Airport
By Pauline Kaldas

1 He paced the airport waiting room, his steps marking a path in the carpet between the rows of seats. At first those sitting down looked up at this man who could not hold his feet still like the rest of them and curb his agitation. After a while, some returned to their own thoughts or families. A few kept their gaze on his coming and going, perhaps to ease their own turmoil. Even after he left, a few repeated his path with their eyes as if permanently helped by the ghost of his movement.

2 Samir was about five feet seven, with black hair cut short because otherwise it would frizz and wave. His nose was rather large, but his eyes compensated, their brown glimmer and long lashes giving his face an unexpected beauty. He was slender, his physique almost that of a young boy. But around the middle a slight roundness was beginning, probably because for the past year he had been going to Chinese restaurant and ordering pupu platters for dinner. Once, his coworkers had talked him into going out after work. He was frightened at the prospect of having to understand the menu and perhaps not having enough money. When they ordered something to be shared, he was relieved. The assortment of fried foods soothed him. Although some of the tastes were unfamiliar, he had grown up with the smell of food frying. His mother fried fish, potatoes, cauliflower, so now he could eat with a certain security. He asked a couple of times what this was called, his tongue moving silently in his mouth to repeat the words *pupu platter*. After that, occasionally, he would go to the restaurant alone and order the same thing. He didn’t catch the odd twist of the waiter’s face, and he ate confidently.

3 It was eleven o’clock Sunday morning. He had woken early, a little before six, despite having stayed up late cleaning his small apartment thoroughly. Glancing at his watch, he noted there was still another hour before the plane was due. He stretched his pacing out of the waiting area to look at one of the arrival terminals. Flight 822 from Egypt via Switzerland. Yes, the arrival time was still twelve o’clock p.m. He turned his gaze around the airport until his eyes fell on some tables and chairs that he hoped were part of a coffee shop. He headed over, lengthening his stride a little. Ordering the coffee, he was tempted to get something to eat but was afraid his stomach would turn, so he settled at a small table with the Styrofoam cup awkwardly balanced in his hand. It was too hot to drink so he could only sit, the sounds of the airport mingling together till they became a steady hum in his head.

4 She stared at the empty suitcase on her bed. How do you pack for moving to another country? she thought. She circled the room, stopping to sift through open dresser drawers, to flip through clothes hung in the closet, to slightly rearrange items on top of dressers, only to find herself back in front of an empty suitcase.

5 Her mother appeared at the door. “Hoda, you haven’t done anything! The suitcase is empty.”
6 Hoda shifted her eyes to the suitcase as if seeing its open cavity for the first time. “I will. I'm just organizing,” Hoda replied to appease her mother.

7 “You leave early in the morning,” her mother said as if ringing a bell.

8 As her mother stepped out of the room, Hoda sat on the bed, giving her back to the suitcase. She was an attractive woman, but not in the traditional Egyptian sense. Her body was slim without the usual roundness around the hips and legs, probably because she insisted on walking everywhere. Taxis are too expensive and buses are too crowded, she argued. Her black hair was cut straight just above her shoulders. She never put anything in it, didn't use henna, and wore it simply as it was. Her mother had tried to coax her a little, to style it in some way, but after all these years, she knew it was a useless effort. Her face held the energy of youth, and people often found themselves looking at her. It was her mouth that was her most prominent feature. Although it was considered slightly large, there was still something captivating about it, the way her smile pulled you in and made you listen to whatever she was saying.

9 It was eleven o'clock Saturday morning. She had woken early, a little before six, despite having stayed up late saying good-bye to friends and relatives. The first thing she did was call the airport to check the departure time. Flight 822 to Boston via Switzerland. Yes, it was leaving at two o'clock a.m. in the morning and due to arrive at twelve o'clock p.m. American Eastern time. After she hung up, she made herself a cup of coffee although she rarely drank it. The traffic outside began its erratic rhythm of fitful stops and starts accentuated by the loud honks of impatient drivers. She sat in the kitchen almost in a trance until her ears tuned the noise outside to a steady hum in her head.

10 Would she be on the plane? It was his brother who had written with the flight information. He had received one letter from her parents, accepting his proposal and giving their blessing. Everything else, signing the church marriage papers, processing the immigration documents, had been done through his brother. And it had taken longer than expected, almost two years of filling out forms, presenting proof of this and that, till he felt his life had transformed into a sheaf of papers. He sometimes forgot the purpose behind all this, that it would eventually lead to marrying someone whom he didn't know. At times, fear chimed through Samir’s body. Perhaps he should’ve listening when his brother had urged him to return to Egypt, to choose for himself. But Samir was reluctant to leave his new job.

11 In the meantime, all he could do was wait and work. He had arrived in this country with little money and little education. The only school that would accept him in Egypt was the agricultural college. For two years, he sat and listened to professors lecturing about crops, soil, irrigation till his mind blurred and he knew if he didn't leave, he would end up another man with a college degree selling cigarettes in a kiosk. He was not a lucky person, but he entered the green card lottery anyway. It was free and they only asked for your name and address. The rumor said fifty thousand each year would be chosen to come to America. And he had heard of people who won and actually went.
What a strange country, he thought, to make its immigration decisions through a lottery. He curbed his joy when he received notification that he had been selected. It was clear that the process would be long. Now came the applications to be filled, the requests for documents, the interview which, in halting English, he felt sure would eliminate him, but the end was indeed permission to immigrate, to chance his life in another country.

12 Would he be there? What was she doing going to another country to marry a man she didn’t even know? Her parents had helped convince her that this would be best for her. “He’s from a good family and after all he’s in America and not many people can get there.” “Besides,” her father added, “this America is more suited to your independent nature.” “Yes,” her mother added, in a resigned tone, “and they like educated people there.” It was true that in Egypt Hoda often felt like a piece of rough wood that needed to be sanded down. No one understood her desire to continue for a master’s degree in chemistry. “You have a college degree,” her parents argued, “And you’re twenty-one now. Look for a husband. It’s time to settle down.” When a young man approached her parents to propose marriage, she accepted, thinking this would keep people quiet. But she had been naïve. The young man was insistent that she quit school and devote her time to setting up their new home. Finally their heated arguments led to a breakup of the engagement, and not surprisingly this only worsened her reputation. She knew her parents feared that now she would never marry.

13 When the proposal from America came, she hesitated. She had one more year until she completed her degree. But everyone assured her the paperwork would allow her enough time to finish. And they were right. Thing dragged out for so long that at times she was engaged or that she was going to America. So when Samir’s brother appeared at their door two weeks ago with the plane tickets and the approved visa, her head spun like a top.

14 He had arrived with some hope and trepidation. The process had been difficult, but each time he pictured himself standing inside the kiosk, his body trapped and his arms reaching for cigarettes, he was able to push himself and do what was requested. Surely in America there would be more possibilities. But that first year, America kept him dog-paddling and gasping for air. The language confounded him, quick mutterings with hardly any gestures or even a direct look. He took an English class, but the rules of grammar and the purposely slow pronunciation of the teacher did little to improve his understanding. He found a job washing dishes in a restaurant where contact was limited to Good morning, How are you, and Seeing you later. When the radio in the kitchen broke one day, followed by the mumbled swearing of the cook, he offered to fix it. The cook gave him a perplexed look and tossed the radio to him with a Go ahead. The dishes piled up a bit as he fiddled with the switches, found a knife to use as a screw driver, and then manager to make the music remerge. After that, other radios and sometimes clocks, telephones, or calculators were handed to him. Most of the time he could fix them, and the added conversations made him more confident.

15 Fixing things was the one thing he could do. It was like a sixth sense to him. When he was a child, if something broke at home, they couldn’t afford to buy another one.
Since it was already not working, his family figured there was no harm in letting him fiddle with it, and so he learned how everything was put together, how to take it apart, and how to reconnect the parts so it worked. He was most comfortable staring at the inside of machine with its intricate weaving of wires and knobs. But he had never perceived his ability as a skill; it was simply an instinct.

16 When the restaurant manager caught wind of his reputation, he approached him with a request to fix his stereo, adding, *I took it to the shop but they couldn't do anything.*

17 He spent a day at the manager’s house, surrounded by components with wires stretching like a web of animal’s tails. Every time the managers walked by, Samir saw him shaking his head with a look of doubt clouding his face. By the end of the day, the tails had been untangled, and when Sami pressed the power button, the music spread through the house. *Thank you, thank you,* the manager repeated, and Samir stood puzzled by how a boss could lower himself to thank an employee. The manager sent Sami to the same shop that couldn't fix his stereo. He was hired on a trial basis, but he proved himself quickly. He had found his niche in this country that could make many things, but didn't know how to fix what it broke.

18 It wasn’t that she didn’t want to get married. She had always hoped her life would be with a partner, and at some point she expected to have children. But she knew she didn’t want the life she saw around her. Women dragging their chores like chains, cleaning house, washing clothes, cooking food, all for others. She had watched friends marry at eighteen and nineteen, sometimes even men of their own choosing whom they loved. Within the first year, their spirits dissipated like sugar crystals in water. It frightened her to envision her life in this way, her days filled with the care of home and family, her body growing heavy with the idleness of her brain.

19 That is why, against everyone’s understanding, she enrolled in the mater’s program in chemistry. She was one of two women, but the other was there only to pass the time until she found a husband. Her family had determined that it would be more respectable for her to continue her studies than to remain at home waiting. But for Hoda, it was a different matter. Chemistry had caught her fancy and it was the only thing she wanted to do. As a child her mother had to pull her out of the kitchen, where she would find her sitting cross-legged on the floor with a bowl in front of her, mixing starch and water, baking soda and vinegar, on some new combination. “Just to see what would happen,” she answered her mother’s shouting inquiries. Finally, her mother banished her from the kitchen. The result, aside from Hoda never learning how to cook, was that she began borrowing chemistry books from her friend’s older brother who was studying at the university and moved the experiments to more secluded parts of the house. She struggled through the master’s program, where the male students laughed directly at her and the professors didn’t take her seriously. Still she persisted and gained high marks. It was an act of faith since she knew the only job Egypt would give her would be in a lab analyzing blood and urine samples.
20 Perhaps that’s why she accepted the roll of dice that would lead her to America. There might be a chance there of having a real job, of doing research, of working with someone who would take her seriously, not turn everything back around to her femininity. Her English was strong since all the sciences were taught in English, and she had occasionally had American or British professors with whom she had no trouble communicating. What concerned her was this man who had extended his proposal across the ocean. What kind of man would marry a woman without even seeing her, would choose as if picking a number out of a hat?

21 After two years in America and turning thirty, Samir knew he had to get married. And he also knew he needed a certain kind of woman, not one who would lean on him, who would expect to be at home while he worked. He needed someone who could stand in this world next to him, perhaps even lead him a little. He sent his request to his brother: a woman who was educated, who knew English well, who wanted to work; a woman who could swim in deep water, he added. His brother argued with him that he was asking for trouble, that such a woman should remain unmarried. But Samir was insistent and said he would accept nothing else.

22 Hoda was twenty-five years old. If she didn’t marry soon, she would be looked on with either pity or suspicion. And if she remained in Egypt and married the next man who proposed, her life would inevitably fall into the repeated pattern of other women. She couldn’t articulate what she wanted, only that it was not here. Hoda caught her breath like the reins of a horse and began to fill the suitcases. She counted the number of dresses, skirts, and pants she had, then divided by half; that’s how many she would take. Then she proceeded to do the same with all other items. Within a few hours the two permitted suitcases were filled.

New Directions

Maya Angelou

1 In 1903 the late Mrs. Annie Johnson of Arkansas found herself with two toddling sons, very little money, a slight ability to read and add simple numbers. To this picture add a disastrous marriage and the burdensome fact that Mrs. Johnson was a Negro.

2 When she told her husband, Mr. William Johnson, of her dissatisfaction with their marriage, he conceded that he too found it to be less than he expected, and had been secretly hoping to leave and study religion. He added that he thought God was calling him not only to preach but to do so in Enid, Oklahoma. He did not tell her that he knew a minister in Enid with whom he could study and who had a friendly, unmarried daughter. They parted amicably, Annie keeping the one-room house and William taking most of the cash to carry himself to Oklahoma.
Annie, over six feet tall, big-boned, decided that she would not go to work as a domestic and leave her “precious babes” to anyone else’s care. There was no possibility of being hired at the town’s cotton gin or lumber mill, but maybe there was a way to make the two factories work for her. In her words, “I looked up the road I was going and back the way I come, and since I wasn’t satisfied, I decided to step off the road and cut me a new path.” She told herself that she wasn’t a fancy cook but that she could “mix groceries well enough to scare hungry away and keep from starving a man.”

She made her plans meticulously and in secret. One early evening to see if she was ready, she placed stones in two five-gallon pails and carried them three miles to the cotton gin. She rested a little, and then, discarding some rocks, she walked in the darkness to the sawmill five miles farther along the dirt road. On her way back to her little house and her babies, she dumped the remaining rocks along the path.

That same night she worked into the early hours boiling chicken and frying ham. She made dough and filled the rolled-out pastry with meat. At last she went to sleep.

The next morning she left her house carrying the meat pies, lard, an iron brazier, and coals for a fire. Just before lunch she appeared in an empty lot behind the cotton gin. As the dinner noon bell rang, she dropped the savors into boiling fat and the aroma rose and floated over to the workers who spilled out of the gin, covered with white lint, looking like specters.

Most workers had brought their lunches of pinto beans and biscuits or crackers, onions and cans of sardines, but they were tempted by the hot meat pies which Annie ladled out of the fat. She wrapped them in newspapers, which soaked up the grease, and offered them for sale at a nickel each. Although business was slow, those first days Annie was determined. She balanced her appearances between the two hours of activity.

So, on Monday if she offered hot fresh pies at the cotton gin and sold the remaining cooled-down pies at the lumber mill for three cents, then on Tuesday she went first to the lumber mill presenting fresh, just-cooked pies as the lumbermen covered in sawdust emerged from the mill.

For the next few years, on balmy spring days, blistering summer noons, and cold, wet, and wintry middays, Annie never disappointed her customers, who could count on seeing the tall, brown-skin woman bent over her brazier, carefully turning the meat pies. When she felt certain that the workers had become dependent on her, she built a stall between the two hives of industry and let the men run to her for their lunchtime provisions.
10 She had indeed stepped from the road which seemed to have been chosen for her and cut herself a brand-new path. In years that stall became a store where customers could buy cheese, meal, syrup, cookies, candy, writing tablets, pickles, canned goods, fresh fruit, soft drinks, coal, oil, and leather soles for worn-out shoes.

11 Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead, and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous or unpromising, and the roads back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction. If the new choice is also unpalatable, without embarrassment, we must be ready to change that as well.

Use the selection “Airport” to answer the following questions:

1. Samir and Hoda enter into an arrange marriage because they both
   a. Want to improve their lives
   b. Are pursuing graduate degrees
   c. Need to get away from their families
   d. Must send money home

2. What choice about Samir’s life was made for him?
   a. When to enter the green card lottery
   b. Where to work at fixing things
   c. Where to go to school in Egypt
   d. Which woman to marry

3. In the beginning of the story, Samir seems agitated because
   a. He is waiting to fly somewhere
   b. He is waiting to meet his future wife
   c. He is frightened about flying
   d. He is anxious about returning home to Egypt

4. In paragraph 2, Samir’s food order at the Chinese restaurant is ironic because
   a. He has trouble pronouncing *pupu platter*
   b. the food does not taste as he expects
   c. the *pupu platter* is meant to be shared, not eaten alone
d. the food makes him sick although it reminds him of home

5. The airport symbolizes
   a. Running away from problems
   b. A chance for new beginnings
   c. Security in life’s decisions
   d. Procrastination and delays

6. In paragraph 3, the author uses the phrase “afraid his stomach would turn” to show that Samir
   a. Felt sick with nervousness
   b. Changed his mind about the marriage
   c. Drove too fast to the airport
   d. Drank coffee that was too strong

7. In paragraph 6, the word *appease* means
   a. To calm
   b. To express
   c. To frustrate
   d. To provoke

8. What does paragraph 200 suggest about the choices people make?
   a. Preparation is important
   b. The results are unknown
   c. There are few risks involved
   d. Let fate decide what to do

9. Which phrase in paragraph 21 helps the reader understand the meaning of *insistent*?
   a. Who would lean on him
   b. Even lead him a little
   c. He was asking for trouble
   d. He would accept nothing else

Use the selection “New Directions” to answer the following questions:
10. Annie Johnson is motivated to start her own business because she
   a. Doesn’t like working for others
   b. Wants to put her many skills to use
   c. Needs to be able to supervise others
   d. Must support her family

11. Annie knows she is ready to start her business by
   a. Selling all her meat pies on the first day
   b. Being sure she can carry her supplies to the factories
   c. How much her children enjoy her food
   d. Building a stall between the factories

12. Which of the following statements best expresses a theme of the passage?
   a. Life is hard, and people need to make sacrifices to be successful
   b. If the road you are on in life is not the one you want, make a new path for yourself
   c. Only a few people can overcome great obstacles to create a successful life
   d. With hard work and perseverance, it is possible to overcome discrimination

13. When Annie Johnson made her plans meticulously, she
   a. Started learning how to cook
   b. Cooked the meat pies at night
   c. Practiced her daily routine
   d. Arrived at the factory at lunchtime

Use both “Airport” and “New Directions” to answer the following questions:

14. One message in “Airport” and “New Directions” is that people
   a. Should not take great risks in life
   b. Can achieve success easily
   c. Can only count on themselves
   d. Have to overcome fears to move forward in life

15. In both texts, the women
   a. Rely on others for their success
   b. Are married
16. Which of the following themes do the texts share?
   
   a. Hopes for a new life may help you achieve what you did not know you could
   b. Taking chances is too dangerous for people with high expectations for themselves
   c. Love adds meaning to relationships, whether week seek it or not
   d. One should hold onto one’s ideals and values to be successful

Write a short response to each question using evidence from the texts to support your responses.

17. What is one conflict Hoda faces in “Airport”?
18. What does the writer of “New Directions” think of Annie Johnson?
19. How does the idea of hopes and dreams apply to “Airport” and “New Directions”?