

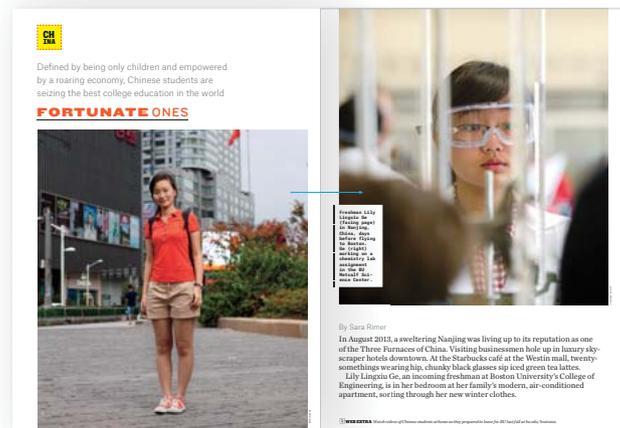
EAST MEETS WEST

I ENJOYED THE ARTICLES on China and Chinese students at BU (Winter–Spring 2014), but I was troubled by the exuberant boosterism of Western-style economic development that seemed to permeate the magazine. Our own economic policies have had disastrous social and environmental consequences, including a widening gap between rich and poor, a rapacious appetite for using up finite resources, and permanent climate change. That these same policies are being adopted by a country of 1.3 billion people is not a good thing for them or for the rest of the planet. For instance, China's hunger for fossil fuels is a driving force for the mining and transport of tar sands oil, which brings us that much closer to irreversible climate damage. Except for a few side comments about traffic and pollution, there is no reflection on this in *Bostonia*. We need to become partners with China and its students to address the issues that affect all of us, not just continue practices that take us all to the brink.

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LIFE OUT THERE?

I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST the article about Catherine Espaillat and her work with the Discovery Channel Telescope in searching for the “Goldilocks” zones around distant stars (“Finding Planets Before They Happen,” Winter–Spring 2014). Unfortunately, most of this investigative work by many astronomers like



Espaillat ends up looking for life-forming planets millions of light years away and speculating on their “just right” zone locations and the so-called planet’s composition in the search for life, which we will never be able to confirm with a visit because of the vast distances—unless Einstein is wrong and Gene Roddenberry is right.

What we need to do, and I’m pleased to hear that NASA has put money in the 2015 budget, is send probes to the moons in our solar system, like Europa, that have vast liquid water oceans under icy crusts. If we could determine that the surface upwellings have carbon-based organic life or that the liquid water under the crusts has living carbon-based life, then life is everywhere.

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FIRST STEPS

THE METHOD OF WALKING described in “Walking Like a Cavewoman” (Winter–Spring 2014) may not be simply a matter of primitive bone structure. Tom Brown, a lifelong student of primitive hunting methods, de-

scribes exactly the same walk in *Tom Brown’s Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking*, pp. 97–98. He advocates it as the best way to stalk an animal by making the least amount of noise.

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GETTING BOTH SIDES

CATHERINE CALDWELL-Harris (“How a Liberal Learned to Respect Conservative Thinking,” Fall 2013) impressed me with her breadth of vision, her background, competence, and excellent writing, but I must take issue with the final section of her article.

She begins that section by calling for collaboration with “the other side.” The term, as she uses it, refers to political conservatives, since she identifies herself as a former staunch liberal and appears to assume that we, her readers, are liberals in need of the understanding or toleration of those to the right of us. Such an

assumption is, of course, questionable, but forgivable. What struck me as utterly illusory, however, was the author’s tenet that “the right is happier than the left.” What earthly connection does politics have with joy or sorrow? Does liberalism cause sadness? Vice versa? I searched throughout the article for some documentation or proof of this presumed connection: studies by eminent psychologists (or one by some ambitious untenured faculty member trying to publish something, anything), but the only time the author came near citing a source was a passing reference to some vague “surveys,” to wit: “And if so, is their more natural mind-set the reason that conservatives are, at least according to surveys, often happier than liberals?” Here she tempers her generalization with “often,” but the rest of the time it appears to be “always.”

Finally, it might have been well to reverse the argument and show toleration as well for the other “other side,” meaning the liberals, considered wimps, dreamers, or communists by a good number of conservatives.

But these remarks refer only to the last section. Reservations aside, the article held my interest throughout, and I found it well worth reading.

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