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The Aleph



a journal of global
perspectives



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The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives

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In memory of John Lathrop

Stories in The Aleph are set in Gentium, designed by Victor Gaultney and adopted by SIL International, an organization working to document thousands of dying ethnic languages, many of which are written in modified Latin scripts. Most digital fonts do not include these extended alphabets and therefore millions of people are shut out of the publishing community. Gentium is an attempt to meet this challenge. The name is Latin for *belonging to the nations*.

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College Partnership for Global Education

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Front Cover: Child in a Shanghai Doorway, China [Katie Halper Bagusky]

Inside Front: Hiking the Franz Josef Glacier, New Zealand [Emelia Failling]

Frontispiece: Winter light-up at Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto, Japan [Vienna Farlow]

Inside Back: School Girl in Saigon, Vietnam [Olivia Joyce]

Back Cover: Market Still Life in Florence, Italy [Hallie Phillips Manheim]

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Aarhus Viking Graves, Denmark [Stephen Mugel]

Woman and Child in Rajasthan, India [Clara Boesch]

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About the Aleph

The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives, first published in 2002, is a joint project of the Hobart and William Smith Colleges and Union College Partnership for Global Education. The journal, intended to reflect the wealth of international experience among students at our respective institutions, takes its name from the 1945 short story “The Aleph” by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. In the story, the narrator (a writer) comes upon “a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance” in which “without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist.” Through this encounter with the Aleph, he is able to see all things from all perspectives—yet he despairs the daunting task of trying to convey the enormity of this experience to his readers.

Our affinity for Borges derives from his desire to understand the connections among seemingly disparate things and his search for clarity in a chaotic world. His story resonates with us because our students face much the same challenge when they return from abroad: after crossing borders and cultures, navigating societies different from their own in which they are exposed to new values and perspectives, how can they make sense of it all? How can they adequately convey the significance of the experience to those who did not share it?

The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives was created to address this dilemma. All too often, the “reentry” phase of study abroad is overlooked and students lack opportunities to build upon and to continue to process their international experiences once they return to campus. To this end, the journal provides a space for reflection, analysis, and dialogue that benefits contributors and readers alike. The pieces, both written and visual, offer insight into what captivates, challenges, and inspires our students – and through these words and images we learn about the people and places they encounter, we see how they change along the way, and we are exposed to “all the places of the world, seen from every angle.”



Parliament in Budapest, Hungary [Jiangtao Gu]
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Central Market Hall, Budapest, Hungary [Dylan Magida]



Flamenco Dancer in Barcelona, Spain [Lynn Hu]
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Moments I

South Africa, Before and After

It's Day One in the South African apartment where I'll be living during my time abroad—the ultimate symbol of the unprecedented independence that comes with having an ocean separate me from the safety net that is my parents. Except I'm locked inside with no key to the front door. So much for independence.

My housemate, Connie, has the key to freedom tucked away in her pocket. But Connie has become a prisoner to the bathroom, whose wooden door joined forces with the humidity to form an immovable barricade. The cell phones in our pockets transformed into glorified alarm clocks once we realized neither of us had any idea how many digits were in a South African phone number.

Karate. That's the only solution we have left. So I spend ten minutes perfecting every high impact, full speed, leaping roundhouse kick I can think of until the door swings open and my fellow captive and I taste sweet liberation.

It's Night One in my new bedroom. I stare at the clock, waiting for 1:45 to become 1:46. I've had to pee since 1:07. Global Ed had assured me that in South Africa the monsters come out after dark, looking to rape and pillage anything they can find. The five-meter walk to the bathroom whose door can't be closed is too risky. The night monsters will snatch me up into the darkness, never to be seen again.

It's 2:31, and my fear of an exploding bladder overcomes my fear of the monsters. Good thing I fine-tuned my karate skills earlier. I open my bedroom door and check the hallway. The coast is clear, for now. I sprint to the bathroom, break the world record for fastest urination and fly back to my room. I close the door, safe and sound.

The next morning I learn one girl had peed in the sink in her room to avoid the dangers of the dark hallway. Another peed in a bag.

It's Day 314 of being back in the States. I sit on my full-size bed covered in plush pillows. I don't have to share my room with an ant colony and two cockroaches anymore. The bathroom door down the hall can be shut without fear. I haven't thought about the night monsters once since being back.

I'd trade it all, the luxuries of being back home, not having to ration one roll of toilet paper for a week, being able to stay out past dark without needing an escort of at least three males. I'd give it up in a second to be back in South Africa.

I miss the smell of the earth before it rains. I miss the half-hour walk to the grocery store. I miss the massive trees that begged to be climbed. I miss Savanna Dry Cider and Brai and Bake Croissants. More than anything, I miss the people.

Looking back, that first day was the best first day I could have asked for. It took any expectations I had brought with me and shredded them, leaving me exposed and vulnerable to all the difference that surrounded me. Without any expectations I could just go along for the ride, and try new, incredible things. I began to discover myself in a way I never thought possible; even now, I struggle to put it into words. I believe my inability to articulate this evolution is rooted in the fact that the change is not yet complete; I am a work in progress.

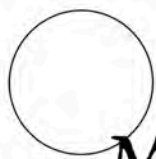
Sometimes I catch myself slipping back into my pre-South African tendencies. These moments are when I miss South Africa the most. Here I am sheltered, here I am safe, here I am just another lazy college student. I want to go back. I need to, lest the transformation I began starts to reverse itself.

They say that when you set foot in Africa a piece of you will forever be connected to that mysterious place. The part of me that feels that connection refuses to be silenced, and for that I am thankful. It is my reminder of what I have learned, how I have changed since my arrival on Day One, and it is my motivation to see that transformation through to the end.

—Hannah Wilber



Ruins Above Village of Blaubeuren, Germany [Silene Binkerd-Dale]



Moments II

A Beijing Scene

I am sitting in the lobby of the on-campus hotel. A little old woman sits down on the sofa across the way from me. She had just come inside after walking around in the crisp autumn air and is wearing her winter coat, silk scarf, and sunglasses. My American and Japanese classmates sit next to me on the lobby sofa as we discuss our class movie project.

American Classmate: Uh oh, my computer 没点了. (died)

Me: Now how are we going to finish the movie?

American Classmate: Maybe we can go to Nyoki's room, his dorm is nearby.

He turns to our other classmate, Nyoki, who is from Japan and speaks very little English.

American Classmate: 我们可不可以在你的宿舍里继续拍电影? (Can we continue making the movie in your dorm?)

Japanese Classmate: 可以! (Sure!)

American and Japanese Classmates exit the scene. I stay behind and wait for another classmate to arrive. After she arrives, the old woman stares at us. She is probably wondering "Who are the foreigners and why can they speak Chinese?" I move to sit next to her.

Me: 你好! (Hello!)

Beijing Woman 1: 你好, 你是哪个国家的呢? (Hello, which country are you from?)

Me: 我是美国人。(I am American.)

Beijing Woman 1: 真的吗? 你现在离你的家很远。你想念你的妈妈吧? (Really? You are quite far from home. You must miss your mother, don't you?)

Me: 对, 我想念她。(Yes, I miss her.)

Beijing Woman 1: 你为什么在这儿? 你是学生吗? (Why are you here in Beijing? Are you a student?)

Me: 是, 我在这里学习中文。(Yes, I am studying Chinese here.)

Beijing Woman 1: 你的中文说很好。你在北京呆好久吗? (Your Chinese is pretty good. Have you been in Beijing for a long time?)

Me: 我只在北京呆了一个学期了。(I am only in Beijing for one semester.)

Beijing Woman 1: 那你很想你的妈妈吧? (Ah, I'm sure you miss your mother, right?)

Me: 对, 我很想她。(Yes, I miss her a lot.)

Beijing Woman 1: 你的家里人是多少? (How many people are in your family?)

Me: 我的家有五口人: 妈妈、爸爸、哥哥、弟弟和我。(My family has 5 people: My mom, dad, older brother, younger brother, and me.)

Beijing Woman 1: 唯一的女儿吧? 那你肯定是你妈妈的宝贝儿。你今年多大? (You are the only daughter then? You surely must be your mother's favorite baby. How old are you?)

Beijing Woman 2 enters and sits beside Beijing Woman 1.

Me: 20岁。(20 years old.)

Beijing Woman 1 turns to Beijing Woman 2 sitting beside her.

Beijing Woman 1: 看这个宝贝儿, 20岁, 呆在北大学习汉语! (Look at this baby, 20 years old, and staying at Peking University to study Chinese!)



Beijing Woman 2: 小宝贝儿! 我今年60, 70岁左右! (What a small baby! I'm 60 or 70 years old this year!)

Me: 您们俩为什么在这家宾馆里? 您们在等朋友吗?
(Why are you two here at the hotel? Are you waiting for a friend?)

Beijing Woman 2: 我们刚吃完了午饭, 来这儿休息一下, 外面太冷了。(We just finished eating lunch. We came inside to rest a bit, it's too cold outside.)

Me: 对, 北京的天气越来越冷了。请问, 我可不可以拍您们照片? (Yes, the weather in Beijing is getting colder and colder. Excuse me, could I take your picture?)

Beijing Woman 1: 我们这么老! 为什么要拍我们的照片?
(But we're so old! Why would you want to take a picture of us?)

Me: 回国以后我想给我妈妈介绍一下您们俩。(When I go home I want to tell my mother about you.)

Beijing Woman 1: 好的好的。你可以告诉你的妈妈你认识了两个老北京太太。(OK, OK. You can tell your mother that you met two old Beijing wives.)

I pull out my camera and take a picture of the two women.

Me: 好的。谢谢您们! (OK, thank you!)

Beijing Woman 1: 不客气。好, 我们走吧。再见宝贝儿!
(You're welcome. OK, we have to go now. Goodbye baby!)

They exit.

End Scene.

—Melissa Hosek



Moments III

On the Bus Heading South

When I arrived in Ecuador I was appalled at the general inability to get things done. When I was with my friend Grace and her family, natives of Cuenca, and we had a list of things to do (go to the supermarket, buy a cellphone, dentist appointment, visit grandma) we were lucky if we accomplished half of them. We would drive around the whole city to find the cheapest cell phone to save \$5 but spend \$10 in gas and waste the whole day.

I began to connect this behavior with that of Grace when we were roommates during our first year of college. It suddenly all made sense—why Grace could never finish all that she took on or why she stayed up late studying for her geology exam to sleep through the very same exam the next morning. This behavior left me with a question: is Latin America still a developing region because it is full of inefficient and unproductive people? Why can't they just do what they have to do? It's not that hard, I do it all the time in the US. How much of this has to do with their long history of being conquered and reconquered by foreign powers? Is it really their fault at all?

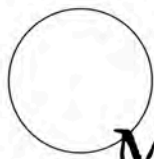
And then, I began to act like them. About a month after I arrived I boarded a bus wondering if it would go near my school where my classes were to begin. Instead of asking for directions (always risky in Ecuador where people will give you directions whether they really know how to get to your destination or not), I had boarded a random bus, and sat in a window seat and enjoyed my trip to an unknown *barrio* of Quito. And when I knew I was wrong (and I mean really wrong—we were heading south instead of north) I stayed on the bus, thoroughly enjoying the adventure. I was content with “wasting” time on the wrong bus, going in the wrong direction. I was becoming one of them, those Ecuadorans

that are always late and never get everything done but always smile, because they are living and loving life...and it was fun!

—Marissa Peck



Viña del Mar, Chile [Jocelyn Canty]



Moments IV

Scrambled Eggs for Breakfast, Scrambled Mountains for Lunch

I had been dreaming that I was in New Jersey, sitting at my kitchen table across from my mother, crying hysterically about how much I missed Wales. In the midst of my tears I remembered that, in fact, I was still in Wales. My mind then transported itself from my kitchen table to my Welsh cabin bed. I awoke with a broad smile on my face, so blissfully happy to still be here. I was ready to start the day, determined to make the most out of what little time I had left. I would be at that kitchen table soon enough.

An hour later I decided to summit Mt. Tryfan with Ben Finkelstein, Carter Brown, Joe Gleason, and our guide, Bill Beynon. It was a choice between going to a movie and climbing a mountain. I ate a bowl of cereal as I stared out into the cloudy abyss through the cabin door. I recalled the dream and hollered at Bill that I would join. The only woman. It was a decision that I would never doubt.

We began the experience with *active experimentation*. This is a phase of Kolb's Cycle, an experiential learning theory developed by David A. Kolb that involves applying lessons learned to new adventures. The day before, we had climbed Mt. Snowdon and had learned how quickly we burned calories. So today we ate a large breakfast at a local café and purchased a lot of snacks for the journey.

At the base of the mountain, our group of five arched our necks to see the peak. It was cloudy, windy, and rainy—typical Welsh weather. After a cheer of “USA!” from the four Americans on the team, my fear subsided and I felt optimistic. I honestly didn't know how we were going to prevail but I knew we would all get there eventually.



Adam and Eve monoliths on Mt. Tryfan, Snowdonia, Wales [Carter Brown]

The brush at the base of the mountain was the first challenge, because there was no clear path to the next rocky section. Moving through the thick vegetation increased my heart rate and the weather made me yearn for the dryness and warmth of a café or movie theater. Summiting Mt. Snowdon the day before left us physically sore. We were in the *Misadventure* stage of Mortlock's Stages of Adventure, another experiential learning theory. My thighs were burning from exhaustion. However, we averted crisis as the vegetation gave way to open, rocky terrain. I felt in control now as we moved into Mortlock's Stage 2: *Adventure*. It was a relief to have the wind and the rain blocked by the mountain itself. I said my first of many prayers of thanks and moved forward.

There is no designated trail up Mt. Tryfan so we each made our own. It was the perfect way to practice Rohnke's principle of *Challenge by Choice*, which encourages participants to choose a path based on their own strengths and weaknesses. We used the Welsh wilderness as a way to self-knowledge, and to understand and test our limits.

Once my feet touched the rock of Mt. Tryfan I could feel the rhythm and the adrenaline quieting my anxieties and insecurities. I was at the *Concrete Experience* stage on Kolb's Cycle and was, consequently, calm and poised. I asked Bill if he felt closer to whatever he believed in while climbing and he replied that I couldn't have phrased it better. I saw God in the damp rock crevices and leaning rocks; in the helpful hand of a fellow climber; in the smiles and "hellos!" of strangers; and in the clouds that surrounded us. There were definitely some dicey sections and Bill told us later on that we literally and figuratively teetered on the edge of the *Misadventure* stage. I focused on the positives.

Finding Adam and Eve, the trademark monoliths which stood as sentinels of the mountain, became an obsession. Every pair of large and imperious rocks excited our tired muscles. We were so fixated that we actually celebrated too early. Ben and Carter began to cheer but Bill just smiled and pointed in the opposite direction, inspiring a good laugh because we knew that we were close.

After venturing a little further, Adam and Eve peeked out of the clouds. It was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. We weren't disappointed by the fact that we couldn't see the Welsh countryside below. We saw nothing or... maybe we saw everything. I felt a great combination of pure happiness and joy in my soul. We summited Mt. Tryfan and also arrived at Mortlock's third stage, *Frontier Adventure*: the literal and figurative climax of our experience. I felt like I was on top of the world amidst the Welsh tempest. The weather was so difficult that we didn't even dare think about jumping from Adam to Eve, which is the traditional way to celebrate climbing the mountain.

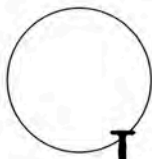
The climb down was tough, and much longer than going up the mountain. However, all of the bumps, cuts, and bruises were worth it. Before walking across the field buffeted by fierce winds Ben, Carter, and I shared a group hug and cheer. We did it!

I understand why some members of our group chose to go to the movies and visit castles, an important facet of *Challenge by Choice*, but I personally could not imagine *not* climbing Mt. Tryfan. I had independently chosen to climb the mountain, and I think that sense of empowerment and independence greatly affected the course of my journey. My odyssey taught me several things: to expand my ribs when pushing myself through a crevice; to take off my backpack and take time to eat a Snickers bar and drink some water; and to ask for help when I needed it.

I learned from *Reflective Observation*, the next stage of Kolb's Cycle, that it's just as important to look forward as it is to look backward and be thankful.

At various times, before tests, quizzes and papers, I have written the mantra "Be Your Own Hero" on my hand. I became my own hero that day and I will never forget that amazing feeling.

—Erica Randazzo

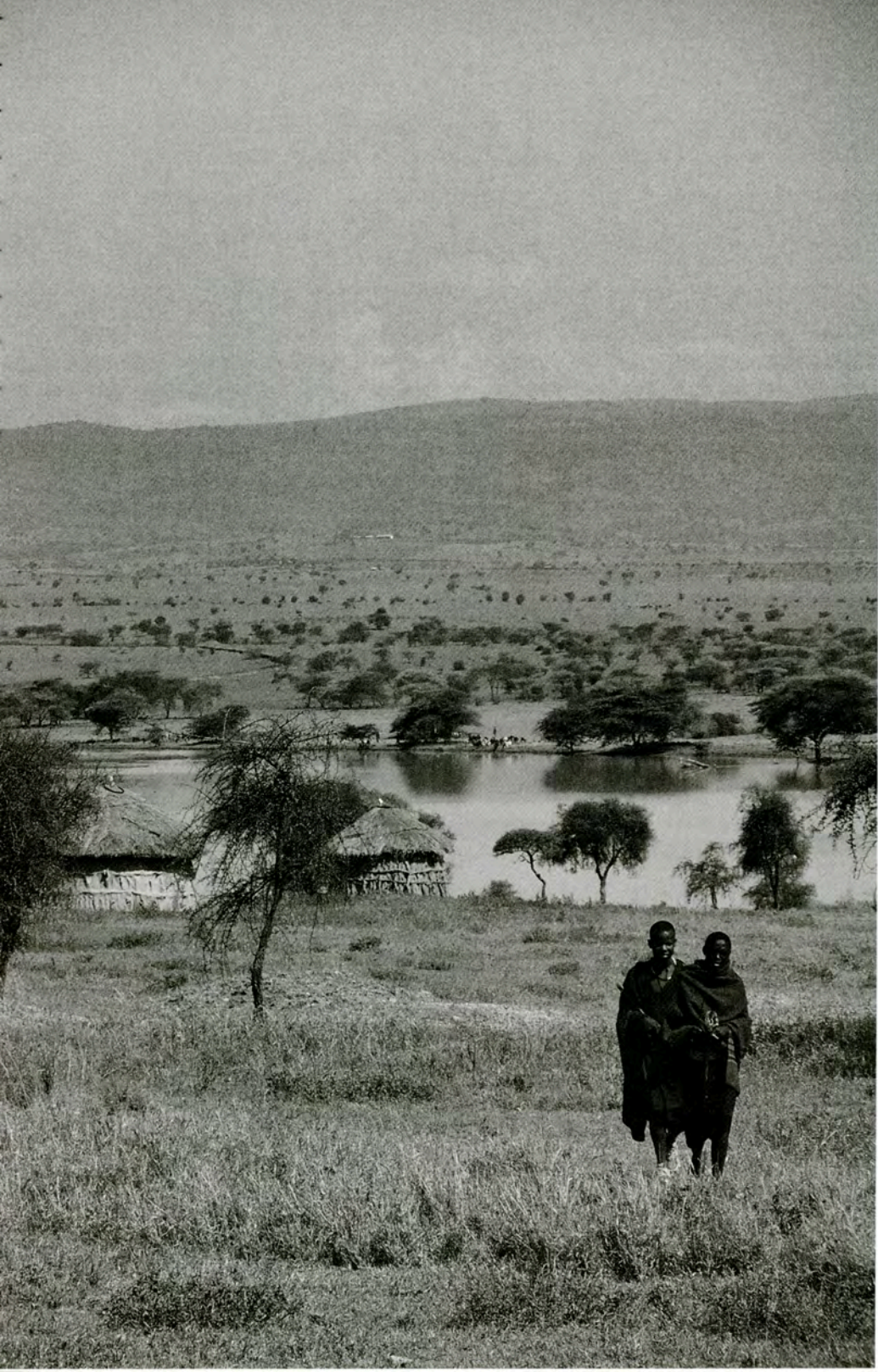


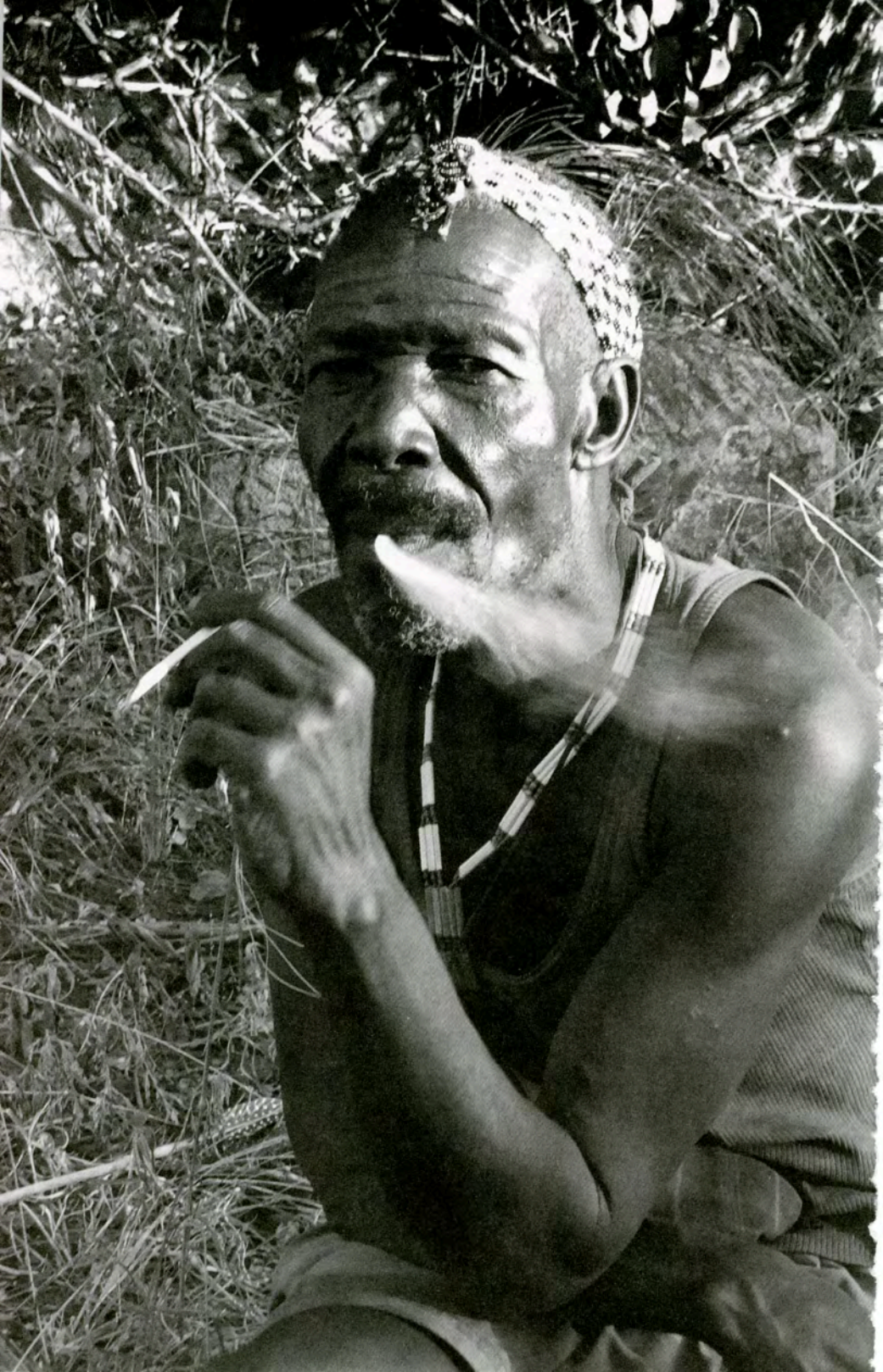
Lessons I

Lessons from the Hadzabe

The sun peeked through my tent and woke me to another blue sky day. It was six and time to hunt with the Hadzabe, one of the last remaining hunter-gatherer tribes in Africa. The morning was cool in the Yaeda Valley, and so I peeled off my long johns and slid on my khaki cargo pants while inside of my sleeping bag. I put on my beige shirt and green headband, dressing to blend in with the landscape of the bush as we were instructed. We split into small groups during breakfast, two students paired with two Hadzas. Mkarama and Moshi led us into the bush, walking quickly and quietly like gazelles, prancing over tree roots in silence as we trailed them stumbling like elephants. We followed the foot trails of wild goats and tracked the droppings of bush pigs and antelopes until we found a solid lead. Sighting a gazelle in the distance, Mkarama slipped away silently with his bow and arrow in hand. Moshi led us to a *kopje*, a tall rock outcropping, to watch the hunt below and scout for more game. After an hour, Mkarama returned with a Hyrax hanging from his belt – he said it was a quick kill; a perfect hit to the neck.

We left our perch and moved farther into the bush, listening and watching for any movement in the undergrowth. Mkarama slid the Hyrax out from his belt and dropped it to the ground while signaling us to stop moving and to stay silent. Mkarama tiptoed around rocks and trees, looking for a good shot at the clip springer (a wild antelope) below. Mkarama's arrow pierced its neck—we walked toward it with trepidation, afraid that it might still be alive and bolt towards us. But the arrow had killed it instantly. Mkarama slung the handsome antelope over his shoulder, its limp head flailing at me. On a large, flat rock Mkarama skinned, gutted, and dismembered

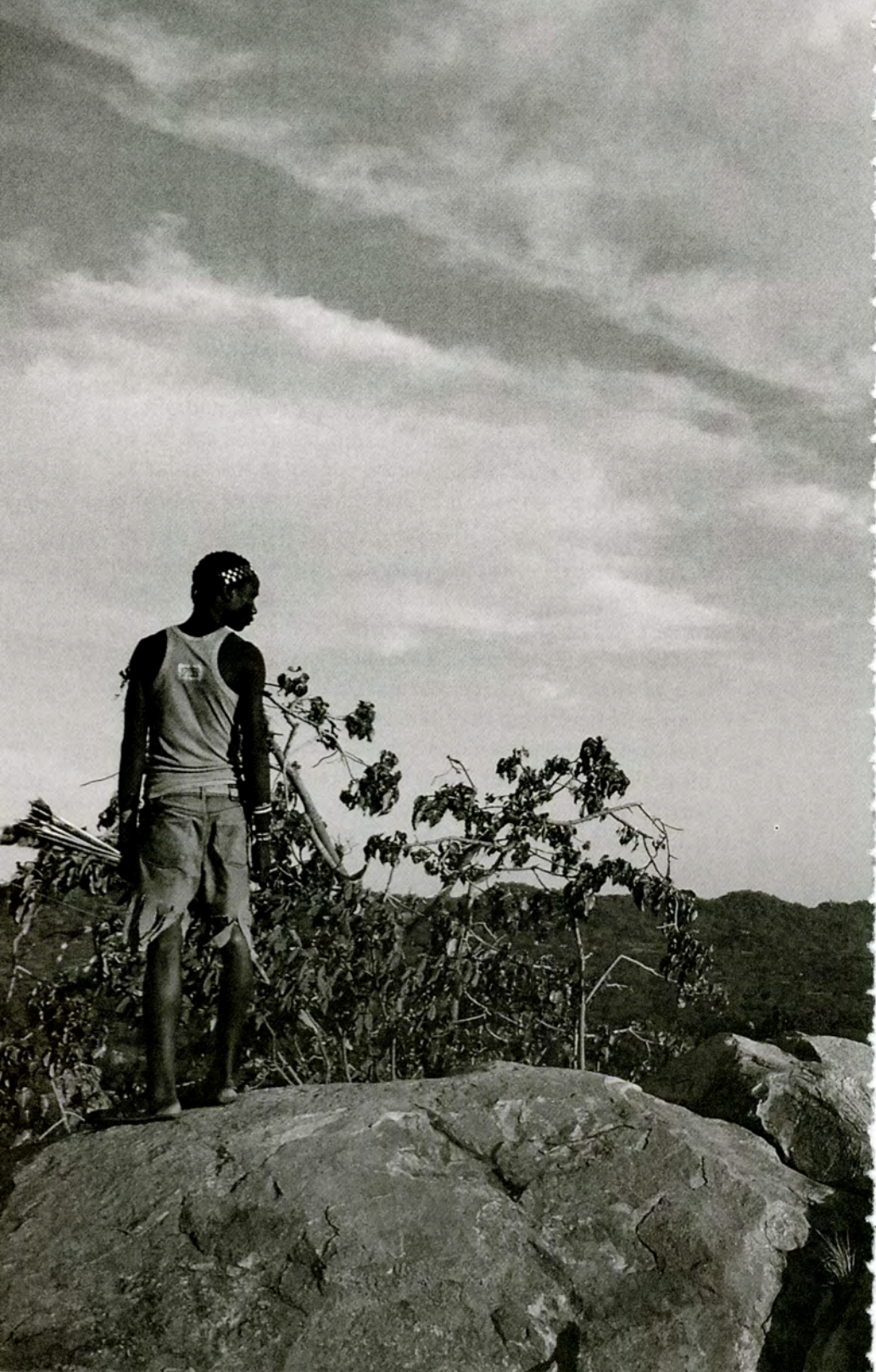




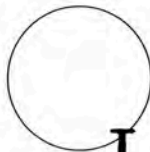
his kill. We photographed Mkarama holding his trophy, a big smile across his face. Moshi gathered dried twigs and used his fire stick, rolling it between his hands until he saw a small flame and smoke. In our broken Swahili we asked, while they roasted the clip springer, didn't hunter-gatherers take their kills back to camp to share with everyone? In a combination of Swahili and hand gestures they explained that it was more efficient to butcher the animals and roast the most nutritious organs like the liver while still in the bush; this preserved the meat and reduced the load they would have to carry home. Mkarama picked the liver out of the hot coals, and offered us pieces. As we headed back to camp, Mkarama carried the carcass on his shoulders, blood dripping down his back. I carted the head with its short and stumpy horns for the long, hot walk home.

For the Hadzabe, this was daily life. They live each day with a fresh start as they have no food or water storage. Our hunting success was not for bragging rights, but for subsistence, for survival. The Hadzabe live a simple life, with no possessions beyond their bows and arrows and the clothes on their backs. They only have what they can carry, only eat what they can find, and share everything with each other. They are free of inequality. A man gains respect not by accumulating goods or wealth, as many Westerners do, but by sharing—as Mkarama did with his clip springer when we arrived back at the camp. While among the Hadzabe I wondered how my ancestors went from living such a simple, yet fulfilling life to our complicated, hurried existence in cities. I believe the Hadzabe are lucky to have been able to maintain their traditions despite all of the modernization and globalization that is occurring beyond the boundaries of their mountain preserve.

—Meredith Allenick







Lessons II

Being Good People

On the next page you'll see a photograph of a watch. This is a watch I bought at a supermarket in Nanjing for 178 *yuan* (about \$28). It's been fairly special for me. Besides finding it aesthetically appealing, it's also been a source of hope. On bad days I like to look at my watch to see if the gears are still moving. When they are, I'm reminded that time is still continuing, and that things will get better. When they're not turning, I'm reminded to wind my watch and get on with my day. It's been surprisingly comforting.

In the following picture you will see a man sitting on a stool. If you look closely, you'll notice he has only one leg. He sits outside a café near my campus that I go to when I crave bread or an easily digestible meal.

Before I came to China, I was told by numerous people not to give money to beggars. I've heard this from many people in China as well. As a result of this advice, I didn't give any money to beggars for some time. This included the man you see in the photo. I walked by him several times a week. I said “你好” (hello), I even waved and smiled to him as I passed by. But, when he stopped waving and turned his palm up, hitting the back of his hand against the stub of what once was a leg, I pretended not to understand. My waving hand would fall, my smile would fade, and my eyes would look away. I remembered what I was told, and followed what other people said and did.

Looking at this now, I can see a sociological pattern. I was instructed to follow a particular norm, observed a particular norm, and internalized this norm. I took the word of perceived experts without much questioning, and refused charity to a man with one leg (and scars all over his torso, as I found out in one of our later conversations).

To be honest, though, this piece isn't really about me analyzing a normative structure that I followed. This is moreso about a moral realization about being a good person that has been on my mind almost every day I've spent in China. Let's look back at my watch.



For 178 *yuan* I have a functional timepiece that is at once a source of comfort as well as style. Arguably, this was a worthwhile purchase. Some would argue it's a deserved gift to myself. But, what kind of person buys themselves a watch and walks by beggars several times a week? Sure, my friends and some of my family have told me and will tell me again that I'm not spoiled or indulgent, but would this man with one leg agree? I doubt it. This isn't limited to the man with one leg, either. I pass by several people each day in terrible situations without even meeting their gaze.

So what should I do? I've asked people, and most still suggest that I don't give beggars money, citing pickpockets and the risk of the beggar harassing me for more after I've given them some. Look back at the photo of the man. You'll notice, the area was clear enough for me to take a picture. My camera was 700 *yuan*, and nobody tried to snatch it from my fingertips. In the photo of the man you'll also notice that he is leaning next to his crutches. Do you really think that he's going to follow me and harass me more? I don't think so.

Thus I've taken to giving him small amounts of money every time I go to the café. I feel a bit better doing this. Does this make me a good person? Some might argue yes, but I don't think so. My donations never reach the price of my watch. I do manage to help him, but I also walk by many others. A few days ago I walked by a man with both arms amputated at

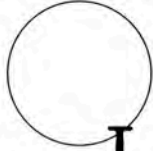


the elbow. I gave him no money. I didn't look him in the eye. Take that in for a moment. He was on his knees begging with no forearms or hands to speak of, and I didn't even look him in the eye. I walked by wondering how he managed to carry his change bucket along with him, all the while enjoying the comfort of the shiny ticking luxury item around my wrist. I can't look at that experience and say I am a good person. I am not a good person.

That being said, I don't know if constantly trying to justify my actions while living with any degree of wealth is possible. As long as I enjoy privilege at the expense of someone else, I lack the consistency to be considered inherently "good" (I can hear Tenzin now, "nothing exists inherently". Just work with me on this one).

My friend Roy has a phrase he likes to use to describe someone he likes. He says "S/he's good people", a plural applied to a singular individual. I don't know if my interpretation is correct or if I'm over-analyzing, but the phrase usually refers to people being laid back and honest with themselves and others about their situation. So now my goals have changed. I'm not looking for a good person. I'm looking for good people. I may try to be a good person, but in all likelihood I will not be a good person. I will just be good people. I'll have to be OK with that for now.

—Gennady Julien



Lessons III

A Time for Questions

One of the things that I have been thinking about lately is being uncomfortable. I have become comfortable here in Vietnam but there are moments when I am shaken by something I observe or something that is said. It can be as simple as learning that I can wander the city by myself, get lost for a while in the busy streets and meander my way back to an area that I know.

There are some things that I will never get used to. I will never be accustomed to people throwing trash into the streets, or urinating in public. There are some cultural differences that I consider to be abrasive, and learning how to respond effectively, so that I will neither offend nor feel poorly myself, is an important skill for me to develop.

I was having dinner with some of my American study abroad group members as well as some of our roommates and three of their friends whom we had not yet met. We were getting to know the Vietnamese students, finding out what they study and what they like to do outside of school. They asked if we had boyfriends and we were answering. I was the only girl in the group with a boyfriend, so the Vietnamese students were trying to figure out why my friends weren't in relationships. One of the Vietnamese guys then made a comment about women needing to be in a relationship because even a weak man can protect them.

I found this comment offensive, and understanding that Vietnamese culture tends to be very sexist, I stifled what in the US would have been a scolding rebuke. Instead, I calmly asked him, "why does a woman need a man to protect her and why would even a weak man be stronger than any woman?"

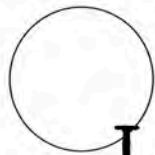
He looked at me and smiled. I then heard one of my American friends say under her breath, "Wow, this is not the time."

I was confused but let the conversation turn to other topics without an answer to my question. I wanted to know why my friend said that, so after dinner when we were walking back I asked her and she said, "It just was not the right time to be challenging their cultural norms when we were just meeting them." Apparently offended, she walked away.

I still believe that I was not challenging his beliefs by simply asking him about them. I did not say that he was wrong; I only wanted to know why he thought women should be in a relationship and not be single. I wanted to know more about how Vietnamese people my age view romantic relationships. This is why I chose to spend a semester studying in Vietnam, to gain an understanding that I would not be able to if I were to travel here on my own. We are here to be immersed in the culture. I understand that asking questions and having discussions can be uncomfortable but it is those conversations that I find to be the most valuable. So when is it the right time to ask someone a question?

Do I wait, like my friend suggested, until I know them better, to bring up the topic? I do not think I acted in a way that was offensive; I believe that it is best to ask the question when the topic is brought up naturally. If I had not said anything I would have felt more upset being left without an explanation for such a statement. I don't believe that in many of these cases that there is going to be a "right time." If the question is controversial, no matter when you ask, people may feel uncomfortable at first but that does not mean that the questions should not be asked. I think it would have been even more problematic if I had waited for an issue or problem to arise, such as a comment about me or someone else that I thought was demeaning or rude, in which case I would have had to confront him directly. So this is one of the important issues that I have been mulling over. Have you had any similar experiences while traveling abroad?

—Melissa Freitag



Lessons IV

Cambodia

Last Monday Ryan and I went to visit a school 3 hours outside of Siem Reap, in a village called Kanar. We went with Lori, Ponheary, and a couple of other people. We brought with us supplies for the children, including toys, books, arts and crafts, and food. Ryan and I, along with another volunteer, were supposed to teach a group of children how to use watercolors. They were kindergarteners through second graders and had never seen paint before. On top of this they didn't speak a word of English so we had to rely on our limited Khmer and other forms of communication.

We arrived at the school, after driving down a broken and bumpy road, eager and excited. We started to unload the car as small, curious children crept among us. They were eating breakfast that the school gave them. Once they finished eating, we went into one of the classrooms where we were going to be teaching. Forty children looked up at us expectantly. We filled cups with water and began passing out paper and paint. They eagerly took the supplies bowing their heads as we gave them each object. We demonstrated how to use the paints by holding the paintbrush, dipping it in the water, swishing it around in the paint and then sliding it across the paper.

I am so used to paints that in my mind this activity should be intuitive. I had never met a child who had never seen paints before. Even after we showed them what to do, they just stared at us. We had to go around to each child and work with them individually before they would even attempt it. It was very difficult because we couldn't really communicate. I know the word for "pretty" so I just kept saying it over and over again. I didn't know how to not talk. It's incredible how you have to rely on other forms of communication when language is not

an option. I really loved painting with these kids but at the same time it was a shock. I knew how poor they were but in my mind every child grows up with paints. It was hard to see kids who hadn't.

The village that these kids live in is still filled with landmines and unexploded bombs from the war, and many people are missing limbs from accidental explosions. A couple of months ago a little boy found a bomb and decided to bring it to the school we were visiting. The bomb exploded and 11 kids were injured from shrapnel. Instead of the reputable hospital in Siem Reap, the children were sent to a lesser facility that did not provide the best treatment. I met one girl who almost lost her eye when a piece of shrapnel pierced her forehead. It was left in and slowly made its way down toward her eye. Thankfully, her father took her to Siem Reap where it was removed and she did not go blind. However, there are other children who suffered similar injuries who were not as fortunate.

Learning about the reality these children experience every day was extremely upsetting. They have to be concerned about randomly setting off a landmine. They have to be aware that you can't just pick up objects you find on the ground. At their age I didn't even know what a bomb was; I had never seen a person with a missing limb, and I had certainly never been injured by shrapnel.

These kids play, laugh, giggle, and get excited. They are kids just like kids in the US. However, they also live in a minefield, having to watch their every step. They have worries that no one should ever have, let alone a 6-year-old. Some don't get enough food. Some have to take care of their parents and siblings. And none of them had ever seen paint. Yes, they are kids but in many ways they are much, much older.

—Rachel Magin



Storm over Drackensberg Mountains, South Africa [Hannah Wilber]





Trail Riding with Hippos, Aquilla Game Preserve, South Africa [Hannah Wilber]





Crossings I

A Day in the Life

The sun begins to rise at about 6:30 in Soweto. I lay under a mosquito net, windows and blinds open, waiting for the sun to kiss my face and slowly wake me. The birds begin to chirp and our *Dada*, Grace, begins to sweep outside the house. As I begin to open my eyes and sink into the morning sun, I can hear the brush of the thistle broom on the gravel outside of my room. The dogs are back in their houses, no roosters, no cows, no goats—it is peaceful outside of my room, and so I wake up to a quiet sun.

Between seven and eight in the morning, I crawl out of my mosquito net and say a quick hello to Leon as he gets ready for school. I brush my teeth and take my malaria pill before I take tea. I walk to the washroom alert and aware of each step I take, as the cockroaches roam the halls in the night and often linger in the mornings. Leon sits in the living room with his bread and tea, and I sit at the dining room table. Leon greets me with “Good morning *Sungura*,” in a soft but playful voice. Most mornings we stare at each other and make funny faces, challenging each other to laugh harder. The house is still except for our giggling.

For breakfast, I have tea and a slice of bread with Nutella. Once I finish, I clear the table and head back to my room to prepare for the day ahead. As I walk, Leon says “stop” and I freeze in my tracks. After a few seconds, he says “go” and I keep walking until he says “stop” again. This continues until I get to my room. These mornings are my favorite – the smile on Leon’s face as we play makes my day.

Once my morning routine is complete, I pack my bag, say “*baadi*” to Grace and *Bibi* (grandmother), and walk towards St. Joseph Hospital to the *daladala* stand. I walk a few blocks and smile at people I walk past—to the elders I say “*shikamoo*”

and to others I simply say “*hujambo*” or “*asubuhi*”. Many kids roam the streets on their way to school and test their English with me and say “morning!” while others smile excitedly and shout “*mzungu!*” I normally spot the *daladala* down the road and wave him to come pick me up—the less walking I do, the less I sweat. The driver says “*karibu mzungu*” and I jump into the van, climbing over people and bags to find a seat near the window. We drive through Soweto for about ten minutes, looking for anyone that needs a ride, and finally head into town. The *daladala* is cramped and hot—if I’m not sitting on someone’s lap, they are sitting on mine. By the time I get to town, I am caked in a thick layer of sweat and dust from my ankles to my forehead. As we pull up to the bus stand, the *daladala* assistant shakes change in my face, signaling that it is time to pay. I fish in my wallet for two coins to make 300 Tanzanian shillings and hand the money to the driver as I jump out of the van.

Taxi drivers and motorcyclists hassle me saying “*mambo*” as I walk by, asking if I need a ride. I smile and say “*hapana asante*” as I walk away from Mt. Kilimanjaro towards Kilimanjaro Coffee Lounge, my favorite place for internet and food in Moshi. I walk past women selling everything from mangos to underwear, and men selling pineapples and sugar cane, sunglasses and DVDs. Some say “*mambo*” to me as I walk by, and others say “*mzungu*”. I walk with purpose and confidence; the faster I get to the coffee lounge, the faster I escape the heat and the hassling by vendors.

The security guard at Kili Coffee knows me and welcomes me everyday with a big smile. I find my seat near the fan, plug in my computer, and begin my work. Today, I am designing the flyer for White Orange Youth t-shirts and the Kilimanjaro Marathon. I eventually order food—grilled chicken with guacamole, a simple taste of home. I eat and work, letting the fan cool me down as my computer heats up. I spend an hour or two at the coffee lounge, oftentimes with Joana. Once we finish up our work for White Orange Youth, we walk to the bus stand to meet the Majengo *daladala* and we head towards

the playing field to meet the White Orange kids. The field is hidden behind the small shops in Majego and is only accessible by walking in a small alleyway between the shops.

The field is made up of orange dirt, and is enclosed by the backside of shops, all covered in graffiti. Smells of marijuana and rotting garbage permeate the air. We run carefully on the uneven surface, dodging piles of garbage, soccer players, and cars and motorcycles passing through. Kids and adults walk through, most staring at the *mzungus* as we run with a group of young African boys. Joana and I wear our running shoes while the kids wear flip flops and sandals. We run together, kicking around a soccer ball made of scrunched plastic bags and string.

Communicating is difficult as the kids don't have any English skills, and Joana and I both struggle with our Swahili. Nonetheless, we run together laughing and smiling the entire time. By the end of the run, we have two kids with us—Saidi and Asumani. When our legs feel tired and our shoes are caked with dirt and mud, we head to a nearby grocery for a quick soda. We treat them to Fanta and Coca-Cola and sit with them. Joana and I have our own conversation in English while they sit quietly and enjoy their sodas. Every so often I glance at the kids and smile at them. Though we don't talk much, I feel good sitting with Saidi and Asumani, like I am making their day.

Once our sodas are finished, Joana and I pay for the drinks and walk towards the Majengo bus stand where I find a taxi to take me home to Soweto. Before getting in the taxi, I negotiate down to a fair price and tell the driver I live "*karibu na St. Joseph Hospital*". I throw my bag in the back and sit in the front seat—I call Mama Nsia and tell her I will be home in ten minutes. The sun slowly goes down and I begin to feel hungry and exhausted from a busy day in the dry African heat. We pull into my driveway and Grace opens the gate for me. She greets me with "*shikamoo*" and a giggle. The giggles continued until Leon pops out from around the corner to scare me. I shriek and laugh with him and Grace as we walk in the house. I quickly greet Mama and Baba Nsia with "*shikamoo*" before I put my bag in my room and get ready to take a cold shower.

Nsia is doing math exercises in her room, and has to complete and correct one hundred questions before she can eat dinner. I take a quick shower before dinner, and cross my fingers there is running water. Because it rained a day earlier, there is water! I rinse my body and hair, wash my running clothes, and dry off. I am too tired to wash my hair, and too hungry.

When I am feeling clean and refreshed I walk straight to the dining room table and sit with Baba Nsia and Leon. Baba Nsia puts a mound of rice and beans on Leon's plate until he says "*basi, basi*" (enough, enough). He hands me the spoon and says "*karibu chakula*" (welcome to food), and I serve myself white rice and beans, our usual Monday night dinner. Baba Nsia and I eat quickly while Leon slowly eats and plays. Baba Nsia chews loudly and uses his hands to eat, and every few minutes, says "*Leon, kula*" (eat). After I finish eating the rice and beans and pineapple, I say "*asante kwa chakula*" (thank you for dinner), and clear my plate.

I walk back to the living room and sit with Mama Nsia while she waits for Nsia to finish her math exercises. I am exhausted and can't believe she is still waiting to eat dinner—it is past 9:00 pm. Leon brings his plate from the dinner table into the living room to finish his food while we watch the local news. I excuse myself to brush my teeth and Leon says "*mimi pia*" (me too) and walks with me. We grab our toothbrushes from our rooms, put on toothpaste, and stand together at the sink taking turns spitting and sipping water. Later, after brushing our teeth, Leon and I play a quick game of Snakes and Ladders, a board game I grew up with. We both take turns rolling the dice and moving our game pieces—Leon miscounts each time, cheating like I did as a kid. And so I follow suit and cheat until we both win the game. I begin to yawn and say goodnight to everyone, "*lala salaama, usiku mwema*" and go to my room. I put my mosquito net down, turn my fan on high, and close my eyes.

—Meredith Allenick

Blue Pottery Makers in Jaipur, India [Maria Tarduno]



Ella, a Potter in Copenhagen, Denmark [Charlotte Lysohir]





Crossings II

Excursion to The Gambia

Our trip to The Gambia was not as engaging or relaxing as you might think, though it certainly was an adventure. My story is not about a successful experience during my time abroad in Senegal, but about a complete failure of an excursion. It was the most frustrating yet the most eventful experience I had during the five months that I spent there.

Our final excursion was set for The Gambia—a small country about the size of Massachusetts, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and on all other sides by Senegal. This was supposed to be one of our best excursions; The Gambia was a place much more tropical than Saint-Louis, with more trees and wildlife than we would find near the university, which is so close to the desert. We imagined that we would be staying near the river like the last HWS group that visited Senegal two years earlier, in a luxurious hotel with access to the water. As soon as we set out, however, we realized all too quickly that this would likely not be the case.

When the date of our Gambian excursion was announced, none of us wanted to go. It had been scheduled for the weekend before the Tuesday that we were to leave Senegal for good; we all wanted to spend that time with friends that we had met at the university, who we would not see for a long time after we left, rather than with each other on a fourteen-hour trip to The Gambia. I even contemplated opting out of the trip. I decided against it, though, and by 8 o'clock on a Thursday night we were leaving the university in a taxi, headed towards the capital city of Dakar.

Four hours later, at midnight, we were left at a taxi garage in Dakar with Abdou, the man who would be accompanying us to The Gambia. Let me start by saying that a taxi garage in Senegal is not what you might imagine. It is not an enclosed cement area filled with New York City-style taxicabs and driv-

ers patiently waiting for customers to depart to wherever they so intend. Instead, it is an immense and extremely dirty area filled with old station wagons, many of which are so rusted that they look like they belong in a junkyard. They still run, though, and are therefore used as a sort of long-distance taxi.

Each station wagon taxi, called a *sept-place*, includes seven seats plus the driver. An extra row of seats has been added behind the usual back seat of a station wagon, and these seats are therefore a bit higher up and more cramped than the seats in front of them. The *sept-places* sit in the garage until customers approach and tell the driver their destination (or drivers approach customers, which is more often the case). This *sept-place* has then been claimed for that specific destination, and the original customers must wait in the garage until enough people who are going to their destination come to fill the seats, at which point the car and its passengers depart. Since there were five of us including Abdou, we had to wait for two more people in order to leave—an event that didn't seem likely, since it was after midnight on a weekday.

While we were waiting, we bought some fruit for the drive and headed over towards the bathrooms (which cost money to use, by the way). Despite the darkness, while we were waiting for the bathroom we saw a grimy kitten playing in the thick and slimy puddles of the garage. We winced when he stopped to take a drink from a puddle, convinced that he would soon die from whatever bacterial sludge was in the water.

As I went into the bathroom, I felt like I was entering a horror film. The room was dimly-lit, with grime all over the floors and walls (I didn't chance looking up at the ceiling). The doors to the stalls were actually just rotten wooden boards nailed together loosely, and I had no idea if there were people behind them because of the lack of light in the room. Luckily, one door was open and I went in. Possibly against my better judgment, I turned on the flashlight on my phone to check out the space. In the middle of the grimy floor was a toilet, which was a porcelain hole in the ground combined with spots to put your feet. There were cockroaches in the corners of the stall,

and the smell was even worse than I had imagined. As fast as I could, I left the bathroom, the bottom of my pant leg wet from some substance on the ground—I tried not to guess what.

That experience over with, we went back to our *sept-place* to see if anyone else had come who wanted to go to The Gambia. To our surprise, there were already two other people. It turns out, travel is much more common at night and in the early morning than it is in the daytime (likely because of the high temperatures during the day and the lack of air conditioning in the taxis). By 1am, we left the *sept-place* garage and were on our way to The Gambia.

After hours of being thrown around in our seats and bumping our heads on the ceiling as our driver tried to avoid the ditches in the road, we reached the border at around 6am. We worked our way through customs for 45 minutes, going from building to building—one of the buildings was even equipped with a jail cell that smelled like urine—and then boarded the ferry that would take us across the Gambian River. Tired from a sleepless night, we all either slept or stared into the distance, observing the view of the beautiful Gambian River or of the man in the corner trying to keep the chickens that he brought with him from running around the boat. After what felt like two hours, but was probably closer to one, we arrived at the shore and stood in line at the garage to get off the boat. For some reason or another, we were stalled next to an 18-wheeler and waited in line for ten minutes as the garage filled up with exhaust and our eyes began watering and breathing became difficult. Babies and their mothers dealt with the situation calmly, whereas I was convinced that I was going to die. Eventually—finally—we were off the boat and officially on the shores of The Gambia, where we ate breakfast and waited for our Gambian host.

When the *Senegambia* area was originally colonized and divided among white Europeans regardless of the wishes of the indigenous peoples, France got what is called Senegal and England got what is called The Gambia. These were artificial borders that paid no regard to any pre-established

Senegambian ethnicities or sovereignty. The culture of the people in the two countries, therefore, remains very similar, and culture patterns arise more along the lines of ethnicity than nationality. What is different, however, is the official language: in Senegal it is French, and in The Gambia it is English. Wolof, the “unofficial” official language, is widely spoken in both countries, with the only difference being a sprinkling of English words in Gambian Wolof as compared to a sprinkling of French words in Senegalese Wolof. Since everyone could understand us when we spoke English, we now served as the translators between the Gambians and our Senegalese guide.

After breakfast our host took us to her place of work, where she works to preserve the natural environment in countries all across West Africa. In what was another hitch in our plans, the woman was told that we were environmentalists and were looking to help the organization’s cause. Although I would have loved to help, we were not trained in such a way and were forced to tell our kind host that we were just sociology students. Both the woman and our guide were shocked. Not knowing what to do, she had us lie and introduce ourselves to her boss as environmentalists, told us that Fridays were half-days for the company, and sent us on our way without any plans as they do not work on the weekends either. And just like that, our plans dissolved and we had nothing scheduled for the weekend.

Quickly, we found what looked like a nice hotel and booked a couple of rooms there. But it did indeed only look like a nice hotel. The second we walked into our room, we all noticed one thing: there was a large piece of feces on the bed. From an animal, no doubt, but what kind? We didn’t know. On the other bed there were animal prints on the once-white sheets. The hotel quickly replaced the sheets, but the stench of feces still remained—it had evidently been there for a while. It turns out that the owner of the hotel has a cat, which somehow managed to enter the room, do his business, and then escape. We were relieved that it at least wasn’t a wild fox or something like that. The water pressure at the hotel was poor

and the electricity was spotty and frequently out. They did, however, have a pool.

We stayed in The Gambia—in this hotel—for one day and one night, only leaving to explore a bit and get something to eat. On Saturday, we wanted to make use of all our traveling and do something touristy. Our guide called around, but everybody that he talked to said that there was nothing to do in The Gambia but watch alligators. He then informed us that even if we had wanted to go see alligators, we couldn't; it turns out he had run out of funds and only had enough to get us back to Saint-Louis. He had even paid for our food out of his own pocket, unbeknownst to us. So we headed back to the port, did some shopping, and one day after we had arrived in The Gambia we headed back towards Senegal.

The boat ride back across the river was not as pleasant as our first. The boat was packed and many passengers succumbed to seasickness. The baby behind us threw up multiple times, and the faces of many other people revealed that they were trying to avoid the same fate. We got to the shore after what felt like a very long time and made our way once more through customs.

As soon as we crossed the border, we were bombarded with taxi and motorbike drivers and their offers to drive us to the nearest *sept-place* garage. In what was to me an obvious choice, we went with the motorbikes. With my bag in one hand and a package of cookies that I had just bought in the other, I happily rode on the motorbike to the garage. The fun was short-lived, however, as we got to the garage in about three minutes. Forced to wait three hours for passengers who wanted to go to Kaolack, we were bombarded (as always) by local vendors and made friends with a few of the little girls who were selling soda and nuts. Although they seemed friendly, I could tell from my five months of trying to learn Wolof that they were actually insulting us through their giggling faces. I couldn't blame them; I would have had some fun, too, if I encountered tourists who didn't know my language. Content to keep my understanding a secret, I didn't say anything.

Eventually, after causing a big hubbub and making enemies with the driver by switching taxis, we caught a ride to Kaolack and arrived at about midnight. Yet again, we had to find a taxi that was going to Saint-Louis. We waited, ate a late dinner, and then waited some more, but nobody was going to Saint-Louis. By 1am our guide had found us a ride with a family of Mauritians who were going to Mauritania, which borders Saint-Louis. We happily squeezed into the *sept-place*, where there were already six Mauritians. Three men were in the back, one with a child in his lap, and a woman was in the front seat with another child on her lap. The four of us squeezed into the three middle seats (our guide headed back to his home in Dakar). With eleven of us in a car that fit eight, we made our way back to Saint-Louis; there would be no sleeping on this ride, either.

As we bumped and swerved down a long, straight road that went through miles and miles of savannah, I saw no settlements, no telephone wires, and no cars whatsoever. Instead, what stood out to me was the feeling of this rural Senegalese nighttime. Despite the time (3am), I could see for what seemed like miles into the landscape of the savannah. The ground was visible, lit up by the moonlight that traveled to the earth without the barriers of clouds or pollution or lights. The light coming from the moon was so strong that you could see shadows under the cover of trees, which were speckled throughout the flat ground. This is what struck me the most: the trees had shadows even at night. Driving along the road, I was captivated by the view of nature and the world in its purest form, lost in my thoughts about the great opportunity I had to experience another part of the world, an opportunity that not many other people have. And then our tire exploded.

We pulled to the side of the road and got out of the car, choosing to lie in the middle of the road to wait for the others to change the tire. The road was still warm from the intense heat of that day, and we stared up at the millions of stars in the sky—so many more than I had ever seen at one time. Soon enough, we were on our way, and a couple of hours later we

made it to Saint-Louis and back to our university. As the cherry on top of our entire journey, and a pretty good indication of our luck up to that point, the taxi driver's car began to smoke as soon as we stopped in front of our dorms. Although we offered to help, he waved us away and we went to our rooms, promptly falling asleep.

It's true, our trip to The Gambia was a failure as an excursion. We did have awful luck. None of us, not even our guide, wanted to be there. We did find a giant piece of poop on our bed. And we did get about 10 hours of sleep during the three nights we were there. But at the same time, it was one of the best adventures I've ever had. This story isn't about the filthy *sept-place* garage, it isn't about the uncomfortable and long trips that we took, and it's not about us falsely posing as environmentalists to the head of a large organization. This story is about experience, and the opportunity we have just to be able to travel.

During this trip I had many revelations. I saw beautiful landscapes and met a variety of people. I learned about the social, political, and economic history of a country that is often forgotten in international discussions simply because of its size and its peaceful state and resulting lack of drama. I had experienced more noteworthy events in 36 hours than I had in the entire first three months of my semester abroad, and now I have a story that I can tell others, and will tell others for years to come. Although it was pretty miserable at the time, I do not regret going on that trip to The Gambia. And despite all our bad luck on the trip, I am forced to remember that that was the extent of it, and my bad luck isn't nearly as dire as the bad luck of others around the world. My bad day is somebody else's good day, and this is something that I often forget. Many people would have killed to be in my shoes as I traveled to The Gambia, and I am very lucky to have had the opportunity to do so. I am privileged, and even though I might complain sometimes, I can always remember how lucky I am.

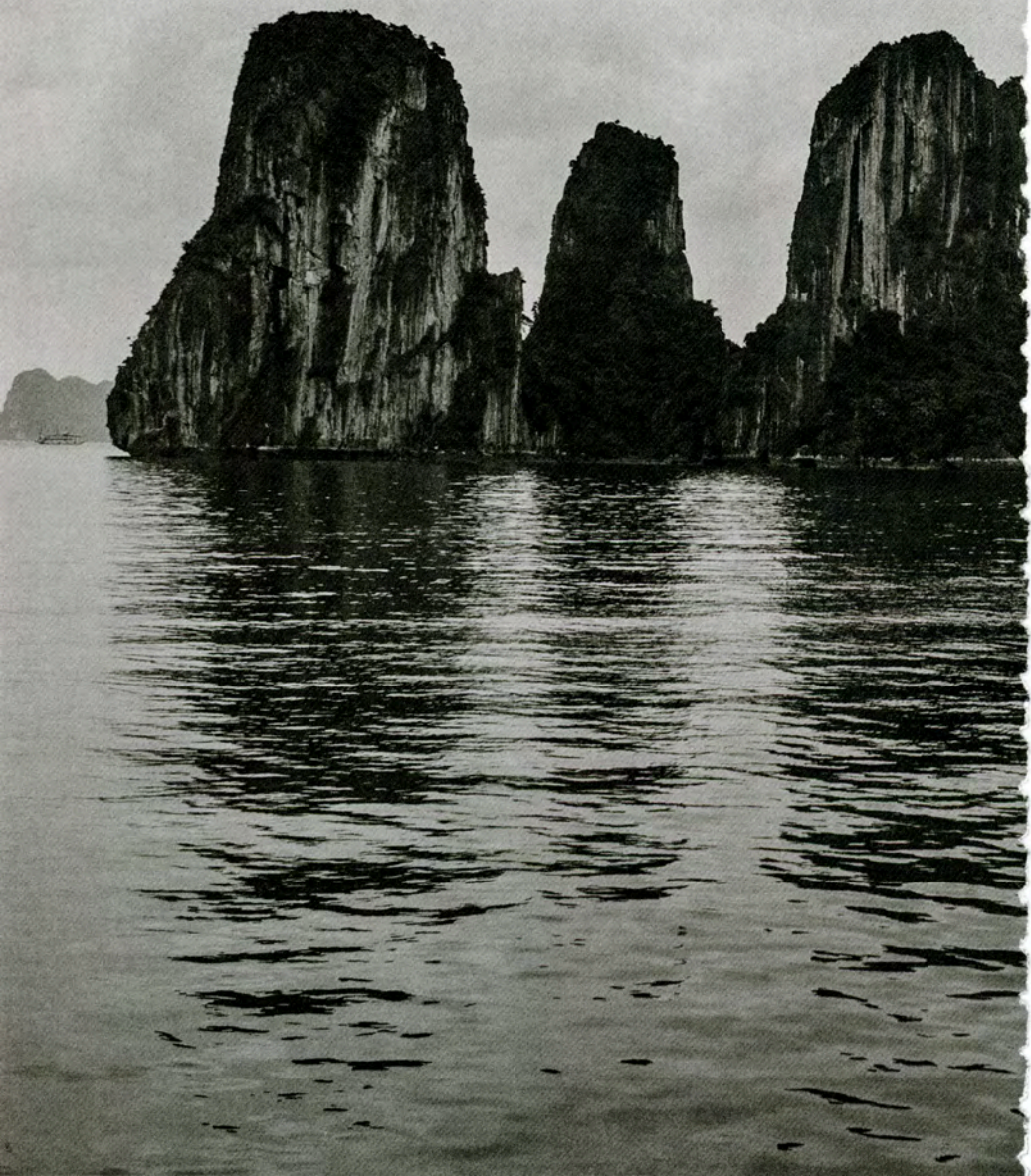
—Anya Bounar



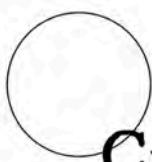
Bachir, L'Orateur de Djolof (above) and Fishermen on their Pirogues (below) St. Louis, Senegal [Anya Bounar]



Ha Long Bay, Vietnam [Michael Williamson]







Crossings III

Closeted

I came out of the closet when I was fourteen. It wasn't easy, it never really is, but once I was out, I was out. I was that girl in high school who was very vocal about her sexual orientation and LGBT rights, the token lesbian. I even had a self-proclaimed dyke stage where I refused to wear bras until my mom yelled at me because my boobs were too big to just be hanging out there. And college was not much different since I fulfilled the stereotype for lesbians as a Women's Studies major. I was confident in my identity as a lesbian. And I never thought I would be trapped in the closet again, but then seven years later I went to South Africa.

I was beyond excited but also beyond terrified. My idea of traveling abroad before that was going the 5 miles down the road to Quebec or the two hours it took to drive to Ontario. South Africa was a gateway to a new world, a new continent, and a brand new experience. When I decided to study in South Africa, I never considered what impact my sexual orientation would have on my experience. I just assumed that I would be OK. I inquired about it with my professor from the orientation class I had to take and someone from the study abroad office about LGBT life in South Africa. "It's great!" they told me. "They are so accepting there. South Africa was the first country to allow gay marriage in their constitution!" "They have a Gay/Straight Alliance at the University!", I was told. This news filled me with hope and confidence that it would not be different in South Africa. That is, until my best friend sent me information about corrective rape less than a month before my plane departed.

Corrective rape is a horrible hate crime that occurs in South Africa against lesbians. Some men believe that if you rape a lesbian, it will correct her sexual orientation and make

her straight. It often does not just end at rape and results in murder. Needless to say, I was horrified. I researched more into corrective rape and found that it occurred more in the rural or poor communities called townships. But it did happen in urban communities. Regardless, I knew that I could not be vocal about my sexual orientation, especially with the target as an American already on my back. My friend told me to be careful, and with her advice I boarded the plane ready to put myself in the closet. So, as the plane touched down in Johannesburg, it was official. I would play it straight.

Playing it straight was not easy for me. I found myself trying to fit into these gender norms, dressing nicely like I was going out on the town when I really just wanted to wear basketball shorts, and ditching my fake Birkenstocks, which still kills me a little inside. I started wearing nail polish on my toes, wearing dresses, and anything else that helped me feel feminine. I felt ridiculous in this façade, but at points found comfort in my new-found femininity. I was impressed with my ability to adapt to this lifestyle. I know I still stood out as an American, but that was never going to go away. But at least I didn't stand out as an American lesbian, and that was the idea.

Within the first week my cover had been blown. On a wasted Wednesday at Stagecoach, a bar popular with the university students, I went out with my American friends. After a few drinks, I found myself talking to a nice gentleman and having a good time. OK, he was hitting on me but I was used to that and was humoring him. One of my American friends interrupted the conversation and asked me if I was bisexual. See, not all of my American friends attended the same college in the US as I did, and they were not familiar with my sexual orientation. I answered drunkenly, no, that I was a lesbian. The gentleman who was talking to me started giving me the third degree about it and I immediately felt unsafe. I left the bar pissed at my American friend for outing me. I hoped that the new friend I had made was too drunk to remember the conversation, but he wasn't. I was lucky that this guy ended up being my closest friend in South Africa. He eventually

became my boyfriend, another part of this closeted identity. But what if it had been the wrong person?

Other people I was out to were part of the Gay/Straight Alliance. I went to those meetings frequently, to find comfort in the identity I was trying so hard to hide. What first alarmed me about the group was how small it was. It was smaller than the Pride Alliance at my home college, which has a quarter of the student population of the university. And then what alarmed me more was when we went around the room and introduced ourselves and said our sexual identity, I was the only female in the room who said I was a lesbian. All the other women said that they were bisexual or “greedy bastards.” I found myself perplexed by this. These women did not feel comfortable as being out lesbians, only comfortable identifying as bisexual, because believe me, most of these women were not bisexual. Observing this behavior, I was left with so many unanswered questions. How can a country that is recognized for its progressive constitution be so intolerant toward the people it seeks to protect? I spent the rest of my time trying to figure out what was truly happening here.

I found that being gay was just not socially acceptable. Using the word faggot is OK (not that it isn't in the United States) and there is a pervasive attitude that homosexuality is a sin. Many people there were religious, and I believe that played a significant role in the homophobia. One time I was in the kitchen of my eight-person unit cooking, and my housemates were talking to my American friend about homosexuality. I couldn't stand to hear the ignorance coming out of their mouths, so I turned up my music. But what I heard was that they just didn't understand homosexuality, it was something that made them uncomfortable and they just couldn't grasp the concept because heterosexuality was just innate for them. What I would tell them now is that you have learned heterosexuality to be natural and that is why you cannot understand homosexuality. The heteronormativity taught you to be so confused by this; it has nothing to do with nature. But I had to live with these people and did not want to go on a rant about this. So I stayed silent.

Never before have I been in an academic setting where the sin of homosexuality was discussed. I was taking a course entitled *Media in South Africa* and we had a whole section on feminist media studies and queer studies. While I found myself able to discuss Foucault and Judith Butler just as well as the lecturer, I did notice how the conversation was so foreign to the rest of the class, and how uncomfortable it made them. When we started the unit, the lecturer (who looks like Adam Lambert) told the class they had to be respectful of the content and other people. I immediately thought to myself, "I never had this happen before where you have to remind people to be respectful," but I quickly found that this disclosure was needed.

Because the class was so large, we signed up for separate tutorial groups where a tutor, usually a fourth-year honors student or masters student, goes over the material so you have a better understanding of it. However, it was clear to me that the tutor did not understand the material he was covering. He attempted to explain that in Gayle Rubin's "Charmed Circle", a theory I know well, only certain sexualities are accepted, typically monogamous heterosexuality. Other sexualities, like homosexuality and prostitution, are not acceptable. So, to get the class talking, he tried to play devil's advocate by comparing homosexuality to pedophilia, instead of pointing out how these are two types of sexualities that are socially unaccepted. The class started getting into the conversation, and this one chick went on a huge rant about how homosexuality is wrong and a sin, citing the Bible as her reasoning. The tutor did not say she was wrong, and hesitated to tell her to stop. I sat in the back of the classroom, wanting to bang my head against the wall, pissed as hell. How does an academic not only misquote a theory, but then allow for a homophobic discussion to occur? I found myself silenced, which does not happen in classrooms often, as a result of my own shock and disgust with everyone in the room.

As soon as we were dismissed, I barreled out of class like a bat out of hell. And this was not easy. This was during my

extremely painful foot injury where I was limping everywhere. But I was so enraged about this conversation that I didn't limp during that walk home. I decided to wait until after 3 so I could go on Facebook to contact people from the Gay/Straight Alliance. I did not know my rights as a student, and I wanted to know if there was something I could do about it. So I posted it on the Facebook page, and the lecturer responded because he is in the group and invited me to have a conversation. I met with him, and he asked me what I wanted to be done. I said an apology would suffice. But I never got an apology. Instead, the tutor was completely arrogant about the situation and announced to the group that apparently someone was offended but all he was trying to do was make us think, dismissing what he had actually done that day. And then this chick in the class who thought she was so intelligent spoke out pissed that someone would complain and not bring it up to the class. I wanted to punch her. How dare she? Her identity, a central part of her being, was not attacked relentlessly by the tutor and students in the classroom. How the hell would someone feel comfortable to speak up? Appalled by what happened with this so-called apology, I asked if I could switch tutorial groups. Permission was granted, and I finally felt free.

And then there was my boyfriend. Fortunately, the guy I was outed to at the bar did not give me a hard time. His name was Tafungwa; he was from Zimbabwe and he wanted to get into my pants. I was unsure about the whole thing. I mean, I was not a Gold Star Lesbian—I had previously been with guys but I just didn't like it. However, I wasn't going to dismiss the possibility of being with Tafungwa because what happens in South Africa stays in South Africa. Tafungwa was a goofy man who loved to tease, laugh, drink and dance and I had a great time with him. He also had a tragic past which I soaked up because I have the tendency to do that. He was an orphan adopted by his aunt and uncle after his mother and sister died in a car accident. Plus, dating Tafungwa would secure my identity as a straight person. After I started to get to know Tafungwa more, I started to really like him. He eventually did bring up the whole "I am a lesbian" conversation and it didn't

bother him necessarily but it became apparent that he did not have much knowledge about sexuality. But as long as he kept his mouth shut and I was honest to him about my feelings towards him, everything would go smoothly. My relationship went more than smoothly; we dated for four months and I fell in love with him. I had become a person in this closet I did not even recognize. But I was happy, caught up in the tropical sun and relaxed African way of life, and that was all that mattered to me. Was it situational? Yes. Was it because I was not comfortable fully being myself? Yes. But I wouldn't take it back. I still identify as a lesbian, but it was something about the time and place that made me fall in love with Tafungwa.

While I was there, I was reminded why I really was closeted. In a township just an hour away, a lesbian had been raped and murdered by a man her parents thought was her boyfriend. Many of the students at the university came from this township. This incident helped me to realize what some people sacrifice to be out. The Gay/Straight Alliance held a candlelight vigil and a speakout on International Day Against Homophobia in memory of this poor woman. We even painted a sign on campus that said *Dead Lesbians Can't Vote* on one side and *How many gays does God have to make before we realize that He wants them around*, on the other. I felt powerful in participating in these activities, but saddened that I was still closeted and uncomfortable being myself because of this type of violence.

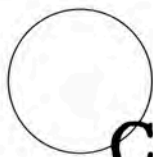
It took coming home to the US to realize what part of me I had silenced. On campus at home, I am loud, proud and active and don't give a damn as to what others think. While in South Africa, I was silent, closeted and, frankly, bored. I had silenced my activist self, the one who will stand up to injustice no matter what. I had lost a part of myself that I love. Activism is so important to me because I want to make a difference. In South Africa, I wasn't able to be vocal or take to the streets. I had to work behind the scenes and be quiet about my anger. While I loved South Africa when I was there, when I arrived home I quickly realized that I wasn't the person I wanted to be there. I couldn't stand up for change while silencing my sexuality.

I have many great memories from my time abroad, from going to a music festival in the middle of the Drakensburg Mountains, to seeing elephants on a safari ride, to witnessing a moon rainbow on the beach, to the laughs I had with Tafungwa. But the most important lesson I took home with me is how important it is to be myself, and to be comfortable in my identity. It is once I am not silencing any part of myself, not hiding in the merciless closet, that I am able to accomplish my life's passion: fighting for social justice.

—Connie Mandeville

Bamboo Train in Cambodia [Chrissy Abdool]





Crossings IV

In Cambodia With a Heart

Summarizing my experience working, learning, and living in Siem Reap, Cambodia is no small task. My time here has been equal parts challenging, inspiring, renewing, and exhausting. I will never have a singular experience so full of complexity and nuance – that is for sure.

My term abroad has been called “the International Experience in Cambodia with a Heart,” a title that is incredibly apt. The term abroad wears its heart on its sleeve every single day. My work here has never had the feel of the typical college workload, where my efforts feel abstract and indirect. Every day I walked into the schools I felt a strong sense of duty, not as a citizen or as an American or even as an educated person, but as a human.

If I had to boil down what this experience has meant to me, I would say this term abroad has been a seminar in global self-discovery. Let me explain. It is often said that college is the time when we find “ourselves.” However, I’d say that on the lush campuses of American colleges all across the nation all we’re learning is where we stand in American society. Perhaps we get a taste for the world by taking classes with foreign-born professors or socializing with international students, but we never see ourselves in the big picture because of the comfort afforded by the familiarity of our environs, both social and geographic. When you study in a country like Cambodia, where so many trappings of the American world you grew up in are gone and the truth is not masked by layers of bureaucracy (two politically-motivated murders have taken place since I’ve been in the country), you learn much more about the kind of person you are in the eyes of the world.

In my time here, I’ve socialized with locals as well as expats from Britain, Australia, the Netherlands, India, Switzerland, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, and America. My conver-

sations with the diverse cast of people have been thematically linked: education, poverty, the environment, and our ideas for the future. The variety of participants made these conversations incredibly illuminating. Interestingly, what these conversations brought to light was not the perspectives of so many different nations, but where my perspective fit in – and in some cases what my perspective actually was. So, if I were pressed to summarize my experience in a single sentence or sentiment, I'd say this experience showed me who I was as a member of the global community for the first time.

Of course, this experience exposed me to so much more than just self-discovery. Over these ten weeks, I gained first-hand knowledge of what it means to live in the developing world. It's easy to be cavalier about "understanding" the plight of the third world when you're sitting in your living room watching it happen on your flat screen TV. I've gained a whole different, more genuine kind of understanding living inside that world as opposed to watching it from afar. I've learned how dear clean water is. I've learned how lucky I am to understand basic first aid and the proper uses of medicine. I also owe my dentist a sincere, heartfelt thank-you.

In a certain way, this has also contributed to my self-discovery although in a different manner. Learning the difference between abstract understanding and practical understanding has showed me the importance of participation in being able to connect with other people, especially other people from different cultures and countries. As the world becomes more and more interdependent and we sprint towards globalizing our workforce and knowledge bases, it is all the more important to realize the significance of hands-on experience as opposed to theoretical experience.

This last distinction was made crystal clear by my forays as an English teacher in Cambodia. Prior to my arrival in Siem Reap, I had never been an official teacher anywhere. I'd tutored many friends and peers in math, English, French, and other topics, but I had never been given a class for 20 hours a week and told to teach them. I had never designed a

single lesson plan or led a group of more than five students through a topic before. Despite my inexperience, I had always thought that teaching would be an easy fall-back plan for my future if my “plan A” didn’t pan out. I had what I considered a really good understanding of what teaching was like. This understanding was all theory as it turns out. The practical experience I gained here would be invaluable.

Working inside a Cambodian classroom as an English teacher who is a native speaker means that you are the absolute authority in the room. The Khmer teachers who typically run the classes defer to you entirely. It is your class and you can run it as you see fit, and the students (as well as the teachers) will do as you say. As a result, you quickly learn how it feels to be unprepared. You learn the significance of a good lesson plan. All those ridiculous games and exercises your teachers made you do in grade school all of a sudden become genius.

The beauty of teaching in Cambodia as a novice is the students: they want to learn and they are so determined to do so that almost anything you attempt to do will be a success in one way or another. The students make your life easier. I was able to try out some feeble lesson plans early on and develop a more robust teaching style over time because the students were so easy to work with. I don’t think I would have been nearly as satisfied if my first experience teaching came in an unruly American classroom. Teaching is just the tip of the iceberg in regards to the distinction between America and Cambodia—a distinction that is the glue that held my term abroad together.

My experience in Cambodia has meant a reevaluation of every social truism I have ever learned. The people here are frankly much more open and friendly than the people in America (of course this is a generalization, but alas generalizing comes with any summary). Whenever we were out to eat at a Khmer restaurant or met a new group of locals, we were warmly welcomed and treated like life-long friends. Every person we spoke to was more than willing to help us find a place we were looking for, instruct us on how to pronounce

a certain word in Khmer, or participate in an interview or other project for our culture class. Interacting with the locals changed my perception of the developing world. My perception, from my couch at home, was of people in constant need of assistance. In my time here, I've found the people to be as generous with their help as they are grateful for any assistance they receive. Moreover, I've discovered that we as a people have just as much to learn from countries like Cambodia as we have to teach them.

In the myriad excursions we went on around the country and the numerous cultural experiences we had, both in and out of class, I have learned a great deal about the rich history and culture of Cambodia. I've learned that there is so much more than the massacre that happened during Pol Pot's terrible reign and America's secret bombing campaign. The country is full of beauty, art, and religion. Its history is packed with ups and downs, rises and falls. I've also learned that the social practices and customs of the country are not "backwards", as one might think coming from a country like America. More poignantly, I've learned that the culture and society of Cambodia are not fixed in sandstone like Angkor Wat; they are changing rapidly every day. The youth of Cambodia comprise a majority of the population and over the next decade I imagine they will transform the socioeconomic landscape of this traditional agricultural country.

The greatest transformation I have undergone in my time here has been about my role in Cambodia. Before I arrived in the country I had a kind of hero-complex. Whenever I described what I would be doing in Cambodia, I imagined I'd be teaching hundreds of kids English and transforming them from basically illiterate villagers to Cambodian cosmopolitans. I had this romantic vision of being the difference-maker in a developing nation. However, after living here for ten weeks, I've learned that I'm not a hero. I'm doing an incredibly necessary job that hundreds, if not thousands, of other volunteers and NGO workers do every day in many different countries. Yes, we all do good work and make small differences that in

the aggregate mean big differences, but we're not heroes and that shouldn't be our *raison d'être*.

The work that is being done in countries like Cambodia by foreign workers and volunteers is important because it will help fuel the development of these countries. That doesn't make the work different from that performed by firemen, police officers, or healthcare professionals. We're not heroes. We're not martyrs sacrificing our first-world lives for the good of humanity. The novelty of our work is superficial; we're just people doing work in a unique locale.

None of this is to say that the work I've done here with students and locals is not important or hasn't been incredibly profound to me personally. I've just come to understand that I alone am not changing the world for the Cambodian people. No one of us is. Some of us might even be having a negative impact on the locals. When you consider the staggering number of NGOs in Siem Reap and the thousands of volunteers who work here every year, it is easier to understand how one person spending two and a half months in the country isn't heroic in any grand sense of the term.

Overall, this experience has meant a lot to me. Importantly, it has shown me who I am in the global scheme of things. It has exposed me to wildly different cultures and ways of thinking and has educated me about a country I barely knew anything about previously. It has shown me that doing necessary work is not necessarily heroic. Finally, this experience has proved to me that I can adapt and be successful in the face of almost any obstacle that I confront.

—Ryan Semerad



Encounters in London, England [Kristen Desmarais]
Feeding the Birds at Kensington Gardens, London, England [Jordan Hawn]

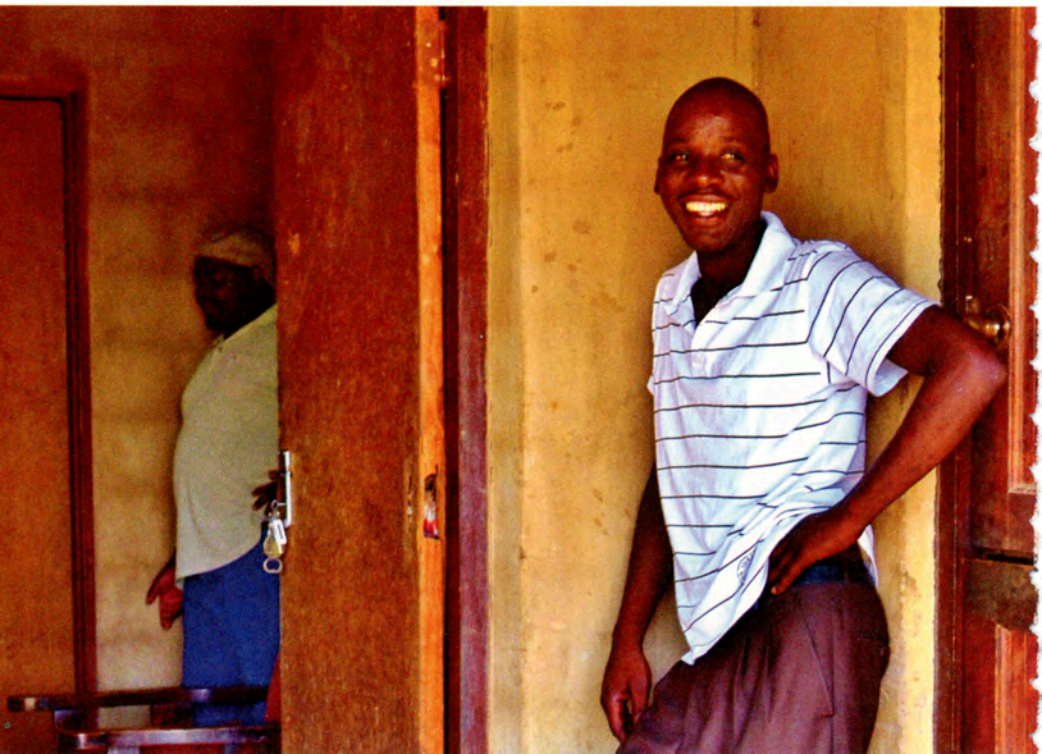


Dresdner Frauenkirche, Dresden, Germany [Yitian Zhang]





Red Eyed Tree Frog, Costa Rica [Will Abbott]
Taxi Driver in Haniville Township, South Africa [Hannah Wilber]





Ganges River in Banares, India [Nico Walker]
Santa Caterina Market, Barcelona, Spain [Dylan Magida]





Market Still Life from Paris, France [Caroline Brustowicz]
Market Still Life from Florence, Italy [Hallie Phillips Manheim]
Facing: River Commuters, Vietnam [Esther Altomare]





Schoolchildren in Moshi, Tanzania [Meredith Allenick]





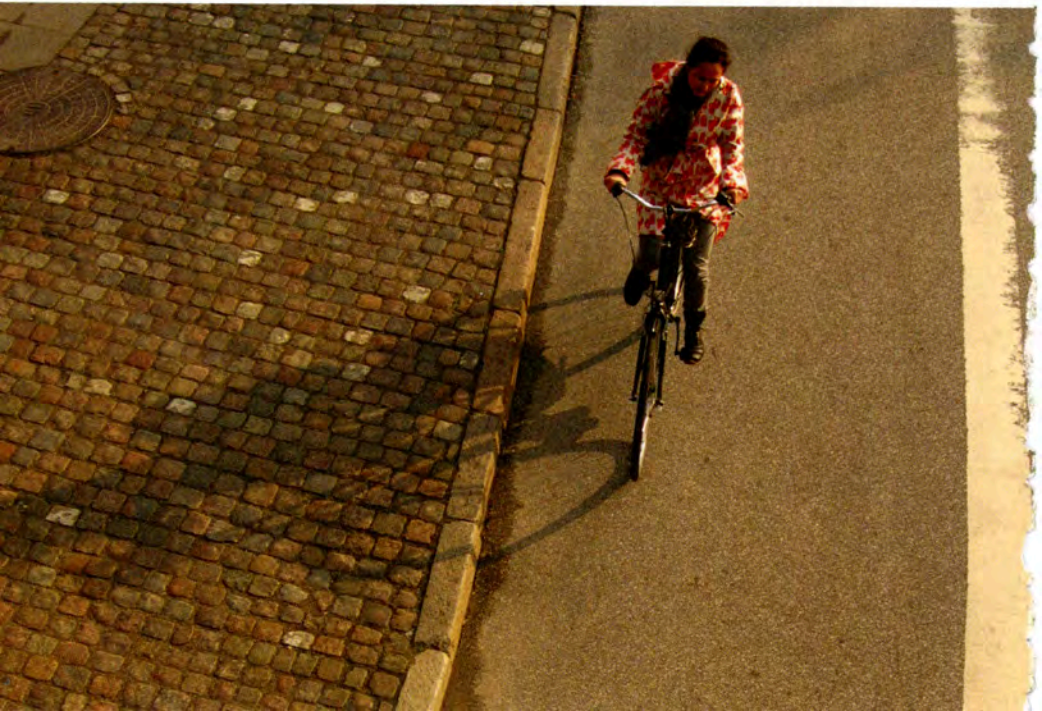




Camels and Riders in Jaipur, India [Clara Boesch]



Monet's Waterlily Garden in Giverny, France [Amy Gallop]
Cyclist on Sydhavnen, Islands Brygge, Denmark [Charlotte Lysohir]





Tomb of Khai Dinh near Hue, Vietnam [Michael Williamson]
Collecting Straw in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam [Olivia Joyce]





Graduation Festivities in Aix-en-Provence, France [Tianchu Wu]
Reflection in Florence, Italy [Jenny Wu]





Orthodox Iconostasis, Russia [Ian Bugbee]
Harvest in Rajasthan, India [Clara Boesch]





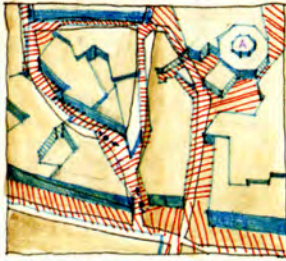
STUDYING OF VIA DEI PACE



8-1 (a)



8-1 (a)



BIRD'S VIEW OF THIS AREA

- ORIGINAL PLANE
- PRESENT VISION
- ORIGINAL PLAN
- PRESENT AREA
- A: SANTA MARIA DELLA PACE
- B: TOWARD PIAZZA NAVONA
- C: VIA

TO STREET
/ STREET
AREA FOR BUILDING
STRUCTURES.
PIAZZA DELLA PACE
PIAZZA NAVONA



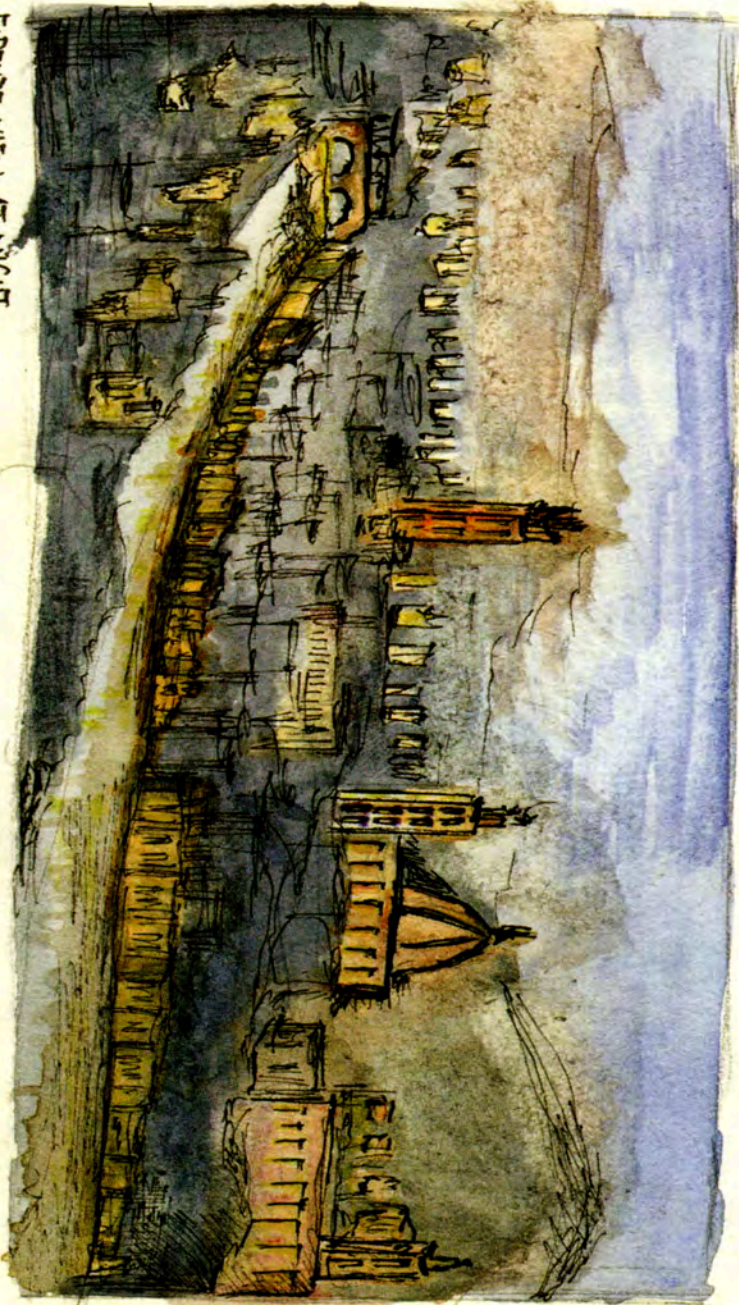
- A: SANTA MARIA DELLA PACE
- B: PIAZZA NAVONA
- C: THE POSITION OF BRIDGE

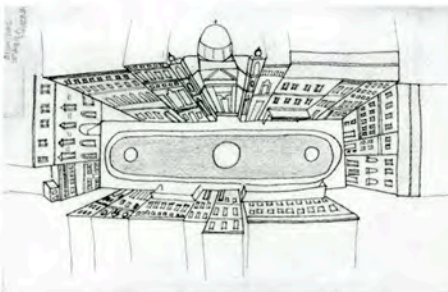
GENERAL MAIN PUBLIC BUILDINGS & SPACES ARE
HIDDEN AMONG THOSE VILLOI. FOR INSTANCE,
PIAZZA NAVONA & S. MARIA DELLA PACE. ROME
UNLIKE OTHER MODERN URBAN PLAN, WHICH
HAS MAIN ROADS LEADING TO THOSE LANDMARKS.
HERE, FOREIGNERS HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THOSE
STREETS ARE LEADING THEM AND THEY'LL HAVE THE
ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCE OF TRANSITION FROM
VERY COMPACT, TO THE VERY OPEN ATMOSPHERE
FOLLOWING

Facing: Tug Boat in Venice, Italy [John Lawrence]
Winter Scene in Mitte, Berlin, Germany [Devan Mizzoni]
This Page: Study of Via Dei Pace in Rome, Italy &
Grand Place in Brussels, Belgium [Feixia Huang]

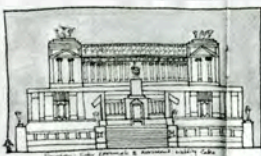


FIRENZE VIEW AT NIGHT.
FROM PIAZZA MICHELANGELO.





Elevation: Victor Emmanuel II Monument: Walking Cube

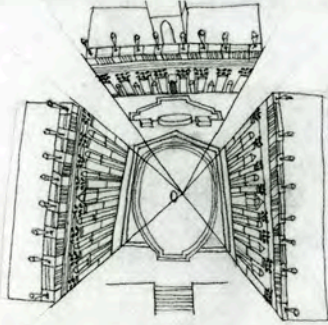


PALAZZO VENEZIA

- LOCATED AT THE CENTER OF THE GEOMETRIC CENTER OF ROME
- NAMED AFTER THE ORIGINAL VENETIAN PALACE WHICH WAS DESTROYED BY THE CONQUEST OF HIS NEW PALACE (PALAZZO VENEZIA)
- FIRST BUILDING AND RESIDENCE OF VENETIAN MAYOR
- HAD A RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE PHASE PUBLIC SERVICES THERE
- PALAZZO VENEZIA - ABOUT 1600 RECONSTRUCTED BUILDING IS SOME DESTROYED BY ORIGINAL NEW SPREAD



- PALAZZO VENEZIA (CONTINUED)
- FLOOR IS TO REPRESENT AN ENTIRE ROOM IN ONE - INCORPORATED IN THE
 - BARRACADE FORMER INTERIOR BEING EQUIVALENT TO A
 - THEY GOING TO BEER MAKING (LANDMARK) FROM INTERIOR
 - OFFERS THE IMAGE OF THE PALAZZO GENERALLY FROM EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR
 - NAME OF THE HOUSE (ORIGINAL NAME) - VENEZIA - THE
 - TRANSLATION
 - ONE CAN SEE A FASCINATING VIEW OF THE ENTIRE CITY FROM THE TOP
 - PALAZZO VENEZIA IS TO THE RIGHT OF PIAZZA VENEZIA



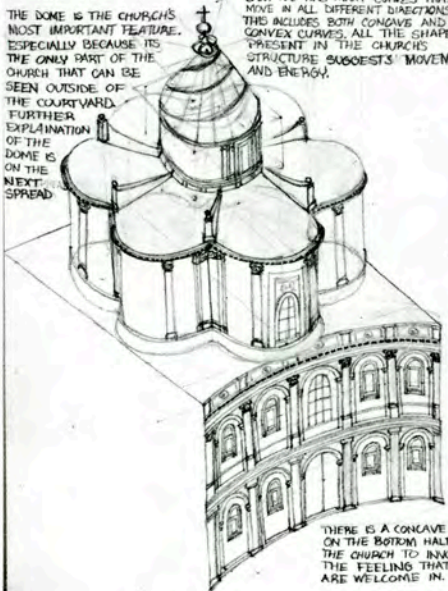
CAPITOLINO 2010/2012

Facing: View at Night from Piazza Michelangelo, Florence, Italy [Xiaoyang Liu]
 This Page: Victor Emmanuele II Monument, Rome, Italy [Chloe Jensen]
 Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, Rome, Italy [Christina Biasiucci]

AXON VIEW

THE DOME IS THE CHURCH'S MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE ITS THE ONLY PART OF THE CHURCH THAT CAN BE SEEN OUTSIDE OF THE COURTYARD. FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THE DOME IS ON THE NEXT SPREAD.

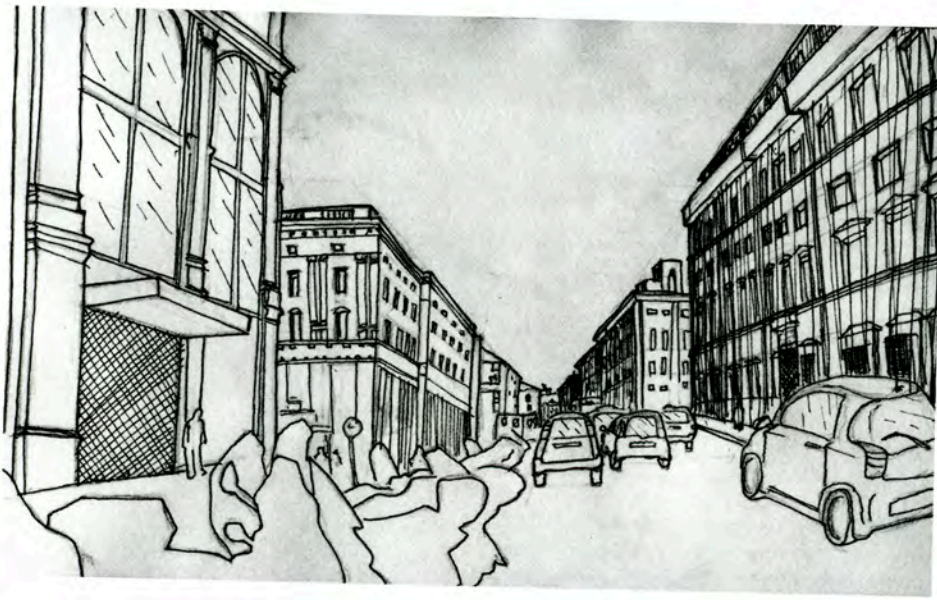
SANT IVO HAS MANY CURVES THAT MOVE IN ALL DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. THIS INCLUDES BOTH CONCAVE AND CONVEX CURVES. ALL THE SHAPES PRESENT IN THE CHURCH'S STRUCTURE SUGGESTS MOVEMENT AND ENERGY.



THERE IS A CONCAVE CURVE ON THE BOTTOM HALF OF THE CHURCH TO INVOLVE THE FEELING THAT ALL ARE WELCOME IN.

WITH THIS CUT AWAY OF SANT IVO WE CAN SEE HOW BORROMINI CREATES THE ILLUSION THAT THE CHURCH IS TALLER THAN IT ACTUALLY IS BY EXTENDING THE PILASTERS UP TO THE TOP OF THE DOME.



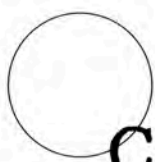


*This Page: Sketches of Rome, Italy [Christian Martinez]
Facing: Positano Cliffsides, Italy [Brittany Keeler]*





POSITANO CLIFFSIDE



Crossings V

Finally Alone

Having four siblings leaves little room for privacy. Sharing a bedroom and bathroom growing up, and sharing just about every toy and sweater and coloring book does not allow for much alone time. But I would not trade my chaotic and adventurous childhood for anything. Through the experiences of my youth, I have learned to live with other people, to tolerate just about everyone, to extend kindness and compassion to those whom I meet, and to share. All of these life lessons would no doubt be put to the test in the next exciting chapter of my life.

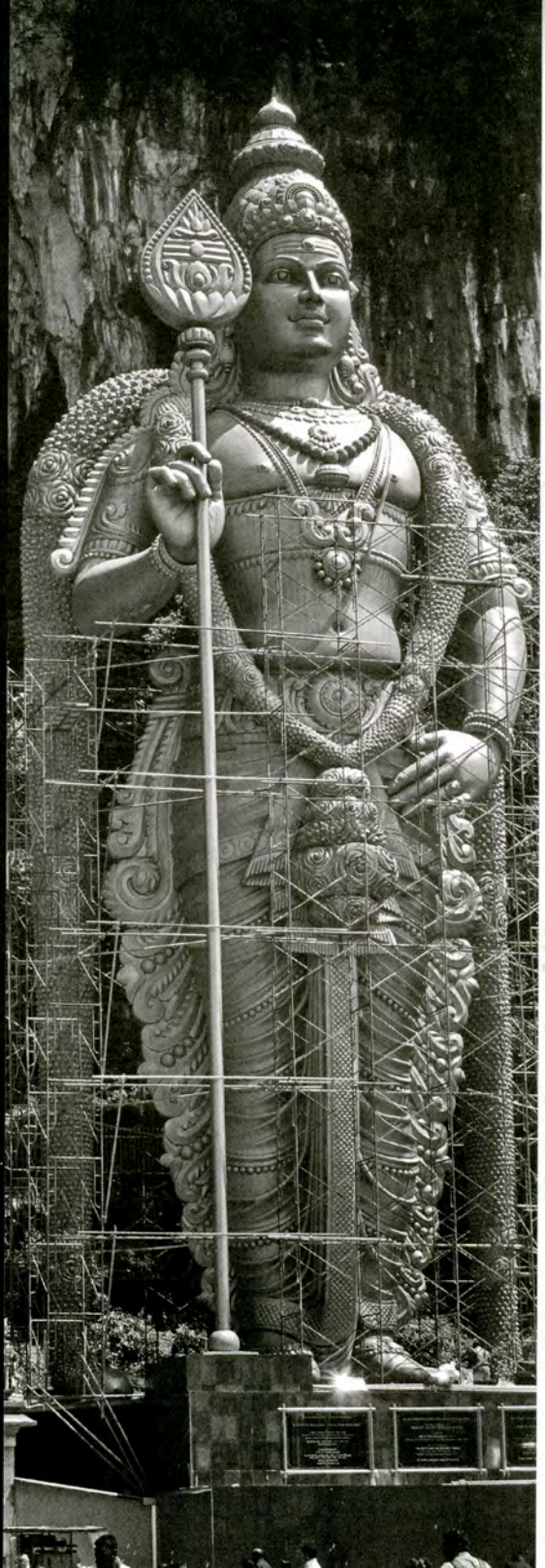
While nothing can truly prepare one for international travel, I felt ready and excited before I studied abroad in Hong Kong during the fall of my junior year. The airplane trip around the globe was one of only three plane rides I had taken in my entire life. And what a plane ride it was! For sixteen hours of flying I busied myself by paying partial attention to movies, keeping one eye focused out the frosted window at the cloud cover or utter blackness, and constantly wondering when the flight attendants would be serving the next Häagen-Dazs ice cream and cheeseburger snack. This was all a new experience for me. I had only been out of the United States twice before. The first time was to Mexico with my family as we drove back across the southwestern part of the United States on one of many cross-country road trips. The second was to Canada, again in a minivan, when we ventured to Alaska and back. But Hong Kong...wow! I was in for a treat.

My semester in one of China's Special Administrative Regions was the semester of a lifetime, filled with a diversity of smells, tastes, sights, languages, and people. Before going abroad I set the goal to travel to as many other places while away as was possible. Six unique passport stamps later, I can confidently say that I achieved and exceeded my initial vision for my time abroad. Allow me to paint a picture for you. After

flying alone for the first time I arrived at my home away from home, Lingnan University in Hong Kong. There I was immediately welcomed and met by many other international students as well as natives of Hong Kong, such as my roommate, Joe (his English name). This community felt comfortable. I was quickly surrounded by many people and we all became good friends in no time. Even still, I was well outside of my comfort zone. My only language is English, and most of the students at Lingnan knew two or three languages in addition to their native tongue. The global nature of our community was inclusive and it was not difficult for me to feel comfortable in my new environment. However, the courtyard of my university was only the beginning of my new experiences.

High on my list of travel goals was to take a long weekend trip by myself. I sat down and opened my travel guide to the tiny city-state of Singapore. I had a preliminary list of places I had wanted to visit while in Southeast Asia. Vietnam and Singapore had piqued my interest. But why stop there? The accessibility of Hong Kong makes flying to the surrounding countries and districts incredibly easy. On a whim I booked a flight to Singapore and decided that I would figure out how to get to Vietnam later. While talking to people about my plans, a friend also studying at Lingnan mentioned that she had traveled to Malaysia and loved it. She suggested I do likewise. Malaysia and Singapore happen to be neighboring countries, so I figured why not add another destination? My whimsical adventure was shaping up to be a great trip. I even convinced a group of three friends, all from the US, to meet me in Hanoi, Vietnam after I had explored the first two stops of my four-day journey. All of the plans were settled. I would fly to Singapore, stay less than 24 hours, take a bus to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, spend the night, and take another plane to Vietnam where I would meet my friends. I was so excited to finally be traveling independently, as I had never truly been anywhere without a member of my family or a good friend. This was a totally new chapter in my life and I could not wait to get started.





While flying to Hong Kong was an epic sixteen-hour journey, during which I knew only one other person onboard, my flight to Singapore was thrilling because I knew no one. This anonymity was empowering. I was flying to a country and region of the world to which I had never been, and where I was completely foreign to everything and everyone. I arrived at the airport in Singapore, a new and clean facility, after 10pm. Since I had not made any plans for the night, I decided to sleep in the airport. I found a quiet section of a terminal, pulled a few chairs together and fashioned a makeshift bed, covered myself with my coat and made sure I knew where the bathrooms and fire exits were. As an inexperienced world traveler, I put my wallet and passport in my underwear and tied my bag around my ankles. No doubt I looked like an absolute fool, but I felt relatively safe and was reassured to see a few other travelers doing similar things. At around three or four in the morning, I awoke from my half-sleep and realized the lights were still on. I had hoped that someone might have at least turned the lights off—they hadn't. Restless, I wandered around, bought a snack and went to the bathroom before going back to sleep. I woke up a few hours later when I was sure the skytrains were running again. I was about to meet Singapore! I went back to the bathroom, brushed my teeth, washed my face and decided it was time to get out of the airport and explore the city.

There was no escaping it now: I was alone. Riding the skytrain into the city center was easy. Urban mass transit rail systems all operate in more or less the same way. I was happy to recognize that the skytrain in Singapore was similar to my experience in Hong Kong. Upon arriving in the center of Singapore, I engaged in the only two activities that did not require money, language skills or knowing anything about the country: I walked and took pictures. I did this all day long. The freedom of having no itinerary was gratifying. My only goal was to arrive in Malaysia by morning. Never did I think I would be saying, "OK Noah, you have to be to Kuala Lumpur by morning." This was crazy! I felt something like James Bond. Over the course of the day I stopped at Kentucky Fried Chicken, walked around the entirety of Marina Bay, took far

too many photos of the skyline and things I found interesting, and ended up at the Marina Bay Sands Hotel and Casino (a simple web search for this destination will make clear why this was an important part of my day). I walked around more of the city, ate food in various places and patiently anticipated evening when I could photograph Singapore at night. Wandering through the lit skyscrapers was a beautiful highlight of my short time in Singapore.

My mode of transportation to Malaysia was bus. I walked the few miles north along a busy boulevard to the bus depot and figured I should eat before my journey. Two new experiences occurred while I waited for my bus. I went to get dinner at a restaurant in a shopping pavilion, but when I reached into my wallet to see what I could afford, I realized that my options on the menu were limited to rice and rice with meat. I splurged and went for rice and meat and got a look from the waiter that read as, "Really? That's all you want? OK..." My small plate was enough to hold me over and I still had a few Singapore dollars and coins to keep as souvenirs.

The second experience I had taught me to always ask to board the earliest flight, or in this case, bus. I was scheduled to take the 11pm bus across the Singapore-Malaysia border and I was dreading staying awake until then. As I walked by the bus office for a second time, I thought to ask if there was an earlier bus. My mother always told me the worst anyone can ever say is "no." I asked the man behind the desk if there was a bus leaving before eleven. He looked at his watch and sprang up from his chair. "Yes, yes! There is a bus leaving now! Go get on that one!" His English was very clear and after he switched my ticket I ran out to the street and found my bus, just as the driver was putting out his last cigarette. Had I missed this opportunity, I would have waited another three hours in a part of Singapore that I don't think many tourists loiter in. Instead, I was safely on my way to the one of the most populous cities in Malaysia.

After an uneventful bus ride across the border, I was into the heart of the city shortly after one in the morning. I had no trouble hailing a ride from the line of cabs patiently waiting

outside of the bus station. I pointed, as I had done countless times before, to the name of the hostel where I was planning to stay for the next two nights, and we sped off into the city. To my utter surprise, we hit traffic! The time was near two in the morning and without the safety of my airport bed, reality was beginning to set in: Noah, you are alone. Still, I kept my head about me. It would not have served me well to get nervous or start panicking. My father always gave me the advice “know your surroundings, even in a new place.” Seated in the back of a cab in Kuala Lumpur, I was confident that everything would work out just fine.

My hostel room was small and very simple. One wall was orange and the rest were gray. The room had no external windows, only one facing out into the hallway that allowed for eerie shadows of other world travelers to slide across the foot of my bedspread. The key to my door also turned on the electricity; this was another first for me. The room’s single rotating fan was a gift from heaven as the humidity was unbearable. In the morning I took breakfast on the roof. A cheery Malaysian woman served eggs and toast with super sweet orange juice, and after eating I was on my way. Exploring Kuala Lumpur was intense. It was loud and odorous and filled with people and buses and cars and taxis and trucks and markets and music—these elements filled my senses. I had no idea where to go. I knew I wanted to see the Batu Caves and a few of the tallest buildings in the city like the Petronas Towers as well as the Menara KL Tower, but other than that I had planned to simply explore. And that’s exactly what I did.

I was all alone. In a country of approximately thirty million people, I knew no one. And no one knew me. This feeling of independence was important and unique. It was so very different from anything I had ever experienced. I interacted with people that I will most likely never cross paths with again. The world is such a vast place compared to my small corner of the northeastern United States. I wonder how many people I have seen in my life; certainly the number went up drastically when I traveled abroad to some of the most populated places in Southeast Asia.

It was an honor for me to experience a very minute part of the lives of the strangers I encountered. I have often wondered what people do during a typical day around the world. Exploring Singapore and Malaysia, as well as the other places I traveled to while in Asia, gave me a sense of how they live, eat, speak, interact and simply exist as human beings. It has been said countless times that, fundamentally, we are all the same regardless of where we live, what we look like, what we idolize, who we share faith with, and what we do with our time on earth. I was humbled by all of the wonderful people I met and by the perspectives that these individuals held on the world.

I am hungry to return to Asia. My travels abroad, and specifically my journeys alone, changed me entirely. Through international study and travel I gained a new sense of self and a greater level of confidence. I thank my parents for instilling in me a sense of adventure, while maintaining a keen sense of my surroundings. My navigation skills were put to the test —and without these skills, I might still be walking around the night markets of Kuala Lumpur, blissfully wondering why I had not willingly gotten myself lost years earlier.

—Noah Lucas



Along the Neckar River in Tübingen, Germany [Silene Binkerd-Dale]
Along the Chao Praya River in Bangkok, Thailand [Colin Desko]





Amman, Jordan [Caitlyn Hughes]
Cinque Terre, Italy [Jenny Wu]





Crossings VI

Goondiwindi Sojourn

Before I went abroad I decided I wanted to have a different experience in Australia, away from the city and touristy areas where we would spend most of our time. After two months of living in Brisbane, my group had a week off to spend however we wanted. Others traveled south by plane to see Sydney, or north to Cairns, and even across the country to Perth. Instead, I started my adventure by getting on a bus with fellow student Hayley to meet a host we had happened upon while browsing the website Help Exchange. Boarding the bus that took us out of the only place in Australia we were familiar with and into the great unknown was nerve-wracking. We were headed towards the hot interior of the country, to a tiny town called Goondiwindi, and we really had no idea what to expect. Surely some sort of adventure awaited us.

“Gundy”

November in Australia is really, really hot and humid. Heather met Hayley and me at Toowoomba, a big town in between Brisbane and Goondiwindi, our destination. This was one of the reasons we had settled on her profile: she had offered to pick us up and the bus (4 hours to Goondiwindi) was not cheap: No one really goes to Goondiwindi. Heather was a tiny woman who was a retiring English and Culture teacher at the local primary school. She was quick to point out to us that she’s not your typical farmer’s wife and instead described herself as “cultured and not into cooking.” Unsure of what to do, we awkwardly lugged our bags over to her car. Heather briskly moved old jelly jars and other junk around the car to make room for our bags and before we could get a word out we were speeding across the flat countryside towards the interior of the country. It was hot. Once in the car and settled, almost as an afterthought she asked us “What do you like to drink?”

You do drink, right?" She added that last bit with noticeable concern. Hayley and I rushed to assure her that yes, of course we did. Silly Australians.

After about 15 minutes into our conversation with Heather, we realized that even with two months of living in Australia under our belts, we had no real experience with the thick Australian accent. Driving across the flat, sunny landscape, we heard more slang words in 20 minutes than in the entire time we spent in Brisbane. I thought that was pretty cool.

Once we arrived in Goondiwindi, Hayley and I explored the town while Heather ran errands. We had an easy time of it. Touring the streets of "Gundy" took less than 15 minutes. It was clear we stuck out to everyone (mainly bored cashiers) watching. A passerby overheard us arguing about whether we were in Queensland or New South Wales (bordering states) and called out "Mate! You're in *Goondiwindi!*"

Rolling our eyes, we went to the post office where I mailed several post cards home. I had to choose between two mail slots, labeled "Goondiwindi" and "All other places." Clearly, I came from "All other places."

With time to kill, we wandered over to the library/tourist center where we learned about the town's legendary racehorse, Gunsynd. We spent around an hour there in what should have been called "The Gunsynd Center" watching DVDs of his races, oohing and aaahing as the elderly clerk showed us painting after painting of the dappled grey racehorse. We admired signed photographs, read first-hand accounts and newspaper clippings, and viewed the statue of the horse on Main Street. More than ready to leave, as the elderly clerk was apologetically telling us about his ear wax build-up, we signed the visitor book and noticed the last person to do so was several months before. Hayley and I were still in the phase of thinking "...what have we gotten ourselves into?"





The Family

Heather met us and we drove another half hour out of town to their house, on ByBilla Farm. We met Damien, Heather's husband, at the house. A really wonderful, slightly rotund man with a typically Australian cheerful disposition and valuable insight, Damien walked us through the world of breeding cutting horses and wool-less Dorper sheep (big money!) Together, Damien and Heather were adorable, arguing incessantly in front of us about which way to cook the chicken, draft the lambs, etc. We also met the couple's two sons, James (19) and Nick (21), who seemed exactly the stereotypical cowboys one might expect to find here.

Dinner

Over dinner we learned a lot about living in the small-town, big-farm Australian bush. For starters, if we had trouble understanding Heather and Damien, we hadn't a hope of understanding the boys' speech. Listening to the family bickering, laughing, and chatting over dinner felt like a bilingual event; the boys' accents were much thicker than their parents' and their fast-paced comments contained too much slang for Hayley and me to really follow the conversation. Topics ranged from tire-kickers, dozers and bullies, and pig hunting, to drenching and drafting the ewes and musing over where Nick's missing swag was. I'm still not sure what a swag is. Often Heather or Damien had to translate for us while James scoffed. Of course, all the local boys and girls had swag. What did we use? Feeling exceptionally lucky to have happened upon such amazing people, I thought that this was the Australia I had looked forward to discovering. Despite Heather's denial about cooking, the food was fantastic, and within a day we felt like we were part of the family.

Rounding, Drafting and Drenching

The first few days went by quickly and easily, with a combination of tours of the farm that Damien was happy to give us, basic horse training and psychology with yearling colts, swimming in the river to find the newborn foals, administering penicillin to a sick horse (no vet required), and rounding

up the sheep from their pasture and driving them towards the shearing station. The last part included using motorbikes, sheep dogs, and an impromptu lesson on using a stick-shift and driving on the wrong side of the road. Hayley and I walked behind the 400 sheep while James used the motorbikes to keep the sides together. Prickers clung to my shoes and pant legs, and sweat dripped from underneath my hat in the intense heat. We penned and drafted the sheep to get ready for the following week of shearing. We were content and happy already, but the majority of the work was yet to come. That included shearing the sheep, by far the most intense part of the work. The next three days went by in a blur.

Shearing

As I step into the shearing barn at 6:45 am, my nose is assaulted by the smell of five hundred unhappy sheep penned up in a barn overnight. My eyes adjust to the dim wooden interior, and I notice the sheep behind their pens, eerily following my every move with their eyes. Still half asleep, my ears pick up the rustling hooves, the occasional BAAA piercing the silence, the pathetic bleats from the separated lambs. It's still dark outside. The shearers move in, their trucks rumbling across the horizon leaving a trail of dust hanging in the air behind. Their dogs jump out of the trucks, tongues wagging, eager to start. With a few gruff words from their owners, the dogs settle themselves onto the dusty ground under the barn to wait until needed. Gritty, hardened country shearers with dirty clothes, muscular arms, and little to say that resembles English stomp in. The oil can greases up the shearing machines. We stand around watching the clock. We eye each other. As the needle hits seven, the roar of three machines starting up cuts through the morning air, clippers buzzing ominously. The first of the sheep are dragged out of their pens on their backs, protesting, wiggling, legs flailing. As tradition calls for, the day starts at exactly 7am.

The shearers professionally wrestle the sheep in different positions as their clippers snip at every bit of wool on their bodies. They start with the belly hair, which they flick to me

and I catch the flying lump of wool and put it in a special belly hair pile. Next they shear the head and neck, then the flanks and round sides, and finish at the hind quarters and nubby tails. It's over within a couple of minutes, and they shove the shocked sheep through a little chute where it can leave the barn. I grab the newly sheared wool and spread it out on the wooling table. I sweep the area clean as the shearer wrestles the next sheep. Bloody welts appear from time to time on the velvet smooth skin as the clippers occasionally dig too deep. As the shearers begin to tire at the end of the hour, the mistakes increase and I start feeling badly for the sheep. Sometimes I pick bits of skin off the wool as I sort the hair from the wool, the long from the short. Behind us, James works the shearing press, condensing fluffy wool into huge 220 kg bags. Greasy spots appear on the wooden floors beside each shearer's station. I am greasy and dirty and exhausted after the first hour, wondering how to make it through the day.

Sometimes a shearer will shout something at me and Hayley. Hayley looks over at me confused; I shrug my shoulders and helpfully give her the "I don't know..." sign. Eventually I learn that whenever they speak to us, they want us to hand them the red chalk to mark the wethers. Easy enough. This pattern continues throughout the day in the 100-degree heat inside the dim barn. With an hour lunch and a fifteen-minute break every hour during which we scarf down jelly drop cookies and soda, the work is just bearable. 460 ewes. Wool or hair? Long or short? Sweat. Sheep blood. Lanolin oil. Milk. Pee. Poo. I am coated in grime.

Sometimes a rogue sheep escapes the shearers, and we rush to catch it before it leaps off the second floor of the barn. I grab at its heavy wool coat, the burs matted into it sinking into my fingers as the sheep struggles to pull away. I hold it and wait for a shearer to come rescue me—a panicked sheep is too big for me to drag back alone. When the shearers finish a pen the dogs are used to rearrange the sheep. They are amazing to watch in action. At the words "Marty up!" Marty, an athletic and fierce dog jumps onto the backs of the sheep, snapping

at their ears and breaking up bunches of unmoving sheep. As their backs part, he falls into the frantic array of hooves, only to appear seconds later darting out of the fray several yards away. At times the work is nauseating, like watching a sheep be stitched up mid-shear. But after three days of this work, Hayley and I are pros at sorting the wool.

Damien and Heather were extremely apologetic that we had happened to come during shearing week, but I was ecstatic about the opportunity. It was far from slave labor—yes, it was hard work, but it was incredible learning about the operations of the farm. And by the end of the week, we began to feel like the daughters they never had. We were taken out for ice cream, we watched Nick and James play in their local rugby league, and as we got on the bus to leave to rejoin our group, Hayley and I started talking about what if we just stayed, our group would never be able to find us way out here...I was very reluctant to go. This week made my time in Australia unforgettable and truly unique.

As we rejoined our classmates back in Brisbane, everyone was eager to talk about their various adventures, but I realized that in the excitement and the chatter of reuniting “old” friends, it was impossible to convey in a few sentences how incredible my week had been. It was difficult (and frustrating) to describe in only a few words the amazing people I had met. Even here, I have left out a lot, which goes to show just how much can happen in a few days. Writing this piece has given me that chance to tell my story and do it justice, and for that I am grateful. The success of my study abroad experience really came to rest on this one adventure, and without it, I don't know that I would be able to look back on my semester and say it was truly one of the best experiences of my life.

To everyone going abroad, consider taking a chance on something a little out of the ordinary.

—Jess Steketee



Snapshot

Rainbows Without Rain?

I'm no stranger to the rain. None of us should be, especially after the spring rains of 2011 in upstate New York. The rain we've encountered here in New Zealand, however, is definitely of a different sort: incredibly drenching windy mists, not huge rain drops, coming and going quickly. Anyway, that's what it had just stopped doing when I took this photograph on my walk to school Wednesday. I am in Year One at Gladstone Primary School, captured in my photo with a beautiful rainbow arching over it. It is exciting and unexpected to catch a rainbow, but I see "rainbows" all the time at this school.

These rainbows are the excitement of the kids running freely outside, trying out dance aerobics for the first time (which I had to do on my first day), and exploring their independence. These rainbows are the artwork that is plastered in my classroom and everywhere else, and they are the All Blacks rugby balls that the children play with. They are the smiles, the friendships, the learning, the accomplished feeling when a student finally understands the difference between the long "i" sound and the letter "i." The rainbows are there when students make the right decision, when they reach a new reading level, when they question you, and when you learn something from them. The rainbows are there in the pride the students take in leading morning calendar (in English and Māori), in the animated tales they share with the class about their weekends or the curiosity they take in an x-ray of a fellow student's broken arm.

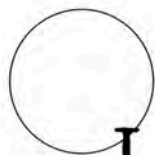
But in order to have those rainbows, you must also have rain—cutting out animal shapes (for a finger-numbing three hours) for the kids to paint, breaking up shoving matches, and trying to get everyone to smile at the same time for the class

picture. It's when the same kid is always "forgetting" his field trip money, or when you have to send them to the corner. The rain comes when there are arguments, when parents complain, when parents do nothing, and when the weather forces the kids inside during lunch. It's when the pigeon flies into the room or the fire drill goes off and all hope for regaining focus is lost. It's when one kid farts in class and everyone knows who did it, when someone throws up in the worm farm, or when someone brings in goodie bags for his birthday, but is one short. The rain comes with the tears and the bloody noses and the uncertainty and the struggles.

But with each drop of rain, you learn, they learn. And, eventually, you realize that you can't have rainbows without rain.

—Lauren Morosky





List I

Remember That Time

Studying abroad has not felt like one cohesive experience to me. It's felt like blurry, rushed hours and days that blend together, and are separated by moments that feel significant. Some of them aren't big moments and most of them individually won't change my life. But compiled, all of these moments have become this remarkable experience that I don't want to end. When I put together all of the memories—small and significant alike—they are how I see this amazing time so far removed from my real life. And all together, these experiences are changing me. Like that time...

I got violently sick on the plane ride to London. Like SICK. And I spent most of the flight pressed against the window, fading in and out of sleepy unconsciousness.

I panicked when I did finally arrive in Bath and I realized I had no idea what to do or where to go. And I was jetlagged and sounded funny and was overwhelmed. And all I could think of was to call the British emergency number I had in my American phone. And nothing happened.

A group of us went out for the first time to a bar. Yeah, that one I don't really remember...

My flatmates and I binged on all the cheap English candy we could find while standing in the kitchen, talking about relationships.

I sprained my ankle and had bronchitis at the same time, during my second week of being abroad.

My friend and I got into a screaming match at a nightclub and he half-heartedly apologized the next day, but I know he didn't really mean it.

Someone forgot to replace the toilet paper roll in the bathroom. Actually, that was more than one time.

We got lost hiking in Wales and had to wander through a thistle patch to find our way out. But that lunch we had afterwards? So worth it.

My friend and I were the only women—and the only guests—in the Dover Backpacker’s Hostel and it was terrifying.

In a Dublin pub the traditional Celtic band that was playing covered “I’m on Fire” and I melted into the bar.

The man in the Angry Birds hat on the Amsterdam subway told me the train smelled like Cheez-Its. And you know what? It really did.

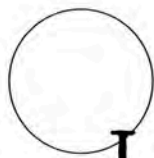
My friend and I accidentally booked a 6:45am train from Berlin to Prague. Stupidest. Decision. Ever.

The mild blizzard in Prague. It was not fun.

The many times, actually, that we all went to McDonald’s late at night. And how some of our saddest nights were when it closed at midnight instead of being open for 24 hours.

It’s a cliché to say this, but I know when I come home after my semester in England I will be incredibly different. The people I’m meeting and the experiences I’m having abroad are, more than anything, changing how I see myself. I’m finding strengths and weaknesses that I really hadn’t seen in myself before. I realize that I’m not confrontational and that I will always be the person to wait for the crosswalk light to turn green before I step into the street. I’m a terrible map-reader, a sub-par tango partner, and an amazing cook when it comes to anything involving curry. I wouldn’t know these things if it weren’t for the good, and the bad, lessons I’ve learned here in Bath. So while getting sick and fighting with friends and being lost in a thistle patch haven’t been the shining moments of my life thus far, I don’t think I would change them at all. They’ve become my study abroad experience.

—Laura Alexander



List II

Dear Japan

Thank you for:

- 1) Teaching me how to bike in a typhoon
- 2) Letting me be a geek
- 3) *Pan* (“pastries”)
- 4) Making toe-socks cool!
- 5) Teaching me how to ride a bike in a skirt
- 6) Having streets so clean you can eat off of them
- 7) The transit system
- 8) Teaching me how to cook rice
- 9) Showing me that the only big things in Japan are the spiders and the crows
- 10) Window blinds. They are completely necessary, especially when the sun rises at 6 am. Every. Single. Day.
- 11) Making bowling common (Yes. Bowling is in fact a sport!)
- 12) No real cheese, regular milk, or index cards (anywhere!)
- 13) Nice construction workers
- 14) Japanese music

- 15) Teaching me what *nato* is
- 16) The most amazing food ever!
- 17) Black swans
- 18) Japanese doughnuts (which taste exactly the same as American doughnuts)
- 19) Octopus tentacles
- 20) Making history interesting
- 21) Teaching me that it is perfectly acceptable, in fact encouraged, to wait until the crosswalk signal says to “walk” rather than chancing it with passing cars
- 22) The most lax airport security
- 23) *Kaitenzushi*
- 24) Colorful cars, buses, construction vehicles, and garbage trucks
- 25) Motorcycle gangs dressed up as Santa

(I've limited myself to only 25 things I would like to thank Japan for, as my list could go on and on.)

—Sasha Miller



Portraits I

Caroline and Me

Caroline glared at me from across the dinner table. I knew what she was thinking even though her thoughts were in Danish: I want the American to leave. She was putting a lot of energy into what she thought was her meanest and most mischievous seven-year-old expression, but I saw more than little girl anger. Caroline was truly upset, and I felt personally responsible. She and I were the only two mono-linguals, and because Camilla and Ulf felt required as hospitable host parents to include me in conversation, English had been the predominant language since my arrival early last week. Poor Caroline was left in the dark. Not only could she not understand me, the new stranger living in her home, but my presence also took attention away from her. She proved that “Only Child Syndrome” also held true across the Atlantic.

Ulf prepared Caroline’s dinner plate: he served her three *frikadeller* (Danish meatballs) and a single piece of broccoli. She refused the food and pushed the plate away. I noticed that her deep blue eyes were now wet and her cheeks grew redder by the minute. The vivid colors in her face were in stark contrast with her gray jumper and dark gray tights that she wore in typical Scandinavian fashion. I prayed that she wouldn’t throw another temper tantrum tonight. Four dinners ago, as Camilla, Ulf and I chatted about my new classes, Caroline had stood up on her chair clenching two handfuls of curried rice. Prior to the launching of saucy yellow granules from her petite fists, Ulf carried her upstairs kicking and screaming. He later retreated, exceedingly apologetic for Caroline’s behavior, with stains on his white shirt and a scattering of rice on his bald spot.

Tonight at dinner, I attempted to include Caroline in dialogue to avoid her temper from escalating again. “Caroline, how was swim practice today?” I asked in English.

Ulf translated for me: "*Caroline, hvordan var svømme praksis I dag?*"

I loved the way he said her name. Care-oh-leen-uh. It sounded so pristine in comparison to the rest of the Danish language. I had attempted the Danish pronunciation of Caroline during the first couple days, but quickly transgressed to the American version. Care-oh-leen-uh sounded so unnatural coming from my mouth.

Caroline didn't answer my question and continued to stare at me. She was now crying. Her lower lip protruded from its normal position and her arms were folded.

I tried again to console her. "What's your favorite stroke? You're probably a much better swimmer than I am."

Ulf interpreted, but my efforts were of no use.

He and Camilla assured me that it was OK—that her being upset wasn't my fault.

"She's just immature for her age," said Camilla in near-perfect English.

"Please tell us if she is ever inappropriate with you," said Ulf. "We want you to feel comfortable here."

I nodded. It seemed so strange how Ulf and Camilla were requesting that I tattletale on their seven-year-old daughter. It was even stranger, though, that a seven-year-old girl was capable of making my transition abroad more difficult.

For the remaining time spent at the dinner table, Ulf and Camilla continued to speak to me in English in an act of defiance against Caroline's ill behavior—a seemingly universal parenting technique called Ignore Your Unruly Child.

Camilla tried to distract herself from the stresses of parenthood. "Tell us about New York!"

She meant the city, and didn't seem to understand that I was from the opposite end of the state, eight hours away.

"We would love to go when—" Ulf paused and discretely nodded his head toward Caroline so she wouldn't hear her name, "gets a little older."

“It would be a lot of—” My sentence was cut short as Caroline dramatically dismissed herself from the dinner table. She had pushed her chair out so quickly that it fell over. Camilla and Ulf looked at each other and simultaneously took very deep breaths.

Caroline went to go play with Chili, the dog, who would undoubtedly give her the attention she yearned for. I glanced over to Caroline’s untouched meatballs. I was so relieved that she left the table before losing control—it was likely that her aim was impeccable.

I heard Caroline call to Chili in the next room over. “Chili, *kommer!*”

Chili and I had already bonded over numerous belly rubs. I wondered what Caroline required for friendship, let alone a peace treaty.

The next morning, I was putting in my contact lenses in the downstairs bathroom when Caroline opened the door unannounced.

She gawked at me through the mirror with eyes and mouth wide open. Caroline then screamed, “*Mor! Mor!...*” I didn’t catch what came after, but certainly understood her desperate calls to her mother. Camilla hurried to the bathroom in misled panic as Caroline feverishly told her mother something about me in Danish.

Camilla began to laugh and pointed to my contact lenses. “Caroline has never seen those before. She says you have plastic eyes.”

I let Caroline watch me put in the remaining left lens. I showed her its curvature and flexibility, how it slides between my thumb and forefinger, and how the lens invisibly settles on my cornea. I made two circles in my hands and brought them up to my eyes as an attempt to show her the purpose of contacts—that they were like glasses. Caroline seemed confused and laughed at my silly hand gesture. I realized that everyone in her family had perfect vision.

I pointed to my eye and then hers. “Eye.”

Caroline smiled and responded, "Øjet."

"Oy-uh," I repeated and Caroline immediately burst out in laughter. I suspected that my Danish pronunciation was wrong. She then turned on the faucet and pointed at the streaming water. "Vand."

"Ven," I repeated, and Caroline was again equally amused with my lack of Danish proficiency.

I then took my turn. "Water."

The morning progressed as Caroline and I moved from room to room naming random objects in our respective languages. Her motives for the name-game were obviously not to learn English; she thought my pronunciations were hilarious and I was now a new source of entertainment. The hilarity of the game heightened when I made the mistake of introducing the word fork. Not to my surprise, Caroline's rendering of fork purposely eliminated the r-sound. She ran laps around the kitchen island with a drawer-full of forks in her hand singing *fok fok fok fok fok* as she waved them in the air. I should have guessed that of all the unruly seven-year-old Danish children with limited English vocabularies, Caroline would be the one to know the f-word. I didn't attempt to make her stop swearing. In retrospect, I should have at least made her put the forks down as she ran, but I was so pleased to see her finally happy in my company.

Later, Ulf's father came over to babysit Caroline for a couple hours while Ulf and Camilla went out. Caroline quickly grew tired of playing with *Farfar* (Grandpa, literally translated as Dad's dad) and came into my bedroom for a sequel of the morning's fun. I was tired of the name-game, so I took out a couple pieces of printer paper and we drew with colored pencils. I sketched a stick figure of Caroline wearing a dress with a pink bow in her hair. I drew a poor representation of their dog and the trampoline that was out back. In return, Caroline drew a portrait of me. She also gave me a stick-figure frame and proudly spelled my name under the drawing. She then proceeded to add a mangy head of hair, a uni-brow, and to my delicate stick-figure frame the largest set of breasts a little girl

could imagine. Unfortunately for me, her masterpiece was not yet complete. To give the drawing its final touch, Caroline drew a line coming from the vertex of my stick-figure body and legs. I thought it was a penis, but her psssss-ing sounds made it clear that I was urinating.

I took the paper from her. “Caroline! No!”

“Yesss,” She replied in English—that much she knew. Her smile stretched from ear to ear; it was both malicious and endearing. I snatched the red pencil from her hand and made edits to my drawing of Caroline. A seven-year-old was not going to be triumphant in this matter.

“Nooooo,” Caroline wailed as she saw her new boobs and devil horns.

“Yesss!” I was now mocking her.

Farfar knocked on the bedroom door and Caroline immediately crumbled both papers and threw them in the trash. She knew *Farfar* would not find them amusing.

“Everything OK?” His English was much weaker than Ulf’s.

I opened the door. “Yeah, everything’s fine!”

I smiled back at Caroline.

She slapped my butt and ran out into the kitchen.

—Ariella Korn



Dinner with My Danish Host Family &
Coffee Vendor in Copenhagen, Denmark [Leslie Carrese]





Portraits II

Senegal: Faces on Film

The imperfections in my photographs stem from several sources. My printmaking process is rough and rushed and incorrect. I have minimal technical skills when it comes to light meters, film developing, and printmaking—essentially everything that is involved with film photography. I also have an unfortunate tendency to expose film to light, in which case the images are lost forever. All of these things could be solved by shooting digitally. I guess it might seem kind of strange that I decided to take all of these portraits on a film camera from the 1970s, but it was a very deliberate choice.

One haunting element of any type of photography is the imaginary images that are never taken, the lost opportunities, and the missed moments. In Dakar, I left the house without my camera and ended up sitting by, captivated, while a friend had his hair cut by a twelve-year-old barber. In Saint-Louis, I imagined taking pictures of groups of rollerblading kids, but was too scared to ask. On campus, I asked my favorite fruit vender, Fatou, if I could take her picture and accidentally offended her. The images that I wanted to take exist in my mind, some formed by moments I actually witnessed and some made up, but all powerful and so deeply embedded that I can still see them months later.

Eventually I stopped taking only imaginary pictures, and started taking real ones. I ended up taking the majority of these real pictures in my last two weeks in Senegal and some of my favorites on my next-to-last day. The Fatou incident had forced me to grapple with the distancing element of photography, and reinforced my feeling that, in general, you must work on knowing people before you come at them with a camera. I do not take pictures of people without asking, no matter how interesting or beautiful they might look, because my goal is to use photography as a means of connecting openly.

Having a camera did not suddenly give me superpowers. I still had to go through every normal process to get to know and understand people in the best way that I could. This is largely why I put my photography on the back burner for several months and spent that time getting to know people. Having an idea of what pictures I wanted to take was a hindrance. It was only when I let go of this idea that I finally realized that the only people I had any desire to photograph anymore were people who I had come to know well, who had let me in organically, and who I would miss greatly. When I asked these people to take their pictures, they didn't need to be persuaded, because the connection was already there.

The most poignant part of film photography—something that doesn't apply to digital—is that even when you get to take the picture, it is hard to know what you are going to end up with. The only indication I had of what was on each roll of film was found in the messy notes I made on a piece of paper. I used this paper—ragged and torn by the time I brought it home—to keep track of who was on which roll. I left Senegal with this list, a plastic bag full of film, and the hope that it would not be ruined by airport security or anything else along the way.

Developing each roll of film was a nerve-wracking experience, as I knew that I only had one chance. One mistake could easily wipe out thirty-six pictures. But there is joy in film developing that far outweighs the fear. Miraculously, I managed not to ruin any of the Senegal rolls.

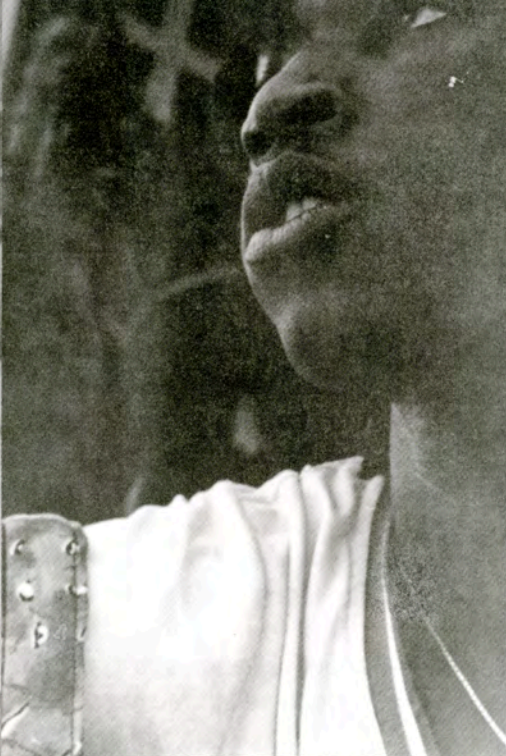
My light meter was broken for much of my time in Senegal, and many of my pictures were much too bright or dark because of it. To the manager of the darkroom, many of them were photographic failures. He would try to coax me through fixing them, talking about aperture and contrast and while I listened politely I continued to rely almost entirely on trial and error, having very little knowledge to fall back on. I worked furiously until there were dozens of pictures suspended in the trays of liquid. Only after they had been rinsed and dried did I actually look at them. Each time I spread them over the table and cried.

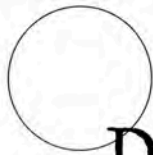
I chose film because I wanted to have something to hold onto in the months following my return. I wanted to have something to work on. I wanted a physical process. Unlike the digital images I took in Senegal, my film images have been through multiple stages, and these stages belong to very different periods of my life. It is this multi-stage process that has been my strongest connection to Senegal. Watching this process come to an end has been extremely difficult and saddening. As I finish printing my photographs and try to choose the ones most representative of the people I met in Senegal, I am struggling. I am trusting these pictures to speak for themselves, although I don't know what they'll say to you. I hope you can overlook their imperfections and understand that it is these imperfections that make them raw and real and representative.

—Michaela Thorley









Definition

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, which follows the lunar cycle. It began on August 1st in Jordan, with the first sighting of the new moon. Since it follows the lunar calendar, a Muslim will have fasted every day of the year in 34 years time because each year Ramadan starts about 11 days earlier than the year before. It is a month of fasting, so no eating or drinking from sun-up to sun-down. Fasting is one of the 5 pillars of Islam and is intended to teach Muslims about patience, spirituality and humility. Ramadan is a holy time in which Muslims focus on prayer as well as giving to their neighbors and helping the less fortunate.

It's one thing to read all about Ramadan and learn the facts; it's a totally different experience to actually witness this holy month take place. Before starting my semester abroad, I knew we would be here for Ramadan, but I had no idea what it would really entail. I've come to the realization that it is a beautiful, spiritual, communal affair that is like nothing I have ever witnessed.

The first few days were tough, getting used to not eating or drinking in public (including our classroom), trying not to forget the little things like taking a quick sip of water while you're dying from the heat walking around downtown, or after giving a presentation in class, or chewing a piece of gum. But, it soon became second nature.

Our first *Iftar* (dinner breaking the fast at sunset) was spectacular, the food was delicious and the sense of appreciation and humility we experienced that night was encouraging to say the least. Walking around town after 4pm is an experience, because by that time most shop owners have closed down for the day, and restaurants have not yet opened. By this time,

Jordanians were lethargic, cranky and hungry and all that was left to do was sleep, pray and prepare for *Iftar* at sunset.

The last 2 weeks were incredibly different from the previous month and a half; we had to change our entire schedule to adjust to the sleepiness that sets in with Ramadan and the issues with non-fasting in a fasting environment. All of our instructors and speaking partners in the program were awesome throughout this time, as they all offered answers to any of our questions about the holy month. When speaking to different people, you learned that everyone kind of had their own feelings as to why they were fasting. Some said the main reason was to feel humility and understand what life is like for those who are less fortunate; others said it was more about learning patience and still others noted it was to learn to be submissive to Allah.

No matter the reason, they all enjoyed the fast and it was easy to tell that it was a very special time for them. Basically it's like Christmas every day for a month—a huge meal shared with ALL of your family, special treats, special presents and special decorations. The radio stations here wish “you and yours *Ramadan Kareem*” (happy Ramadan) and the stores are decked out in *Ramadan Kareem* signs, lights and lanterns.

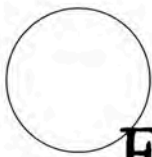
My favorite time during Ramadan is sunset, as silence envelops the city for a few moments after the call to prayer. People are busy praying and then all at once you can hear forks and knives clinking the plates of hungry Muslims digging into their *Iftar*. The city comes alive, all the shops and restaurants open and people are cheery and overcome with joy and love. It is truly a beautiful time.

—Caitlin Hughes



Wadi Rum, Jordan [Caitlyn Hughes]





From My Journal

Five Things

If you ask me what the most magical thing is in this world, then I will definitely say “time”. Two weeks ago, I was still sitting on the couch in Golub house, gathering information about Louisiana from movies and books. Two weeks later, I have had a life-changing adventure and finally turned that abstract information into real experiences. A person’s perception can change in a short amount of time. The memory of this experience plays like a movie in my mind, and in that movie are five influential characters and locations that I will never forget.

1. Ms. Lowis and Her Restaurant

There is a famous expression in China: “The food he cooks makes the man.” Peoples’ tastes and cooking styles often reveal the essence of their personalities and characters. We say that China is “the country founded on soil and table.” Thus, I felt right at home eating the food cooked by Ms. Lowis, an old lady in Dulac. Every day, when we finished our work, she would prepare lunch for us at her cozy restaurant. Ms. Lowis, and her cuisine, are delicate. Each has benefited from the passage of time and the accumulation of culture. Ms. Lowis’ cooking is like a book, demanding a full heart, and concentration.

We never knew what she would serve until we sat down and enjoyed our meal in front of the warm fire. The meal would start when Ms. Lowis would carry out glasses of Cajun peach tea, fresh and cool. It was not too sweet, but opened up our appetites for the main dish, which came out next.

Ms. Lowis brought out cabbage with beef and shrimp. At first I thought the dish might be tasteless...I didn’t see any trace of garlic sauce or soy sauce, which are prominent in Chinese cuisine. But then I smelled it, wonderful and powerful. Once I

opened my mouth I just couldn't stop. The cabbage was soft and juicy and the beef and shrimp were lightly cooked. The ingredients danced on my tongue. My only thought was "I wish I could have more."

Ms. Lewis is like her food. At first glance, she is just another normal old lady. But then you start talking to her. She is the daughter of the chief of a local Native American tribe, who consider her a "living encyclopedia" of their history and culture. Ms. Lewis has visited many countries in Africa and Europe. She has stayed on her land through many natural disasters. She has a wonderful family; photos of them cover the walls of the restaurant.

Many organizations helped her through the disasters, and so she made our food with heart and gratitude; we could taste it! After our last meal there, she carried out 8 wrapped presents for us—her hand-made coconut pies. Ms. Lewis gave each of us a warm hug. I still have her restaurant's card with me and I think this was the greatest restaurant I have ever been to. When my Mom visits from China next year I want to bring her to Dulac for a wonderful dinner at Ms. Lewis' restaurant. We will skip the fancy restaurants in Boston, the expensive drinks in Orlando, the disdain of the waiters in New York City, and just enjoy this warm place and its great owner, who made me feel so at home.

2. Bourbon Street and Canal Street

You can't see any scars left by the hurricanes if you only go to Bourbon Street and Canal Street and the French Quarter area in New Orleans. "Where is the hurricane? Aren't we supposed to help people build their houses? Where are those broken houses?" But I'm not going to talk about the bars, restaurants, or touristy shops. I want to write about what most visitors might ignore, like a black street drummer who turned a plastic bucket into the most wonderful instrument in the world. Men in fine suits and women with shiny jewelry stood on balconies with glasses of red wine, chatting and gig-

gling in an elegant manner. Another group of people circled the drummer, clapping their hands and cheering. New people joined in. About 10 minutes later, the bucket in front of the drummer was filled with one-dollar bills. Then people went on their way as the drumbeat stopped. The man wiped sweat from his brow, stretched his arms and disappeared into the crowd with his buckets.

I met many street artists like him, and saw many wealthy people covered in gold and silver. The contrast reminded me of the differences between the Lower Ninth Ward and the French Quarter, and also of the very different reactions to Katrina in New Orleans and Sandy in New York City. When Katrina came, the Lower Ninth Ward suffered a lot and afterward it was mostly left on its own to survive. The French Quarter, however, is the district that makes the most money from tourism, so it was well-protected and taken care of after the hurricane.

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, it took a long time for the government to take action and the compensation people received from insurance companies and the government was delayed and cut. When Hurricane Sandy hit New York City, even TV programs in China reported the disaster and hundreds of reporters travelled to witness the events. The vivid comparison shows us a cruel reality.

During my visit to Bourbon Street, I was too emotional for any entertainment. Maybe I was not born for revelry. So instead I got into a streetcar and explored the city in the warm, orange glow of sunset.

3. Lower Ninth Ward

I want to tell people about the Lower Ninth Ward because I was shocked by the damage from Hurricane Katrina and the depressing current condition of the area. I won't beg people to come to see it as visitors but at least I want to raise awareness about New Orleans and how it has suffered from hurricanes. I didn't see many people living in the Lower Ninth Ward. Many



Abandoned Bicycle in Munich, Germany [Kathryn Schumacher]

houses still had broken windows and mold-covered walls. I clearly remember a car that was burned and left on the street. Wild weeds grew very tall and nearly covered some of the narrow roads. Many houses were washed away entirely and others were scattered by the floodwaters and formed a messy pattern.

But I finally found something to be hopeful about when I got to the site where houses were built by a non-profit organization called Make It Right, founded by Brad Pitt. All the new houses were raised above the ground to better survive future disasters. They were also built in an affordable, high-quality, environmentally-sustainable way. I could see a beautiful little garden in front of almost every house with various kinds of plants and flowers. But few people had moved into these houses and many of them had "For Sale" signs on them. Houses are easy to rebuild, but peoples' hearts are not. People are not confident that they can return and not lose everything again in a future disaster. And that is the dilemma that the Lower Ninth Ward is facing and will continue to face. What I can do is to share my experience and hope it will show others how serious the problem is.

4. Isabel and Project Homecoming

I admire the people who work for non-profit organizations. They are patient, caring and responsible. They work out of love and self-discipline and obviously not for material rewards. In the week I worked with the staff from Project Homecoming, I was struck by the harsh working conditions but also the diligence of the staff and their ability to endure hardship. They had no clean restroom, no hot meal to eat and the only break was a half hour when they stopped construction work and ate their lunch. Every day they left the worksite with dust, paint and sweat all over their bodies, but with no complaints. When the owner of the house came by to check the progress, one staff member would show her around and point out the new things that had been built, and what still needed improvement. These visits helped us all see the daily

progress we were making. I could witness the light and smile on the owner's face; she was one step closer to moving back into her house.

Among those staff members we were working with, Isabel was the most impressive. She always wore a smile on her face and her sense of humor was greater than anyone I have ever met. One would meet her and never know that she had lost a child. Isabel always brought the best from within her, and this pulled people around her out of sadness and fear. Sometimes she would talk about her dead child, show us pictures, and then she would look up into the sky, with tears pouring down her face for a few minutes. Then she would wipe the tears, start to laugh again, and say "I feel good talking to you girls." She once mentioned why she chose this job: "My daughter will never come back, but, you know, I can't live in the past. I must keep going and that's why I want to give something back to the community."



Ran Wang in Grand Isle

She is nimble and does everything quickly and efficiently. She gave us very clear tasks and told us if we had any problems, we just needed to ask her and she would help us out. She cried when we left. I hope she will have a wonderful life in the

future. And thanks to beautiful people like Isabel who work for non-profit organizations, New Orleans has been recovering, little by little, day by day.

5. *Grand Isle*

This was the best part of our trip. If there is one thing in the world that I crave, it is the chance to work closely with nature, under the vast blue sky and on a beach by a grand ocean. I felt so satisfied when we finished building a long fence along the coastline and buried plant seeds into the ground. Half a year later, those tiny plants will come out for fresh air and create scattered green stars on the beach, bringing hope and life. I participated in this process, leaving my footprint here, on the edge where the southern border of this country meets the Gulf of Mexico.

The staff members working for the non-profit organization here all have tanned skin, deep blue eyes like the ocean and familiar southern accents. They contribute years and years of their lives to protecting and taking care of this natural reservation few people know about. But the staff members have made the choice to stay here and do something they truly enjoy. One can hardly be troubled by materialistic things and outside worries in such an elegant place. People all say the Maldives or Cancun have the prettiest shores in the world, but I'd say that Grand Isle is the heaven in my heart; it is a place that is seldom touched by human beings and where birds fly freely.

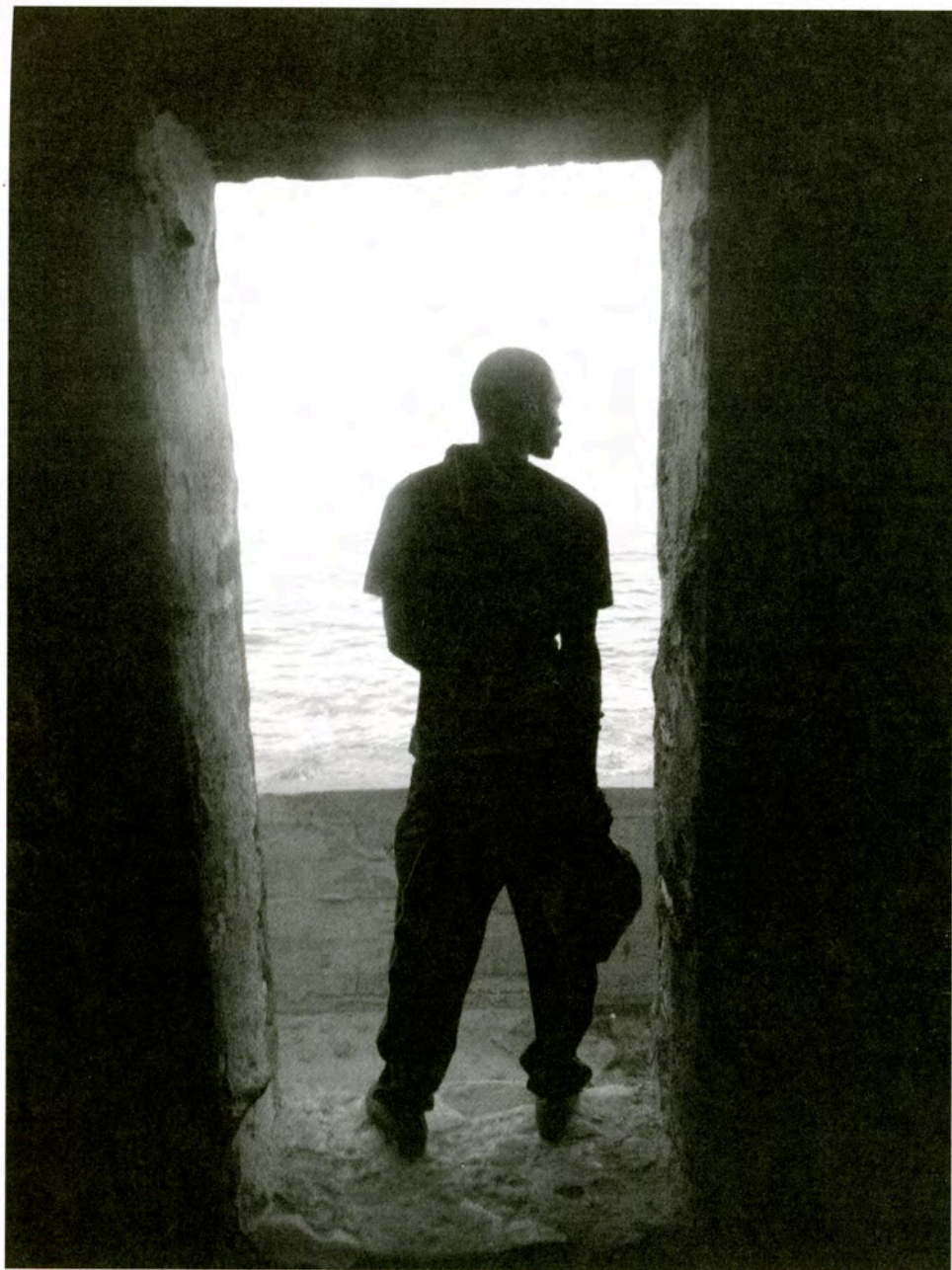
—Ran Wang

'ÁQUI NASCEU O FENÔMENO'



Hobart Soccer Players at Ronaldo's Field, Brazil [Will Abbott]
A Bundle of Joy, India [Brenda Souza]





Door of No Return at the Maison des Esclaves, Île de Gorée, Senegal [Anyà Bounar]





I thought
down the stairs, for
Aleph."

"The Aleph?"
"Yes, the place
the world, seen from
but I did return. The
privilege so that the

head over heels, and when I
repeated.

here, without admixture or
every angle, coexist. I revealed
the child could not understand
man might carve out a poem

with there I tried
opened my eyes, I saw the

confusion, all the places of
my discovery to no one,
and that he was given that
! Zunino and Zungri shall



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