team of dogs howls. A pair of Ravens speeds by, the sound of their wings in the

*December 13. Thousands of Iraqi Christians from Baghdad and Mosul have fled to northern Iraq amid a campaign of targeted violence against them.*

surprisingly warm air like the nylon windpants of a swift walker.

There is no other place in the world like this, no other moment like this one.

*Moscow, December 16, 2010*

**Veronica Khokhlova**

On Monday, two days after the first pogrom, Marta and I went grocery shopping across the street. Moscow seemed unchanged. What caught my eye while we were waiting for green light was a young Central Asian migrant worker, who had a black ski hat on. One of the words on this hat was “the Olympics”, and I thought, “Wow, the 1980 Moscow Olympics, are they still selling this stuff?” And then I noticed two more words below “the Olympics”: “Krasnaya Polyana”, a place where some of the events of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi are to take place.

My head is filled with those ugly pogrom images, and all those dirty chants, and those faces, and what I read online about it. But I haven’t been around much lately, so a tiny part of me still doesn’t believe any of it is for real. And I wish I could squeeze the rest of myself into this tiny part of me and live there. And somehow it helps to think about this *gastarbeiter* and his hat; it helps to pretend that I continue to stare at his hat, asking these questions: Is it a cheap fake hat that he bought at the market? Or did someone bring it to him all the way from Sochi? Or did he find it in a garbage container? Does he think it makes him look a little bit more like a Russian patriot? Does he think it makes him less of a target here? Or is it just a warm hat and he never thinks about it at all?

*On December 11, in Moscow, thousands of young men massed outside Red Square, venting their anger over the fatal shooting last week of a soccer fan by a migrant from the North Caucasus. The demonstrators started chanting nationalists slogans, “Russia for Russians” and “Moscow for Muscovites.” Dozens of innocent people from the Caucasus or Central Asia were beaten and stabbed.*

*Uijeongbu, South Korea, December 16, 2010*

**Cheryle Rose Ala-Jeon**

December 14 was little Zach's second birthday and we celebrated it with a mini-party at my house (I said mini-party because we only had two kids at the party and there's no way for my house to accommodate more). At first I actually wanted a bigger party at some kids' cafe somewhere in Seoul so that I could invite my Filipina friends and their kids, but my husband's schedule and our busy weekend made this plan a no-no. Anyway, since my house is too far away for my friends to visit (most of them live on the opposite side of Gyeonggi province), I was able to invite only two friends. [...]

Anyway, I cooked spaghetti because my little noodle monster likes it so much, and decided to order chicken from Kyochon chicken and pizza from Domino's. The kids enjoyed their mini-party and the adults enjoyed talking about life. The party was fun, but I still hope the time will come when I can host a bigger (Filipino-style) birthday party for my little one... Hmm... perhaps on little Zach's fourth birthday or seventh birthday?

*Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Security forces loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo opened fire on demonstrators, beating and killing marchers who had planned to disrupt state television, one of the principal underpinnings of the government's hold on power. At least 15 people have been killed among the crowds of supporters of Alassane Ouattara, who was elected president last month in a long-delayed vote but has been unable to assume office because Mr. Gbagbo has refused to step down.*

*Beijing, December 23, 2010*

**Hannah He**

The last workday of 2010 is over. Finally. 2010 ends with disappointments, disappointed with Beijing, with my job.

Over the past decade Beijing has grown more and more uninhabitable. The number of automobiles in the capital has more than doubled since 2002, reaching over 4.5 million today and having far outgrown the road networks. Main roads are basically parking lots even at high noon, making

*"The air alone makes me want to shop." Michaya Pollard, as she accompanied her children's elementary school to downtown Seattle to see the Christmas decorations. ("The New York Times", December 23, "Quotation of the Day")*

traveling from one place to another an ordeal. While the car industry is booming, air quality is getting worse. (Beijing is notorious for that.) Besides car exhaust, “dirty industries” in the city and nearby provinces are major contributors. Thanks to “made in China”! Despite the poor physical environment, housing prices have tripled in the past five years. The population is swelling. There is nothing you can do without queuing: taking the subway; using an ATM; shopping at a supermarket and seeing a doctor... The list is endless; so is the queue. What’s more annoying is that there are some barbarians who don’t queue at all. The megacity is eating away its residents’ lives day by day. Nevertheless, these factors cannot stop people from flocking in. Regional disparities in China are excessively large and resources are allocated to first-tier cities like Beijing and Shanghai. As a result, manual laborers come along and colleague graduates remain here no matter how hard life is.

As for my job, I’m very disappointed with my boss for not keeping her promise. Ai. Let it go...

*Hayward, California, December 29, 2010*

**Silvia Brandon-Perez**

I just came back from the food container where we give out food on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Today there were eight families, with various amounts of children, and one lone grandmother who came with her grandson, and who is obviously having a hard time with her mind. [...] The food we give her probably keeps her from dying of malnutrition, although today we had no oatmeal or beans, only “light” tuna and canned corn and peaches, some white rice and pasta, no milk or juice for the weary hungry.

*In the three months since Israel ended its settlement construction freeze in the West Bank, causing the Palestinians to withdraw from peace talks, a settlement-building boom has begun, especially in more remote communities that are least likely to be part of Israel after any two-state peace deal.*

I came home and had one of those “bleeding heart” moments of sobbing while I was putting my own fresh fruit and vegetables into the juicer. Last weekend when I went to my daughter’s baby showers in Los Angeles, part of the reason we took longer to get there was the hordes of people pouring into and out of malls around the LA area, shopping “till they drop”...

On days like today, as a proud and “ornery Spic”, I fully understand the word “bleeding heart” because my heart does bleed, and I feel powerless and hopeless, but then the “ornery” part takes over and I am enraged that in this society of plenty (at least, the top percentile has more than they could use in untold generations) we throw away people in this way. [...]

We have all sorts of families come to supplement meager pantries with our even meager offerings; many of them have small children who will gladly drink the juice we distribute, when we have juice, which is not always. In Hayward most families have retrenched as the jobs have disappeared [...]

I am feeling better now; rage always does that for me. I am thinking of all the fat cats out there talking about deportation and about “illegal aliens”. [...] If the rest of us, the ones who are not fat cats, lived in any other country, we would be out there blocking the streets, demanding an end to the impunity of the rich who [...] throw parties in their million dollar homes where the help is all “illegal” so they can be paid shit wages. [...] If I were younger, I might start a revolution. [...]



## Contributors and translators



**Salvatore Aiello**, born in Palermo in 1949, lives in Cercola (Naples). From 1977 to 2006 he worked for the Fiat Group. His diary page has been translated by Carole Greenall.

p. 14

**Cheryle Rose Ala-Jeon**, born in 1979 in Manila, the Philippines, lives in Uijeongbu, South Korea. She has worked as an English teacher and as a clerk in a law firm. She is now a housewife. Her diary pages come from the blog *Surviving Korea* (<http://www.chersurvivingkorea.blogspot.com>). We thank her for allowing us to publish them.

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**Anonymous** Her diary page comes from Afghan Women's Writing Project ([www.awwproject.org](http://www.awwproject.org)), where it is accompanied by this note from the editor: "Although AWWP regularly uses our writers' real first names, avoiding specific geographic locators or family names, occasionally we feel a writer whose situation we know well is at such risk that security demands we run a piece anonymously". We thank AWWP for allowing us to publish it.

p. 75

**Bea** Her diary page comes from the blog *Gardencore* (<http://gardencore.blogspot.com>).

p. 17

**Johanna Bishop** was born in Chicago in 1974, and lived in Pennsylvania and New York be-

fore moving to Tuscany in 1998. She translates from Italian and Spanish into English. In this issue she has translated the texts by Massimo Parizzi and Gianluca Giachery, and the poem by Ingrid Coman.

**Rommel Bondoc** was born in 1980 in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, where he currently lives after working in Saudi Arabia and in the United Arab Emirates as a construction engineer. He now runs a little Internet shop. His diary page comes from the blog *Gem's World* (<http://gemsantor.blogspot.com>). We thank him for allowing us to publish it.

p. 6

**Silvia Brandon-Perez** lives in Hayward, California. Her diary page comes from the blog *americaisnotacountry* (<http://americaisnotacountry.blogspot.com>).

p. 82

**Chandra Livia Candiani** was born in 1952 in Milan, where she still lives. She translates Buddhist texts from English to Italian. Her poem was translated by the Theravada monk Ajahn Abhinando.

p. 47

**Brigitte Ciaramella** ([brigitte.ciaramella@fastwebnet.it](mailto:brigitte.ciaramella@fastwebnet.it)) was born in 1966 and was brought up bilingual Italian/English. She is a freelance translator with a special interest in literary works. In this issue she has translated the diary pages by Marina Girardi, Alba Ciarleglio, and Federica Faggioli.

**Alba Ciarleglio**, born in 1955 in Lucera, Italy, has lived in Bologna since 1958. Married with one son, she has worked as a dealer in household fittings, fabrics and antiques and as an in-

terior decorator. Now she is a housewife and is actively interested in the environment, politics and ecology. Her diary page has been translated by Brigitte Ciaramella.

p. 32

**Cindy:** “I am a graduate student studying Behavior Analysis. I was born in the United States, but partially raised in Alexandria (Egypt). I am a Muslim feminist.” Her diary entry is drawn from the blog *The Story of an Arab American girl* (<http://organicmuslimah.blogspot.com>).

p. 12

**Ingrid Beatrice Coman** was born in Romania in 1971. She moved to Italy at 23, and has adopted Italian as the language she writes in. She has published a collection of short stories and several novels. She now lives in Malta. Her poem has been translated by Johanna Bishop.

p. 73

**Marco Dalla Dea**, born in 1982 in Padua, Italy, lives in Sappada (Belluno) and Padua. A freelance journalist, he mainly writes about sport. His diary page has been translated by Carole Greenall.

p. 29

**Rachel Ekitzel**, a student, lives in Shenzhen, China. Her diary entry comes from the blog *I can spell Ekitzel* (<http://ekitzel.blogspot.com>).

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**Emily**, born in Ipoh, Malaysia, since 2002 has been living in Singapore with her husband Veneth and their son Edison, born in 2007. She works for an electronics company. Her diary pages come from the blog *Our Little Smarties* (<http://ourlittlesmarties.com>).

pp. 18, 26

**Federica Faggioli** was born in Ravenna, Italy, in 1977. In 2007 she left to work in Israel-Pales-

tine as a volunteer worker for *Operazione Colomba* (Operation Dove), a civil peace corps (www.operazionecolomba.org). Her diary page was translated by Brigitte Ciaramella.

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**Gianluca Giachery** is a doctoral student in Educational Science at the University of Turin, Italy, where he works as a teaching assistant in this sector for the Department of Foreign Language and Literature. He is a contributor to many periodicals, and has recently published two books. His essay has been translated by Johanna Bishop.

p. 37

**Marina Girardi** was born in 1979 in the province of Belluno, Italy, but now lives in Bologna, where she works as a street illustrator and artist. She sings in the band “Alhambra” and runs creative workshops for children and teenagers. Her diary pages have been translated by Brigitte Ciaramella.

pp. 16, 27

**Carole Greenall**, a graduate in European Studies (Bath) in 1978, since 1981 has been an English language teacher at Palermo University and lecturer in Translation from Italian to English at the Palermo School for Interpreters and Translators. She has translated the diary pages by Salvatore Aiello, Marco Dalla Dea, and Stefano Oltolini.

**Laila El-Haddad**, born in 1978, is a journalist and divides her time between Gaza and the United States, where her husband Yassine, a Palestinian refugee denied his right of return to Palestine, resides. They have a son, Yousuf, and a daughter, Noor. Her diary page comes from the blog *Gaza Mom* (<http://www.gazamom.com>). We thank her for allowing us to publish it.

p. 77

**Hannah He:** “I was born in 1982 in a small coastal city in Shandong province, China. I came to Beijing in 2000 and studied English language and literature in Beijing Foreign Studies University. Currently I’m working at Sony Pictures Entertainment Beijing Representative office. I think my experience represents many young people of our generation in China. Born in 2nd or 3rd tier cities, or poor countryside, they worked hard for years to get a ticket to college in a big city. Then they would find jobs and have their own family here.” Her diary page comes from the blog *Life caught between rewind and fast-forward* (<http://hannahtheDrifter.blogspot.com>). We thank her for allowing us to publish it.

p. 81

**Jazeann**, born in the Philippines, lives in Singapore. Her pages come from the blog *Maid’s Diary* (<http://maidsdiary.blogspot.com>).

pp. 19, 57

**Veronica Khokhlova** was born in 1974 in Kyiv, and moved from there to Moscow in December 2006. Her diary page comes from *Neeka’s back-log* (<http://vkhokhl.blogspot.com>). We thank her for allowing us to publish it.

p. 80

**Clare Kines**, born and raised in Roblin (Manitoba, Canada), retired from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after twenty-four years of service. Widowed in 1996, he moved in 1999 to Arctic Bay, where he met his wife Leah. They adopted two children, Travis and Hilary. They run the Kiggavik Bed and Breakfast. His diary pages come from the blog *The House & other Arctic musings* (<http://kiggavik.typepad.com>). We thank him for allowing us to publish them.

pp. 11, 79

**Claudia Liebelt** is lecturer of Social Anthropology at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Her research interests are in gender, migration, and the global economy of care. Her book *Caring for the “Holy Land”: Transnational Filipina Domestic Workers in the Israeli Migration Regime* is forthcoming. Her pages are drawn from *On Sentimental Orientalists, Christian Zionists, and Working Class Cosmopolitans. Filipina Domestic Workers’ Journeys to Israel and Beyond*, in “Critical Asian Studies”, 40, 4, December 2008, pp. 567-585. We thank her and the publisher Taylor & Francis Ltd (<http://www.informaworld.com>) for allowing us to publish them. p. 59

**Stefano Oltolini**, born in 1973, lives in Milan, where he works for a humanitarian organisation. He has two children. His diary page has been translated by Carole Greenall. p. 48

**Massimo Parizzi** was born in 1950 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. A translator, he is the founder and editor of this magazine. His text has been translated by Johanna Bishop. p. 3

**Sarah Smile**, expressive arts therapist, moved to Israel in July of 2003, with her husband and four kids. Her diary page comes from the blog *Sarah Smile* (<http://sarahbsmile.blogspot.com>). p. 48

“**Sunshine**” was born in 1992 and lives in Mosul, Iraq. Her diary page comes from the blog *Days of my life* (<http://livesstrong.blogspot.com>). p. 52

**Noemi Tasarra-Twigg**: “I am a freelance writer based in Manila, Philippines. I am an English teacher by profession but I recently went free-

lance full-time”. Her diary page comes from the blog *Dreamwalker* (<http://www.dreamwalkersworld.com>). We thank her for allowing us to publish it.

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**Yalda** Her diary page comes from Afghan Women’s Writing Project ([www.awwproject.org](http://www.awwproject.org)). We thank them for allowing us to publish it.

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## Last issues

**Number 21 (March 2009), “human fellowship” - back cover:** “At the end of the battle, / and the combatant dead, a man came toward him / and said: ‘Don’t die; I love you so much!’ / But the corpse, alas! kept on dying. // Two approached him and repeated: / ‘Don’t leave us! Be brave! Return to life!’ / But the corpse, alas! kept on dying. // Twenty, a hundred, a thousand, five hundred thousand, came up to him, / crying out, ‘So much love and no power against death!’ / But the corpse, alas! kept on dying. // Millions of persons surrounded him, / with a common plea: ‘Do not leave us, brother!’ / But the corpse, alas! kept on dying. // Then, all the inhabitants of the earth / surrounded him; the corpse looked at them sadly, moved; / he sat up slowly, / embraced the first man; started to walk...” (César Vallejo). - **contents:** diary pages from Gaza, China, Israel, Cuba, Italy, Ukraine and Russia, The United States, Great Britain; poems by Giacomo Leopardi, Marco Saja, T.S. Eliot, Jaime Gil de Biedma, César Vallejo, Ennio Abate; excerpts from “The New York Times”, “CNN International”, “La Repubblica”; *Notes* by Massimo Parizzi; a passage from a letter by Etty Hillesum.

**Number 22 (June 2009), “from Gaza on” - back cover:** “...anti-politics is this wholesale slaughter of the defenceless...” (Lidia Campagnano, Rome, December 29, 2008) - **Contents:** diary pages from the United States, Italy, El Salvador, Iraq, Israel, Kosovo, Ecuador, Palestine, Cuba, Gaza, Jerusalem, China; *The Pain of the Wronged World*, by Elio Vittorini; 325, by Sebastiano Buonamico; *On the Shema and the Prophet Martyr*, by Marc H. Ellis; *Spring 1938*, by Bertolt Brecht; from *War*, by Franco Buffoni; *La chéursa*, by Raffaello Baldini; *With the Shepherds*, by Laura Zanetti; *Polyphony of Nostalgia. Stories from Ecuadorian Migrants*, by Carla Badillo Coronado.

**Number 23 (January 2011), “innocence” - back cover:** “In order to discover a livable world, how much rottenness must be swept away!” (Joan Miró, 1939) - **Contents:** diary pages from El Salvador, Israel, Cuba, Italy, Canada, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Iraq, China, Gaza, United Kingdom; *Innocence?*, by Massimo Parizzi; *Living Means Being in Infraction*, a poem by Roberto Juarroz; a page from *The Earthly Paradise*, by Elsa Morante; *Child*, a poem by Sylvia Plath; *The Lost Blush*, by Alfredo Tamisari; *The Extraordinary*, a poem by Robinson Quintero.

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