

JETAA.NY

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Japan Exchange
and Teaching Program
Alumni Association,
New York Chapter

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Fall 2003

THE "WORKING FOR THE MAN" ISSUE

Jobs, Careers and Keeping Our Heads Above Water

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Yes, it's a tough capitalist world out there. But we all know there's more to work than just working, as the following anecdotes from (anonymous) JET Alums illustrate. * * *



ROMANCE



In the Japanese Workplace



there, we did the Japanese thing and denied our feelings. When I was leav-

Office romances were quite common in my school (my school also has a long history of teachers marrying former students!?) and you never quite knew what you would see at the end of dark hallways in the basement. One day, I opened the door to the "preparation room" for English and Social Studies teachers and I found the math teacher and the recently divorced gym teacher in quite a compromising position. Luckily they didn't see me. All they heard was an astonished "ehhhh?" I'm sure they're still wondering who it was that saw them... Turns out even the students knew they were together. Since I left the school, they have gotten married and have child together.

I had my own version of an office romance. I was best friends with one of my English teacher colleagues. He was the most interesting person on staff and we had lots in common, but never let anything happen, mostly because he was descended from samurai and his family would NOT have looked kindly on a foreigner in the family registry. He was also very old fashioned and would not pass through my entryway unless there were also other people in my apartment. So for the last year I was

Japan, he drove me to the airport. As we watched the throngs of Japanese tourists go through the departure gates bowing and waving "bye bye" to each other, I told him that after two years of friendship (not to mention obvious chemistry), there was no way I'd be content with a Japanese goodbye. So he gave me a big hug and a real kiss goodbye--I don't know which one of us was more shocked!

* * *

There was Ms. Naito and Mr. Hirose, who just happened to have their desks put together in the faculty room at my school... No one knew about their romance, and then boom, they got married.

Then there was me, as an AET, I was totally in love with Ms. Yokota, an English teacher. It turned out we had the same birthday. She was beautiful, and the head of the archery club. After I joined the archery club, she would actually help me get into position

with the bow and arrow.... I was hoping cupid would be looking on... the best I ever did was hit the "mato" next to the one I was aiming at. Alas, it was not meant to be. In class, I had always mentioned my dog, Smokey, in my jiko shokai, and had drawn a picture of Smokey on



(See "Romance" continued on page 12)

SPECIAL SAYONARA

Hello JETAA NY Members,

After almost two years of serving as your humble Co-Editor for the JETAA NY Newsletter, I have decided to enter my time of retirement. It has been a pleasure working with all the JETAA Members out there who have contributed to the Newsletter, and to try to humor, amuse, and keep everyone informed through the publication. I'm retiring, but Steven is still at your service. So adios, and I'm sure I'll run into you avid JETAA Members at an event or two!

Best Wishes,

Jody

The "WORKING FOR THE MAN" Issue

This past Halloween I took to the streets of NYC as "The Job Fairy." And it turned out to be a fairly popular costume. I walked around with a suit, some wings, and a big bag full of jobs. And everywhere I went, people stopped me on the street and at parties and pleaded for employment.

This is the state of the world that we're living in and that JETs are returning to as of the Fall 2003 Issue. And if you're trying to change jobs or even just find "a" job, then it's not such a fun time (unless you work in bankruptcy law, like certain editors.)

That said, it's time to shirk off any remaining urges to *amaeru* and to instead make things happen by ourselves — just like that first English class we taught where the JLT turned to you in front of the class, smiled, and just said, "Talk with the students."

The US is increasingly a tough country to make your way in, and the safety nets of the past are dissolving quickly. But don't lose hope. The JETAA Network is here to help. And this Fall 2003 issue is just one dimension of the JETAA Network that's available to you. So take advantage of it. And if you're a JET Alum who's already "working for the man," step forward and help out your fellow alums as well.

Happy Networking!

Steven



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Thanksgiving, *Kurumasu* and *Shogatsu* are right around the corner. But before we hit the *bonenkai* circuit, let's set the scene with what's been going on in the JETAA NY scene.

JETAA NEW YORK SOCIETY PAGE
by **Yoku Shitteiru**

First off, has anyone noticed the increased volume of personage at JETAA NY events? The **Career Forum** along with the **Nippon Club Reception** and the *nijikai* drew well over 100 people. Then over 80 JET alums took over the Pine Bar for the November Happy Hour. (Props to **Matt Jungblut** for an original yet price-conscious watering hole.) And November finished off with a *Nihongo Dake Dinner* that drew over 50 alums to a Korean restaurant — a daring and successful choice of venue by organizer **Lynette Martyn**.

Lynette also just finished organizing JETAA NY's participation in another successful NY Cares Day which saw a terrific JET alum turnout. And while a mix-up put JETAA on a different project than **NYdeVolunteer**, everyone had fun and played nice with the Boston College alumni group.

Back to the Career Forum, many agreed that it was about as useful a function as JETAA NY could have put together and an excellent use of the JETAA alumni network as a resource. It was great to see so many JET alums come out of the woodwork, and it laid the foundation to bring out more in the future. The *oishii* spread and open bar at the reception right after the forum was perfect for mixing everyone together, and everyone got to play Siskel & Ebert to boot. The *nijikai* bar was huge and comfy and those who stayed late enough had the good fortune of watching the Yanks drop Game 7 to the Marlins. (Oops, did I say "good" fortune?)

And speaking of games, Happy Hour gossip has revealed that JETAA NY did indeed play the Softball Tournament in October (Yom Kippur weekend). Many thanks

to **Lance Lieberman, Ryan Bothwell, Matty J and Drew Barnes** for ensuring there was October softball after a last-second field space issue popped up. JETAA NY was able to grab second place overall. Congrats to the **Greenwich Japanese School** for taking back the trophy. *Rainen mata gambarimashou!*

For those of you who missed it, JETAA NY held its Second Annual Beach Outreach on September 6 at Long Beach, Long Island. Celebrity guests included good weather and **Drew the sushi chef from Yakitori East**.

In other news, the number of eligible JET Alum bachelors in the Greater New York Metropolitan Area dropped by at least two in the past few months as **Scott Hinneker** and **Ryan Bothwell** tied the knot (though not with each other). And in Former-JETAA NY-Treasurer news, former JETAA NY Treasurer **Lynne Washington** got married in London this summer, while former JETAA NY Treasurer **Sue Castroman-Aylesworth** gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in September. Big *omedtou gozaimashita* to all of you!

Meanwhile, former JETAA NY President **Sam Beltran** recently moved to San Francisco where he will likely improve the volleyball level out there. And former Secretary **Alex McLaren** will soon move to Washington, D.C. and join a different kind of "jet set" as he begins work as a foreign service officer. We know you'll both kick major *oshiri* with your new endeavors.



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LAW CAREERS AFTER JET

Perspectives on Mixing Law and Japan

by Brian Hersey*

So you are thinking about law and wondering how JET experience might fit into that. Well, as an ex-JET, licensed to practice, who has worked and studied in Tokyo and New York, I will be happy to share the wisdom I have accumulated by observing those around me, conferring with my *Senpai* and eavesdropping in Roppongi bars. Basically, I will try to lay out the good news, the bad news, offer some general advice and then provide some suggestions for paths available to Japan-experienced attorneys.

The good news

JET experience is rarely a minus. At a minimum, it gives you something to talk about in interviews. The ability to be a self-starter, to handle complex situations where you really have little idea of what is happening, should serve you well in practice. Comfort in dealing with people from other backgrounds might help (for example, adjusting to life in Japan has proven valuable in adjusting to being surrounded by Manhattan yuppies). Some forward-thinking employers value these attributes. Plus, there is always the possibility that the Japanese economy will boom again resulting in another influx of Japanese investment and clients and driving up the demand for attorneys familiar with Japan.

The bad news

Two central problems face those looking to combine Japan and a legal

career: the pigeon-hole problem and lack of demand. JET experience can pigeonhole you, actually making you less attractive to employers whose practice has no connection to Japan. This means that you need to play down your Japan interest in many interviews. Today, firms that are thinking about the future are more likely to be interested in China.



At present, the demand for Japan-related backgrounds in law rivals only the demand for diminutive NBA centers. Even in firms with Japan-related practices, Japan experience and even fluent Japanese have limited value. People select their attorneys primarily based on perceived competence. The language skills might allow you to entertain clients more effectively or to live more comfortably in Tokyo if you are sent there. However, it can cut both ways. A Japanese speaker might not jive with the client's vision of a US attorney. Or say you had reached a very high

level of Japanese and studied law at say Tokyo University for eighteen months, passed an interview and a test completely in Japanese with *keigo* and everything flowing smoothly. The senior partner whom you had never met might arbitrarily prevent you from working on the lucrative Japanese portion of a project because "he does not trust non-native speakers to read Japanese documents."

(See "Law" continued on page 11)

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How Did We Find Our Jobs?

WORK LIFE AFTER THE JET PROGRAM

For some of us it was easy. For some it was a struggle. And for all of us it was a life learning experience. See below how many of your fellow JET alumni found their current jobs. Also, feel free to contact any of these folks with questions.

Scott Alprin

Aichi-ken, 1992-95, *Intellectual Property Lawyer, Washington, D.C.*
I saw a sign in Japanese on a bulletin board in the lounge at law school, and saw that a firm wanted a paralegal. I called up and asked for the position. The man who is now my boss replied that there was no funding for the position anymore. I said that I would work for free, and he agreed to see me. When I got there, I was sent to lunch with two partners. I asked them what the difference between a patent and a trademark was. That was 1997, and I have been with the firm in some kind of capacity or another since then.

Cynthia Hansen

Okayama-ken 1995-1997, *Director, International Visitor Program for the World Affairs Council, Seattle*
When I decided to move from San Diego to Seattle, I used informational interviews to cultivate a network of people within the field of international relations in Seattle. I can't recommend strongly enough the value of informational interviews. I began with the directory for the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors and my initial info interviews led to other contacts and professional organizations. I narrowed my focus to two organizations that were doing the kind of work I wanted and kept in touch with them. Within 3 months both had unadvertised openings for which I applied, and a month later I had offers from both. Timing is important, but going after organizations rather than shoe-horning yourself into available positions is a valuable approach.

Erik Ralston

Hyogo-Ken, Kobe-Shi 1995 - 1997
G7 Group - Sales
I was introduced to "John" through a friend over a cocktail. John and I discussed our careers among other things. Without thinking about my own situation I passed some of my personal contacts and interesting reading materials to help him in his pursuits. A number of months later John asked me if I knew anyone looking for a certain position. I appropriately offered my own services and now have a new job.
eralston@g7group-ny.com

Aaron Keating

Nagano, 93-96, *Office Manager, Seattle*
I got my current job with lots of high quality research on the web - in my case, for local non-profits' employment pages, as well as the places they advertised when they were hiring. I stayed away from Monster.com, etc. - too big, too impersonal. I also wrote, re-wrote, and re-wrote my resume again and again, getting input from professional contacts each time, and changing it to match each job for which I applied.

Anita Fee

Chiba-ken 1999-2000, *Development Assistant, Fellowship of Reconciliation*. While I was looking for a job, I volunteered at this organization. Eventually, a position opened so I interviewed and got the job.
www.forusa.org

Michael Harper

Kagoshima-Ken, CIR, 1990-93,

Accountant at an internet company, Seattle

I moved to Seattle looking for Japan-related work and got a job doing customer service at a telecom company. After getting laid off I took a graduate accounting course and sat for the CPA exam. I ran into a lawyer friend from the telecom company who was working with a small company and he asked me to do some work on the books. A few months later he asked me to come on board as a full time employee. I have been here four years. (*Additional Comment* - The foreign language will usually be the icing on the cake. Many Japanese live in Seattle and many have business degrees, so competing just by having the language is tough unless you have some other skill.)
yakumichael@yahoo.com

Cindy Hoffman

Chiba-ken '97-'99
Teacher of Japanese and Chinese Social Studies (grades 9-12)
The magnet school program (Center for Global Studies) in which I now teach (aka current job) is where I began my interest in Japan back in high school. I left my home high school to attend the program at an urban high school for one semester. At the end of the term, we took a two-week homestay trip to Japan where we lived with families and saw "the sights." I was sold - my life would never be the same. Fast forward - after JET, I felt something was missing in my job as an executive assistant (actually, a lot was missing) which I found through a recruiting agency (Bremar Associates) and happened to visit the Center and talked to my former teacher (now director of the program). He needed a social studies teacher and I had been interested in teaching since JET. What can I say - right place at the right time. I'm now in my third year here and it's working out great!
cindyhoffman@hotmail.com

Shannon Quinn

Kagawa, 2000-2001, *Student Services Assistant, Department of Near Eastern Languages, University of Washington, Seattle, WA*
I returned from Japan knowing I wanted to work in higher education. I went back to the University of Washington (where I received my BA and still had many contacts on campus) and worked part-time for approximately a year, until a permanent position opened. As a UW employee I am able to pursue my M.Ed. in Higher Education Administration using tuition exemption.

Ilonka Oszvald

Yokohama-shi, 2 years (1996-98)
Publications Coordinator at transatlantic relations think-tank, Washington, DC. I was an intern for a year at the Institute during grad school and took over for someone who was leaving. It was a lucky break.

Clara Kuhlman

Tottori 99-01, *Placement Assistant, Office of Career Counseling and Placement, NYU Law*
I applied through NYU's website for this job. It was a shot in the dark and I didn't think they would call me back, but I got lucky. According to the HR people here, I was called because I am an NYU alumni — unfortunately for everyone else that seems to be how it works here. I am also studying part time at NYU (getting a Masters), which was the main motivation behind wanting a job here. secretary@jetaany.org

Isaac Leader

Saitama Prefecture ALT, 1999-2001

(“Jobs” continued on page 13)

THE PRICE OF ENGLISH IN CHINA

by Nate Hall (Yamaguchi-ken, 2000-02)

Maybe the job markets aren't so hot in the U.S. or even in Japan. But one JET Alum has found one part of the world that's still booming. Nate Hall reports from China where he is currently teaching English.

China has surprised me, much like Japan did, and while my experience here is radically different from my experience in Japan, I should point out that my experience in either country was not necessarily the definitive one. The readers of this Newsletter likely thought and probably hoped (in vain) that they would never hear this phrase again: Every situation is different. I have heard many a tale about foreigners being harassed by the Public Security Bureau in China, but I have never seen one representative of their department since I have been here.

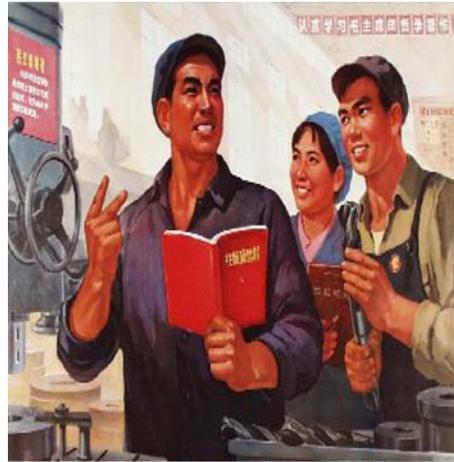
Despite being a nominally Communist country, very few things that we in the Occident may consider public institutions are free. Healthcare is not provided by the government as a free service; likewise education. As China has joined the World Trade Organization and entrepreneurs have to deal with less red (pinko?) tape to cut through to start and operate a new business, a class of *nouveau riche* is in the making. There is greater and greater inequality in the Peoples Republic of China as some people take advantage of new economic liberties. Since education is not free, and since some people have more money than others, some people are willing and quite able to pay extra for a better education for their children. A better education in China means English proficiency.

As China heads into a seemingly brighter future of international trade with the world's fastest growing economy, the citizenry are eager to become more adept with the obsequious international language -- English. The JET Programme holds steady -- it has in recent years stopped growing. The number of participants is more or less fixed each year. I am not sure if this is due to the state of the Japanese economy or simply because the ministry formerly known as MONBUSHO has decided that there is only so many foreign teaching slots for the program to be efficient. The world's most populous country, however, is hungry for English teachers and foreign specialists in their secondary schools, as well as in their universities, and there will never be enough, not in this decade, nor in the next.

Since China is desperate for foreign English teachers and since there are a lot of people with a lot of money, schools are willing to make some very generous provisions to attract foreign teachers, and therefore attract ambitious students and wealthy parents. The cost of living in China remains much lower than that of Japan, and as such the salaries are lower. But it is much easier to save money here than it is in Japan and there are more corners to cut.

My school provided my airfare and will provide my return in June (it was not first-class, but JET no longer provides that either). My school covers my housing and my meals entirely, so of the money I make, nothing is subtracted to pay bills. If I want to do anything on the side, there is nothing in my contract or in my visa to stop me. One of my colleagues, an Australian, has actually opened up his own pizza and chicken restaurant with a Chinese partner, the father of one of his former students.

In addition to freedom to own private property, the Chinese are getting more relaxed about political freedoms as well. Whereas the older generations in Japan seem only to have retained "this is a pen" from their English classes, the older generations in China all learned to say, "I love Chairman Mao." Not so anymore. My students freely tell me that they do not like the late Chairman Mao Ze Dong. Other historical communist leaders, such as Sun Yat Sen, and Zhou Enlai are still popular, but the communist party as a whole is becoming less so. In huge lettering across



大学大用毛主席光辉哲学思想

the school entrance, facing the road the English words read "Open. Democratic. Debate." Only time will tell how seriously these words are to be taken.

I work for a particularly prestigious school in the suburbs of Chengdu City in the Sichuan Province of central China. The school now has two campuses, the old one about ten years old and the new one,

where I live and work, still being built. Both have new, modern, ugly architecture, which in China is usually covered with bathroom tile, which has its advantages. It is less depressing than concrete because it does not have the tendency to age as fast, and when you want to clean it, all you need is a squeegee.

The facilities are both expensive and expansive. Both campuses have large teaching buildings, with audiovisual equipment and Internet access in every classroom. The teachers are allotted large private apartments—quite frankly too large for one person. There is a rubberized track, a turf soccer field, tennis courts, basketball courts, and soon there will be a swimming pool and adjunct elementary school. As in Japan, there is no insulation, and no central heating.

Many people in China are running a bit wild with their plans, or perhaps they just are not planning enough, but it seems that the administrator here spent so much money building the school that there is not enough left over to pay the first-year teachers—as in the school is running out of money.

This does not apply to the foreign teachers. The school is right in thinking that we would probably go teach in the next town if they attempted such a line. The first-year teachers have however received a loan—that they are, strangely enough, expected to pay back to the same school that now owes them two months salary in arrears.

The rumours are that the school used a largish chunk of this year's tuition to pay off the bank loan in full, so that they will not have to pay interest or mortgage. The still-affluent students still have money to order out for pizza from my colleague's restaurant, a practice that the dormitory supervisors banned this week, prompting speculation that the restaurant is too much competition for the school's snack bar.

When considering the shortcomings, one must keep in mind that China is a developing country, and people are not necessarily used to having quite so much capital at their disposal. In spite of the weekly blackouts and losses of water pressure (common in a three-month-old building anywhere in the world) the students are not being pulled from the school, and the teachers are not jumping ship.

There are great opportunities here, lots of free stuff, and lots of new liberties to be taken. And any veteran of the JET Programme can appreciate that.

JETAA NY CAREER FORUM

October 25, 2003

by Jo Sonido

For the past three years, JETAANY hosted job skill workshops for newly-returned JETs and for alumni seeking help as they transitioned out of old positions and wanted some advice on resume writing, interviewing skills, and career fields choices. This year, we consolidated what had been three separate workshops into a one-day career forum held on Saturday, October 25.

Perhaps it was the lagging job market, the all-star JET Alumni Panel, or the fact that the Welcome Home Reception was held immediately after, but whatever it was, 40 JET alumni came from all of the tri-state area on a crisp autumn afternoon to share their collective experience and anxieties of the area's job market.

The 3-hour career forum was divided into three parts: Job Market Update & Resume Writing; Panel Discussion; and Breakout Discussion circles.

Victor Cabilla (ALT, Chiba-ken), a career counselor at Bremar Associates in Manhattan, led the job market update and resume writing workshop. Victor gave a thorough strategic overview of the resume as tool used to get an interview, not to get you the job. He gave useful tips on how to streamline your resume so that it is reader-friendly and effective in presenting yourself to potential employers.

The Panel discussion featured JET alums who have done and continue to do great and wonderful things in their lives. You had to be there!



Big thanks to them for sharing their experiences and advice: Steven Horowitz (Aichi), Eric Harris (Mie), Nicole Deutsch Yokohama), Char Lee Kibler (Ibaraki), Josh Borden (Ibaraki), Lee Uehara (Chiba), Erik Ralston (Kobe), Jamie Pizzorno (Kyoto) and R. Michael Wirin (Toyama).

Finally, the breakout discussions were divided into four general fields: Business, Education, Finance and Legal. During the breakout discussions participants could ask specific questions, receive advice, or even get feedback on their resume. From all the great compliments received by participants, the forum was a huge success. We look forward

to hosting a similar forum next year and hope that you will consider participating either as a panelist or advice seeker.

For more information on the the career forum you may contact JETAANY Treasurer, Jo Sonido at treasurer@jetaany.org

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THE NYC TEACHING FELLOW PROGRAM

...Or, How I went from "Yanguburato-sensei" to "Mr. J"

by Matt Jungblut - Saitama '88-91

It's 8:20 AM – you haven't had your first cup of coffee yet, you're in front of twenty-six frenzied kids, you got six hours of sleep last night, you make less than a sanitation worker, and you have Elmer's Glue running down the front of your pants – if this sounds like paradise, you might want to be a NYC Teaching Fellow. The Teaching Fellows is kind of like JET, if you got your

Masters degree instead of going out drinking every night and rather than seeing rice paddies, 7-11's and shrines on your way to school, you pass overgrown vacant lots, bodegas, and store-front churches. Also you are giving back a lot more to your own country and will more likely see the fruit of your efforts after a few years. You need to be as mentally tough as you did to endure Japan, maybe even tougher in some ways to do this job, but after your time in the chu-gakkos and sho-gakkos, you know if you are a teacher or not.

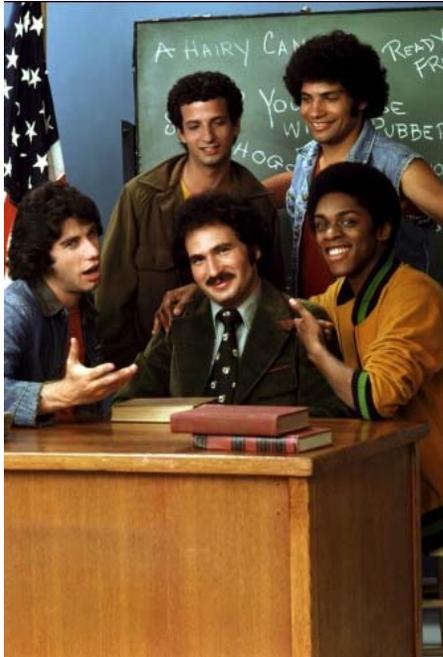
The job is stressful and I had greater culture shock going into the South Bronx for the first time than I did walking through Kamakura on my first visit. People stared at me, but I was not a movie star to them, different languages were spoken, but nobody complimented my feeble attempts, the customs and culture were different, but no one really gave a ---- about my hometown and that my favorite sport was baseball – and yet the children are the same, they are open minded, enthusiastic, can be fiercely independent and then throw their arms around you five minutes later.

Let me give you a quick overview on why I joined the NYC Teaching Fellows. While on JET and during my stint as a private hire in Japan, I discovered that I not only loved teaching, but that I was good at it too. I often covered classes on my own if a teacher was out (shhh! don't tell MEXT), the kids responded well and I was eventually treated as an equal by most of the other teachers. Upon returning to New York, I became a PPT or a regular substitute, which meant that even though I was unlicensed, I could teach in the NYC public schools. There was very little support, not much money, and no training. I did this for two years and due to frustration, poverty, and a few other things, I quit. The PPT positions no longer exist in NYC, so don't bother looking – the Fellows program is one of the many ways that NYC is replacing those positions – but with much improved training. After leaving teaching, I moved to Hawaii, taught ESL and drove around a submarine (really) for a few years. When I returned to NYC, I worked corporate sales for an airline. I had some pretty good perks and great benefits, my clients were generally high-end agencies or huge corporations, banks and the like. I enjoyed the money and the benefits, but never totally embraced the job fully. Still, I probably would still be working for Virgin Atlantic, except for September 11. I was nearby the WTC with a few co-workers that day, and without going into much detail; let's just say that I realized how callous and unsatisfying the corporate world could be. Some of my friends encouraged me to teach again, but it did not appeal to me in NYC, due to my previous experiences.

Then I found out about the Teaching Fellows; ads like "No one ever goes back 10 years later to thank a middle manager." and "Have you ever heard of a teacher quitting to do something more important?" starting popping up on the subways and in the New York Times – these ads were making me realize how much I missed teaching; so I went to the website (www.nycteachingfellows.org), to check it out. It seemed like the JET program, only better, I would earn my Masters degree, teach fulltime, receive

a full salary and benefits, and have a professional support network.

I won't go into too many of the specific details, as those of you who are interested in this have probably already headed for the website – but I will say that you should check it out, talk to some of the current Fellows (I know at least three former JETs) and see if it's for you. I absolutely love it and would recommend it to anyone who ever wants to teach anywhere. The training is hands on, the support network is fantastic, you earn a Masters for practically free, and you really can make a difference.



Some answers to FAQs.

- The application process is much tougher than JET in many ways. Nobody seems to slip into this program – well, maybe I did.
- You need a minimum of a 3.0 GPA or a really good cover letter showing valuable life experiences that will sway the reviewers.
- The coursework is tough, but not grueling. It can be done and I still have somewhat of a social life.
- You can now apply at different times of the year, in the past it was like JET and everyone started at the same time. I still think that the camaraderie built by starting with the main groups in June would probably be more worthwhile.
- You will teach in inner city schools, but that being said, the nice elementary school where I teach is a million light years away from the hellish school that I once taught in. The Bronx has gotten much better and I generally feel as comfortable in the neighborhood around my school as I do anywhere else in the city.
- While about 30% of the Fellows are right out of college, most have some work experience behind them. In my summer classes there was a lawyer, a psychologist, a marketing director from MTV, a MTA transit worker, a television actor, a professional artist, and some dot.commers – oh and at least one former submarine pilot.
- You will need to pass your teaching exams before getting your license – these are the LASTs and the CSTs. In fact ALL teachers in NYC must now pass them.
- Demonstration lessons are required during your interviews. Use your Japan experience to your best advantage here.
- Have realistic expectations – you will NOT reach every child, nor do the Fellows expect you to; however you will have a great impact on someone's future – even if it is only yourself.

If you are interested, I recommend checking out the website. If you want further valuable information and insights, I recommend buying me a Guinness at the next JETAA Happy Hour.

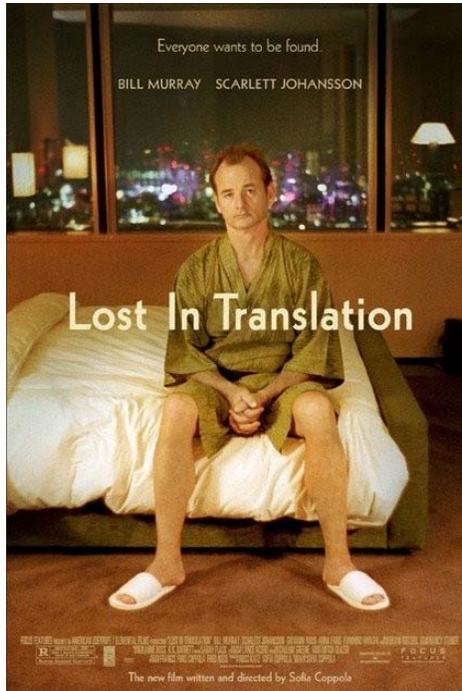
JETTIN' TO THE MOVIES

by Alexei Esikoff (Fukushima, 2001-2002)

Sofia Coppola, like many new visitors to Tokyo, has never forgotten her first jet-lagged glimpse of the city. She made an entire movie around it, assigning that overwhelmed reaction to Bill Murray, his face pressed against the limo window as he takes in the neon ant-colony that will be his home for the next week.

Unlike the rest of us, though, jammed among the illegible signs and swarms of people, Murray finds his own visage adorning a Suntory Whiskey billboard. (Though, of course, he can't read that either.) The Bill Murray doppelganger, Bob Harris, is in town for a celebrity's dirtiest secret, to score a couple million on advertisements that will never be seen stateside.

Charlotte (a mature Scarlett Johansson), the film's other main character, is staying in the same hotel because she followed her photographer husband halfway across the world. When he leaves Tokyo to follow a band, she is left to troll the hotel nightly, where she meets a similarly sleep-deprived Bob Harris.



Disorientation runs throughout *Lost in Translation*. Struck illiterate and mute in homogeneous crowds, Bob and Charlotte are stuck in more ways than one. Both have difficulty adjusting to the time zone; living much of their life at night further dislocates them. Reminders of structured, normal life come through faxes, phone calls, even a selection of carpet samples Harris' wife wants him to peruse. These isolated incidents stand in stark contrast to Bob and Charlotte's aimless wandering.

Lost in Translation is essentially a simple story about a relationship between two people who, given different circumstances, would not have much in common due to age and status. The dialogue is sparse. Both sense the other as intelligent, slightly lonely people. Unlike most relationship-movies, Coppola understands that this realization doesn't necessarily lead to constant witty conversation. They have a mutual admiration, but cannot articulate why. (Some moviegoers may find these long awkward stretches trying, as they are frequent.)

This is a Bill Murray movie, so it is funny, but a subdued funny. In a pivotal karaoke scene where Bob and Charlotte's kinship is solidified, he demonstrates to hilarious effect the lounge singer shtick he perfected on SNL. And, living up to the title of the

movie, Murray mugs for the camera during a photo shoot. Asked to pose like the "Ratu Paku," he smirks a delicious "Ring-a-ding-ding."

There are flaws. Coppola takes the "l" and "r" pronunciation difficulty too far with a scene involving a stripper sent to Harris by a Suntory honcho as a present. Tripping over the word "rip" (as in "rip my stocking"), the stripper becomes grotesque, not funny. More troubling is Charlotte's relationship with her husband (Giovanni Ribisi). Studying old snapshots, Charlottes fixates on one where he is looking at the camera, but she is gazing at him. It is a telling moment, but the film doesn't answer what they are doing together in the first place.

Regardless, Coppola has created a rare, quiet movie of laughter and tension and wild sake-induced karaoke nights. In the teeming madness of Tokyo, she zooms in on Bob and Charlotte, two foreigners who are able to forge a connection. By the end of their week together, their temporary world is a little less weird, and they are a little less lost.

KILL BILL

That Quentin Tarantino is a geek for Asian action films is well-known. But who knew he could create one of this own? *Kill Bill*, a wildly violent homage to all of his obsessions, is entertaining in its own right. Some highlights for Japan-ophiles include:

- A dazzling anime section that delivers exposition and emotion.
- Sonny Chiba gets an extended role for just being Sonny Chiba.
- The head of the *yakuza* is a half-Chinese, half-Japanese American woman (and she can behead anyone who questions this).
- The demented schoolgirl Go Go. That sailor uniform has never been so diabolical.



Your Friendly Neighborhood Job Agency

by Steven Horowitz

In every Newsletter, you probably see the ads by the four main Japanese recruitment agencies in New York – QUICK USA, Interesse International, MAX Consulting, and Bremar Associates. Many of us have used these agencies in our efforts to find jobs. (And maybe you even saw some of their ramen shop recommendations in the Summer Issue.)

But who are these guys?

The Newsletter decided to find out. We stopped in for a chat with the top people at each of these firms to help everyone get to know their friendly neighborhood Japanese recruiting agency a little bit better. And while each company head may have traveled his or her own path to get where they are, it became apparent in the course of conversation that all of them work extremely hard to help their clients and job candidates.

Bremar Associates

A number of us might be familiar with Bremar Associates through fellow JET Alum and Bremar recruiter Victor Cabilla. But Bremar, which was founded by the wife and husband duo of Minako and Edwin Bremar, has connections with the JET Program that date back to 1988. Edwin, while a professor at Georgia Tech, was one of the first interviewers for the JET Program. Minako, began her career in recruiting informally when her own network enabled her to help put companies and job candidates together. She began working full time as a recruiter, and in 1998 she and Edwin founded Bremar Associates. In addition to spending their time between the New York and California offices, Minako and Edwin have four children, all adopted, ages 7 to 11, and are actively involved in fundraising for educational programs in New York City.

MAX Consulting Group

Manabu “Max” Nagura always knew he wanted to own his own company even though he had no idea what form it would eventually take. But after growing up in Himeji, graduating from Kansai Gaidai with a degree in education in 1985 and spending a year studying abroad, Max eventually went on to found MAX Consulting. Max’s inspiration for breaking away from the crowd? A Japanese friend he met during his year abroad who was learning to run his own family’s business and advised Max to “build your business.” Now with 18 years of recruiting experience under his belt, Max says his favorite part about his job is helping people to achieve their financial well being. When not doing that, he enjoys fly fishing and playing with his 5 year old daughter. Working closely with Max is Sayaka “Stacy” Ijima, a 6 year recruiting veteran with a degree in international relations from Hofstra.

Interesse International

When Interesse President & CEO Masato Fujihara first arrived in New York in January 1994, it was the coldest day he’d ever experienced. Since then things have warmed up quite a bit. In addition to finding a spot with the New York Men’s Choir, where he once helped a JET alum also in the choir to find a job with a major Japanese company, Fujihara, who has over 20 years of H.R. experience, has led Interesse to a successful New York presence as well as offices in California and Atlanta. Fujihara, who is fluent in German, originally planned on building a career in Europe during his college days. But he discovered the excitement in the business world was in the risk-taking environment of the US. Working closely with Fujihara is Mika Nomura, a Nagoya native with 14 years of recruiting experience including a 6 year stint in Hong Kong (which explains why she can speak Chinese.)

QUICK USA

Tadaishi Saito, who set up QUICK USA’s New York office in 1999, has run the NYC Marathon the last four years and has learned to never give up. Somewhat coincidentally, QUICK’s origins as a staffing company began nearly 26.2 years ago in Osaka. Saito began his career in advertising and sales, but he soon recognized the trend towards a borderless world and towards globalization which led him to focus on an international presence for QUICK to achieve his dream of running his own business. On the differences between recruiting in the US and Japan, Saito notes that in Japan people follow a relatively straight line, from college to work, while in America it’s common to take a more round-about path. Regardless of who he works with, he finds the most enjoyable aspect of recruiting to bringing people together in a win-win situation. **(Special thanks to Mina Shimada of QUICK for all her help with the Newsletter. Mina recently moved back to Tokyo.)**

("Law", Continued from page 4)

So what should you do?

When asked what piece of advice they would give to JET alumni thinking about law school, every attorney responds, "Think again." But, if I can't dissuade you from law school, if you are going to persist in following the legal path then let me relay the best piece of advice I have received. Write this down.

No seriously.

Go on, get a pen. I'll wait... Ready? OK, here it is ...

Become an attorney at a top-tier firm.

If you want to work on transnational deals this means big firms, and both the firms and their clients want excellent attorneys. Being able to communicate in Japanese is great. So is cultural knowledge of Japan. But be a good attorney first. Go to the most elite school (school names are important in law generally and especially in dealing with Japanese clients) you can get into and study your butt off. Then find a large firm that will train you to become a top-tier attorney. In Tokyo, the foreign attorneys with top credentials and fluent Japanese have the best careers. However, the second best situation would be to be an outstanding attorney with no Japanese at all. The saddest situation would be to be an attorney with fluent Japanese and little training or experience (like yours truly).

So my advice: go to Harvard Law School, serve as the editor in chief of the Law Review and then clerk for the Supreme Court. Then you will have many options. If you are just another schlep with a law degree and functional Japanese then you really are not a hot commodity. Believe me, I know. So let me say it again. BECOME AN EXCELLENT ATTORNEY FIRST. Got it?

Possibilities

That said, there are several options available to attorneys with Japan backgrounds.

1) The best case scenario is that you land a job with a large US firm that has an office in Tokyo. They train you here for a few years and then send you to Tokyo. Tokyo offices tend to be small and the junior attorneys I have met in Tokyo have found the work to be more interesting than the work they get in New York. Of course most of them were drunk when they told me this so you can take it for what it is worth. Those deals often come with SWEET (pronounced "Sah-weeeet!!!" while looking into the listeners' eyes with an intense expression and one hand gesturing for emphasis) expatriate packages so that you can live in a giant rooftop apartment close to the office. These attorneys can stay in Tokyo but have the option to head back to the US.

2) Some go straight to Japan from law school or with little "big firm" experience. Most attorneys will not recommend this. Nevertheless, this remains an option. The pay is not bad but the work often less than interesting. Most people who do this usually become kind of glorified proofreaders or translators (depending on your Japanese ability). In a best case scenario, you would be practicing Japanese law and getting a Japanese attorney to sign off on it. Even if you were able to somehow get good transferable training, most US offices will not credit your experiences in Tokyo. I know several attorneys who have effectively "trapped" themselves in Tokyo (note: because Japanese firms cannot have branch offices there is not much law work outside of Tokyo). They make what would be senior partner salaries in their home jurisdictions but would only command junior associate salaries at home. So this option is best left to those absolutely committed to spending their career

in Tokyo.

3) The academic option. With the upcoming introduction of a law school system in Japan the demand for US-trained, qualified attorneys to teach law may increase. I have already seen a few advertisements for these positions. Like English teaching, tenured positions may be rare. The schools will prefer prestigious academic backgrounds, some practice experience and at least three publications. I saw an advertisement for a professor position last year that would have involved teaching law in English, but required that the candidates Japanese be fluent enough to understand and participate in staff meetings.

4) Just work in the US and look for opportunities to combine Japan with your practice. The most common route and maybe the one I am following. There are opportunities. I have spoken with several attorneys who have managed this one. Basically they practice law of some kind and look for opportunities to combine their experience with Japan. Just as an example, I recently got to translate a Japan Supreme Court opinion for publication in a textbook on Military Law.

5) The non-law option. One of the considerations in my choice of careers was the flexibility that law offers as a career. As an MBA I would not be able to practice law. However, as an attorney you can always take the bank route. I have heard of (but not met) several people who have taken this route, entering investment houses or banks. I understand that something like one-third of all admitted US attorneys are not practicing law. Can't add more about this because I simply do not know.

If you are just another schlep with a law degree and functional Japanese, then you really are not a hot commodity.

So what are you trying to say?

Still interested in law? That's ok. Perhaps you dream of defending Constitutional rights (these guys fall like rain in law school- but that is another article) or of advocating for the underprivileged (who cannot help pay off your law school debt). Perhaps you imagine that even trudging through several hundred thousand pages of badly written, repetitive, mostly irrelevant, highly technical documents for sixty-to-seventy hours a week beats your present low-paying, stressful, challenge-free, dead-end job.

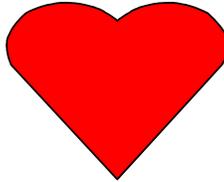
I personally still like law. I like the intellectual challenge of it. Law is where the rubber hits the road, where all that nonsense from economics, sociology, political science, history and philosophy actually affects people's lives. I enjoy meeting other attorneys and learning about new things. Studying law will sharpen the mind. Law can even make for a rewarding and lucrative career. But as an ex-JET keep in mind that, for most attorneys, Japan-practice is a hobby, not central to their practice. Japan background plus law does not automatically give you a leg up on the quest to reach easy-street. So with that in mind, good luck. I sincerely wish you all the best.

**Brian graduated from the University of Washington School of Law, where he served as an editor of the Washington Law Review, in 2001. He is admitted to practice law in New York. After law school he took a Monbukagakusho Fellowship to study employment law (focus on age discrimination in Japan) at the Graduate School of Law and Politics at the University of Tokyo. He is presently living in NYC and looking for a permanent position. Look him up if you know of any jobs, want to go rock climbing or feel like drinking beer. He would like to thank Steve, Allison, Jason, and Josh for contributing their thoughts and wisdom as well as the numerous other attorneys whose advice somehow penetrated the alcoholic fog of Tokyo nightlife over the past couple of years.*

("Romance" Continued from page 1)

the board, which looked like a shark. On my last day at her school, I placed a picture of Smokey, and a rose in her shoe box, and high-tailed it out of the school, and Japan. Ano ko wa doushiteiru daro?

The other time was when, on Valentine's day, I decided to leave my Japanese girlfriend flowers outside her office building. I was accustomed to giving her flowers, and them receiving right back, as our relationship was a secret... this time it would be different. I had a Japanese friend write something on a card (in Japanese) that said: "To the girls at so and so, thank you for your assistance with my insurance this year." Everything was planned perfectly. However, the wrapping of the flowers had the name of the flower shop. Some of my girlfriend's colleagues called the shop, and asked if anyone had been buying flowers there for the company. The flower lady told them that she remembered a gaijin who had purchased flowers, and told this big story about how he would leave flowers anonymously at his girlfriend's company. People had spotted my girlfriend walking around with a gaijin (me), and, well, my girlfriend was mortified. So was I. I called up the flower shop, and in a trembling voice, accused the flower lady of violating the flower lady - customer privilege, and told her that I would never buy flowers from her again. Fast forward 8 years later. I am at a conference and start talking to this guy from the town where I lived in my town. Turns out that his aunt is the flower lady herself, and that she is on her deathbed. I always wanted to apologize for yelling at her... but now, I guess I never will.



with. Sometimes I made a guest appearance in his ichi-nensei class and I already knew his students from my occasional ichi-nensei English classes, so it was a pleasant surprise when he invited me to join his homeroom for a karaoke outing and some lunch. For sure, then, I thought we were just friendly colleagues.

Well he did pick me up and we joined the students, already well into shrieking their throats hoarse with unbridled glee. After about forty minutes I was beginning to get into it when he said "Let's get going" and we left the students there! Then he drove me out to lunch and said "Let's go for two-person karaoke" afterward. !?! Has anyone else done one-on-one karaoke? I guess I was lucky because he did have a nice voice, but it was a singularly awkward episode followed by a long drive to a nearby beach. When we got

there he hopped out of the car and walked around puffing on a cigarette, then drove me home.

Very confusing. Still not sure what that was all about (although I later learned about the popularity of driving dates in Japan), but he was a very nice guy and despite the oddity of karaoke for two, it was a fun time.

* * *

I knew about one JET in another town who was sleeping with the wife of the *kyouikusho*, the head of the Board of Education. Then there was my friend in a nearby town who was hooking up with the wife of a teacher. He said the teacher would invite him over for dinner, the teacher's wife would make sure her husband got drunk after which he would inevitably pass out, and then the fun would begin. The funny part is I ran into a JET alum who lived in the same town a few years later. When I mentioned my friend's name, this guy said, "Oh, the guy who had the thing with the teacher's wife?"

There was a young new teacher at my high school, not much older than me, who I got along with very well and occasionally hung out

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(Continued from page 5)

Assistant Director, City of Yokohama New York Representative Office

After quitting my post-JET job in Japan and spending 6 months traveling, playing frisbee golf, skiing, and deeply considering whether or not to apply to a master's program in either IR or business (in other words, being unemployed and burning through my life savings—please do not try this at home), I realized that what I really needed was more work experience, not to mention an income. I found a temporary place to stay in the city and devoted the next 2 weeks to registering/interviewing with Japanese employment agencies and revising my resume according to descriptions of the jobs they put me up for. I interviewed for only one job, which I accepted after convincing them to change it from part to full time plus benefits. 2 weeks after that, I had a chance (again through one of the agencies) to interview for my current job, which was much closer to what I wanted to be doing. When I passed the (competitive, all in Japanese) interview, I quit the first job to take this one, and have no regrets. isaac@coyokohama.org

Joshua Borden

Ibaraki-Ken, 1995-1997 (AET & CIR)

President and CEO of an import/distribution group, grossing US\$30 million in annual sales. I am also the president of ACS International, an international consulting company, currently arranging one of the largest industrial projects undertaken worldwide in the last 10 years. After returning home from JET, I got offers right away from large Japanese companies while applying to part time graduate programs. After a couple of bad experiences as an American "salary man" in a Japanese corporation, I called upon existing contacts, and asked if I could do anything in New York to help them. From that, I opened my own company, which grew far beyond my expectations of paying for grad school. My consulting company, ACS, was opened in direct response to my overseas vendors asking for greater help in conducting business in the States. jsborden@hotmail.com

Regina Cronin

Ishikawa Ken '92-'95 (woa, that used to not seem so long ago!)

Director - Infrastructure & Standards e-Business & Emerging Technology, MasterCard International

Interviewed with MasterCard 3.5 years ago through a grad school friend connection. Survived the interview and have worked in 3 different departments since that time. I had finished my MA in Japan Studies at Hopkins SAIS in Wash DC in '99 and took an internship at the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank and then heard about the open Japan-related position at MasterCard. My work now does not involve Japan, but my association with Japan likely helped in getting my first job at MasterCard after grad school. regina_cronin@mastercard.com

Adam Hempling

Nagano Prefecture, CIR/PA 2000-2002, *Communications Associate, Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership*

Believe it or not, the job that I found was advertised on the JETAANY Market Place webpage. Prior to finding it, I was working as a Japanese language interpreter in Chicago...a good job which allowed me to use my Japanese language skills, but I ended up working third shift (10pm-7am) and the frequency of Japanese calls was pretty low. So needless to say, I was eager to get back to using some of the other skills I had been using on my job as a CIR like editing, graphic design and webpage management. When this position got advertised, I put a portfolio of my work as a CIR together and sent it to New York. The rest, as they say, is history. Adam_Hempling@cgp.org

Victor Cabilla

Chiba-ken, 1998-2001

Recruiting Counselor at Bremar Associates, Inc.

Right after JET, before arriving in the US, I had a job lined up with a Travel Accident Insurance company near Philly. It sounded great and

the salary was an improvement on JET so I was excited, but I should have been cautious about a job with "no specific job description." Anyway, we left each other after six months, and I sent my resume to the Japanese employment agencies in NY to see about landing a Japanese job there. I was very open to industry and position, and was first approached by Bremar Associates, Inc. where after a couple of interviews was hired to join their team!

victor@bremar.com

Amanda Burdick

Substitute teacher (public school)

I had my certification (NYS) in Art and Elementary and my master's degree before going to Japan. When I returned (and even before returning) I applied for several permanent positions. I had friends watching the papers for me, and I also used the internet to apply from Japan. But due to timing on my return, wasn't employed. So I have submitted my name to a couple schools for substitute teaching. I also teach at a private arts facility (I did this before Japan as well) where they are very interested in multicultural/ethnic art classes.

a_burdick_wk@yahoo.com

Rhiannon Fink

Saitama-ken, 1 year, *Assistant to the President of Fujisankei Communications International, Inc.*

After returning to the US after JET, I completed my M.A. at NYU. Upon graduation, I registered with three agencies (Bremar Associates, Max Consulting, and Interesse) in NYC that recruit for Japan-oriented jobs. I was ultimately placed by Bremar.

Rhiannon.Fink@FCI-NY.com

Eric D. Harris

Mie Prefecture, Tsu-City 1994-1996, *Lawyer*

I replied to an advertisement listed in the New York Law Journal.

However, I was able to obtain the job because I had in-house legal experience at a manufacturing company in New York and Japan (Minebea Co., Ltd.) and I had served as law clerk to three Judges (including New York and Pennsylvania State and Federal Courts).

www.feldmanweinstein.com

Coretta Cooper

Oaska-fu 1999-2002, *Elementary (bilingual) teacher in the Bronx.*

I am also studying for my Masters degree in Education at Mercy College. This is all through the NYC Teaching Fellows Program. I heard about it from a friend who was doing it. I have met several other JET alumni in the Fellows Program.

Nathan Hall

Yamaguchi-ken, *English Teacher, Chengdu, China*

I was on the N train and my neighbor had the NY Times want ads open and she found an ad for teaching English in China, and she thought that sounded like it was something I would do. I applied because I always wanted to learn Mandarin, and I didn't enjoy what I was doing in New York, and I am much happier where I am now. It is a bit like JET in some regards, but with a lot more personal freedom, which is not what I expected in China, but they mind their own business more than my bosses did in Yamaguchi.

Rosie de Fremery

Shizuoka-ken, 1998-2001, *IT Director for American Jewish World Service (a global nonprofit organization)*

Before I came home I posted a general inquiry about IT jobs in NY on the bulletin board of my alma mater's computer science server. A while later an alum I knew asked if I was interested in a job as IS Manager at her nonprofit; I interviewed and got the job. About two years later, through a friend at a sister nonprofit, I learned of an opportunity here and switched jobs. In both cases it was through friends that I found work. hikaruhana@yahoo.com

Rosie Reviews***SILK*** by Alessandro Baricco

Reviewed by Rosemary de Frémery

In light of the approaching holiday season, when JETAA-NY members are likely to be looking for relaxing reading material, I elected to review *Silk* by Alessandro Baricco, our Book Club's selection for September. A 1997 bestseller in Baricco's native Italy, *Silk* has been translated into 27 languages and is merely 90 pages in length yet in its compact form tells an epic story of love in a time of fantasy.

Silk has as its central figure a decidedly colorless personality in 19th century provincial Frenchman Hervé Joncour, who is described as "one of those men who like to be observers at their own lives, any ambition to actually participate in them being considered inappropriate." This protagonist without any agency of his own is directed into the silk business by a local entrepreneur in his small town of Lavedieu, then induced to journey "right to the end of the world" so that he may purchase silk eggs to ensure the livelihood of his community.

Upon arriving in Japan, Joncour is blindfolded and led to the residence of a powerful man named Hara Kei, who we learn has a fair command of French. During their initial exchange, Joncour is perplexed and intrigued by the presence of a young girl in a flowing red dress draped across the lap of Hara Kei, being petted as if she "were some luxurious, sleeping animal." The Frenchman and his Japanese counterpart continue negotiations without incident until:

Suddenly,
Without the smallest movement,
That young girl,
Opened her eyes.

Here Baricco, wishing to emphasize this moment, alters the flow and pace of his prose (most likely intentionally – having written articles on musicology, the author probably means to simulate a change of tempo) so that we may have a closer look at this instance which precipitates the unraveling of the love story in *Silk*. In this moment Hervé Joncour discovers that this girl is, however improbably, Caucasian. Perhaps equally fascinated at encountering such a face in Japan, she remains fixated on him for the duration of his audience with Hara Kei, even being so brazen as to reach for his tea cup and press her lips to the exact spot from which he had sipped.

Joncour departs the country soon afterwards, silk eggs in hand, returning to his wife Hélène and their village by early April. When asked "What's it like, the end of the world?" he replies "Invisible." For a time, his life is "as rain before his eyes, a vision of peace."

But he journeys back to Japan with the image of the young girl somewhere in the recesses of his mind, and they eye one another once again as he is brought to meet Hara Kei. By the time Joncour reaches them she has disrobed and left for a swim, leaving her orange dress on the ground. He and Hara Kei begin walking to another location and Joncour quietly drops one of his gloves next to the discarded dress.

Later during that same visit the girl ensures that a handwritten note finds its way into the hands of Hervé Joncour and he returns to Lavedieu by early April, just as before. Joncour leaves the note untouched for 42 days, settling peacefully into the comfortable routine of his life as he had always known it before traveling abroad.

Then, upon making some inquiries, Joncour learns that a distinguished Japanese courtesan lives in nearby Nîmes and can translate the note for him upon request. He makes the trip to Nîmes and Madame Blanche, relaying the message, declares, "Come back, or I shall die." Joncour has already been affected by the weight of these words, but Madame Blanche advises, "Forget about her. She won't die and you know it."

Joncour takes this in and then returns home, passing months of dreamlike peace with his wife in apparent contentment despite all that has taken place. However, when the question of another trip to Japan arises and Joncour says to his mentor "You decide," our protagonist passively engineers his departure to the country where Hara Kei and his young girl await.

What happens after that point I will refrain from detailing here so as not to spoil the plot's denouement for those who care to read *Silk* for themselves, but I can offer that the love which declares its presence is not what one would assume and leaves everyone with a sense of regret – Joncour most of all, as the realization descends upon him. Some may be less than enamored at the occasional melodramatic passage in *Silk*, but others will appreciate the simplicity and sensuality of Baricco's language, which manages the rare feat of communicating so much to the reader with such economical form.

Keeping in mind that *Silk* is a novel of escape from the ennui of a privileged, unremarkable life to the intrigue and obscurity of a fantasy land "at the end of the world," JETAA-NY readers should find this novel very pleasurable and effortless to follow. If you end up reading and enjoying this book, consider discussing it with us via email or attending one of our meetings – just contact me at jetbookclub@hotmail.com

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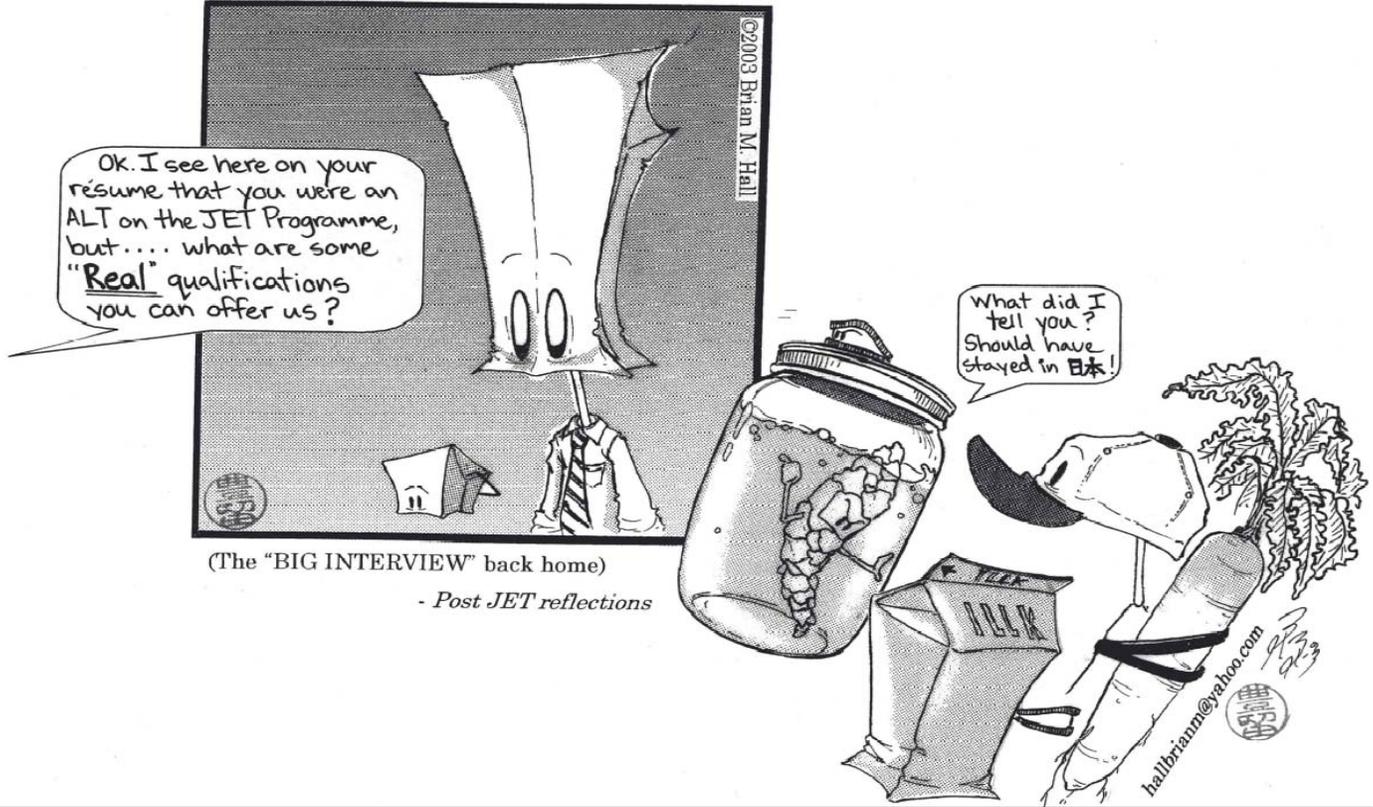
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