



The **Aleph**  
a journal of global perspectives

12







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The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives  
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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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Partnership for Global Education

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*Front Cover:* The Danube at Sunset in Budapest, Hungary [Lindsay Kent], Greenland Ice Sheet [Alison McCarthy]; *Inside Front Cover:* Inari Shrine in Kyoto, Japan [Jiaqi Chang]; *Frontispiece:* Rainforest in Lamington National Park, Australia [Brina Dillon]; *Inside Back Cover:* 10,000 Buddhas Monestary in Sha Tin, Hong Kong [Krystina Bronner]; *Back Cover:* Spices in the *Souq al Sukar* (sugar market), Amman, Jordan [Erika Stuke], Giant's Cup in the Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa [Abigail White]

## 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 understand and convey his experience to his readers.

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. It 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. 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."

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## No Pasa Nada

WHEN I DECIDED to go to Sevilla, Spain, to participate in an immersion program, I knew it wasn't going to be easy. Sure, my Spanish skills were alright at best, but I was nowhere near fluent in the language. I had promised myself that I would practice my Spanish the summer before my trip in the fall, but no practice that I could have done would have prepared me for what was in store for me.

I wanted to participate in an immersion program because my goal was to grasp every aspect of the Spanish culture. I wanted to come out of the program with a completely new perspective, and I have absolutely reached that goal. However, this was not easy to accomplish.

The first day I met my host mom, Rocío, I was anxious. When the bus came to a stop and it was time for my HWS group to find our host families, my heart pounded. I started to question my ability to speak Spanish. Everything that I had learned in the past about Spanish felt like it was slipping away in front of my eyes. I wanted to give up and go home.

The first thing that I said in Spanish to Rocío when I met her was "Listen, I am really sorry that my Spanish is terrible. I really want to improve and I am so nervous right now." Rocío smiled and said, "Jenna, I am not nervous. I am excited. This is going to be a great experience. *No pasa nada*." At the time, I had no idea what *no pasa nada* meant. When I settled in to Rocío's home I looked it up. *No pasa nada* meant "Don't worry about it." I came to discover that this phrase captured the essence of the Spanish way of life.

As the semester went along, my Spanish improved dramatically and this was largely thanks to Rocío. Although I struggled with my Spanish, she was patient with me every day. She constantly taught me new words and she truly wanted me to see her culture. She took me out to meet her friends, to her favorite restaurants, to her favorite stores, and she even went on runs



with me along the Guadalquivir River. I would find myself apologizing over and over again for the lack of my Spanish skills and she would just look at me with her kind eyes and say “*No pasa nada, Jenna.*” Every time.

Rocío wasn't the only *sevillana* who used the phrase *no pasa nada*. My professors said it, my Spanish friends said it, and even news anchors said it. The Spanish live a very relaxed life. In the United States, we are very work-oriented as a culture. Everyone is constantly worried about meeting deadlines, studying and being successful. The Spanish are also concerned with being successful, but they believe that everything comes with time and patience. They believe that everything will work out eventually and that worrying is a waste of time. I came to this realization one day as I was rushing to get to class. I looked



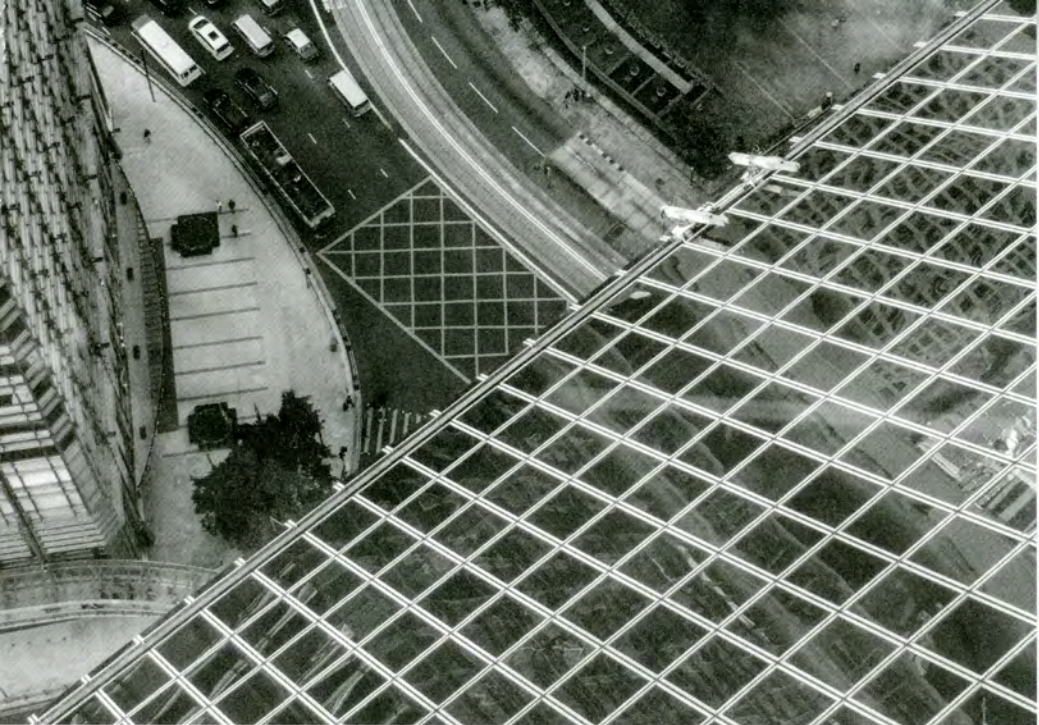
Two Portraits of Rocío, Seville, Spain [Jenna Raleigh]

around me and noticed that nobody was in a hurry. I could picture Rocío in my head, saying “*No pasa nada*,” and telling me not to worry about being late to one class. She would tell me that one day would not affect the rest of my life and that I should be thankful for each day that God gives me.

My semester in Spain taught me much more than Spanish. It taught me to not take anything for granted and it reminded me of the important things in life. In Sevilla and in the rest of Spain, all the businesses would shut down in the city at 3 p.m. and everyone would come home to be with family for lunch. This tradition reminded me of how important it is to spend time with family and relax. At first, it was hard for me to be completely relaxed during these siesta hours. I was annoyed because during the day I like to be productive. Then I realized how important it was to look at your life and reflect. Rocío taught me that everyone needed siesta time, to remind us that we are only human and we deserve peace and relaxation.

Today as I look outside and see the cold and snowy campus, I remember the warmth and kindness that Rocío showed to me while I spent my semester in Spain. Although I won't be returning to Spain in the near future, I know that I will always have a home in Sevilla. I will always remember how important it is to live a life without worry and to treat every day like it is my last.

—Jenna Raleigh



Hong Kong Streetscape [Elliott DeGuilme]  
Vienna Streetscape, Austria [Andrew Hellmund]



## At Least Ballet's Already in French

ON MY FIRST day of ballet in the south of France, I guess I introduced myself as Pony. No, no, it's not a nickname. My name's Pony. I really don't know how anyone kept a straight face the whole class. "Ça va, Pony?" Yes, Pony's fine. Pony understands the combination, *merci*. It wasn't until after, in the locker room, that the 20-year-old who spoke the best English asked me to clarify the pronunciation. I was then met with Bonnie and Clyde references, complete with hand-gun gestures, something that has now become a regular occurrence for me when introducing myself in France.

I was more nervous walking to Aix City Ballet than I'd normally care to admit. But the French are pretty particular, and ballet is even more particular, so I couldn't imagine what the two combined could possibly render. This class was the advanced level, so I was hoping it wouldn't be full of pink tights and impossibly thin girls, their arabesques hitting the backs of their heads. I can't even remember the last time I wore pink tights. I had worn black but shoved some in my bag, just in case.

Ballet isn't really something a lot of people continue to do in America after a certain age unless they want to dance professionally. After all, who would want to give up Saturday mornings to take a class that is essentially as demanding as it is rewarding, just because? But perhaps that's just my (biased) opinion.

I started ballet when I was 13—about 10 years later than the average ballerina—so I'm not unaccustomed to taking classes from time to time that were challenging, to say the least. But dance was something that helped me begin to take ownership over my body at an age when insecurity is all too prevalent. I am grateful I stuck with it despite the hardships. Being a dancer is now something that largely forms my identity. It shapes my

perspective, strengthens my self-discipline, and even affects how I move in everyday life.

The studio is only a five-minute walk from my apartment. It's off a main street, a narrow alley leading to a nondescript door. As I didn't get lost for once, I was about 25 minutes early, but I'm used to people getting to class 30 minutes prior to stretch. When I walked in, however, it was empty except for an older woman.

I didn't catch my teacher's name, unfortunately, but I knew from previously talking to the owner of the studio that "Madame" was a semi-celebrated teacher from Paris. I was somehow able to communicate to Madame that I'm American, wanted to try the class, and, yes, I have danced before. She used a cane and moved very, very slowly but was elegant nonetheless. Her small dog ran around the studio, leash trailing behind it, before she tied it to a barre.

Madame motioned for me to go upstairs where I met another girl, Emma, who was in one of the two changing rooms. Her English skills matched my French, so we didn't talk too much before going downstairs. She was able to tell me black tights were acceptable. Madame asked if I was cold and motioned for me to choose one of the cardigans hanging beneath the staircase. It was pink with tiny buttons and ruffles. I felt very French but hoped it wasn't the equivalent of wearing a long-forgotten castoff from the lost-and-found.

Aside from Emma, the rest of the class wandered in late, of course polite and apologetic, but the teacher wasn't distressed. The class size was intimate: a total of five including me, and the women's ages ranged from 18-22. I got the feeling they took the class because they like ballet, but probably didn't want to dance professionally. I began to wonder about the difference in emphasis on the value of the arts in France. Marseille, a neighboring city in the Provence region, was just selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2013, meaning that all year long, hundreds of cultural and artistic events will occur throughout the Provence region. While I have always

experienced living in areas that value art, I have recently met Americans who didn't know what a liberal arts school was, let alone modern dance.

I had no idea what to expect in terms of skill level for this advanced ballet class, but I found myself, well, more than competent, something I haven't always experienced and was really not expecting. I was even complimented on my expressive *port de bras*. Madame wanted to know if I had a Russian teacher at home, but I'm not Vaganova trained. Occasionally, they rallied their English to try to explain things, and I always tried to answer in French. I was surprised and relieved by everyone's compassion.

I would have liked to say I was not apprehensive to dance in France, that I rolled out of bed that morning only relaxed and eager. Most people probably think of me as less distraught than I really am, but when writing this, I realized that continuing a passion abroad isn't just about dealing with new customs but also previous afflictions. I am beginning to acknowledge that maybe—just maybe—I do have a chance at making something of myself in dance, and hopefully this experience in France will only foster my confidence.

—Bonnie Bushnell



Wading in the Ocean, South Africa [Karah Charette]  
Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland [Alex Welych-Miller]





Sled Dogs in Greenland [Alison McCarthy]





## Dancing in Ireland

I DIDN'T KNOW what to expect when I went to my first Irish dance class in Galway. When I got out of the taxi and saw what looked like a bunch of old men sitting in a bar, I checked to make sure I was even in the right place—it turned out the bar was just connected to the community center, which also doubled as a men's sports club. Once I figured out I was, in fact, at the right place, I walked into the dance hall to see a group of women with feet moving at light speed tapping to swift-moving Irish music. I remember feeling my stomach drop at the sight; even though I have danced my whole life, I had never taken an Irish dance class before, and I wasn't sure whether I would break my ankle or fall on my face.

Luckily, I decided to be brave and try out the class anyway. Although I was the only American, I wasn't the only one with minimal to no Irish dance skills, so I was in good company. The teachers started us out at a very basic level, and we worked our way through reels and all kinds of jigs for ten weeks. I was surprised and delighted at how natural it felt to me and how fun it was to be Irish dancing. My classmates were thrilled I was American, and they loved to ask me about the places I had traveled and what life was like back in the States. One of my classmates, Claire, even offered to drive me home from classes, which definitely beat the 25-minute walk, especially on rainy nights.

Fast forward three months, and I'm waiting to go onstage at my first *feis*, or Irish dance competition. Little girls and boys are literally dancing circles around me, and my palms are sweating. I'm more nervous than I ever have been for any dance performance, although the only people in the audience are parents, small children, and my mom. Luckily, I was with the ladies from my class, and our teachers offered us kind words of encouragement.

We lined up in front of the judges a few at a time. When the music began, my feet began to move as if on autopilot,



Carrick-A-Rede Rope Bridge, Northern Ireland, [Alex Welych-Miller]

and I hopped and jumped around the stage for a few short seconds. We spent ten weeks practicing footwork, keeping our arms tight against our sides, making sure our legs and feet were turned out when they were supposed to be, and it all culminated into a few short routines. In the end, it wasn't too bad—I only messed up a couple times, and I came away with a few medals. Even more than that, I left with a sense of pride and accomplishment that I had learned and, on a very basic level, mastered a new type of movement that I had never experienced. And, I met some amazing women who played a huge part in the experience I had during my time in Ireland.

All in all, Irish dance was a success for me—no broken bones, no major embarrassments, and I had the opportunity to experience a unique cultural tradition in its country of origin. I'm so grateful I had the opportunity in the first place, and I'm hoping I can continue taking Irish dance lessons back in the States, preferably with people on my skill level!

—Alex Welych-Miller

## Studying in Denmark, Learning About Myself

THE FIRST DAY of my time studying abroad was orientation. A Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS) graduate from the previous year came and talked to us about how wonderful our upcoming experience in Copenhagen was going to be. She had been very involved in the DIS community, and had also won an award during her time at DIS. She spoke at length about the joys of study abroad. At the time, this was hard to hear. I was sitting in that audience having arrived the day before and was tired, overwhelmed, and jet-lagged. I didn't think I would look back on that moment, or indeed my study abroad experience as a whole, with any warmth or joy at all. It was difficult to see myself ever becoming as confident at DIS as this woman was.

Well, hindsight is, of course, 20/20. By the middle of the semester, I wanted to go back and tell my past self that it really does get better. I made amazing friends, bonded with my classmates, and increased my self-confidence. So often, people talk about study abroad as a huge, life-changing experience. I found that it truly was. I found it freeing to be away from school and my family. I didn't have many people from HWS around me, so I was immediately exposed to a different group of people and ideas. I dove right in and made a point of speaking to people and introducing myself almost daily, not just during those first few orientation days. I therefore drew myself out of my own shell, which was exciting. I also took Danish, which at first was challenging but eventually became an important key to understanding Denmark and feeling more at home.

As for meeting the Danes themselves, it was also a matter of taking the leap and challenging myself to move outside of my comfort zone. When I first met my host, I was extremely intimidated. We had nothing in common, which made dinners

silent and awkward. At first, I found my host to be often cold and unapproachable, and it was difficult to relate to her. On the other hand, there were moments when she would be more animated, blunt, and even crass. This uncomfortable mixture took a while to get used to. Over the course of the semester, though, I began speaking up around her more often. I talked to her about my travels in Europe, and what I was learning in my Danish class, which opened interesting conversations about the nature of language and how it evolves.

I also spent time with my host's extended family and got to know them in all their Danishness. I learned about their unique sense of national pride: they view themselves as international underdogs and are proud of this status. My host's son-in-law once made a comment about how Denmark has never won anything. This goes back to the Danes' constant remembrance of their 1864 military defeat by Germany, in which Denmark lost much of their land. They commemorate this loss by preserving the battlefield site as a historical landmark. This loss has also led to the mentality of behaving as an insular tribe that sticks together against the perceived threat of the outside world. This was so interesting to me, coming from the American mentality of striving to be the best at everything, no matter what.

I was taught about the mentality of being the victim in my Danish class as well. The class was about language and culture, and examining the overlaps between the two. Our teacher spoke often about the "tribe" of Danes, and how it is difficult to break into that closed circle. I found this to be true at parties, where Danes gathered in clumps by themselves and chatted away in Danish, making little effort to introduce themselves or help me and other DIS students feel comfortable. Though I attended these parties with other Americans, I still found them to be a real test of the skills I had been putting into practice over the course of the semester. One of the women in the DIS Res Ed office had spoken at orientation about talking to the Danes. She used the analogy of ketchup in a bottle to explain that Danes are often reluctant to chat,

just as ketchup is reluctant to come out of its bottle. But all it takes is a little push. I was scared because I am often quite shy, so I was intimidated by these initially quiet Danes. But then I remembered what I had been thinking all along: you're abroad and this is your chance. So I went for it and began making an effort to actually go up to Danes and talk to them. It was difficult at first, but it got much easier as I got more confident.

Over the course of my semester abroad, I also became more conscious of myself as American. I spent most of my formative years abroad, which makes me a "third-culture kid." I lived and traveled mostly in Germany and German-speaking regions, so that area feels like home to me. I make a conscious effort to be respectful of the customs and culture wherever I travel. Locals see that I make this effort and therefore welcome me in.

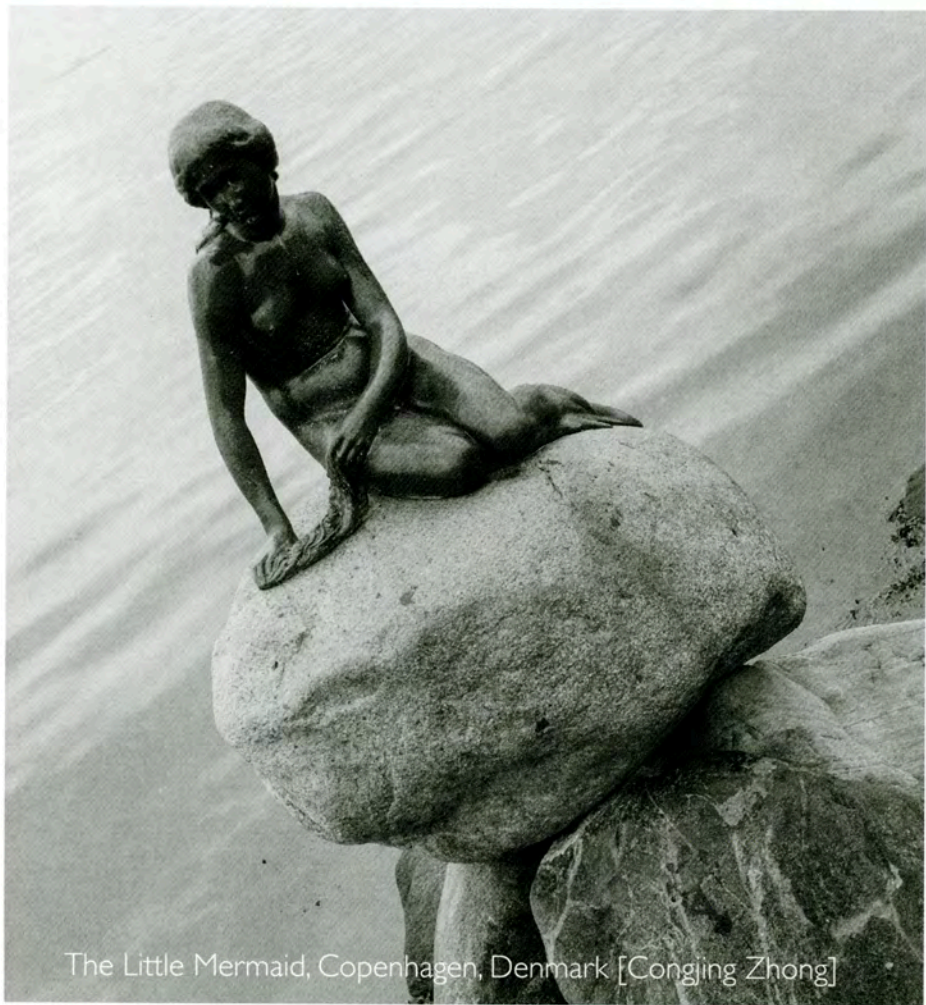
In Denmark, it was much the same way. Because everyone spoke English, it was easy to immediately feel comfortable. I was eager to learn about Danish culture, because I had never travelled to Denmark before. However, I met some Americans who did not have the same level of cultural awareness, which made me worry that their behavior might impact how the Danes viewed me.

I didn't like how ignorant I was of world affairs—the Danes knew much more about the news and history, and stayed more up-to-date on current events. I realized how content I had been to stay within the college bubble. After this revelation, I spent more time reading the news. Again, it was a simple, and perhaps obvious, change. Yet it helped me feel more confident as a world citizen. I have continued to read the news since coming back. This practice is not only about becoming a world citizen, but about growing up and realizing how interconnected we all are.

I am incredibly grateful for my experience. Even my mistakes and regrets taught me something. There were times when it was difficult, and living in a new place was often exhausting, but those times were character-building. For example, I would often have to ride my bike for 15 minutes through rain and wind in order to get to the train. That's when

you find a reserve that you didn't think you had and as a result, you grow. By the time I got on the plane heading back home, I felt like I proved myself as a person, which was rewarding. I looked back on who I was at orientation and was proud to say that I really did discover all the joys of study abroad that I had been promised.

—Clara Lowenberg



The Little Mermaid, Copenhagen, Denmark [Congjing Zhong]



The London Eye in England [Emily Clipston]



Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey [Emma Goodman]



## Transformed by a Country Road

Have you ever walked down a road, just to walk it?

Have you ever spent an hour moving your feet, knowingly, in the wrong direction?

I have.

I have walked the wrong way on purpose, just to see what's over the hill.

I have stood and taken in the open landscape around me, reaching miles and miles with my eyes, opening my face to the sun's warmth before it is hidden for the night.

I have felt lost, but have not felt scared.

I have felt cold, but have felt warm at the same time.

I have ridden a gentle horse over level and simple terrain and have seen a beauty I haven't seen elsewhere.

I have done these things with people who were strangers, but who are now close friends.

I have been changed

by a walk

down an Irish country road.

—Rachel Newcomb



## I Watched History Unfold

I NEVER WOULD have thought that my study abroad experience would include witnessing the resignation of a Pope and the inauguration of a new one. I live about five blocks from St. Peter's Square, so I've seen the chaos and the crowds of people grow with each passing week. I had the opportunity to attend Pope Benedict's last appearance, even getting a glimpse of him riding around the square in his "Pope mobile." The square was filled with thousands of people, making it difficult to see much, but just being surrounded by so many people from around the world was an incredible experience.

The day before the conclave was to begin, I was traveling back from class on a bus completely filled with priests. The majority of them spoke English, so I was able to understand their excitement about the upcoming days.

After classes on Wednesday, a few of my friends headed over to St. Peter's Square to see if the Cardinals had made a decision. Black smoke appeared from the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel, so there was a sense that there would not be an announcement of a new Pope that day. A bit later, however, I got a message that white smoke was billowing from the chimney. I grabbed my camera and ran out the door. I waited in the rain along with tens of thousands of others, many waving flags as we all looked to the balcony where the new Pope would appear.

The time had finally come. The curtains covering the window where the Pope was to appear had opened. One of the cardinals addressed the square, saying the new Pope had taken the name "Francesco." Suddenly, I heard people around me chanting "Francesco, Francesco" without even knowing which Cardinal was chosen. While waiting for the Pope to come out, I asked a man in front of me if he knew which Cardinal it was because I couldn't quite translate all of the Italian being spoken. I was so excited because he had initially told me he was American, but I soon heard other people saying he was

from Argentina. It was impressive that a non-European had been elected. To me, this showed the world that the Catholic Church is ready for change.

The Pope finally made his appearance. In a sea of thousands of people, I clapped and cheered. Standing in St. Peter's Square as the Pope addressed the world for the first time was indescribable. To see people from all over the world gathered in one place for one sole purpose was extremely humbling. I will never forget that feeling or what I saw and to have had this opportunity was an incredible privilege.

—Andie D'Agostino

*Editor's Note: A version of this piece originally appeared in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.*





Copenhagen Bicycles, Denmark [Greg Shelkey]  
Bicycle and Dog, Rome, Italy [Caroline Demeter]





Bicycle in Bruges, Belgium [Emily Surprenant]  
Mural in Berlin, Germany [Yuqi Ge]



## Four Scenes from Maastricht

### I. Giselle: Memoriam for a Bicycle

UPON MY ARRIVAL in the Netherlands, I began my quest for a bike. *Een fiets* in Dutch. I found Giselle a few days into my trip. I was with a few of my friends and when we walked towards the university, we saw that there were two bikes locked up against a building. There was a wonderful 1970s-looking golden bike and I wanted it. A sign on the door said, "Bikes, Apartment 8." Zak, always the confident Englishman, told me to knock.

So I knocked. A tiny old Dutch man opened the door, pointed to the bikes, pointed to me, and asked me a question. I pointed to the bike. Then I bought it. I bought a bike off of a stranger in a foreign country. I made Zak test it out; I was too nervous after my foray into being a confident and independent person. I rode the bike home, locked it up, and named it Giselle.

Giselle was my pride and joy. That bike stayed with me until the end. I learned how to fix it. I took it out of the shed and put it on the grass and really figured out how it worked. I didn't Google "how to fix tires" or sell it for scraps. I tried to fix it myself, and, when I really couldn't, some European boy with a sense of purpose and an inherent knowledge of bicycles would come over and, in French, or English, or hand gestures, would tell me how to repair Giselle.

Though selling my bicycle at the end of my trip seemed like I was giving away my left arm, I knew I had gained more than just muscles in my calves. I knew how to fix things. How to read street signs in different languages, how to use hand signals. How to properly lock up a bike. I gained what I needed: confidence. All from a bicycle named Giselle.





Situationist Altered Street Sign in Paris, France [Julie Kuntzman]

## II. *Moutarde*

I got off of the plane in Amsterdam and arrived in Maastricht all before two in the afternoon. In that whirlwind of excitement I had: 1) found where I was going to be living for the next four months, 2) met my new roommate, and 3) discovered I was extremely and terribly hungry. I mustered up some courage and walked with my roommate to the nearest grocery store. Grocery List: bread, milk, mustard, apples, etc. I found almost everything, except for the mustard. Now, I know what you're thinking: mustard is not a necessity. It wasn't; you're correct. But it was a challenge. When I had finally found it in a back aisle, I couldn't understand any of the words. Where was regular mustard?

I panicked, and turned to a woman next to me and asked, in English, "Do you know the difference between all of these mustards?" I was flustered. The mustard had caught me off

guard and I wasn't about to lose to a condiment. In what I presume to have been Dutch, she replied that she didn't speak English. The mustard was winning and I couldn't do this, I couldn't be independent in a country where I knew nothing, where I knew no one.

In a last-ditch attempt, I asked her in French, "*Parlez-vous Français?*" "*Oui,*" she answered. I could make this work; I could live here...once I remembered how to say mustard in French.

### **III. Colors**

Before I arrived in the Netherlands, I knew little about the country, its history, and its people. Throughout my time in Maastricht, I realized that everything was brighter there, bolder. People were confident, blunt, and always on time. I loved it.

I took a day for myself a few weekends in. I had traveled a lot, and needed some time to really explore my city. I had always noticed the architecture of Maastricht; it had a deep and exciting history. It was impossible to ignore. This day, however, was different. I noticed the people. The thing I learned about the Dutch was their pride in their sense of style. Bright, bold, and put together. Like them. Purple skirt, orange jacket, multicolored socks. Any outfit I saw always worked, no matter how many colors or patterns there were. There was no fear in this world of street fashion.

I like to think that I took a little bit of this back to the States with me. You'll know if you see me. Purple skirt, orange jacket, multicolored socks.

Bright, bold, confident.

### **IV. *Kinderboerderij*: Language and Change**

The first time I realized that the Netherlands was going to completely change my worldview was when I went to the zoo. Across a tiny stream and under the old fort, just a few steps

from the university, there was a zoo. In the States when we think zoo, we picture lions, penguins, anything exciting and worth our time. In Maastricht, the zoo had goats, chickens, and two donkeys. It looked like my best friend's backyard. A Dutch boy I met, Willem, told us that this was the *kinderboerderij*. *Kinder* means child; *boerderij* is ranch. The Child-Ranch. In proper Dutch, *Kinderboerderij* is a petting zoo. This was my first Dutch word, and I tried as hard as I could to use it in any sentence. "Have you been to the *kinderboerderij*?" "I was going to sit by the *kinderboerderij* today to eat lunch." It only worked for so long, I had to keep learning and exploring. There was a lot to learn about the Dutch language and the culture of Maastricht, and it was going to be a long and confusing journey.

Studying abroad changes you. I'm not just talking about an eye-opening petting zoo experience. You'll collect stories, photographs, memories, and friends. But it leaves you with a bittersweet understanding of place. We're a culture focused on the past. It's that feeling you get when you look back and say, "Things were better back then. Everything was new and exciting." You'll remember that time you shared with your best friends, getting four hours of sleep in a hostel before you grabbed everything you owned and ran to catch a train to spend a few hours in a city you felt you'll never see again.

But we can't think like that. I never again want to say that I won't be in the same place. Because I know I won't. The Paris I was in when I was 20 will not be the same Paris I visit in the future, with my family, my husband, my kids, myself. Who knows? All I can say is that I'm going to love it. It will be new and exciting. We can't expect places to remain static while we're not there. These places, like language, will grow and change. The *kinder*, the *boerderij*, they exist apart from each other, as we exist apart from places we have once loved. But, eventually, they come together, and they are something new. Something more exciting.

—Emma Link



Coffee in Uruguay [Sam Muratori]

# Three Scenes from Uruguay

## I. *Cafés Tranquilos*

AS A DEDICATED and avid coffee consumer, I've made it my mission to find the best cafés and coffees in Uruguay. Throughout this journey, I have found some pretty distinct differences from the United States in terms of price, style, ambiance, and taste.

I've found that coffee by the cup is more expensive in Uruguay than in the United States. Also, it comes in smaller portions. Espresso in Uruguay typically comes in tiny mugs the size of a shot glass, and costs 40-60 pesos, about 2-3 U.S. dollars. In the United States, you can get a large coffee at Dunkin Donuts for \$2, but the quality of the Uruguayan espresso surpasses it, for sure.

Aside from the price, the greatest difference is the presentation of the coffee. In fact, I was unaware I could even take coffee to go here, while in the States coffee to go is the norm. I guess that tells a great deal about our cultures. After being in South America for four weeks, the United States appears to be a place of impatience, where people are in a constant state of haste. It is quite the opposite here in South America. No one is ever in a hurry, except when someone misses the bus. But even my Uruguayan professors come to class ten minutes late each day.

When you go to a café in Uruguay, you sit and lounge. The point is the ambiance rather than the coffee. When you receive your coffee, it has a most appealing presence. It comes in attractive little teacups, with a glass of sparkling water, and a small dish of two biscuits or cookies. In the United States, you get a paper to-go cup and a dismissal. It's all about speed, getting in and out. Uruguayan cafés are much more welcoming, and they encourage conversation and the discussion of new ideas.

As shocking as it is (or was to me at least), the people in cafés down here aren't familiar with iced coffee. When I developed a friendly enough relationship with one of the owners of a shop down the street from me, I asked him to pour espresso and *leche* into a cup of ice. He looked at me and told me he would bring it to me but he didn't think it would taste good; I assured him otherwise. After he tried it, he told me he was going to name the drink after me and add it to the menu.

## II. Pinheiro Fútbol

This Sunday, our group finally got to experience the ultimate South American cultural activity: a *fútbol* game. On game day, the streets are filled with fans galavanting and chanting their way to the stadium, miles away. In fact, the unity and obsession for the popular Pinheiro Uruguayan team made it clear to me which team I should root for. On our way, we passed dozens of vendors selling the same yellow and black striped jerseys, scarves, hats, umbrellas, bags and soccer balls. After entering the stadium, I realized they must do a pretty good business; every fan was in yellow and black.

As much as I enjoyed the game, I was totally enchanted by the culture of the crowd. They sang, stomped, drummed and screeched, and did not stop. My teacher told me about an Argentine TV show that recorded all of the different fan chants for each *fútbol* team. Unfortunately, my pictures do not do the crowd justice. They were relentless. They fistpumped and danced for two halves of 45 minutes each. I was sure their arms would fall off.

The actual *fútbol* game was great too, even though no goals were scored. But I guess that's a sign of good soccer; it was competitive and gut-wrenching.

But the crowd stole my attention for the majority of the game. I heard many shouts of a few specific Spanish curse words. That's all I could pick up, at least. My professor said

they were saying much worse things; these are the moments when I wished I was fluent.

I wished that I was in the heart of the lively group, although it could be dangerous. People were climbing up the flagpoles, throwing garbage at the police, and setting off flares. Who wouldn't want to be involved in that?

### III. My Favorite Meal

I had one of my favorite meals at the house of some local friends. After meeting them on the way to a concert and spending the night struggling to speak Spanish to them at a bar, they invited us for a home-cooked dinner the next night. We felt obliged to accept their generous invitation. They slow-cooked *asado* on their colossal brick oven on their roof. There's something special about dinner here that I find very different from having meals in the United States. It is more of an event here, not in a family-obligations kind of way, but a gathering of people who actually desire to break bread, laugh, and spend time together. I have found that people in the U.S. often do not value sitting down together for a meal—hence our obsession with fast food. Our culture is a bit hasty and I think it is time to bring back the idea of taking our time and spending it with loved ones. So maybe it was the happy-go-lucky, carefree environment of singing, dancing, and drinking on this rooftop, but that grilled *asado* was life-changing, better than anything I had tried at a fancy New York restaurant. We've had weekly dinners ever since.

—Sam Muratori

## Three Scenes from Denmark

### I. Becoming a Nutcracker

AT OUR OPENING ceremony today, the Mayor of Culture and Leisure for the city of Copenhagen wished for us to encounter three things during our time here: open doors, open arms, and open hearts. I have been in Denmark for less than two days, and I have certainly experienced all of those things. I cannot even begin to count the number of times I have introduced myself to a fellow DIS student; everyone is eager to meet new people and make new friends, which is wonderful.

My roommate Julie and I have bonded quickly with one another, as well as with two other girls in our neighborhood. The four of us will be spending many early mornings navigating Denmark's public transportation system together. And perhaps most importantly, my host family has made every effort to welcome us into their home and their hearts. They are warm, friendly, and always ready to have fun.

My host family has done this five times already, so of course they are welcoming when meeting new students. Danes are said to be reserved, aloof, and perhaps even standoffish from an American point of view. As one of our speakers from DIS explained, Danes have a hard outer shell, much like a nut that needs to be cracked. She recommended striking up a conversation with a Dane, even if they seem intimidating or completely uninterested in chatting. Allegedly, after a few questions and some genuine conversation, the average Dane can be "cracked," so it is our task to become expert nutcrackers.

I am a timid person and find it difficult to approach a stranger and strike up a conversation. I understood that this would need to change during my time abroad, but I wasn't expecting it to be such a challenge! Suddenly, I was nervous about interacting with Danes. At lunch, two of my friends and I visited an outdoor cafe to sample Denmark's fine beer



selection. I ordered last, and found myself staring at a row of bottled beers that I did not recognize, trying to make a decision. I scanned the selections, and chose one called Elephant. The woman behind the counter sensed my hesitation and suggested that I try a different one that is more catered toward the “young and hip” crowd. I thanked her and took her suggestion (which turned out to be very good), and found myself wondering where her nutty shell was.

I started to think I didn’t have to worry so much about being a nutcracker. This was confirmed later in the day, when my friends and I exited the train station onto the street, searching for our bus. After no more than 30 seconds of confused glances exchanged between the three of us, a man approached us and began speaking in Danish. I stumbled on my words and explained, “We’re American.” Without a thought and with a warm smile, he switched to English and asked if we needed help because we looked a little lost. He helped us orient ourselves and we went our separate ways.

While some Danes may appear reserved, with an outer shell that needs cracking, there are always exceptions to the rules. My host family, the woman behind the counter, and the man at Roskilde station all proved this to be true. And while I will certainly work on my nutcracking skills, I don’t think that they’ll be required with every Dane that I meet. In the meantime, I’ll take advantage of every open door, every pair of outstretched arms, and every open heart that I come upon.

## II. Walking with Music

I leave my last class and head down the stairs, unraveling my headphones as I walk. I hit shuffle and attempt to find a song, any song, that suits my mood, a battle that is ongoing for someone with too many options and an indecisive nature. It’s chilly on Vestergade, with wind blowing between the buildings that block out the sinking sun. Finally, I’ve found a song: “We Don’t Eat,” by James Vincent McMorrow. I’m stopped at a crosswalk, waiting for the light to change as the piano

fills my ears, its driving rhythm reminding me that I am in a city, a city full of people; those people are alive, and so am I. There are few moments as invigorating as the ones in which we remember that we are living life.

I moved along, but at a slower pace, because I'm undeniably aware that nothing is as important as this moment, in the grand scheme of things. Did you know that it's possible to see something for the very first time, twice? All it takes is a little bit of childish wonder, a reminder that you are smaller than you want to admit you are, and the perfect song. I've walked from DIS to Central Station and back every weekday since I arrived, but, this day, it was all new. As I rounded the corner, the sun warmed my face, and my heart was filled with joy as the song came to an end.

I've always loved listening to music and walking; it is my personal form of meditation. Since I've been dealing with anxiety, there have been times when I thought I would never feel calm again. But on this particular Thursday, I realized that I can always find peace in walking to the perfect song. Wherever my wondering and wandering takes me, music will always follow.

### **III. The Pedersens**

I live in Gevnigne, a name that I am still trying to learn how to pronounce, in Roskilde County. We live in a suburban neighborhood, but we are definitely in the countryside; the back of the house looks over a cow pasture that is particularly pretty when the sun makes an appearance.

Ian, my 11-year-old host brother, gets to enjoy that view while on the trampoline in the backyard. I always wanted a younger brother, and he is even sweeter than I could have hoped. He loves to share facts about history and is a very smart kid. Ian is genuinely excited that we are here. He's even a great dancer; last night, he performed Gangnam Style after dinner.

My host parents also have two daughters, Jennifer and Claudia, but they both live in their own apartments with their

boyfriends. We eat dinner with them every Tuesday and see them even more often than that because they live so close by. This Saturday, we are going to Claudia's apartment in Roskilde, a larger city about 10 minutes away, for coffee and cakes.

I share a room with Julie, who is from Boston and goes to school in North Carolina as a sociology major. She is doing the public health program at DIS. Sharing is no problem with a room as big as ours! We have a couch, a large table with chairs, a desk, two beds, and enough space left over to make us feel as though we each have our own place. We even have a glass sliding door that lets in a lot of light in the morning (for better or for worse).

My host family is truly fantastic. They hosted their first students in 2011, and, luckily for me, have welcomed students in their home ever since. I hope that they continue to host students for many years to come because other people deserve to experience a host family as warm, welcoming, and open as they are. I could not have asked for a better family.

Every person that stays with the Pedersens puts a handprint on the wall (including visitors of students). They've got quite the collection!

—Alison McCarthy

Mr Simms

Olde Sweet Shoppe®

Mr S

Original Boiled Sweets

Free Favourites



Gummies & Liquorice

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Olde Sweet Shoppe in Cambridge, England [Emily Clipston]



Gelato at Piazza Navona in Rome, Italy [Caroline Demeter]

## Marrying My Waiter

MY FRIENDS FROM Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Emma and April, were visiting me in Brussels from the Netherlands, where they're currently studying abroad. We went to a restaurant by the *Grand Place* (touristy yet so necessary at the time). Waiters were dressed in white, standing outside their restaurants, competing with similar restaurants next to them for customers. They tried offering us deals, discounts, and, of course, flattery. Finally, one of them won us over; European men never hesitate to remind you that you're a woman. The waiter in our restaurant was most certainly of Italian descent, yet we conversed entirely in French. As we were ordering our meal, my waiter enthusiastically exclaimed, "Oh, your smile, so beautiful!"

This marked the beginning of a delightful fiasco.

After singling me out at a table of three girls (awkward), the compliments continued. But he wasted no time: he asked me if I was married.

*"No! Je suis trop jeune!"*

He insisted that I'd marry him. Eventually, he's telling me he loves me left and right. The waiter was telling me he was going to take me to Vegas, the Caribbean, and how we're going to have lots of children. By then, I was playing along, and three hours of pretend flirting in French followed. When he first brought out dessert to the three of us, my dessert was larger and more extravagant than April's and Emma's, and included whipped cream and extra chocolate. He then proceeded to spoon-feed me the first bite. It was so cute. Every time he passed the table, he acknowledged me as his "*femme*."

Perhaps the funniest part of all was when he tried to persuade me to move into the apartment upstairs with him. His persuading tactic was that he was "so rich." He said, "You're my wife now; you can have all my money!" He then proceeded to throw his wallet down in front of me and exclaimed,

“Here, take my wallet; it’s yours, it’s yours!” Then he huffed away. When a cute little stray cat came over to our table, he exclaimed, “That’s my cat, but we’re married now, so it’s your cat too!”

Eventually, another waiter joined in on the fun. My faux-husband kept saying things like, “You can’t have her; that’s my wife!” He even had the nerve to go over to another table and ask a man what he thought of me, once again, claiming that I was his wife. Of course, I played along, they kept bringing us free drinks, and we were having a blast. He even brought us another complimentary dessert—cheesecake this time.

My waiter-husband’s brother was asking Emma how many sexual partners she’s had. He kept asking what we were doing after dinner. Of course, we lied and said we were going to sleep. It was quite funny because he was trying to get me to go salsa dancing with him; he was 10 years older than me!

By the end of the night, I playfully walked up to him and asked him for a divorce. He complimented all three of us, and said how happy he was that we played along. Surprisingly, we were the first girls to play along with his bit. He gave us all kisses and, as we walked away, he yelled into the distance, “Molly ... Molly ... Molly!” I found him in the crowd and blew him a kiss.

The best part was that all happened completely in French. How many people can say they got married on their trip abroad?

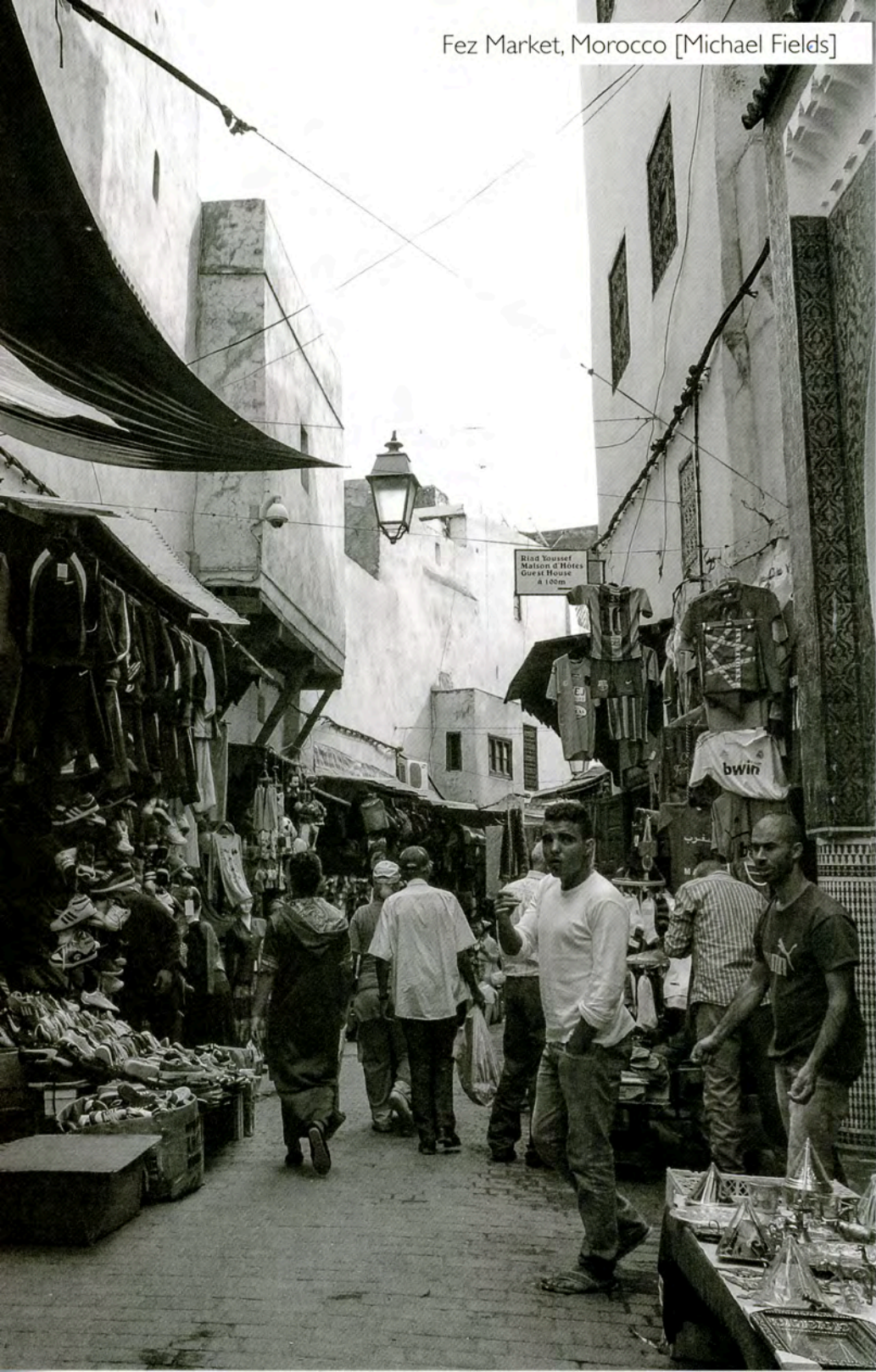
—Molly Ramage

Pedestrian Street, Norwich, England [Gabrielle Mylod]





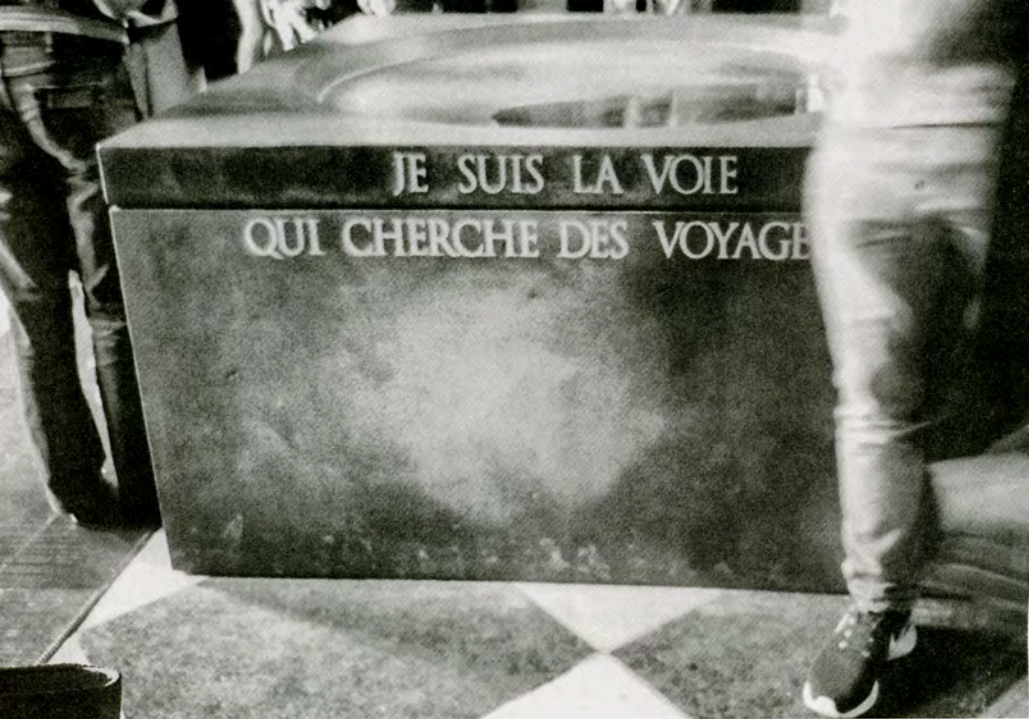
Fez Market, Morocco [Michael Fields]







Bath, England [Gabrielle Mylod]



In Notre-Dame de Paris, France [Jordan Pulling]  
New Year's at the Temple, Hue, Vietnam [Sophie Bober]





Vineyard Workers in Frascati, Italy [Rachel Hughes]

## Lucy

*Why do you go away? So you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors. And the people there see you differently, too. Coming back to where you started is not the same as never leaving.*

—Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*

WE OFTEN THINK—AS we step foot on that flight to a new land—that the adventures waiting for us across the ocean are overflowing with experiences that will make us well-rounded students. Of course, putting on a resume that you studied abroad can earn that thumbs-up from a potential employer or the graduate school that we desperately want. And, of course, there is the possibility of enjoying the nightlife in a far-off land, sampling a new dish that we Americans lack in our preservative-packed diets, and snapping a selfie in front of that iconic cultural relic just to later post it on Facebook or Instagram. But sometimes we forget the greater impact we can have as informal ambassadors of the United States in those very far-off lands, representing the red, white, and blue in ways that may not be seen in that country's media. Perhaps, as I experienced, we forget how small the world is, how fortunate we are to travel, and how a simple plane ride across the ocean can truly change not only our own lives, but others' as well.

In the beginning, my time in China had been focused on self-fulfillment—studying, sightseeing, shopping, and experiencing everything that I possibly could from a culture completely unlike my own. In a way, you could say that I was being quite selfish with my time abroad—going to place X, Y, and Z for personal memories that I could one day fondly look back upon in a tattered scrapbook and share with family and friends upon my return. I had looked at this adventure as a way to improve my understanding of the world, and I knew that more was to be had if I took that one small step outside



Standing with Lucy and Her Grandmother in China [Lucas Rivers]

my comfort zone. And then, one Sunday afternoon, not only was the scope of my term abroad drastically shifted, but my perception of humanity as a whole as well. It didn't happen on a luxury cruise ship or on a tour bus headed to the next magical destination. It didn't have glam or bling like the towering buildings in downtown Shanghai. Instead, it was a simple exchange between two cultures that changed lives—especially my own.

The Union term abroad students were partnered with native Chinese undergraduates at Fudan University to foster cultural exchange, language acquisition (both English and Mandarin), and hopefully to create a lasting friendship. Upon meeting my future language partner and sharing various stories and perspectives, she asked me a small favor. As part of her extracurricular activities, she mentors an 11-year-old girl in her school subjects and social settings. In a way, it's quite similar to the Big Brothers Big Sisters program we have in the United States. Knowing that English was my mother tongue, she asked if I would be willing to sit down one day with the girl and teach her a few English words, practice her readings,

and work on pronunciation. I am no English aficionado, but I knew that this experience would certainly help me determine whether or not I would want to be an ESL instructor or take a gap year to teach English after graduation. And with that in mind, I agreed.

That Sunday afternoon arrived quickly, and I was told by Liu to meet at the North Gate of our campus at 9:30 a.m. sharp. Stress overwhelmed me the night before—not only was I nervous about the thought of going to a complete stranger’s home to teach English, but I also was quite distressed about the proper etiquette one must follow as a guest in China. While I won’t go into much depth since gift-giving in China warrants a whole separate article, I will say that after several phone calls to my professors and Chinese friends, I managed to conjure up a nice bag of assorted fruits for the family—a gesture quite similar to the American tradition of bringing a bottle of wine or self-prepared dish when invited for dinner.

On the subway ride there, Liu briefed me on the backstory to the situation the girl’s family currently faced and I was certainly caught off-guard. The girl’s mother, she described, abandoned her to marry an older rich man when she was just a small infant, and the father, while still in the neighborhood, outwardly refused to acknowledge his daughter’s existence. As a result, the grandmother was solely responsible—fiscally and emotionally—and has been since the mother ran off. However, amid the hardship this girl has encountered already in her young life, Liu told me how infectious her optimism was, always beaming with a radiant smile. With that tucked away in the back of my mind, we reached the subway stop only to be greeted with huge grins from both the grandmother and young girl. With no hesitation, the grandmother started speaking to me in a heavily accented form of Mandarin that I certainly had trouble following. From the bits and pieces I could understand, though, the grandmother appeared to be infatuated with my “Hollywood-style” looks and her belief that I was undoubtedly the “prettiest” foreigner she had ever seen. I assumed that with her older age came hindered eyesight as well.



We continued to walk down the street as the grandmother warned me—over and over again—that the house was very small. “No problem at all,” I kept saying to her (in Chinese, of course). With a slight left turn, I looked ahead to the direction we were bound for and felt an overwhelming sensation of shock fall over me. Before us, amongst the towering financial buildings, TV towers, and luxury hotels in the distance, stood a neighborhood unlike anything I’ve seen before. Small, shack-like buildings displaying that day’s laundry hung from the windows while garbage danced with the wind on the street. Small alleyways only six or seven feet wide separated the houses. Granted, I knew the house was small—the grandmother had made that clear. But in all honesty, I was expecting a cozy apartment in one of Shanghai’s many complexes. My ignorant Western perspective was being turned inside out.

We walked, winding through alleyway after alleyway, avoiding wandering dogs as they welcomed us to the neighborhood. Running into the smell of the stove every now and then, I was reminded that people actually lived in the houses around me. Perhaps most shocking was the attention I was receiving from each and every person we passed. Mouths agape, eyes widened, and eyebrows raised, the grandmother said that in all of her years living in this neighborhood, never had a 外国人 (foreigner) visited. Foreigners were rarely spotted in residential neighborhoods, especially a neighborhood like the one I had wandered into. With heads peeking outside windows and doors, we kept walking through a maze of small house-like structures until we finally arrived at their doorstep.

Yet again, the grandmother made it clear that their house—which I was about to enter—was small. Regardless of how many times she could have drilled that into my head, my definition of “small” was all too generous as I stood in their doorway, stunned that the one room before me was what they considered home. This room, smaller than most dorms at Union, was equipped with one wooden bed, a small sink, a worn-out desk, and a stool holding the hotplate they used to cook. A single light bulb above the doorway illuminated the

room around me. Newspaper lined the walls in various places, clothes stored on hangers were hung in random places, and the seemingly concrete floor beneath our feet told a story of many years. “This,” I remember thinking, “is what they call home.”

I was motioned to sit on the bed. But, before doing so, I presented the grandmother with the bag of fruit that she customarily refused before finally giving in. The little girl, who I was to refer to as 小妹妹 (little sister), wore her shyness on her sleeve before finally warming up to me. She reached into her backpack and revealed a tattered English textbook she was waiting for me to help her with. Of course, before opening the book, I began by asking her very basic questions in English to get the ball rolling (“How are you?” “What color is your shirt?” “How old are you?”). I looked through the book and realized her vocabulary was actually more extensive than I had imagined for an 11-year-old. Words such as “turtle,” “firefighter,” “astronaut,” and “blueberry” were all in her previously studied lessons. We sat, read some paragraphs about Bingbing wanting to become a doctor, and, like any 11-year-old, she slowly began to dislike the idea of studying outside of school hours. With those very sentiments, the little girl pulled out a deck of cards and said, “let’s play!”

An hour or so passed by and the grandmother kindly suggested that we head to lunch. With a house unequipped to make a decent meal for guests, she thought a local restaurant known for their *xiaolongbao*—steamed buns, my favorite Shanghai dish—would be the best option. Battling more dogs as we began walking towards the restaurant, the grandmother stopped and pointed out a small house down a second alleyway. With no explanation why this was of interest to us, I brushed it off and continued walking with a grumbling stomach on what seemed like an endless journey until reaching the restaurant—a busy establishment frequented only by locals. Upon finding our seats, Liu and I realized the grandmother was not behind us; she was waiting in line to order and pay for our meals. “In no way,” I remember thinking, “am I going to let her pay for lunch.”

Wallet in hand, I hurried towards the front of the restaurant. A lunch that cost 110RMB for her and her granddaughter was a substantial expense for someone whose income was limited. 110RMB to me, however, was almost nothing—about \$18 to be exact. I was not comfortable with this situation, but, no matter how hard I tried or how much I insisted, the grandmother refused. In fact, her anger became apparent as I continuously attempted to pay the bill, making a small scene for the customers to watch. According to Liu, in China, if you invite someone to a meal, it's customary and expected that you will pay. In fact, if you don't, it can be interpreted as extremely disrespectful. And, while this may be the case, I just had a hard time accepting this generosity.

Our food was served and conversation was had when I suddenly noticed the grandmother's eyes begin to fill with tears. She sat for a while, eating her lunch and staring into her lap, the wrinkles on her cheek catching a few falling teardrops. Finally, as the moments passed, she shared with me something that I will never forget. She said, as the tears continued to roll down her face, "You have just made me so proud and happy. You have changed mine and my granddaughter's lives."

I was astonished, confused, speechless, concerned—you name it. How was that even possible? How could I have done such a thing with just a few short hours and a single English textbook? I just didn't—and couldn't—understand. I thought it rude to blatantly ask for her reasoning, but I was curious and taken aback. A few seconds of silence passed until she continued to speak. It wasn't a matter of what I had done, but the sole fact that I was willing to spend time and share my talents with someone so different than I was. My limited teaching stint had changed her outlook on her granddaughter, but more importantly, it had changed the outlook of the girl's father on her as well.

Unbeknownst to me, the house the grandmother had motioned to on our walk to lunch was in fact where the girl's father resided. And, as we were passing, it just so happened that he was also outside, seeing his daughter with me—a for-

eigner. To some Chinese, to be associated with a foreigner is a symbol of success. And, as the grandmother continued to share, the father—upon seeing his daughter with me—would make him realize that the girl he had abandoned and ignored would eventually succeed. She would, as indicated by my presence, break out of the current social status they were bound by with her newfound motivation and connection. According to the grandmother, my presence simply proved to the father that abandoning her was one of the worst decisions he could have made. And most importantly, my dedication in helping a complete stranger with something as simple as a few English words and phrases made her realize how connected we really all are—regardless of culture.

I had no idea how to respond. We continued eating as I wrestled with the idea of changing someone's life in my head, still unsure if anything she said could possibly be true. Could something as simple as one's presence truly mean and change that much?

We returned to the house for a small magic show the girl had been eager to showcase. I was quite impressed with how the young girl's nimble fingers made cards disappear and reappear like something truly supernatural. As she presented the Queen of Hearts card that I had originally picked, it suddenly hit me—I had a Chinese translation of the first Harry Potter novel in my backpack. She loved magic—clearly—and reading is always something worth encouraging. And with the limited income the two had, books were not on the shopping list. There was no question about it; I had to give her the book. I reached into my bag, pulled out the paperback novel that I loved so much and handed it to her. Instantly, with almost no hesitation, her face lit up like fireworks. She looked at me as if to ask “Is this really for me?” as she grasped the book with both hands.

I told her, “*Harry Potter* was one of the first books that I read and absolutely fell in love with. It's about a little boy—your age—who discovers he can do magic.” She smiled from ear to ear and opened up to the first page. I wondered if the book may be a little too difficult for her, but I knew that she would someday

be able to appreciate fully the story like I had those many years ago. After all, she had heard of Harry Potter but was never able to read the books or watch the movies.

She came over to me and asked me to sign the book for her. “In Chinese or English?” I asked. “Both,” she replied. And so I did. In the front cover, I wrote in both English and Chinese, “*Harry Potter* is one of my favorite books. I really hope you enjoy it as much as I do and realize the true magic around us everyday. Keep smiling, keep studying, and you will do great things.”

Then, as I was finishing up, the grandmother came over and asked me one more favor: could I give the little girl an English name, one that would help her better communicate with foreigners in the future? To some, an English name is extremely important and indicative of projected success, and thus she wanted me to do the honors. And, so, I thought for a few minutes.

“Lucy,” I said.

And with that, she smiled.

—Lucas Rivers



Milford Sound, New Zealand [Virginia DeWees]







## Interview: Andrew Hellmund

ANDREW HELLMUND STUDIED abroad in Berlin, Germany, and was awarded a Student International Initiatives Fund (SIIF) grant. Through the SIIF program, students apply for funding to support self-designed projects that explore a personal interest outside the classroom while abroad. *The Aleph* sat down with Andrew for a conversation about his experience.

*Andrew, what did you propose to do for your SIIF project?*

I proposed to visit the sculpture studio of one of my heroes, Alexander Calder, in France, and also to meet with Sir Anthony Caro, one of the last living great metal sculptors. It didn't quite work out like that, but that was the initial plan.

*Had you met many sculptors before this project?*

I've met many; a lot of my friends are sculptors, but not of the magnitude of the people I wanted to meet in Europe. But you have to start somewhere, and it seemed like the right time to try it.

*Your first destination was in the south of France. Can you tell us about that?*

Sure. I wanted to start with Alexander Calder's French studio. Calder was an American sculptor who worked in France, and he was my childhood hero. He passed away in the 1970s.

Coming up to the studio was memorable. I didn't have any expectations. I didn't know where I was going, I didn't speak French and I was wandering through this village of maybe 100 people, following the Calder signs, until I got to the bottom of a hill, and at the top was this very beautiful building. The studio was two and a half stories and made of fieldstones, with windows on all sides, and the roof had windows as well, which I noticed was common in the different studios I visited.

Beautiful wooden floors, wood construction on the inside, fieldstone foundation, just a beautiful place to work.

His studio was marvelous to walk around. The tools were in the basement now, but just seeing the light and the beauty around the studio and understanding why he was in the middle of nowhere in Southern France. It's quite clear, the beauty and peace...

*Did you learn something about Calder by being in the place where he worked?*

I knew he was a zany character. I guess seeing his studio brought home that he was a person, too. He needed good light to work, he needed space that would inspire creativity, and being in the middle of nowhere meant there were no distractions. He could be by himself and grow in that time, too.

*So what was the next step of your project?*

I emailed Sir Anthony Caro's assistants and they informed me that he was not feeling well and wasn't meeting anyone new. That pushed my project in a different direction. After that, I began to look for sculptors to meet whose work I really connected with.

I contacted a sculptor named David Vanobeek. He is from Belgium, but his studio is also in the South of France. He agreed to meet with me and I stayed with him for a couple of days. That turned out to be a really amazing experience. If I thought Calder's studio was in the middle of nowhere, this guy was 50 miles from the middle of nowhere. He didn't have any technical training; he's just a sculptor by discovery, which is really powerful. He's supporting a family as a sculptor, his wife is an artist, and they live on the edge, with so little and yet so much. They are so happy.

His studio was similar to Calder's, an old industrial building with windows on the sides. Electricity, but no plumbing. He rented it from the town. He's putting out new pieces every year and learning about himself in the process. I think one of

the great things about visiting sculptors is that you start with a conversation about sculpture and design and process then it quickly shifts into life, politics and everything else. Everyone had something to share.

*You stayed there a couple of days...where did you sleep?*

I stayed in an extra room in his house. His family was away so we had time. We drank like a gallon of tea every morning before work, and we spent the days looking at his sculpture, other sculptures in the area, visiting different art centers, talking about sculpture, and I guess the future a lot, too, what it might mean for me to be a sculptor.

He gave me a window into what it could be like to be a sculptor, how far you could push yourself, how not to be limited by all the material needs that, especially in the United States, we tend to focus on. He really was living the bare minimum. Simple vegetables and simple food and it wasn't bad. It was useful to see that the creativity was coming through, beyond all that. I guess it gave me the hope that, even if I'm surviving on just a couple of vegetables a day, it's still possible.

We've become good friends. We've talked a couple of times since and we bounce ideas off each other and send each other our work to get another critique, since we are both in the middle of nowhere in some ways.

*What happened next?*

I decided, even though I couldn't visit Caro, that I still wanted to go to England and see what old British sculpture was all about. So in the beginning of May, I hopped on a plane and flew to England and I had a list of four or five British sculptors, some in bronze, some in steel, and a few sculpture parks I could visit. I had addresses, but I didn't know where I would be staying. It was pretty scary actually! I thought I'd be sleeping under the hedgerow every night!

I first met with Charles Hadcock near Manchester. He sat down with me for several hours and told me about his work



and showed me his gallery and sculpture studio, and like Calder it also had this very industrial feeling, very open and very bare in some ways. Once again our conversation started with sculpture and drifted to life and where the future might take me as a young sculptor. I really appreciated that he took the time out of his busy schedule to meet with me, spring being a busy time for sculptors, preparing for summer shows. So it meant a lot.

Charles also gave me a brochure of a show he did with Peter Hide, and that gave me a new name to think about.

A few days later I met with Angela Conner in London. She was older, but very whimsical and she had so much energy. She was trained in sculpture, and not engineering, but even then she tried to do a lot of things that engineers would do. She wouldn't let anything stop her. She recently finished a public kinetic art piece that was 90 feet tall and made out of aluminum and fiberglass; it's really quite exquisite. Her studio was full of the different projects she was working on, some metal, some figurative; she really did what she wanted to do.

She had some great ideas about how to keep going on your own course. She said, "Don't ever let the galleries choose what you do for you. Choose your own path. It's really what you do that matters, not what they do." I think her life was a testament to that.

*It seems in a way that every sculptor you met had something to tell you, some piece of advice or wisdom, or a piece of the puzzle.*

And maybe that puzzle will become clearer down the road. They did give me little bits and pieces that immediately had an effect on me.

*When you were visiting these places, were you thinking about your future studio?*

I was dreaming about what my space would look like, and I wanted to get a feeling for what might be possible. They all varied according to the background of the sculptor. I wanted

to learn how they worked, under what conditions, and with what background they came into sculpture. Everyone had their own way of doing things. David was working with the bare minimum. Charles was coming from money.

*After you met Angela Conner, did you meet anyone else?*

I met one other lady, Pam Brown. It wasn't intentional. I went to a sculpture park in Iron Bridge, which has that name because the first iron bridge in England was constructed there. I arrived, in the middle of nowhere again, on a typical British day of pouring rain. I spent an hour and a half walking around. It was the most beautiful sculpture park I had ever been to. It was just metal sculpture, nothing else. It was simple work, but powerful.

When I came back to the little barn of a visitor's center, this older lady, Pam Brown, asked me if I wanted a cup of tea. "I'd love a cup of tea." We spoke for about three hours! Her husband had made about three quarters of the work in the park before passing away 30 years ago. Some of the sculpture in the park was her work, too. She had a lot to talk about. How they created the studio and the park and how that made Iron Bridge a really energized area for sculpture.

Then Pam gave me a tour of the studio she and her husband had built. At the time I was visiting, it was rented to a sculptor by the name of Peter Hide, who had once been a student of Anthony Caro. This was the second time I heard his name on that trip. I fell in love with his work, right then and there. Pam really opened my world, and she introduced me to Peter.

I met with him last October. I went up to meet with him and some of his students, looked at sculpture, and worked with them a bit. He's based in Edmonton, Alberta, also in the middle of nowhere. After that, he invited me up to work as a studio assistant for a month over winter break.

His studio was beyond anything I had seen before. He had two bays, 120 feet by 30 feet, and giant cranes and forklifts.

He was working on probably 45 pieces at once, and they all weighed a ton or more. It was so incredible to work with this sculptor and learn some of the things that you can't really learn without this kind of experience.

*Where do you go from here?*

I have been accepted to the University of Alberta's MFA program in sculpture, where I will study under Peter Hide. That's my next step.

*How did your own creative process change along the way?*

At some point, it became very challenging to keep going forward because I just wanted to get home and sculpt! I did sketch, but it was so fast I didn't have time to think. When I did get home it just all came out of me. And my style changed completely, within a few weeks. For my development, this process of meeting people, facing my own fears, travelling by myself, not knowing exactly where to go, has opened up a new world. I don't have to know where I'm going. I don't have to know where I'm sleeping. I know there will be a way. It's terrifying, but you learn so much about yourself.

## Somewhere Over the Rainbow Is Brasil

Somewhere over the rainbow is a paradisiacal place  
Where samba feeds the soul and *faijao* feeds the tastes  
Laughter and joy are national traits  
Where family is the core and dancing expresses grace

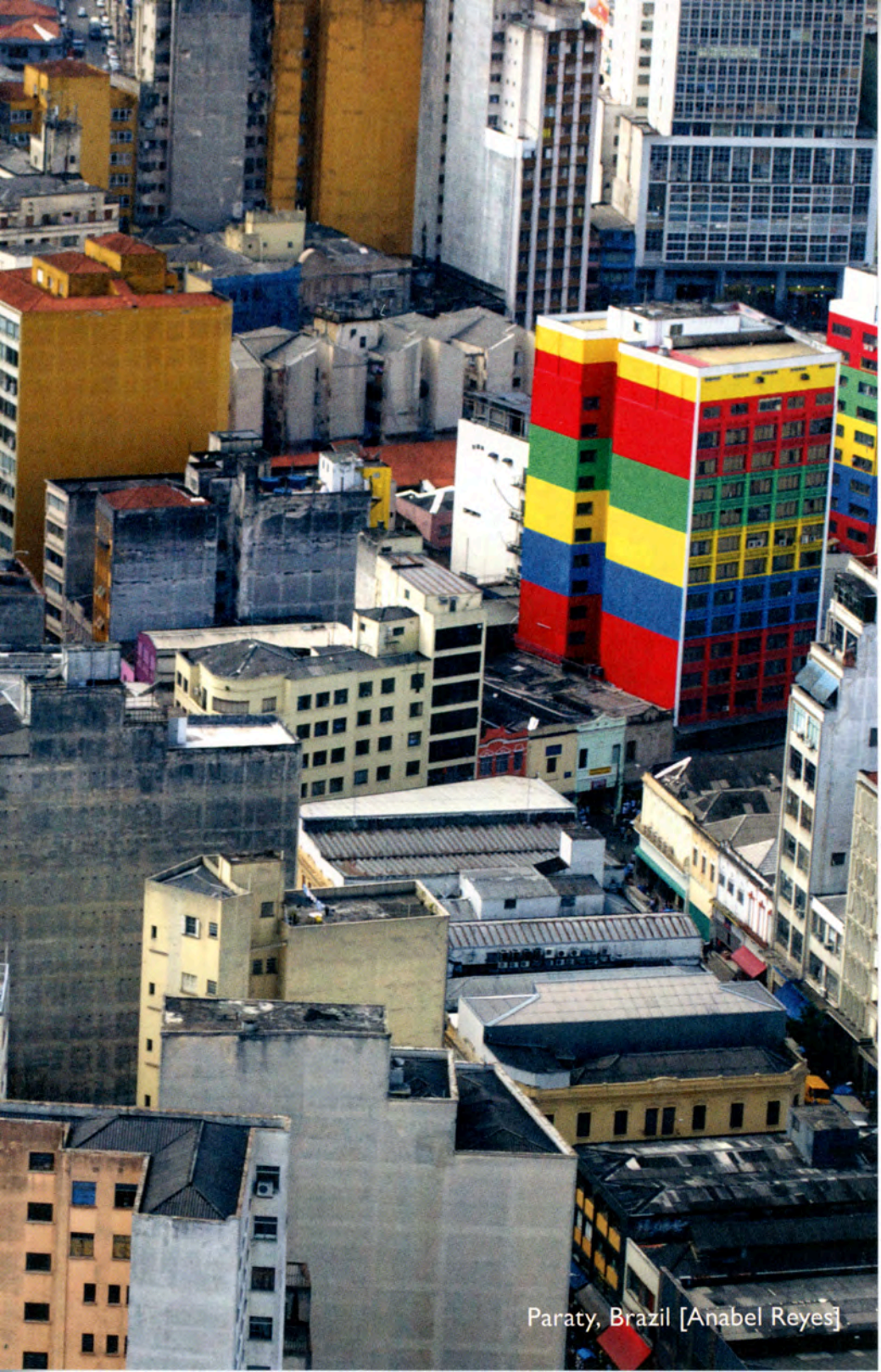
Somewhere over the rainbow is a mystical place  
Where mountains surround the people and people surround the faith  
Where Candomblé and Umbanda are embraced  
Where the Bahianas represent the beauty of the  
Afro-Brazilian race

Somewhere over the rainbow is Brasil Brasileiro  
A place where *ceiveija* and *charrasco* make a perfect combination  
A place where a *balada* is not complete without a *roda de samba*  
And where *capoeira* on the beach is as authentic as a  
*caipirinha* with *Cachaça*

Somewhere over the rainbow is Brasil  
A place of adventures, memories, and identity  
A place of panoramas, music, love, and happiness  
Where it is impossible to deny *que a vida é bonita*

—Natalia Hernandez





Paraty, Brazil [Anabel Reyes]



Chain Bridge at Night, Budapest, Hungary [Jonathan Hunt]  
My Host Sister Hulud in Al Rajjif, Jordan [Erika Stuke]





Canal, Venice, Italy [Emily Clipston]  
Schönbrunn Palace, Austria [Lindsay Kent]



Sunset Over the Villlage of Gudhjem, Denmark [Greg Shelkey]





Noon in Lagos, Portugal [Dollian Garo]  
 Street Scene in Hong Kong [Elliott DeGuilme]





Norwich River in Winter, England [Andrew Zenger]  
Wadi Rum, Jordan [Bridget Sakowski]





Bavarian Countryside, Germany [Gabrielle Mylod]  
View from Queenstown, Australia [Olivia Todd]









St. Peter's Square Panorama, Vatican City [Casey Nicoletti]  
Bathhouse on the Øresund in Malmö, Sweden [Alison McCarthy]





Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, Ireland [Loren Hiser]  
Manarola in Cinque Terre, Italy [Emily Surprenant]





Sunset over Palermo, Italy [Courtney Elwell]  
Llansteffan Castle Overlooking the River Tywi, Wales [Paige LaRue]







*Clockwise from above: Pedestrian in Rome, Italy  
Sunset in Venice's Cannaregio District, Italy  
Château de Chenonceau, France  
Macelleria (Butcher Shop) in Rome, Italy [Julie Kunzman]*





Little Girl on Tricycle in Versailles, France [Emily Surprenant]



Neuschwanstein Castle, Germany [Luke Connolly]

Busker at the Lennon Wall in Prague, Czech Republic [Perry Ostheimer]





Students Collecting Data on Heron Island, Australia [Olivia Todd]  
Boat in Venice, Italy [Andie D'Agostino]





Painting in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, France [Loren Hiser]



## Leaving My Mark

MY SERVICE-LEARNING PLACEMENT in Galway has been both deeply influential and inspiring. During my time abroad in Ireland, I have found that some of my very best days and fondest memories have happened at Sunny Meadows Pre-school. It is such a joyful and happy place, full of the kindest, most caring people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. They made my service-learning something that I would look forward to every week, and it became a place where I found myself spending my spare time. The women didn't treat us as foreigners who were just there to do some work for them; they adopted us into their circle, and made sure we felt at home and included at all times.

Midday, when they would take tea, they would always call us in to join them and gossip about the news and other upcoming cultural events. I felt that I was immersed deeper into Irish culture because of these discussions; I learned about things I never would have on my own, such as the current Irish economic situation and the struggles of parents whose children are rejecting their own culture. The women were attempting to combat these challenges themselves in the school by bringing some basic Irish language activities into the classroom; they even taught us a few phrases along the way. I don't think that I would have been able to have as great of a learning experience with any other organization.

The experience we had with the women at Sunny Meadows Preschool was entirely dependent on the fact that they were in desperate need of dedicated workers to turn their dream play yard into a reality. The school was in the midst of a transition of supervisors and with more incoming students daily, they had no time to dedicate to the project. Luckily, we had all the time in the world. The project was focused on transforming the concrete-walled play yard into a more inviting atmosphere for the children that would both entertain them and encourage their creativity. Our job was to continue the work that



Murals at Sunny Meadows Preschool in Galway, Ireland [Morgan Murray]

had been started by the summer camp. They had painted an underwater mural on two panels of the play yard's concrete walls, and it was up to fellow student Alex and me to ensure the rest of the walls would at least get a base coat.

At the time, we had no idea the dramatic change a base coat could make; it soon looked as if we were in a completely different location. The entire surrounding area seemed brighter and more upbeat as more and more of the walls were completed. The reactions of the children were the best; they loved to watch us work. When we were finished covering all the walls with base coats, the women decided that they wanted us to leave a more lasting mark on the school, and gave us two walls on which we could design our own floral murals.

The ability to leave a lasting mark was one of my goals upon coming to Galway, and I knew in that moment that I had

been given this opportunity for a reason, and that there was nowhere else I would have rather worked.

I feel as though I was able to contribute in an enduring way to Sunny Meadows Preschool. What started as an ugly, barren backyard surrounded by concrete walls was transformed into a bright and playful habitat for preschoolers and neighbors to appreciate alike. With help from Ballinfoyle Community Garden's landscaping crew, and some of the Sunny Meadows women's husbands, we were able to completely make over the space. Our work will last as long as the durable exterior paint does, but the impact and the relationships we built with the women who work there will last infinitely longer. (We even convinced one of them to get on Facebook!) I have no doubt that Alex and I will both continue to keep in touch with these women; we have exchanged e-mails and been promised updates as the other murals are completed. Since it is too cold to paint now (at lower than 10 degrees Celsius the paint will peel instead of drying), they will be completing the other murals over the spring and summer. I'm really excited to see how the whole picture turns out.

Regardless of who finishes this project with Sunny Meadows, Alex and I transformed the space and the school's impression of typical Americans more than we ever thought possible. We laid the foundation for the murals; upon our work, others will contribute more cosmetic aspects of the transformation. After laboring so hard on a project, it is bittersweet to not be able to finish it. We left our mark and did all we could in the play yard, but it's still slightly painful to know that others will be taking over what we started. On the other hand, I kind of like leaving it unfinished; it's as if we don't have to say goodbye because it's not over yet. While we weren't able to complete all the planned murals on the play yard walls, we were able to finish the two we designed. For me, they shine the brightest, and not just because they are a vibrant yellow.

My time spent at Sunny Meadows stands out above all of my experiences in Galway. I looked forward to my hours

spent there at the beginning of every week and I was always sad when the time to leave rolled around. I felt quite at home at my service placement. The women with whom we worked genuinely cared about us, always asking how we were adjusting, constantly making a fuss that we weren't eating enough and then baking for us. Whatever it would take to make us feel at home, they went above and beyond it, offering us kind-hearted support and advice whenever we needed it.

The service-learning experience I had made me view Galway as more of a second home than a different country. My organization made me feel as though I fit in, and had always been a part of it. Through working with them I not only accomplished my goal of leaving an impact, but I had an impact left on me. I learned more about Irish life and culture from my weekly conversations with those women than I ever did in class. They provided me with real-life examples of situations faced by contemporary Irish families and their personal opinions on the educational system and decisions made by the Irish government. The things I learned and stories I was privy to made me extremely grateful for all that I have been given in this life, and this opportunity to be immersed in another culture. This experience has taught me to be self-motivated, to be the change I want to see around me. This project taught us that hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed in situations where it is desperately needed, and that the actions of two people can leave a remarkable impact on a place in a short amount of time.

—Morgan Murray

## 7/11: Guangzhou to Beijing

*The following journal documents my observations while traveling over 1,000 miles by high-speed train from Guangzhou to Beijing, China. This was without a doubt my favorite experience from my semester abroad. The date was November 7, 2013.*

Off to Beijing! I've been looking forward to today because my way of getting to Beijing is quite special for me. I am not flying, driving, swimming, or walking there: instead, I have boarded a high-speed train for the first time in my life! If I were to have only one special experience during my time abroad, it would be this. I don't care that it takes eight hours to get to Beijing, I just want to experience rail travel in a foreign country. It is the best way to experience the Chinese countryside while still being comfortable. I have loved trains since I was very little! I'm going to record my journey on the world's longest high-speed rail line in today's entry.

10:14—The train departed Guangzhou South Station at precisely 10:00. Only several minutes into the journey and the train has already reached the magic number: 300 km/h! The person in front of me has pulled down the window shade, which is causing my view out of the window to be partially blocked. I'm kind of annoyed by this. I want to see what is outside!

10:37—I'm listening to the song "Nowhere Fast" by the band Pasadena from Annapolis, MD. The lyrics say: "Going nowhere fast." I'm in the middle of nowhere in China. And I'm going pretty damn fast. How fitting.

10:41—One of the train's attendants comes by to mark my ticket. He then offers me *kēle* (Coca-Cola) or a fruit drink. I indicate that I would not like either one and reply with "Xièxie" (Thank you).

10:14

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10:41

One of the train's attendants comes by to mark my ticket. He then offers me Kēle

10:47—The person in front of me pulls down the shade so that the window is almost entirely covered. She's asking for trouble.

10:51—The attendant reaches to the baggage compartment above my seat and moves the extremities of my backpack so they do not hang down. A bit unnecessary perhaps.

12:11—I apologize to the gentleman who had to use the bathroom after me. Or, rather, *duibuqi*.

12:15 —We've arrived at Changsha South Station.

13:21—The menu in the dining car is in Chinese only, so I don't know what is being offered to eat. But I did see a "World War II" edition of Pabst Blue Ribbon. I'll buy that later in the journey.

13:36—We've arrived at Wuhan. As the train approached the station, I saw nuclear power plants and red and white smokestacks in the distance. I'm sure there will be no shortage of these industrial sights throughout the remainder of the journey.

14:00—I've noticed that many of the trees now have orange, red, or yellow leaves. Since we're moving north, the landscape will slowly resemble more and more something I've been denied since I've been in Hong Kong and dearly miss: an actual autumn.

14:13—The sky is nice and blue. The sky in Hong Kong has rarely been blue in the last two and a half months. It seems trivial that I've mentioned this but it just came to my attention because I've barely seen it recently.

14:40—We've just passed what looked like a grouping of houses that was demolished. At first, I thought it was an area for dumping waste, but then I saw foundations. House groupings seem



to be the norm in the countryside. Each grouping has a few dozen homes and angular ponds, perhaps for drinking water. There are between a few hundred meters to about two kilometers space separating each grouping.

15:23—We've arrived at Zhengzhou East Station. It seems that high-speed trains running between Guangzhou and Beijing arrive at the route's intermediary stops from either direction simultaneously, because the same thing happened at Changsha and Wuhan.

16:29—I saw what looked to be the beginning phase of construction of a multi-lane highway cutting right through a rural area. I imagine this is happening all over China. The same thing was happening in the U.S. over 50 years ago.

16:51—We've arrived at Shijiazhuang. There were a ton of high-rise residential buildings under construction on the approach to the station. I wonder if those buildings will themselves constitute a new city in ten years' time. The train's automated P.A. system just said that Beijing Xī (West) Station is the next stop!

17:35 — It's dark out now. I drank a can of the special edition PBR. It actually honors the U.S. Army during WWII, possibly because they helped bring about Japan's downfall and subsequently ended that country's colonization of much of China. Who knows? I'm not sure what's so special about the beer; it tastes exactly the same as the PBR you would drink at a college party. But it was quite cheap, only 10 yuan!

17:59—At Beijing Xī! Right on time! Now time for the metro.

—*Elliott DeGuilme*





Venice Panorama, Italy [Alexandra Clark]  
Greek Temples of Selinunte in Sicily, Italy [Courtney Elwell]



## Journal d'un mélomane

That's not abroad.  
I heard the phrase many times  
When I stated my plans to spend my semester in Canada.

I suppose in some ways it's true;  
It's not a displacement as shocking as  
Asia  
Or Africa  
Or even Europe.  
Some destination halfway across the world.

I drove to Quebec in a car  
My parents dropped me off  
And I didn't spend my first days in this new city on my own.

Not to say it wasn't foreign  
And that I didn't at first feel the urge  
To hide away in my room

And to avoid the use of this new language at all costs.

I didn't understand the guy who gave me my room keys  
And I didn't want him to speak in English.  
I had studied for eight years and couldn't understand?  
All of sudden,  
This music blog I had proposed  
seemed like a very bad idea.

Even so, music, I thought,  
Would at least be the same,  
Have the same rules.  
At my first jazz flute lesson, I realized that  
there is a heck of a lot of musical terminology  
that I might have wanted to look up *en français*.  
I never realized the similarities between learning French

Busker on the Seine, Paris, France [Luke Connolly]



And learning jazz.  
French I had studied for years  
Learning vocabulary, writing compositions.  
Jazz I didn't study at all  
Just said okay, let me play.  
Play now and play great.

Talk about unrealistic expectations

It occurred to me that I lacked verbs, grammar,  
*le feeling* of jazz as the Québécois Anglicism goes

Through lessons, I began to see  
That I had to learn to speak in jazz  
The same way I had learned to speak in classical

I had played the flute for years  
it was hard to play badly again.

They said "that's not abroad"  
But still I met people here  
from all corners of the world.  
Surprisingly, I didn't meet a single American.

For a country girl  
The city offered plenty of exciting musical appearances  
I delighted in the particularities of *la musique Québécoise*  
And its history all its own

There was music everywhere

At one place, moose antlers and a Québécois flag  
Decorated the scene  
Musicians in plaid, spectators too  
It seemed distinctly Canadian  
But for these *chansonniers* that play in the bars  
the musical repertoire comes in large part  
from my own country

In CD shops I perused  
I found more music that I was familiar with  
Than music that I wasn't

I watched the State of the Union  
From my laptop computer in my dorm.  
The president said "America is the greatest country in the  
world"  
But why Mr. President does there have to be a greatest  
And someone who matters less?

We often hear that music is a universal language  
That everybody understands  
So why do all these other cultures hear our music  
and we hear none of theirs?  
They listen to our songs,  
Learn to understand our songs  
Even if they don't speak our language

Is it laziness, arrogance  
Or just because we don't have to  
That this arrangement is not reciprocated?

In the last weeks of April  
Street musicians begin to appear  
Like buds on the trees  
But it is perhaps only in Quebec  
That you will find a few brave and hardy folk  
With covered instruments  
Parked out with upturned caps  
among towering banks of snow.

—Megan Ulin



Dog and a Painting in Rome, Italy [Caroline Demeter]





Dogwalking in Rome, Italy [Caroline Demeter]

## The Real Greece

SOUVLAKI, 'KOSTAS' AND *Mamma Mia*; ask any American youth what comes to mind when they think of Greece, and it is likely that one of these three images will be referenced. I am no exception to this; I shamelessly admit that these shallow conceptions, coupled with my sort-of-relevant philosophy major, made Athens a no-brainer for my study abroad destination. I envisioned myself jumping off of cliffs into idyllic blue waters and swimming to the shore, where my Greek boyfriend Kostas would then carry me to his father's souvlaki shop.

Now, by contrast, if you ask how major media publications portray Greece, you will likely find the adjectives “crumbling,” “dangerous,” and “hopeless” in their descriptions. I became aware of this phenomenon just before I went to Greece, when I decided to Google the actual living conditions of the country where I would be living for the next four months. Rather than pictures of peaceful waters and tanned bodies, I found photographs of smoky riot scenes and scary black-hooded men, which were always accompanied by dismissive headlines. I later learned in my economics class that this media condemnation is international; from the UK-based *Economist* calling Greece “Europe’s Achilles Heel,” to Germany’s *Focus* magazine featuring a Greek statue giving the middle finger, Greece’s reputation in European media is largely negative. Indeed, it was based on this overwhelmingly discouraging portrayal that family members, friends, and even my educated professors began to question my choice of Greece; why would I want to go to a “crumbling,” “dangerous,” and “hopeless” crisis zone?

Certainly I had known about Greece’s financial crisis, but I had no idea that this situation would completely occupy both the media’s image and the “informed” public opinion of Greece. After all, it was only a couple of years ago that we Americans experienced a financial crisis, yet there was

little fear of apocalyptic crumbling; in fact, for the majority of Americans, our day-to-day lives remained relatively unchanged during this economic situation. Why would the lives of Greeks be any different?

Regardless, I began to wonder which mindset I should enter Athens with; do I trust these reputable media publications, or should I naively imagine Greece to be a land of souvlaki and sunshine?

After living here for three months, I can attest that neither the media's portrayal, nor my shallow expectations, were accurate. In fact, it is in spite of these stereotypes that I have come to appreciate Greece for what it truly is, which is nothing short of what Socrates called *the good life*.

I say this first based on the little things that I have experienced in Greece: the colorful orange trees that whimsically line the streets. That first bite into a piping-hot Tiropita. The fruitstand lady who, despite her husband's unemployment, always throws a few extra tangerines into my bag. The co-existence of traditional *rembetico* 1960s rock, and catchy pop music in the clubs. The smiling old men who sit in *Plateias* and puff on their cigars as they jauntily holler *Ya sas!* at passing pedestrians.

I could go on and on with listing these little things, but they are merely symptoms of the big things, the moments and feelings that have made living in Greece a life-changing experience. Indeed, it was not in witnessing the beautiful Santorini sunset, but rather the subsequent and unanimous applause for that sunset, that I have come to appreciate the very act of appreciation. It was not the delicious Greek indulgences themselves, but rather the slow and thoughtful manner by which they are consumed, that has made me rethink my former rushed and anxiety-prone habits. It was not the breathtaking sight of the Acropolis, of Mount Olympus, or of the Temple of Poseidon, but rather the awe-induced silence that accompanied these wonders, that I have connected with the powerful spirit of Greece's history. And finally, it is not the day-to-day experience of living in this country, but rather the

carefree and loving spirit that Greece brings out in people, that has made me passionate about reforming widely held misconceptions.

This is not to say that there aren't questionable aspects of living here; to this day, I cannot identify (nor do I want to identify) the odd, mushroom smell that pervades Athens National Garden, I cannot understand why giving a cashier a 50-euro bill is some sort of unwritten sin, and I cannot fathom the system through which Greeks apparently "wait in line." Yet, it is these little quirks that have made me love this country for what it truly is, not a postcard-perfect, whitewashed village, but a real, functional nation that just so happens to boast a variety of delicious indulgences, a plethora of natural wonders, and several millennia of history.

It also just so happens that Greece is experiencing a period of political turmoil and economic difficulty. Yet this situation should not dominate media attention and international opinion as it currently does, because for every corrupt government official taking a taxpayer euro, there is a local Greek baker giving away their last loaf of bread; for every frustrated youth destroying a piece of public property, there is a rising entrepreneur contributing their ideas to rebuild Greek society; and for every discouraging news report that damages Greece's public image, there is a story of ingenuity that should help to rebuild Greece's international reputation.

Perhaps Greece should say *lipon* (well), and turn a blind eye to its negative international image. After all, it was Greece's own Aristotle who advocated that we detach ourselves from the "opinion of others," and that we focus on attaining personal virtue over public honor. Yet when considering Greece's economy, specifically its reliance on exports and dependence on tourism, how can this inaccurate portrayal go uncontested? This situation is analogous to taking care of a tree; how can we expect the tree to grow if we block its sunshine and deprive it of water? Similarly, how can we expect Greece's economy to shape up if we simultaneously put down the very things on which it relies? Especially for nations within the European

Union, this bullying is counterproductive to *both* Greece and Europe's desired outcome.

I suppose you could argue that Greece deserves this criticism; the Greeks got themselves into their economic crisis through their former luxurious, tax-evading ways, and now they are paying the price with both their wallets and their egos. Yet this label of laziness and deceit should not apply to the collective Greek population, no more than the beer-chugging, rifle-toting, jorts-wearing stereotype should apply to all Americans. Furthermore, the difference is that Americans can simply laugh off their negative international image while Greeks continue to suffer from it; every fear-mongering photograph and pessimistic headline that the media produces is another batch of tourists and prospective buyers that the country loses.

Another relevant Aristotelian value is that of truth; thus, like the Lorax spoke for the trees, I speak for Greece, whose reputation is being cut down as fast as the media pleases. Whether you've personally experienced the life-changing ways of Greece, or you're simply an American who reads the news, I hope that you join me in letting Greece grow.

—Julia Hotz

*Editor's Note: A version of this piece originally appeared on the College Year in Athens blog.*

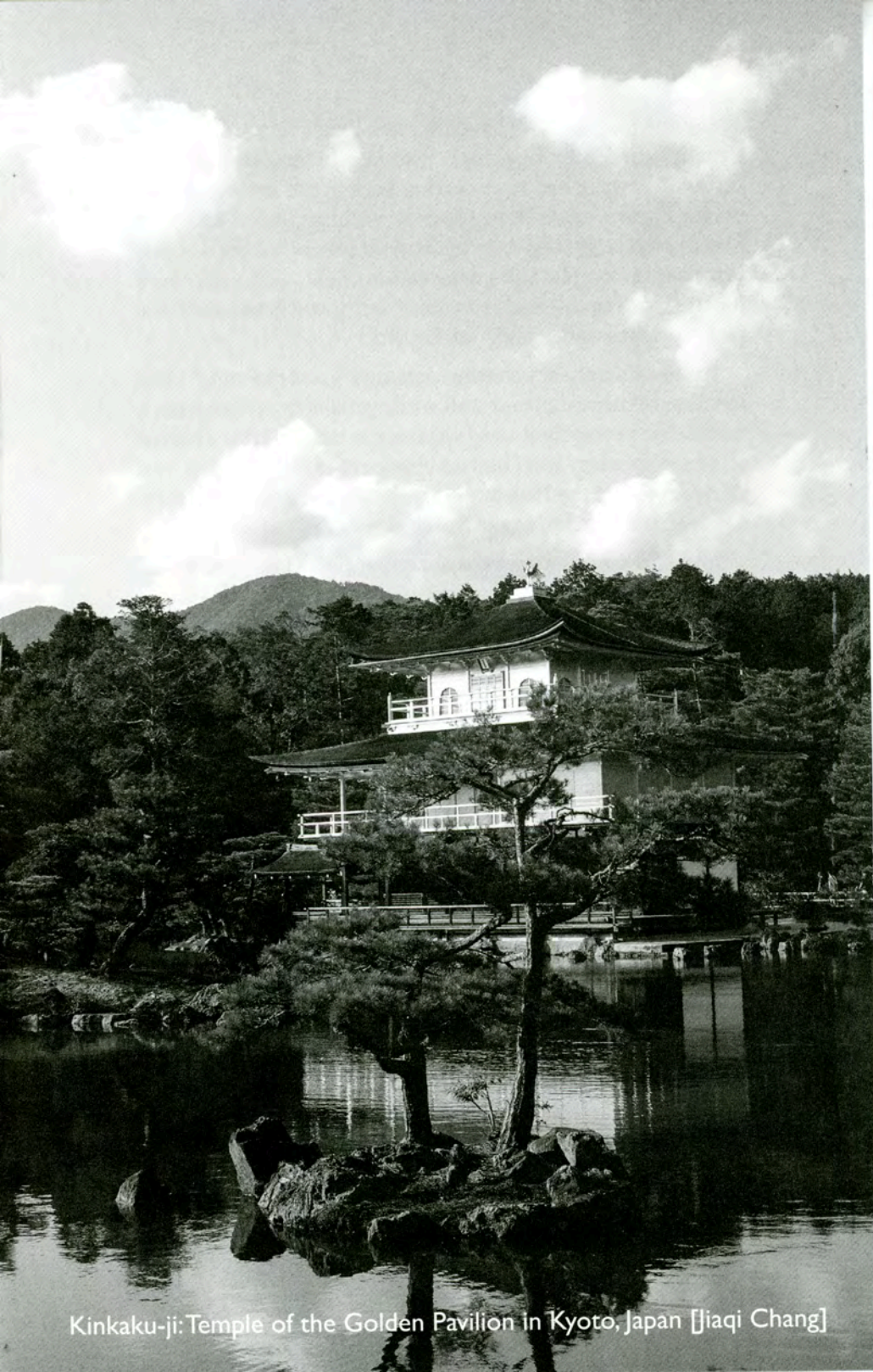
## The Language Barrier

STUDYING JAPANESE HAS not made the language barrier disappear. Many people have unrealistic expectations about language learning. I was once one of them; I only realized exactly what I was in for after I'd been at it for years.

Japanese and American people alike tend to assume I can produce either language at a moment's notice. They ask questions as if I am a walking translator. Language programs commonly speed through material as if the process is as simple as regurgitating memorized words and grammar points on a test. Japanese people tell me "You know so many *kanji*!" (the Chinese characters used in the writing system) when looking at my list of 300 characters, yet I need to know about 2,000 just to be able to read a newspaper from the nearest convenience store. If I say a short sentence correctly, it can give a Japanese person enough confidence in my language skills that they go on to tell me the whole story. Hopefully, it doesn't require more input from me than nodding. Many Japanese find it fascinating that I, a white American, would be interested in their culture; they will often do everything they can to show me their country, but that excitement can completely overwhelm any chance we have at dialogue.

But then again, an effortless life of fluent Japanese might be boring. Where would the stories be if it doesn't take a long time to get there?

I once roamed the grocery store with a friend for an hour before we finally accepted that we wouldn't find the bag of sugar our classmate asked us for without some help. But was the jumbled mess of Japanese in our heads enough to convey our dilemma to the man stocking shelves? We asked the big question, and it turned out we'd pretty much been staring at the sugar for five minutes. And now that I think about it, I never even tasted the cookies our classmate promised us as a reward for the effort.



Kinkaku-ji: Temple of the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto, Japan [Jiaqi Chang]

For the longest time I avoided pre-ordering a video game I really wanted to buy, then discovered the word for “to reserve,” *yoyaku*, had been staring back at me from my textbook for quite some time. My only problem ended up being that I completely forgot my apartment phone number, which I needed to complete the reservation sheet, as it’s common for the store to call and tell when your game is available for pick-up. I stressed myself out for that?

I once said a cheery *ohayō gozaimasu* (“good morning”) to a member of the restaurant staff while getting breakfast from a buffet. She promptly started speaking to me like I was a native Japanese speaker, and I had no chance of understanding her. I’ll never forget the look of disappointment on her face when she realized I couldn’t take the conversation any further.

And how could I forget the dozens of times I made a fool of myself in front of all my American friends, because I didn’t know something that seemed so basic to them, because the program at my college used a different textbook?

And how many times have I messed up a basic part of the language I’ve known for seven years?

It has not all been despair. I signed up for a conversation partner through a program at my school and our entire first conversation was effortlessly carried out in Japanese. She was so impressed that at every subsequent meeting she showed me off to her friends. It was a bit odd, feeling kind of like an impressive trophy, but I also knew that these moments of cultural exchange could change lives.

Every week I carried out a casual conversation with my teacher. Though he sometimes had to scold me for not trying out my new grammar patterns, he was always impressed to hear about how hard I tried to learn how to teach English to the energetic fourth grade students at my internship.

And there were people who did realize they have to go slowly with me. I’ll always remember the looks of relief on the faces of my host grandmother, hotel staff, and airport staff when they realized I could understand them and take



the difficult burden of holding a conversation with me off of them. Taking the struggle upon myself was difficult, but their joy made it worth it.

But perhaps the best interactions were those that transcended language altogether. During my short home-stay experience, my three young host sisters could barely muster up the courage to introduce themselves when we first met, but they soon showed me their Wii. We had found a common hobby, and within minutes we were laughing. Without words, we were bonding, discovering that there weren't really that many differences between us despite powerful factors such as land, ocean, culture, and age that divided us. My host sisters only worked up the nerve to speak to me once during the few days I spent with them. But that one conversation cemented our familial connection.

Easily the most compelling thing I learned while in Japan was how the people I met thought of me. To them I represented the United States, and they felt like they needed to represent Japan. It was one of the most daunting tasks I had ever faced, but challenging myself through simple conversation to represent an entire country and all its culture was the best part of my time in Japan.

With these things in mind, I will always fight the language barrier. It's not just about me; the people I meet are counting on me, waiting for the moment when I can converse with them fluently.

—*Kimmie King*

## Ordinarily Beautiful, Beautifully Ordinary

“There is nothing worse than being ordinary.”

—Angela from *American Beauty*

TODAY, AS I walked back from my biology class with my dear friend Casey, I realized I have one month left in South Africa. And though I have had moments where I am ready to go home, I can say right now that I am not. This is honestly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The chances of my returning to this place are slim, and the chances of my returning and having the same experience are none.

So as Casey and I walked, we began to talk about that—about returning home where everything will be as we left it. Things we have taken for granted as the norm for 20 years will be odd to us. Things we used to know and do will slowly come back to us in strange familiarity. Do we fall into the swing of things without a second thought? Do we carry on as life for the five past months was a mere two-week vacation? When people ask us how it was (an already predicted atrocious and unanswerable question), do we do the impossible and sum it up in three words? We may expect the world around us to have changed, but it won't have. What will have changed is who we are in that world.

I know what I can tell myself. I can tell myself that I will bring my newfound culturally aware perspective to my continuing life at home, and that it will enhance the person I continue to become. But I think telling yourself that and then experiencing it are two vastly different things. And I know it will not be that simple. Those moments of realization will be small and scattered—beautiful, no doubt, but not instantaneous. I have another journey ahead of me whose conclusion is indefinite.

Regardless, I am not here to provide myself answers right now. There is still so much to look forward to doing here that

I cannot get carried away with these thoughts. When the time comes to deal with that transition, I will. In the meantime, as Casey and I recognized the road ahead, I focused on the road we were literally on. I looked down at the pavement on which I walked. With its cracks and rubble, with its broken sidewalks I tread everyday as I walk to class or run in the morning, with its trees and fences that line the sides, with the people I pass and smile at, this road had become familiar.

It was not just familiar with surroundings, though; it was familiar with feeling. I thought of the roads I tread in Geneva: the same ones that have cracks in the sidewalk that I know from my running path, that have trees and flowers, and people I pass and smile at. How ordinary it all was; how beautiful it all is.

Anyone who knows me knows my favorite movie is *American Beauty*. Angela's claim that "there is nothing worse than being ordinary" irks me from time to time. I do not agree with her. As I walked down Carbis Road in South Africa, I thought about Pulteney Street in America. I began to think of all the other mundane similarities between the town in which I am currently living, and the town in which I previously resided. They were both ordinary, containing things we take for granted, but they implied something more. No matter where we go, we can relate to each other through the ordinary. It represents our shared human experiences. And that is beautiful. As different as we try to make the world out to be (which is still true on one hand), and as big as we try to make out the world to be (still true), we aren't so different. And in that moment, walking down Carbis Road, the world got small.

When I think of South Africa now, I do not think of a big chunk of African land on a map. I think of Carbis Road. I think of small details, both good and bad, that I have had the time and blessing to see and know in this town of Pietermaritzburg. Although this town has become less spectacular to me in its sites and attractions, it is becoming significant in another, more valuable way.

I cannot help but think of people in Paris who wake up near the Eiffel Tower every day. I cannot help but think of the

people who can walk to the Indian Ocean in their backyard. I cannot help but think of all the people out there who live next to things we deem beautiful, but to them they are completely ordinary. Sometimes I put myself in this position. When we travel to see something extraordinary, I pretend I am used to seeing it every day. As a result, it loses its visual magnificence. As a result, I gain something more: the ability to see the world in two ways, as both beautiful and ordinary.

Some perceive these two words as opposites. That is what Angela implies in *American Beauty*, as she strives for beauty in spite of being ordinary. What she fails to see, though, is that the beauty she strives for is superficial. She strives for beauty that the world will see, not feel. I see lions, mountains, and oceans, but I feel Carbis Road. I feel a connection between two small towns in one big world. I cannot help but think that no matter where I travel this will be the case. The world will look glorious, but it will feel ordinary. To me, this is beautiful. No matter where else I travel, I understand that we, as people of different cultures, share similar experiences. While one person may look at my home and see beauty, and I see beauty in theirs, if I also feel the ordinary (the connecting factor), then I cannot help but see my own home as beauty. And if I view each and every place in such a manner, the world becomes beautiful all around. It might sound like complicated math, but, simply put, the world is ordinarily beautiful. Beautifully ordinary. The words are interchangeable because they are of equal value, just as is every place that we may have the blessing not only to see but feel.

—Karah Charette



Cliffs of Moher, Ireland [Andrew Zenger]  
Cliffs of Moher, Ireland [Gorman Donnelly]



## A Universal Language

MAY 28 WAS our last day working at the Salvation Army Children's Home in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. We taught the girls Beyoncé's "Love on Top" dance and gave them the opportunity to share what they learned with their friends. It was very informal. Children from the home piled into the small chapel room where we held our classes to watch the show. The girls were nervous and unsure at first, but as soon as we handed them their homemade, personalized t-shirts, each with their name encircled in a glittery, Sharpie heart, their nerves turned into excitement. It's funny how sometimes all it takes is a t-shirt to help you play the part and understand how to immerse yourself in a dance.

The girls did great. During rehearsals, we struggled to get them to perform for us. There was constant chatter and laughter as they practiced. They had never performed before. The atmosphere of our class was always pretty light and casual. When we asked the girls to be serious and pretend it was the real performance, they didn't fully understand what we meant. However, when they put on their costumes and danced for the first time in front of their friends, it was clear that they understood how to perform; it just took the right setting. We catered the dance class to the girls, as we understood that in this particular environment, we were using dance as a tool once a week to offer them the support and attention that they were often lacking. It was important to create the experience that the girls wanted. However, when we did ask them to take their work seriously, it was a struggle, and we had to try hard to keep them focused on the choreography with positive reinforcement.

We had to occasionally remind ourselves that we were not there to train dancers, but to use dance to create a bond with a group of girls that needed a little extra support, love, and attention. In that sense, we succeeded. It was hard to say goodbye to the girls, especially because we had no way



Schoolchildren, South Africa [Karah Charette]

of knowing that they were going to be OK. But I am so glad that we were able to share our passion for dance with them and use it to inspire in them a new sense of creative energy. Dance is powerful because it has the potential for inspiration and I love sharing that with others. The girls have promised to keep dancing and have expressed interest in teaching the younger girls what they have learned. I hope that they have kept the cycle going and pass down to others what we have shared with them.

When we first arrived in South Africa and began interacting with the girls in our residence, I met Anele, who lives down the hall from me. She showed the most interest in getting to know me and learning about my culture, and I also learned a lot from her. When Anele first found out that I was a dancer, she immediately showed interest in exploring the art form. She asked me if I would put together a master class for her church youth group because they incorporate the creative arts into their religion and have always wanted to gain more experience with dance.

Together with Karah, another HWS student, I put together a beginning contemporary class that we held last week for eight beginning dancers. We didn't have access to many facilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (something I really missed about HWS!), so we used the TV room in the boys' dorm. We learned how to work with what we had (choreographing in our rooms or the lobby of our dorm), and our class demonstrated that you don't have to be in a studio to dance. The class was great and the dancers were enthusiastic and hard-working.

This class was another way for us to experience a cultural exchange. While we were leading, the students realized that they were already familiar with a lot of the movement simply from everyday life. As we danced together, we were connected by our movement, regardless of race, gender, or cultural background. Our movement and our passion connected us. When I first arrived in South Africa, I often felt uncomfortable with people staring at me and singling me out because of what I looked like and where I came from. However, in this



dance class, I never once felt uncomfortable or vulnerable. I felt respected, included, and accepted, feelings that are not always easy to come by in South African society. If I met these students on the street or at a party, our relationship may have been different, but, because we were dancing, I felt connected to them immediately and it was the best feeling.

I learned that one of the reasons I appreciate movement so much is because it connects people of all different backgrounds in a way that words can't. Words can often complicate things—misrepresent our thoughts—but we all can learn from movement. Simply put, in this class, we all were connected because we all had bodies and we all could move our bodies. I appreciate simplicity in all aspects of life, and this class perfectly exemplified how something as basic as moving can connect us. This reminder served me well when I was feeling a bit out of place and excluded in a culture that was not my own.

—*Jenna Davidson-Catalano*

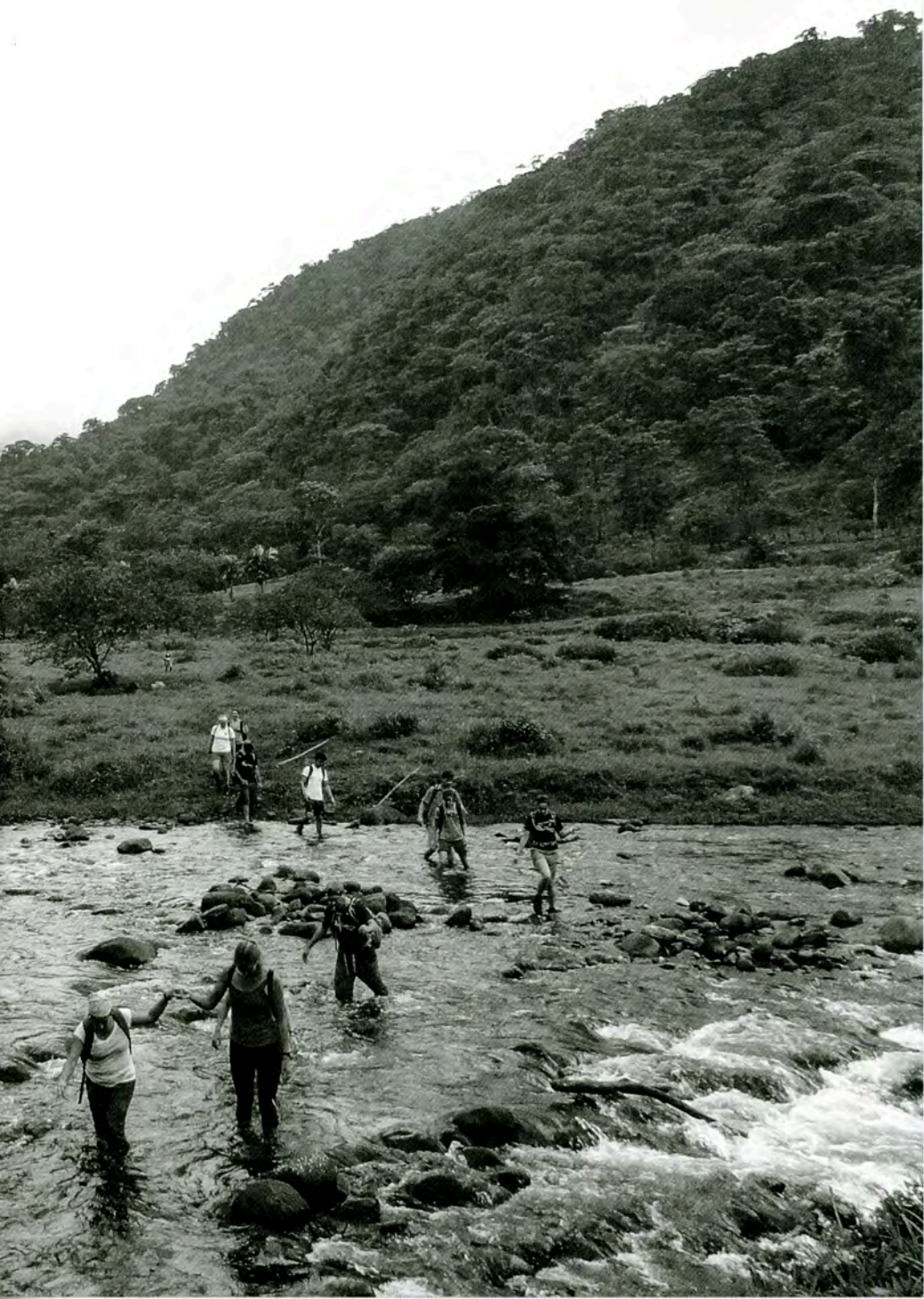


Carousel in Galway, Ireland [Caroline Demeter]





Hiking in Arenal, Costa Rica [Alyssa Biagini]







Light Tunnel in Shiga, Japan [Jiaqi Chang]







Reflection in Paris, France [Sophie Bober]



Boat in Suzhou, China [Alicia Palmer]  
Shipwreck on Heron Island, Australia [Nicolas Steijn]





Looking at Brussels, Belgium [Molly Ramage]  
Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, Germany [Vincent Puleo]





The Wall Dividing Israel and Palestine [Erike Stuke]  
York Minster, England [Megan Coale]





Rain on the Mekong Delta, Vietnam [Erika Steuer]  
Coliseum in Rome, Italy [Megan Soule]



## My Experience in the Gaeltacht

WE WHEELED OUR small suitcases from our flats at Gort na Coiribe across the bridge, through campus, and up to the quad on a chilly Friday afternoon in November. Even with our layers of sweaters and scarves, we could not escape the light drizzle that made us cold and wet. The temperature of the falling mist, paired with the strong wind, assured us that winter was well on its way, if not here already. We met the group of students from the National University of Ireland at Galway (NUIG) who were also enrolled in Beginner's Irish and already waiting beneath the shelter of the stone hallway. Those with familiar faces belonged to our section of the module, while the others were strangers to me. After waiting for the three tiny vans that were running on Irish time, we organized ourselves according to the names on the driver's sheets and squeezed in.

When the vans left Galway City and the familiar countryside appeared and then disappeared out of view with the setting sun, our van became quiet with the onset of darkness. Even our driver, with whom we tried to converse in Irish, was silent. Like the other 11 people on my bus, I was unable to sleep. I was a bit anxious about the weekend homestay in one of the three predominately Irish-speaking regions in Ireland, but also excited about the first opportunity to travel in the country apart from my group. Our headlights illuminated the narrow two-lane road that led to Carna, a small town an hour and a half northwest of Galway. I had heard for the past two months about how beautiful the Connemara region is and despite my inability to view the verdant, rolling hills at this hour in the evening, just being able to lean my head against the chilly windowpane, look up at the incredibly clear sky, and see the thousands of stars brimming with light eased my nervousness.

When we arrived at our homestay, we disembarked the van with our bags and walked up to the front door where our host family was waiting for us. This entire weekend was all about

speaking only in Irish, but all of us were timid and not too confident in our language abilities after only studying this language for such a short time. I was able to muster "*Dia dhuit, ca chaoi bhfuil tu? Is mise Rachel,*" which translates to "Hello, how are you? My name is Rachel," as I placed my bag inside. I thought we would have a little while to settle in, but we were instructed to jump right back in the van and ride for a few minutes down the road to the NUIG classroom facility, where our Irish professors from the university were waiting for us. The entire group received a welcome and the itinerary for the weekend before we were whisked off to the activity for the evening, which was occurring at the only hotel in town. The itinerary read, "singing and dancing workshop." My first thought: this will be a night of embarrassment.

We unloaded from the van and filtered into the Carna Bay Hotel. For the time being, we were the only ones there. We were told by our professors to wait downstairs, which appeared to be the entertainment and social area of the hotel. There was a bar and many tables and chairs, as well as a large wooden floor in the center of a large carpeted one. After tensely sitting for a few minutes, many students frequently eyed the bar and some meandered over to order a drink. Soon all of the students caved in and within no time at all everyone became livelier and revitalized. I ordered a pint of Bulmers, my favorite Irish cider that every pub serves. After a few more minutes, the head professor and man of the hour appeared, and the evening had commenced.

While he gave an introduction about the Irish history of singing and dancing, several students obviously younger than ourselves timidly entered the room, all with a different musical instrument in tow. The professor said that they were local middle school students who were in a band together. They sat down in a row of chairs on the other side of the dance floor and began to play, and I knew that I was not the only one astounded by their musical prowess. Being in Galway for over two months already, I had heard a fair share of Irish music, but never so much talent from such a young group of students! After the

first song, the professor made them introduce themselves and discuss their ability with their instrument, and every one of them was so modest. They were clearly nervous about the large group of college students in the room, but very quickly the tables turned as the professor asked us to sing for them. Luckily there were a few volunteers: one man sang a beautiful Chinese song, another performed a poor rendition of “Piano Man” by Billy Joel, and then all of us as a group tried our best at the American national anthem. The Irish professor then sang a heartwrenching Irish lament in English that left the entire room feeling blue. Luckily, he had a cure for that: it was time to dance!

There was no option; everyone was to be involved in the Irish “finger” dancing, which was basically line dancing or contra dancing. We were assembled into lines and the middle school students dispersed between us. After about ten minutes of nonstop dancing, all of us were worn out to the point of exhaustion. We also were smiling and laughing more than we had on the entire trip that afternoon, and most likely more than any of us had smiled and laughed in the past week as





well. We were all having so much fun! Something we had all thought might be corny and uncomfortable turned out to be a blast and a bonding experience for us all. When we all sat back down, we thought we were done for the night, but how wrong we were.

There was a man, probably in his early 30s, who was a part of the middle school band and had been completely silent until now. He stood in the middle of the dance floor, surveying us all. He explained that he was an enthusiast of *Sean-nós*, which is more traditional than Irish step dancing or Riverdance. He began to dance and everyone in the room did their best to keep up with the movements of his feet. He moved back and forth, and side to side, and the widening of every pair of eyes correlated with the speed and fervor with which his tap shoes hit the floor. When he finished, our entire group, along with the middle school kids who were familiar with his talent, applauded more heartily than for anything else that night.

He was still short of breath when he stated, "I need a volunteer." As usual when this statement is uttered, eyes darted about the room hoping to land on someone who was willing



Road in Connemara, Ireland [Alex Welych-Miller]

to take a stand. Some looked at the floor, or at the wall. Some students jokingly called out the names of other students in our group to embarrass them. However, I remained silent, and my eyes stayed fixed on him. When I hear a figure of authority declare these four words, I wait for someone more enthusiastic to come forward, but there was no such person this evening. Nobody knew exactly what he wanted a volunteer for, but we knew it would require walking to the middle of the room and dancing in front of a large group of unfamiliar people. In one split second, I made a decision.

I boldly raised my hand. Many students looked at me, surprised that I sacrificed myself so readily. The few students in the group who did know me yelled out encouraging shouts of approval as I fumbled my way through the clusters of chairs that stood between me and the dance floor. When my voyage was complete and my whole body was shaking from fearful anxiety, the dancer said to me, "Let's see some dancing!" That's when my face became very serious and he knew I wasn't kidding when I replied, "Only if you show me what to do!" He smiled and he nodded to the middle school students to start up the music. The song was rousing and I became brave again. He stood in front of me and I was to mimic his movements. He then quickly explained how the 15 counts worked with the steps, and suddenly, we were off.

We danced in place and then, without warning, he moved to the left, so I followed him. Just as quickly, we moved to the right and I followed him there, too. As soon as I got the gist of a step, he would throw me for a loop by adding flair to it, daring me to attempt it as well. All of the students from our group were cheering me on each time I was able to learn a new step of the dance. I was smiling even though the only place I was staring was at his feet, doing my best to discern clues about what he would do next. A few minutes in, he asked me, "Are you ready?" to which I could only reply with a fatigued smile as the incessant footwork was starting to tire me out. That is when he stopped moving left or right and moved his feet even faster in place.

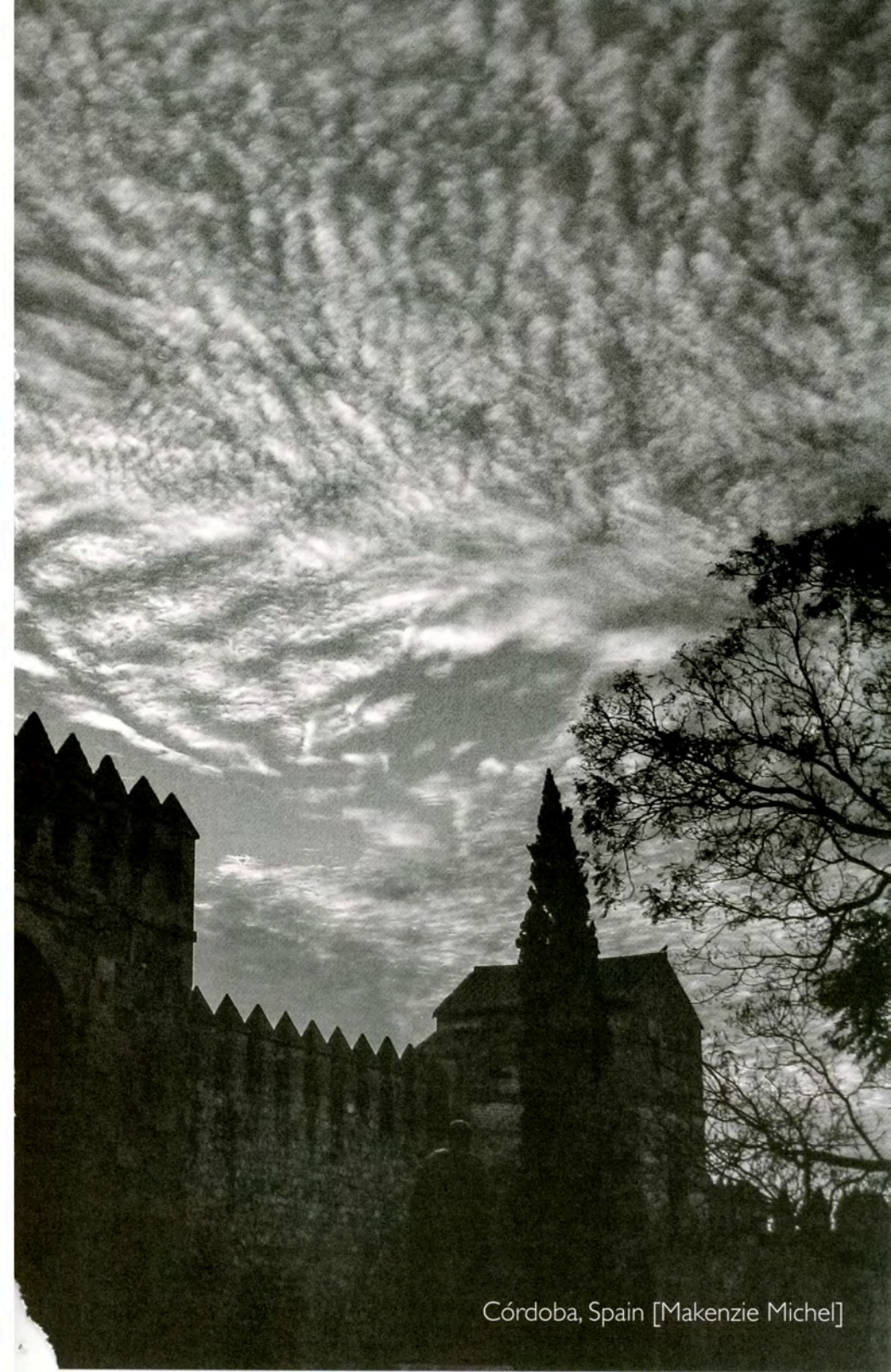
When he noticed I was able to keep up to his pace, he tapped even faster than that. This continued until it was literally impossible to move any more rapidly, and I let myself stop partly because I couldn't keep up anymore and partly because I was laughing so hard that I couldn't dance and laugh at the same time. He smiled back at me and the music died down. The entire room gave me a standing ovation as I shook hands with the dancer and tepidly limped off of the floor due to a few small cramps forming in my calves.

When I sat back down, I was incredibly red in the face and sweatier than I would have liked to be, but I also had the largest smile as everyone around me patted me on the back and praised me for my bravery and ability to dance for that duration. All I could do was knock back the rest of my cider and take deep breaths to recover. I wasn't just recuperating physically; I was mentally analyzing myself as well. Before the dancing began, I was questioning myself on why I have the habit of volunteering myself to do things that I am absolutely afraid of, and afterwards I remembered the reason: It's a leap out of my comfort zone, and what can give you a more intense adrenaline rush than that?

I have realized that without experiences like these we cannot grow as people. If we do not push ourselves to expand our limits, we cannot enjoy enriching experiences that create lifelong memories. For me, traveling to the Gaeltacht was one of those decisions I make without knowing what will happen, only to have my expectations surpassed when I offer myself up to unknown possibilities. We must start by feeling the thirst for adventure that we all possess but that lies dormant until we want to taste it for the first time. The more we taste, the more lengths we will go to quench this thirst. Every new step we take in life is like the *Sean-nós* dance: the faster we move, the farther we will go.

—Rachel Newcomb





Córdoba, Spain [Makenzie Michel]

## What India Means to Me

ARTICULATING WHAT INDIA means to me is a difficult task, since I gained a genuine understanding of the immensity of our globe and the subjectivity of my perspectives during my three-week visit. Visiting a culture so different from my own allowed me to grow as a person and to see myself as a global citizen. A culture that I knew little about taught me lessons and values that I hope to incorporate into my own life and pass on to those around me. A population with which I thought I shared little in common has reminded me of the power of resilience and determination, as well as the undeniable human connection that we all share. India, to me, will forever be a place where I not only learned about an amazing country, but also about myself.

My time in India was filled with experiences, sights, and moments that truly changed my outlook on life and its many challenges. First, the experiences allowed me to learn about a fascinating religion and fully immerse myself in a foreign culture. Second, the sights gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own life and recognize the unfortunate limitations of change. Finally, there were the moments that allowed me to internalize it all. While this was, by far, the furthest and most exotic place I've made it to on this planet, the human interactions I observed and engaged in solidified my belief in the similarity between all human beings. For example, receiving a smile and automatically giving one in return, seeing a child run into a parent's arms, or having a stranger help me follow along in a religious ceremony reminded me of the connection that we all share. Moments like these allowed me to see how human connection transcends language and cultural barriers, and allowed me to connect easily to the people of India.

India is a place with deep-rooted culture, admirable spirit, palpable faith, and enormous economic potential. The culture and spirit of the Indian people taught me to accept the life you have been given and seize each day. Without accepting the challenging constraints of life, you are unable to recog-

nize and enjoy the positive moments. Their ability to accept the monsoon seasons, the relentless honking, the scorching heat waves, and, for some, the constant pangs of hunger was something that really impressed me about the Indian people.

Our yoga instructor told us to just accept, and I saw this philosophy in practice every day among the Indian people. Whether rich or poor, the people of India have a deep pride in their country and face each day with determination and strength. I will try to apply this lesson to my life back in the States. I have learned to accept the challenges of any given day and allow myself to smile and be thankful for what I have. Challenges such as a frustrating conversation, a disappointing friend, a difficult course, or the pressures of tomorrow will be present but will not bring me down. Unsurprisingly, India also taught me to recognize that these challenges are a luxury and to remember how lucky I am.

India helped me understand that mental resilience and determination can counterbalance societal challenges. As I saw entire families living on fewer items than I own myself, I began to think about the amount of possessions that I have, items that at one time or another I thought were necessary to buy and had the ability to do so. While I know that purchasing fewer items will not provide the families I saw with more, I gained a new perspective on something that I thought I was already aware of. I have become accustomed to having all of my basic needs met and then finding reasons to own more. Life can be sustained on so little, and going to India forced me recognize the inequality in the distribution of wealth around the world. This isn't a revolutionary thought; however, it wasn't until my trip to India that I began to understand how dramatically different people's lives can be. It angers me that, as I write this paper on a laptop computer in my home with light, heat, food in the refrigerator, and a dog napping on the couch, the people that I saw in India are still living in despair.

When I walked past families who are living—not just begging but living—on the streets, I couldn't help but be impressed and inspired by their resilience and strength. When I would force myself to walk away from a needy child, I would turn my head and see them requesting food from another

person. While some may see this as a nuisance or a burden, I saw it as a sign of great determination. Children would wander the streets for countless hours asking for food and money. If I was in their position, which is something I can barely fathom, I am not sure I would have had the stamina, both physically and emotionally, to continue in the search. The hope in their eyes never faded.

Some say that having a deep faith in religion allows you accept the life you have been given and the power to continue the fight. I wondered where their determination came from, and the answer was often religion. This is something that I have always had trouble relating to, but I found it to be quite interesting and inspiring among the people of India.

The infallible faith that the Hindu people have in their religion was inspirational to me, since I grew up in a Reform Jewish household. I attend temple only for the High Holy Days and stayed with Hebrew School up until my Bat Mitzvah. While I love being Jewish and believe in the stories of the Torah, I've always been a bit cautious when it comes to placing all my faith in religion. It isn't uncommon for me to acknowledge the limitations of my prayers and consider the scientific realities. Truly unfortunate things have happened to my family and, as I grew older, I began to question why I should believe in something that allowed those unfair things to happen.

Nevertheless, when I saw the Indian people remain strong in their faith, I gained a new perspective on religion and human motivation. The Indian people, despite desperation and destitution, continue to trust in a greater being and fight through the life they have been given. It was refreshing for me to observe individuals so engrossed in their religion, who never questioned the validity of the myths or holy locations. We watched as people sent candles down the River Ganges because they believed that it would bring peace to their deceased family member. We attended an early morning fire ceremony at an *ashram* that served as an offering and praise to their gods. The Hindu people did not partake in these rituals out of obligation, but rather because they truly believed that their prayers and ceremonies served a certain purpose



and would accomplish a particular goal. I had not previously experienced being surrounded by people with such deep faith, but it was what I most enjoyed about my trip to India, and admired most about the Indian people.

Traveling is something I am passionate about, and my time in India strengthened this interest. Whenever I arrive in a new country or city, I like to take a minute and just observe what an ordinary day is like for the people living in that region and juxtapose it to what I am familiar with back home. Learning about various cultures and foreign countries in the classroom is vastly different than a 6 a.m. dip in the holy River Ganges, or the full-body experience of viewing a Bollywood film in Jaipur. The mystique of Hinduism cannot be felt from the pages of a book but rather only through touring the beautifully ornate temples, and getting blessed with a red dot or wrap bracelet. Grabbing a Starbucks chai does not provide you with the moment of serenity that the perfectly sweet chai made on the streets of India does.

I am so thankful that I got the opportunity to travel to a place so far from home and learn about such an important country. While in India, we learned that it is the combination of many different spices that makes a great masala. When I look back on my trip, I see that it was the combination of many different things that created such an amazing experience for me. The people, the culture, the religion, the colors, the food, and the passion that radiates throughout the country mix to make an unforgettable place. I hope to return to India one day, but in the meantime I will carry the memories and lessons with me and allow them to shape my decisions in the best possible way.

—*Kayla Masterman*



Sitting Man in Fez, Morocco [Max Eyle]



## Compassion: Journey Through the Jai in Thailand

I FOUND THE true meaning of compassion when I broke my leg in the mountains of Northern Thailand on a short-term study abroad program. During my rescue and subsequent healing in the hospital at Chiang Mai, I kept coming back to the word “compassion.” It was the only word I could think of in English that encompassed the supreme kindness, generosity, and internal beauty that was continually shown to me by the strangers who helped me heal.

Shortly after I arrived at the hospital, my professor gave me a book entitled *Heart Talk: Say What You Feel in Thai*, by Christopher Moore. The Thai language, Moore wrote, has over 300 phrases associated with the heart. The concept of heart is not limited to romantic or familial love as it is in Western culture. The word heart, or *jai*, when paired with other words expresses a range of physical, emotional, and mental states. The further I read, the more I recognized that the acts of kindness shown to me by Karen and Thai men and women were not isolated instances. I began to understand compassion as a Thai cultural norm. As a Westerner, I saw everyone who helped me as heroic and beautiful, but as individuals too. The book, however, made me aware that I was in a communalist culture. Thai culture values each individual because they are a part of the community, regardless of personal qualities. Even I, a *farang* (white foreigner), was a part of this community and deserving of compassionate care.

**Empathetic Heart** || *aw jai khǎw maa sài jai raw*: Taking another person’s heart into your own heart...the importance of showing compassion and sympathy to others. (Moore 65)

The student who had crashed into me as we ran from the charging elephant was yanking my arm, telling me to get up and run. When I found myself on the ground, the elephant still

trumpeting only 30 feet away, but under the control of his *mahout*, I reached down and felt my bone pushing out against the curve of my shin. I had no idea what was going on, what to do, or how to react, so I screamed in pure uncontrolled terror. A student, with whom I'd barely interacted before, knelt down next to me and held my head in her lap as they manually reset my leg, and bound it with bamboo and shoelaces. She stroked my face, cradled my body, and calmed my fear. She later admitted that she too was terrified. She had never experienced a real emergency before. She had no medical training, and no idea what she ought to do. In that moment, though, she found her empathetic heart. She kept her fear inside herself, and poured compassion and serenity into me.

**With Sincere Heart** || *dûaay náam sǎi jai jing*: Giving something to another without any expectation of receiving a benefit in return for the gift. (167)

I broke my leg hours from the nearest city or hospital, and was forced to drive in the bed of a pick-up truck, with nothing other than a basic bamboo splint protecting my leg. I found myself among strangers, in a situation of absolute fear, pain, and terror, and I was cared for in the most beautiful and tender of ways possible under the circumstances. One of the village men began the drive in the front of the truck, but as we drove and he heard me screaming and crying out in pain, he came to sit in the back of the truck. At first, he held my wrist. This man gently encircled my wrist, not my fingers, and this struck me as poignant and kind. I slid into deeper levels of agony as the truck bed thrashed and bounced, my broken bones spreading apart and clashing together each time the truck moved. I remember trying to bargain mentally with the universe, asking to be given the overall dull aching pain, instead of the bolts of lightning, or belts of fire pain. The universe didn't give me physical relief, but it gave me emotional support and compassion in the form of the men and women with me in the truck. I lay my head in this man's lap, and sobbed out my pain. I remember trying to formulate a

question, asking if it was socially acceptable in Karen culture for my head to be in his lap, but then the next wave of hurt hit, and I realized that cultural standards of what is acceptable have no place in experiences such as this. I don't know this man's name, but he heard my pain. He heard me crying and even though we had no relationship, he gave me love. A soft and simply human love that can be given and gifted to anyone, regardless of circumstance.

**Good Heart** || *jai dii*: Common response...when you perform a requested or unrequested act of kindness or assistance...your action arose from the goodness of your heart...something beyond what you have asked. (79)

For some parts of the truck ride, I was lucid and would talk and laugh with the other passengers. Other parts, my mind reeled from the excess of sensation flooding my brain's pain center. By the time we reached the rural hospital, after two and a half hours on the mountain roads, our guide Aek, and the two Karen village men who had driven me there, had surpassed superhero status in my eyes. I loved them as I love my family, because they showed me unconditional compassion, disregarding that we had formerly been strangers in every way. In a few short hours, Karen men had manually reset my leg, carried me across a river, and driven me down a mountain as fast as was possible along a road with 1,864 curves. Simply getting me to a hospital didn't require holding my hand, working to massage the cramps out of my leg, telling me jokes, giving me sips of water and cookies. Those were extra kindnesses, given simply to help me fight my pain and not because of a medical necessity. I realized that they were a type of social necessity, though. The importance of generosity and kindness, of having a good heart is a cornerstone of Thai culture and a desired personality trait.

**Center of the Heart** || *klaang jai*: People who have been responsible for improving or bettering your life...they reside in the center of your heart. (168)

If I had been floored by the compassion and tenderness shown me by the Karen strangers, I was awestruck by the absolute empathy exhibited by our ambulance driver. When I moaned in pain, tears streamed down his cheeks as he listened to my anguish. I could physically feel him slowing the van around corners, across potholes and bridges. Desperately trying to soften each jerk, to save me from the pain those jolts caused. He didn't speak a word of English. I never even got his name, but he did everything in his power to make the seven-hour journey from the rural hospital to the city hospital easier for me. In the U.S., ambulance drivers, taxi drivers, and bus drivers are separate from our experiences. Often they are an invisible party that the passenger pays little attention to. This driver became one of my compassion superheroes. The driver treated my pain as if it was a burden we both carried, a weight we shared. I was never able to thank him further than the most genuine smile I could muster as they wheeled me into the hospital on a stretcher, and he smiled back, tears still in his eyes.

**Compassionate Heart** || *jai mêet taa*: The Buddhist concepts of compassion and generosity...and the values inherent in them are highly prized by Thai culture... another formulation to describe the quality of compassion and willingness to help others. (72)

I arrived at the hospital with some American preconceptions that foreign doctors would want to get the most money out of me possible but also show the least concern. I expected to be looked at for a moment then rushed to an operating room. We arrived at the hospital after nearly ten hours of travelling. At this point of that day, I was past the point of pain or exhaustion. I had strained every molecule of my being and my memories are fuzzy and fluid. There is one moment I remember with perfect clarity, though. After speaking with both my parents on the phone about how best to proceed, I lay on the examination table, trying to decide whether to have a risky surgery performed that night, or to wait days or

perhaps weeks in this foreign hospital, alone. I had missed my doctor's name when he introduced himself, so I used one of my handful of Thai phrases to ask his name, and introduce myself. He smiled, told me he was Dr. Dumnoensun, and that he was pleased to meet me. Then he looked straight into my eyes and said "Zoë, wait." He said this so clearly, so powerfully, and so gently, that I decided to do what he asked, to wait on the surgery. My tired and broken body had survived its most traumatic day since birth; from the minute I fell, each time I screamed out in pain, when I felt lost and confused in a sea of nurses and medical terms, there was a Thai man beside me pouring his entire self into trying to help me.

**Shuddering with Fear Heart** || *sīaw jai*: The fear in this case is often irrational. You can't pin down exactly why you are fearful. Fear of the unknown... also the situation may be scary and the outcome uncertain, and this leads to a feeling of fear falling within the ambit of this phrase. (48)

The next day, I had to be put under anesthesia because they needed to reset my right leg. It had been set manually twice the day before, but upon examining my x-rays they saw that the sheared section of my tibia was not properly placed and needed to be fixed immediately. I was wheeled into the operating room around midnight, and, against my best intentions, I got really scared. I'd never been in an operating room before. There were shiny metal tools, and everyone was speaking in Thai, and I couldn't understand a syllable. Even worse, everyone was wearing surgical masks so those beautiful Thai smiles that had been encouraging and supporting me through every stage so far were completely hidden from me. Tears started dripping down my face, and I struggled not to make a sound. In preparing me for surgery, they tied my arms out to my sides in a T shape, and I felt as if I was being hung up on a cross. One of the male nurses saw my discomfort, spoke quickly and softly to another of the nurses who took over whatever he'd been doing, and came beside me to hold my hand. I smiled



through my tears and squeezed his hand. I tried to talk to him and learned his name was Subin. He stayed with me, holding my hand tight until I lapsed into unconsciousness from the IV drip. Later that night—I'm not sure if I was still in surgery or in the recovery room—I woke up shaking and crying. My teeth were chattering, and my body was jerking with uncontrollable muscle spasms. As tears spilled from my eyes, I suddenly saw Subin by my side again. He asked if I remembered him; I nodded and whispered his name. He held my hand until they were able to sedate me. Finding a friend in an operating room (in the middle of the night in a country you've never been to) is a rare and miraculous thing. It is not a strain or inconvenience to be kind. Kindness was done only because it should be, with no ulterior motive. Subin saw that it was scary for an American girl to be in a Thai hospital room about to undergo a surgery. It didn't matter that he didn't speak my language; it didn't matter that he was preparing tools for the surgery. He felt my fear and calmed it with kindness.

**True Essence of the Heart** || *náam sǎi jai jing*: You have gone out of your way to help someone without any thought of payment or reward. You did what you did out of some genuine or true feeling of giving rather than as a commercial or mercenary act. For you the smile of gratitude is the currency in which you are paid... (84)

Every day I was in the hospital, the Elephant Nature Park sent visitors with food, books, fruit, and my favorite Thai dishes. I felt flooded with love and friendship, from an organization I had been involved with physically for less than two days. That first day the Park sent me a breathtaking bouquet of fresh flowers. An array of flowers—I wish I knew the names of them—cradled a soft pink and magenta lily. I have never really been sick or injured before, so I don't know what gifts one typically receives when hospitalized, but I hadn't expected to be given flowers from strangers in a foreign country. Having beauty given to me made me feel beautiful. This was quite

an accomplishment given that I was lying in a hospital bed with an IV attached to my arm, unable to go to the bathroom by myself, unable to shower, and still wearing clothes filthy with dust from the 10-hour journey here.

**Relax One's Heart** || *yoon jai*: You disengage from your personal or business life in order to achieve this emotional state of relaxation...You can relax your heart when others may feel discontent. (20)

While I was in the hospital, I felt sublimely peaceful and extremely loved. I was able to transition from “Shuddering with Fear Heart” to “Relax One’s Heart.” There was such an immediate and extreme outpouring of love from friends, family, and even once-removed acquaintances sending me their support from around the world. I wrote on Facebook only three days after my injury:

*I am unconscionably blessed with my loved ones, and I am going to do my utmost to give as much love back into the world as is being poured into me during this experience. Everyone, I can FEEL all the prayers, positive thoughts, wishes, and love you are sending me. This is arguably the most difficult experience of my life, but I'm flowing through it with ease, because you all, my global village, are cradling my heart and carrying me through it. I have no English words for the joy I feel for you all, but I'm working on my Thai, so I'm hoping to find some there.*

After my injury, after my journey down the mountain, and because of the immense love and compassion that was gifted to me, I suddenly found that the malice, depression, and heartache that had been plaguing me for months had entirely dissipated. I found all my former hate, anger, and frustration to be entirely irrelevant. I had endured more physical pain, for a longer period of time, and at higher levels than anyone else I know.

As a result, I discovered that I was a much stronger individual than I had ever believed. I'd always had this nagging doubt in my mind that at my core I was damaged and mean, even vindictive. Going through this ultimate test, being forced to my limits, and finding that at my limits I was kind was an absolutely transformative revelation for me. In the peak of my pain, I didn't curse, I didn't hit. I never once hated or blamed the student who broke my leg in his own blind fear. I screamed, I cried in the arms of strangers, and I was in a type of pain that surpassed what I had ever thought possible, but I was never mean. I found myself thinking selflessly when all the actions and attention of everyone was intensely focused on me. I found compassion within my own heart, and have worked to carry it into every aspect of my life.

I've gained a deeper respect for the basic good of people, in particular how important it is to support those you find around you, whether friends or strangers. I have learned the importance of reaching out, of genuine smiles, of the gentle beauty of holding hands, and of knowing that it really doesn't matter where you are or what happened to you, because there are caring, compassionate people everywhere.

—Zoë Van Nostrand

## Mapping Galway

STUDIO ART PROFESSOR and Galway Faculty Director Nick Ruth asked the students of his seminar “The Space in the Page” to engage critically with the city through maps, diagrams, and symbols. Ruth defined place as the “interplay of the physical geography of a location with the culture of the people who live there,” but asked his students to consider themselves as part of that constructive process, even though they were only temporary residents.

An early assignment focused on developing unique symbols for the maps. Ruth provided a page from his own journal to help students understand the iterative process of icon design (facing). The map by Rachel Newcomb on page 156 features icons for offbeat activities, including parkour, a physical discipline focused on fast and efficient movement across an urban space without regard for paths designed for pedestrians.

Parkour is particularly sensitive to hierarchies of space and the way in which environments are shaped by power. A later assignment in the semester challenged students to examine, rather than vault over, manifestations of these hierarchies.

*For this assignment, you must make a map that describes the social construction of Galway. Who are the key players? Think about those organizations that have influence on the evolving landscape...who makes the rules that regulate existence and practices?*

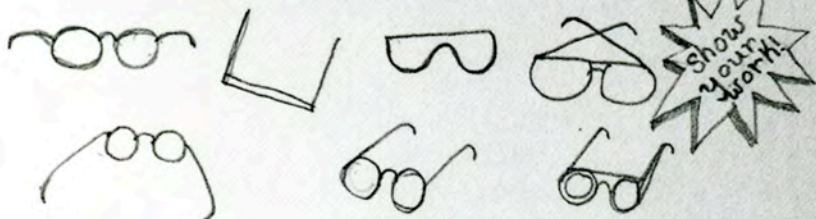
Mary Kacprowicz’s map (157) identifies a network of comforts existing within a shopping center’s commercially organized space, and Morgan Murray’s map (157) of the Bodkin Roundabout/Intersection is a study in transportation hierarchies and their effect on the flow of people across space. Sriya Bhumi’s “Spheres of Influence” map (158) looks at the way in which the location of core services tends to concentrate tourists.

# HOW TO DESIGN A SYMBOL

Eye Glasses -

## STEP 1. BRAINSTORM

- MAKE QUICK SKETCHES THAT EXPLORE LOTS OF IDEAS



## STEP 2. KEEP PLAYING WITH YOUR IDEA, ELIMINATING THINGS THAT DON'T WORK AND DEVELOPING ONES THAT DO. SLOW DOWN AND REWORK, REVISE, EDIT!



JUST LINE



DIFFERENT SHAPE



SMALL LENSES



LARGE LENSES



THICKER LINES



WHITE LINES ON BLACK SHAPE

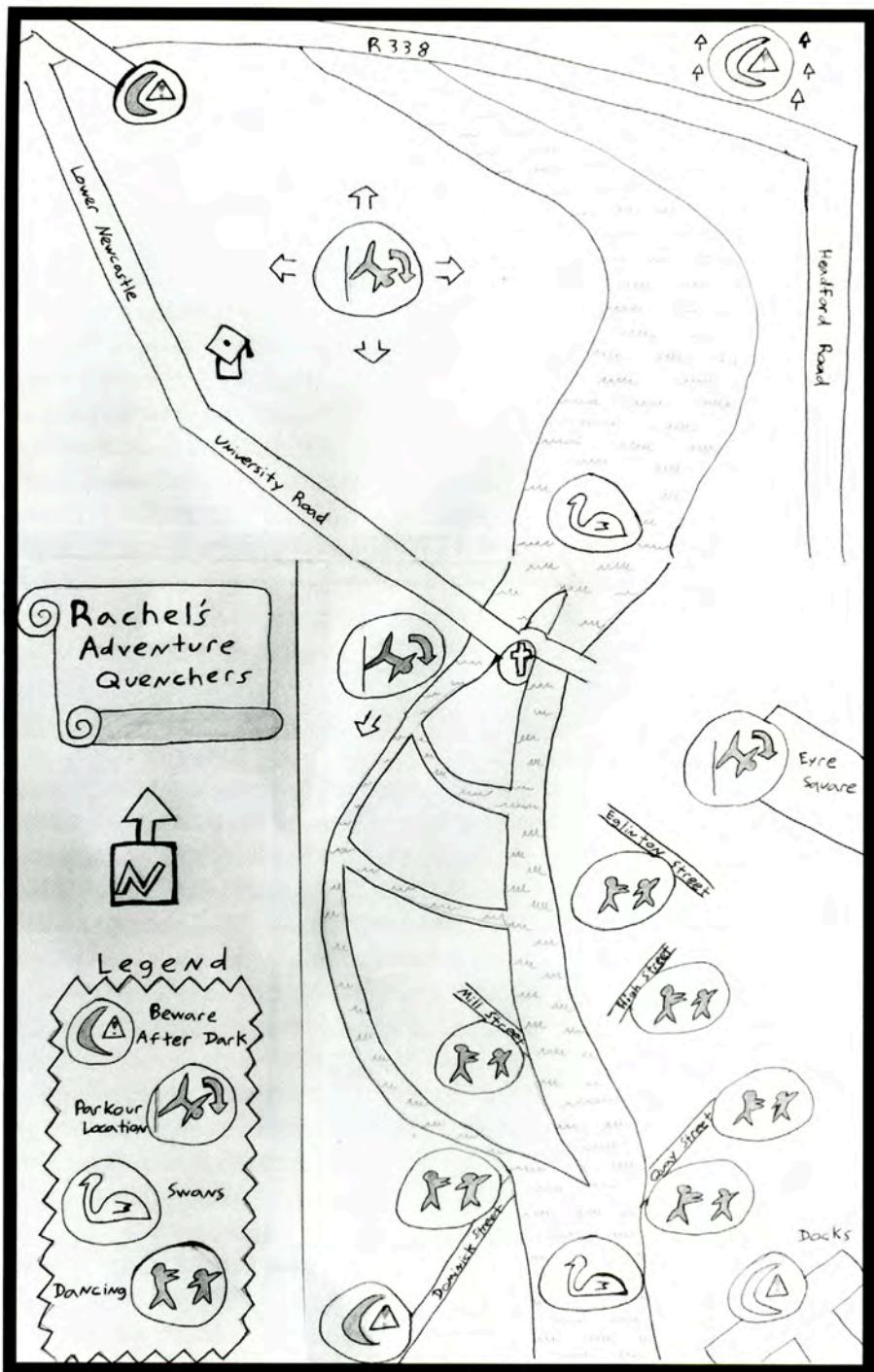


BLACK LINES IN SHAPE



SMALL!

- GOOD VISUAL DESIGN WILL FOCUS ON SIMPLE AND CLEAR ELEMENTS OF THE SUBJECT
- MINIMIZE DETAIL
- TRY LOTS OF IDEAS
- MAKE SYMBOL EASY TO READ EVEN WHEN IT IS SMALL
- FOCUS ON SHAPE NOT LINE
- MAKE SYMBOL STAND OUT FROM PAGE



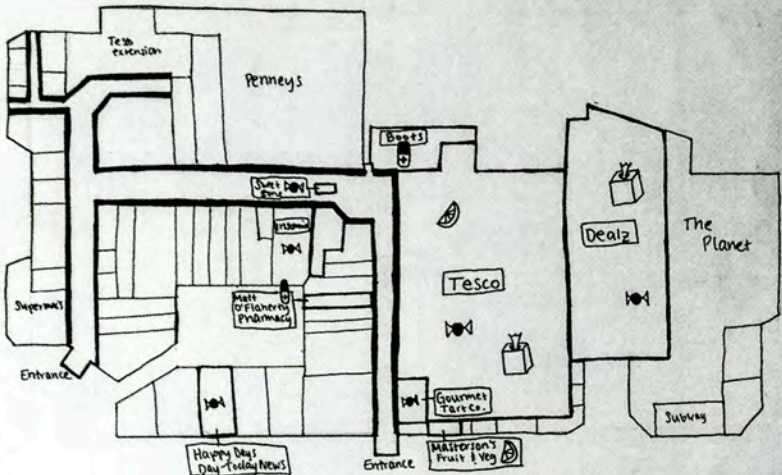
Symbols and Lines: Adventures [Rachel Newcomb]

# THE GALWAY SHOPPING CENTRE

- Mary's picks for when you're sick -  
Galway City, Ireland - October 2013

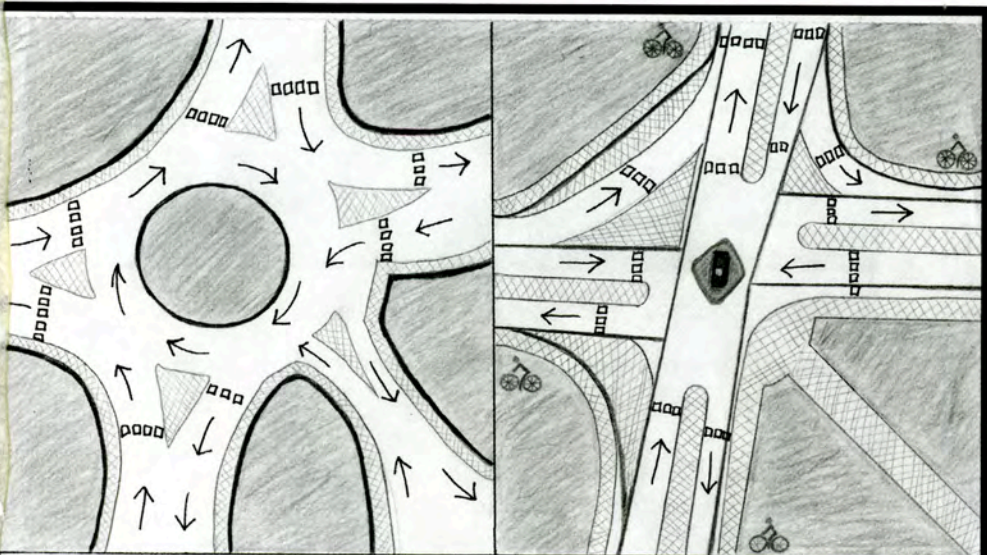
## Legend

-  - oranges for sale to keep you healthy
-  - medical advice available to help you get better
-  - tinsies for sale to wipe away the sniffles
-  - sweets for sale to cheer you up




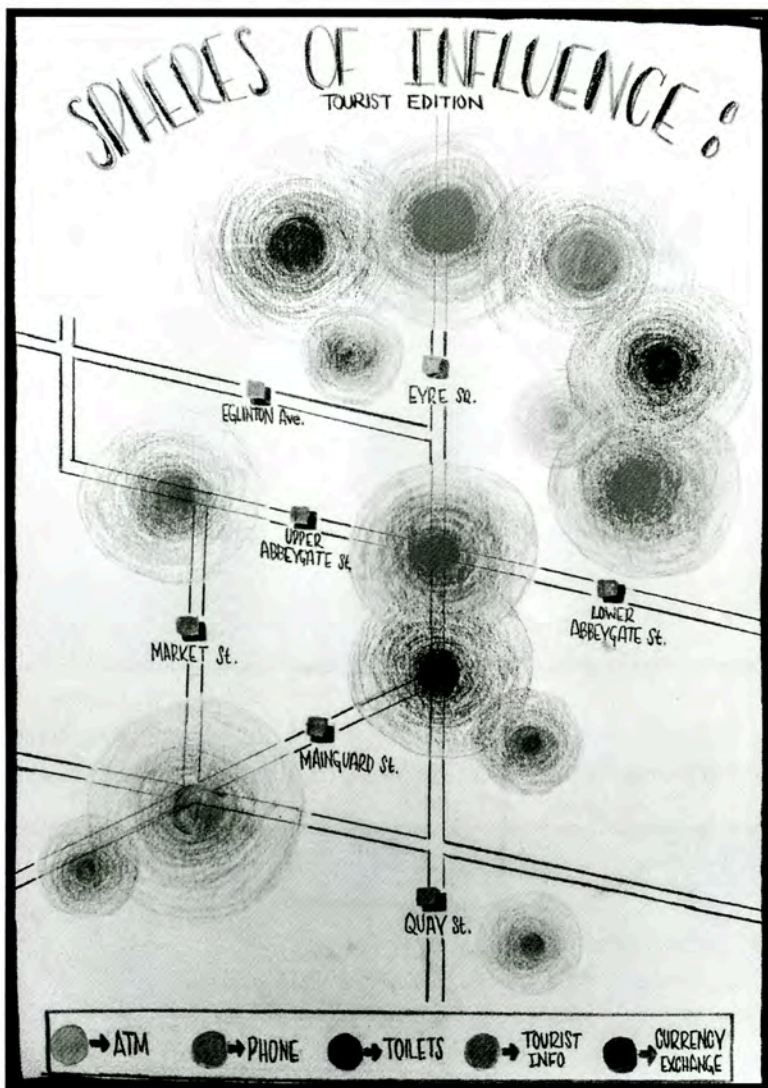
|| to HEADFORD RD ||

Social Construction: Shopping Centre Sick Picks [Mary Kacprowicz]  
Social Construction: Bodkin Transformation [Morgan Murray]



Bodkin Roundabout  BEFORE

Bodkin Intersection  AFTER



Social Construction: Spheres of Influence [Sriya Bhumi]

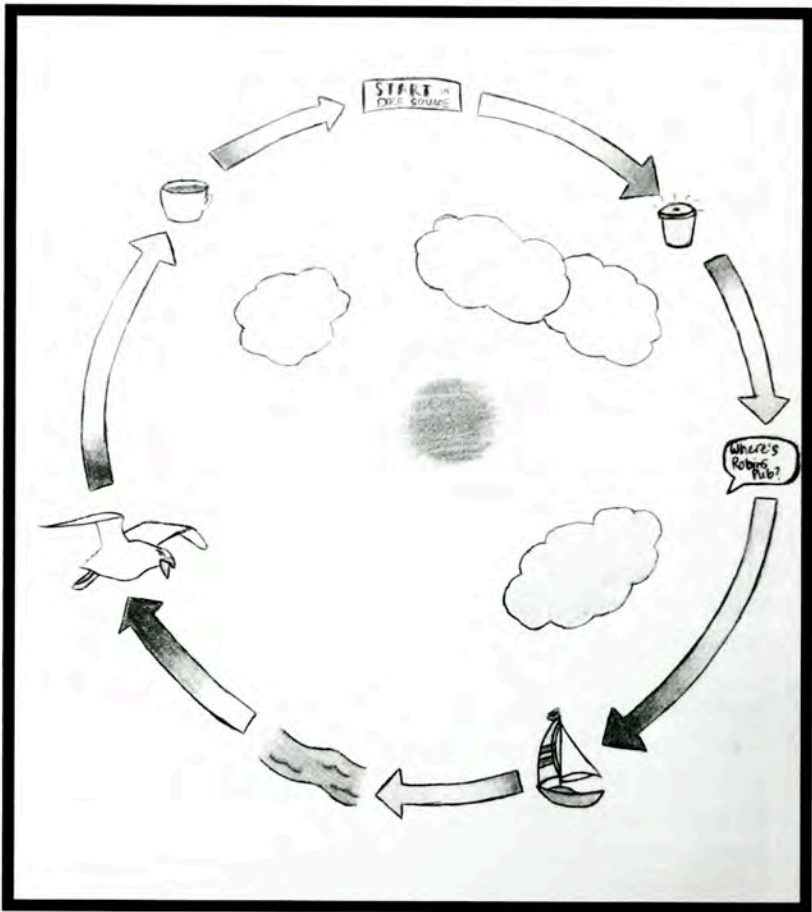
Later in the semester, Ruth introduced students to Guy Debord's concept of *dérive*:

*Debord's playfully serious notion involves the idea of psychogeography, a way of describing and even mapping places through measurement of physical responses... places cannot be adequately captured by recording only quantitative aspects of physical geography.*

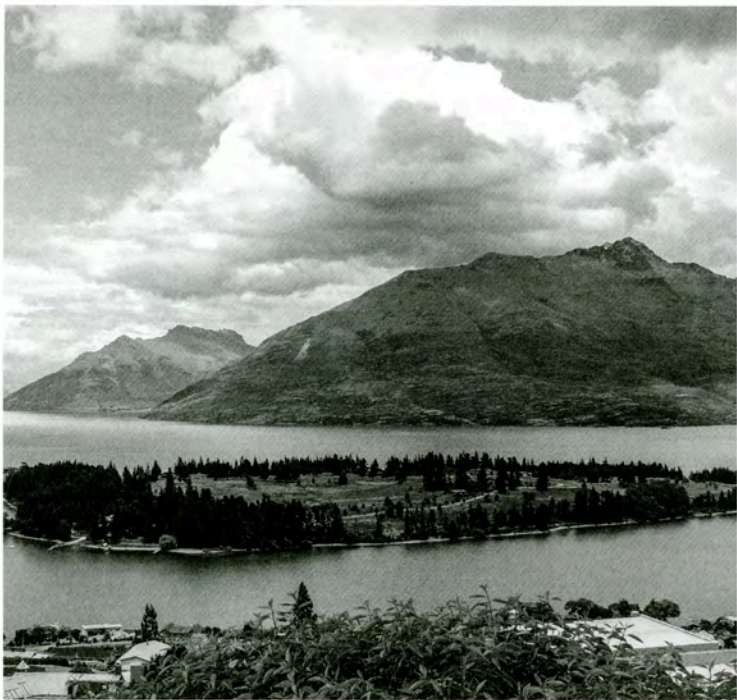


The students had to make their own *dérives* through the city and record their reactions. Later, they produced graphic representations of these psychogeographies. Alex Welych-Miller's *dérive* map, below, illustrates her day as an impressionistic cycle with minimal geographic references.

As with the symbols, the *dérive* maps were personal, idiosyncratic, and the result of a critical process of exploration, brainstorming, and refinement. And yet Ruth reminded students that Debord believed that *dérive* gets "at something both accurate and reflective of collective experience."



*Dérive* [Alex Welych-Miller]



Lake Wakatipu, New Zealand [Stephanie Nieves]  
Sun Shining on the Pantheon in Rome, Italy [Nancy Amestoy]







THE HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES AND  
UNION COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

