NOT DROWNING BUT WAVING
THE AMERICAN JUNIOR YEAR ABROAD

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Abstract

"Not Drowning but Waving: The American Junior Year Abroad" explores and describes study abroad amongst college students as well as its historical roots. This thesis seeks to understand the history and current issues in study abroad while also giving a literary description of the experiences, personal changes, and development of insight in the students who decide to study abroad.

The Introduction serves both as the introduction to my project as well as an overview of the history and current issues within study abroad. It is divided into three main parts. The first section discusses the impetus for the project, the research methodology, relevant literature, and the genre of creative nonfiction. The second section covers the history of American travel and study abroad, as well as the work of the Fulbright Program. The third section is a short survey of contemporary trends within study abroad, and addresses issues of gender, race, location, and student behavior while abroad.

The creative portion of this thesis describes the study abroad students' stories, experiences, and insights during and after a semester in Europe. The first three chapters of this section—"Leaving", "Destinations" and "Guardians at the Gate"—describe some of the initial experiences during a semester abroad. Chapter one looks at the process of traveling to a new country and adapting to new cultural norms. Chapter two describes the study abroad destinations where I did my primary research for this project. Chapter three explores some logistical issues in study abroad, namely academics, finances, and housing.

Chapter four explores the challenges students face after the initial excitement of study abroad wears off, and looks at the issues of student responsibility, danger, harassment, and alcohol abuse. Chapter five describes student travel habits, which is one of the most popular elements of study abroad but also one of the more problematic. Chapter six looks at the challenge of re-entry to North America for study abroad students, and chapter seven provides a conclusion to the piece.

I, Katrina A. Karnehm, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2005 as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in Creative Writing in September 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2005 and 2009.

Date 9/4/09 Signature of Candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in Creative Writing in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date 22/04/09 Signature of Supervisor

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For my parents

& Aaron

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Contents

Introduction

> "We surprise ourselves sometimes, with what we are capable of. I didn't think I was a person capable of walking down a Himalayan track on a summer's morning, all alone. But I am, I was."
> -Kathleen Jamie, *Among Muslims*[1]

The girl stands on the edge. Take off. Take flight. Take as little as possible. These instructions chant in her head like falling flowers. She nudges the toe of her Converse in the dirt, and sees how short her tether is. But what she doesn't see is its breaking point. Someday, after she holds her breath and runs as fast and far as possible, she will look back and see the frayed shreds of her leash floating in the waters somewhere behind her.

This is the story of wishes. *If wishes were horses*, our grandmothers from the old country say, and we have no idea why. At its most basic, this is why we study abroad. We say we travel and study abroad because we wish to explore foreign countries, because we wish to drink without American guilt, because we wish to run away from home. But contrary to what we wrote on applications, we are not really here to become fluent in a language and master British literature. Contrary to what we tell ourselves, we are not really here to become better people or to develop a taste for expensive cheese. Really, we wish to fill in the gaps—where we came from, what will become of us, what we will do with ourselves here on this earth. The farther we run from home, the wider the gaps yawn. Shut them up and hop on another tour bus.

At the end of July she stands on a shore far from here, looking at a sea of cows and grasses. Soon, she will pack and fly 4000 miles away without cleaning her room or saying goodbye to her grandparents. Soon she will be on a shore far from here between two islands and two wars. Two endings race towards the skyline, and this is how she sees goodbye—like someone who owns the stretch of shore below. Travel has been called one of the key human impulses: to travel, to say hello, to say goodbye. We master which way to wipe clean the air. Sometimes we are waving, sometimes we are drowning.

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[1] K. Jamie. *Among Muslims.* (London, 2002). pp. 209-210.

We flail over the water to Tuscany and England, sending postcards of famous towers home. We let our parents decode how far out in international waters we really are. We are not sure ourselves. All we know are the risks we take—after the fact. We cycle a shortcut home on a wet downhill highway in Scotland. We sleep on a porch and in another train station. We walk home alone after dark. We take the step forward into the airplane, and day by day, learn how to wave *hello*, and not long after, *goodbye*.

The girl learns of a world framed in early light mornings, in the sun never quite setting at midnight. She chases the tail of the sun in the west and waits for it on the shore in the east. She says goodbyes to her friends at countless airports and railway stations and along the stone walls leading to the harbor and the town. She masters the art of hello and goodbye and how to get herself halfway around the world and back again. But mostly she learns how to sit on the stone wall and look out onto a far shore and keep waving, waving.

Ask her someday years from now, after marriage and babies and promotions, if the girl on the wall, on the bike, on the shore, is still there. Is she still waving?

Project Origins

On a flight back from Edinburgh via Paris and an Air France flight, I am sitting behind three Americans who have just finished a tour of Bavaria. *We had to walk everywhere,* they said. *I kept ordering water in European restaurants and they kept bringing me sparkling water. I don't drink very much but in Germany they kept telling me to try different beers. They laughed at me, because everyone from child to parent was drinking. Have you ever had glue-wine? If I had to open two restaurants in Germany they would be Papa John's and BW3's. And the restaurants don't open on Sundays!*

I've spent the last three years interviewing inexperienced, breathless, naïve, and even slightly stupid American kids who don't know how stupid they are yet. I've also been a stupid American kid myself, and in the process of living abroad for four and a half years I have heard most of the ignorant and, also, sublime comments uttered by my fellow Americans. Yet these stereotypically American comments still annoy me, and part of the inspiration behind this project came from all those overheard conversations in airports, trains, pubs, and tourist destinations. After enough of these, the message comes down to this: I want to articulate to you, dear reader, the importance of straying past your ignorance, your bleeding nationalism disguised as patriotism, and ultimately your insecurity disguised as complacency. I want you to know that the world beyond our borders is an important place, and the transformation that certain students choose to undergo each semester of every year is an important one. The learning curve is steep, but we do not stop. We fall in love with a country plotted by ancient and arbitrary boundaries. We know too little and say too much, but most of us eventually get a little smarter, even if all we learn is how to wait in line and how to lower our voices (perhaps) in public.

Yet despite how much the students learn and how much they change, they feel when they return that there is no audience or even an individual person who understands. This book is designed to be soul mate and listening ear for them, as well as the story of their experiences for their friends, parents, teachers, professors, and politicians. It is as

much a guide for those who have not yet gone as it is for those who have returned and are trying to process their last few months far from home.

Literature on the Junior Year Abroad

I am certainly not the first person to write on the topic of study abroad, or the Junior Year Abroad, and certainly not the first person to write on Americans traveling, studying, and living abroad. A cursory look at Amazon.com shows a long list of guidebooks and how-to books for travel and study (*Study Abroad 101, Peterson's Study Abroad, Study Away: the unauthorized guide to college abroad* and of course*, Study Abroad for Dummies*), several travelogues on study abroad, and even a few theoretical books on the theory and practices behind study abroad. Out of that long list have come a few that somewhat resemble this thesis in either form or content, and some that were influential either for me as a study abroad student or in the writing of this work.

In researching this project, a number of books were invaluable to me. The *Let's Go* guidebook series was essential to me both as a student and as a researcher in Europe. Bill Bryson's travelogues on Europe, while mostly entertaining, also provided insight into what had and hadn't been covered on Americans in Europe. His writings also showed how the experience of traveling in Europe had changed and how it had remained the same over the second half of the twentieth century. Much of the expatriate literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as that written by Hemingway, Henry James, Henry Adams, Mark Twain, and Edith Wharton provided some historical framework for this piece, and various travel writing anthologies showed an overview of American experiences abroad today.

Most of my best information on the American historical travel and study experience in Europe came from William W. Stowe's *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-century American Culture,* Foster Rhea Dulles' *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of*

European Travel, Larzer Ziff's *Return Passages,* and Joan Elias Gore's *Dominant Beliefs and Alternative Voices: Discourse, Belief, and Gender in American Study Abroad.* Additionally, several pamphlets put out by the Fulbright Foundation were invaluable for describing their place in study abroad history. I am also indebted to various works by Hans de Wit, particularly his *Internationalization of Higher Education* and a few articles published in *Frontiers.* Much of my theory on study abroad came from articles on various study abroad websites, namely *Transitions'* Point: Counterpoint article series, as well as Gore's *Dominant Views and Alternate Voices.* These works pointed out problems behind the occurrence of study abroad as well as new trends and developments. I also found several psychological and sociological articles relating to culture shock, the most useful of which was Victoria Christofi and Charles L. Thompson's "You Cannot Go Home Again" published in the *Journal of Counseling and Development.*

Of the works written on study abroad, most fall into one of these categories: the humorous, the theoretical, or the helpful. Sallie Hyman's *Junior Year Abroad: What you really learn studying in a foreign country* (published by greatunpublished.com) is a diary-like, seemingly-unedited travelogue of her junior year abroad in Germany. In it she writes of her crushes on the other students, her fear of the Gulf War, and the annoyances and amusements of travel in a foreign country. Other than the references to *deutschmarks*, the Gulf War, and typewriters, Hyman's accounts of drinking, travel, one-night stands, and struggles to learn German in 1991 closely resemble the accounts of the students I interviewed between 2006 and 2008. Some of the more humorous travel accounts are first-person essays anthologized by year or theme, such as those in *A Woman's World* or any of those from the *Sand in My Bra* women's travel series.

Hans de Wit's *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe* follows the development of internationalization in universities as well as the growth of study abroad. Joan Elias Gore's *Dominant Beliefs and Alternative Voices* challenges many old

stereotypes and assumptions of study abroad, while to some extent Walter Grunzweig and Nana Rinehart's *Rockin' in Red Square* confirms them. Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune's *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* examines how European students study abroad and what they learn. These are but a few examples of some of the books that analyze and critique trends within study abroad.

Lastly, in addition to the many guidebooks and self-help books available for travelers and students, Colleen Ballerino Cohen and Grace Myhill's *Junior Year Abroad and Back Again* stands out as one of the more practical and user-friendly of the bunch. It is a 96-page study abroad workbook-meets-self-help-book written out of the authors' backgrounds in social work and anthropology. Some of the prompts in the book include places to write lists of important phone numbers, places to paste photos of old and new friends, and places to journal about both culture shock and re-entry shock.

My project is intended to be descriptive, literary, and interesting to read, while at the same time providing useful information for students at all stages of study abroad. I intended the audience primarily to be students who were either planning to study abroad or had recently returned from studying abroad, and wanted either advice or some reassurance that someone else had felt the same way they had. This project will also hopefully help students process their experiences and help put their time abroad into perspective.

Thesis & Creative Nonfiction

At the very beginning of this project, I knew this book was going to be a work of nonfiction. And somehow the three years of budgeting, flying, catching trains, eating hostel food, asking for the bus in the wrong language, not writing, writing for hours, spell-checking transcriptions of overheard conversations, passing silent judgements and many times regretting them later further confirmed that this book would be best served by reporting what I saw and discovered, without fictionalization. In the process, however, I

have had some difficulty putting it into a category. This is not a novel, a political statement, a guidebook or a travelogue. It is not my personal journal edited for public consumption or a series of published interviews. It is not theory. It is not a poem or a love letter, although of all these things, the last two are the closest. It is a little bit of all these things culminating in a creative nonfiction piece that borrows a little from journalism, fiction, and even poetry.

Most put the origin of "creative nonfiction" with Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood,* his self-described "nonfiction novel" about the murders of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas. He and Norman Mailer and Tom Wolfe were the key forerunners of the "New Journalism" movement of the 1960s and 1970s (although they often disagreed as to who fit into the genre and who did not) and creative nonfiction developed out of this movement. The term "creative nonfiction" was allegedly first used by Lee Gutkind, the creator and editor of *Creative Nonfiction*, a website and journal. When describing creative nonfiction, writer Sarah Turner says that creative nonfiction "reads like fiction" and should be "true, but not (necessarily) objective."[2] Duke University's writing studio defines the genre as one that is borne out of the author's or other people's personal experiences, and involves a great deal of research, including interviewing, observing, and "detective/sleuth work." The genre also makes use of various elements of biography, memoir, oral history, and reportage, and can be used when writing about almost any subject.[3] Topics within creative nonfiction are often surprising, and frequently lowly, but creative nonfiction has been used in travel writing, food writing, memoir, personal essays, journalistic essays, and biographies.

One question readers have about my project is whether this is largely autobiographical My answer is that my experiences are in this book, and while I have to

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[2] Sarah Turner, "What is Creative Nonfiction?" Suite101.com. 9 January 2008. http://resourcesforwriters.suite101.com/article.cfm/what_is_creative_nonfiction. Accessed 17 February 2009.

[3] "Creative Nonfiction" Writing Studio: Duke University. http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio

confess that some of my motivation during the writing of this project has been to share my stories with an audience, this is not my main goal in writing the book. I debated for a long time during the writing whether or not to mention my experiences or explicitly refer to myself. On one hand, I think the author's absence from the piece allows a certain scholarly integrity and keeps the focus on the intended subject—the people I am writing about. On the other hand, at times an author's presence can add a personal touch that shows the effect of the experience on the author. Sometimes this is appropriate and sometimes it is not. I think it is up to the author to be the judge of this, based on what his or her presence adds and subtracts, as well as the subject matter. The author Ann Hagedorn writes narrative investigative journalism books on topics like thoroughbred racing, international kidnapping, and the precursor to the underground railroad—all topics fairly removed from her personal life. She never appears in the book even though she obviously invests a great deal of energy into research and understanding her subject.

Conversely, Annie Dillard's *For the Time Being*, which is about a little bit of everything and about our relationship to it, contains both her research on various subjects and her experiences with these subjects (watching newborns get washed in the neonatal wing of the hospital). A more specific example is DJ Waldie's *Holy Land,* a memoir on the history of his suburb, which also was the first of its kind in the USA. His personal history gets intertwined with that of his neighborhood.

In this book, my experience is intertwined with my research. I was a traditional study abroad student, then an international graduate student, and eventually an international Ph.D. student. During my research for this book, the differences between traditional study abroad students and myself were fairly obvious: I was in my late twenties, married, and spending most of my time in an attic bedroom typing a thesis, while most of them were nineteen or twenty, single, and debating how to finish an essay while still going to the bar and leaving on time for the morning's train. Yet for all our differences we were

working through many of the same challenges—dealing with foreigners' assumptions of America, overcoming language and cultural barriers, learning how to get a bus and a train, and learning what not to eat while abroad. Even though I had four years more experience than most of the students I talked to, I still had to stumble through the inconveniences and wonders of a temporary stay abroad in Europe.

When I first started writing, my own experiences were the bulk of my knowledge base and so I wrote a great deal out of that experience. However, I did not want to be the center of attention, so in many of these stories I recast myself as either "you" or "she," which I determined after a lot of trial and error, and eventually after opting for what felt right intuitively. I removed direct references to myself but left in some of my experiences when I felt they were unique but also provided a universal point about the experience of studying abroad. In some cases, the "she" or "you" stories also include stories I did not want to attribute to individual students. Some details were fictionalized for the benefit of the guilty or merely to make certain stories less autobiographical, but on a whole this is a nonfiction piece—my goal has been to be as honest as possible.

When I used the second-person voice, I thought I was using it as a substitute for "I." What eventually happened is that I used it for a more imperative, big sister voice, when I wanted to tell the reader a story about herself that might not have happened yet, or one that perhaps she doesn't remember yet. *You can get through it*, this voice sometimes says. This voice is also, in a way, speaking to my younger self and the younger readers of this book. This voice is the part that has lived through a semester abroad and is telling them they can too. Because second person is often a strain to read for very long, as it usually sounds too didactic and repetitive, I tried to limit this perspective to when I wanted to speak directly to the reader (and my former self) about the experience of study abroad.

The third-person "she" voice appears most often throughout the book. For practical reasons, I used third person most because it is the easiest to read and also because

I felt a first-person account would sound too autobiographical. However, at a deeper level, I have always visualized this piece of writing being a story about a girl, a universal girl whom all study abroad student can relate to. During my research I was asked again and again to describe one "typical" or "ideal" student I had met during my research. I never could, because I do not think a "typical" study abroad student exists. I do, however, believe that every sojourn abroad contains something of a universal experience, and as much as possible, I wanted to express that commonality in the form of an anonymous "she." Like the second person voice, this "she" expresses universal experiences. However, the "she" voice does not know as much as the "you" voice. "She" makes mistakes, while "you" corrects them. Sometimes, this third-person voice does not know what to do with the next challenge, and does things she is not proud of. Most of the time, however, this universal girl is absorbed in the present moment and the differences and challenges and excitements that she is facing, and we, the outside audience and the omniscient narrator, can do no more than cheer her on.

Methodology

In preparing for this piece, I began with about six months of reading and research while looking for programs to visit and students to interview. My choice of programs was semi-formal. I wanted to interview American students who were studying abroad for at least a semester, so I avoided six-week or summer study programs and students. This was at once a limiting factor while also a way to ensure that students I interviewed were in the midst of a true intercultural experience. I wanted them to have lived through some low points as well as high points in their time abroad, and to be more than tourists. I also only wanted to interview students who had studied or were studying in Europe. Other study abroad destinations are not less interesting to me, but I wanted to pursue some of the historical ties to study abroad and Europe. Americans gain a sense of history and an understanding

of Western culture (and sometimes family history) by studying in Europe. They gain a sense of other, equally important things by studying in Asia, Africa, South America and Australia, but these are subjects for other books.

Destination and length of stay in the host country were my primary limiters. I spoke mostly to students who were 19-21 and enrolled at a traditional undergraduate American university while studying at either an island program or direct enrollment program in Western Europe. However, I also spoke to graduate students, non-traditional students, year-long students, full-time direct enrollment students, and even a few foreign students and former study abroad students-turned-expatriates. If they were willing to talk to me, I interviewed them.

Students signed a form stating that they agreed to participate in the interview or questionnaire and they were willing to have their responses published in this thesis. They also had an option on this form to remain anonymous or have their first name used. Students were reassured that my research would have nothing to do with their grades at the host program or their home university. I also told them they had the option of not answering any questions they did not feel comfortable with. Most of my questions inquired into their motivation to study abroad as well as their experiences—their best and worst moments, what they had learned, any culture shock, how they felt they had changed. On the whole, their answers were overwhelming positive, and none showed any personal distress while responding to the interview. On the contrary, most of them seemed to relish the opportunity to talk about their experiences with someone who was listening closely and understood some of what they had been through.

I usually interviewed students individually or in small groups, but the interview situation depended on the time allotted to me at the various programs. I sometimes had to use group responses or written responses to questionnaires, and I also distributed emailed questionnaires to all programs I visited as well as several I could not visit in person.

Towards the end of my research and writing, I sent out an email asking about the students' readjustment to America. Those responses were returned by email. I also interviewed or sent questionnaires to several friends and acquaintances who were studying or had studied abroad. All of these responses with the respective signed consent forms were kept stored either on my private laptop computer or in my private home office in a file cabinet.

I also interviewed people at the periphery of study abroad and those often behind the scenes. These included program directors, resident directors, professors, foreign students studying or living with the American students, volunteer activities directors, junior deans, and the occasional townsperson, coffee shop owner, and host parent. I used their input to balance out the viewpoints and comments from the students. A student might complain that a program was too much work for a study abroad experience, whereas a professor might explain that in this culture, the academic work was part of the cultural experience. Students often complained about cultural personality of the people around them, while the professors pointed out that the students, being the newcomers, were the ones who needed to adapt and learn to enjoy that fact that "different" did not mean "bad." Having multiple perspectives of study abroad and the students themselves was extremely useful for me as I observed each program and strove to articulate what it offers to the world of study abroad.

History of Study Abroad

Study abroad in the twenty-first century is alternately hailed as the great experiment in world peace and mutual understanding, disparaged as a semester-long party, or, more quietly, seen as a risk, given the big, America-hating world out there. But these are not new arguments and concerns, given that the trend of traveling far from home in search of an education dates back thousands of years. Within the United States, studying abroad was an essential part of the founding of the American university system. Today, even though only 1.1% of American college students study abroad each year and the nation as a whole ignores most of the rest of the globe, the infrastructure for study abroad is in place. More than that, the need for study abroad exists too. And despite high unemployment rates, a plummeting stock market, and unpopular wars, the motivation to study abroad is just as present, or perhaps even more so, than when our forefathers sailed back to the Old World in search of an education.

Study abroad appears to have begun during the high point of Greek culture, when students journeyed to Athens to study under the great philosophers.[4] This trend continued during the Roman Empire. So many would-be students traveled from Africa and further abroad to study in Rome under Greek tutors that in A.D. 370 the emperors put forth this letter:

> "The Emperors Valentinian, Valus, and Gratian, Augusti, to Olybrius, Praefect of the City—All those who come to the city in the pursuit of learning should present to the master of the census in the first place a letter from the provincial judges whose function it is to give them permission to come. The letter will mention the towns, the birth, and the merits of the individuals concerned. Thereupon, on their first entrance, they shall declare to what studies in particular they propose to devote their attention. In the third place, the office of the Censuales shall carefully take notes of their residences, to ensure that they direct their endeavors towards the end which they have claimed to pursue."
> Given the fourth of the Ides of March, at Treves. In the third consulate of Valentinian and Valeus, Augusti (12th March, A.D. 370)[5]

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[4] R. Cluett, "From Cicero to Mohammed Atta: People, Politics, and Study Abroad." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad.* Volume 8, Winter 2002. pp.17-39.
[5] W.H.Allaway, "The Many-Faceted Job of the Overseas Academic Program Director" *CIEE Occasional Paper on International Education Exchange No. 2, (*1965) pp 11-12.

Study abroad has been a Western European practice since the Middle Ages, when students journeyed from one city-state to another to study in monasteries, cathedral schools, and eventually, secular institutions. With the founding of Bologna as a degree-granting university in 1088, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Salamanca, and Toulouse, plus others, soon established themselves across the continent. The student-travelers studied history, math, sciences, music, theology, and philosophy while also seeking out education, friends, and leisure. [6] In his book *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis*, Hans de Wit speaks to this idea of supposed international origins of education and the university. The high point of educational exchange in Europe is commonly believed to have occurred between the Middle Ages and the end of the eighteenth century.[7] Religious pilgrims frequented the roads of Europe, but so did university students and professors, who were on pilgrimages to the few universities scattered across Europe. de Wit cites de Ridder-Symoens, who wrote, "The use of Latin as a common language, and of a uniform programme of study and system of examinations, enabled itinerant students to continue their studies in one "studium" after another, and ensured recognition of their degrees throughout Christendom."[8] Their studies also enabled them to bring books, paintings, new foods and eating habits, and new aspects of culture back home with them. Most of them came from elite families anyway, but their experiences in other city-states all but assured them of more opportunities upon their return home. Later, during the Renaissance, "Renaissance teachers looked upon study abroad as the culmination of the humanist education of young members of the elite" and the early years of the sixteenth century were, "the golden age of

[6] J.Gore, *Dominant Beliefs and Alternative Voices*. New York, 2005. p. 35

[7] H. de Wit, Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe. Westport, Connecticut, 2002. p.5

[8] H. de Ridder-Symoens, "Mobility" in *A History of the University in Europe.* Vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Age,* edited by Hilde de Ridder-Symoens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. p.302-303. Quoted in Wit, p.5

wandering scholars."[9]

However, the Reformation and counter-Reformation hurt study abroad, as many countries prohibited study abroad and travel on the grounds that foreign universities might corrupt the political and religious views of its students. As well, Hammerstein shows that in the later part of the nineteenth century, educational exchange became less of a priority than "political and cultural nationalism."[10] Many countries banned study abroad, and Latin declined in use as national languages came into favor. If study abroad remained, it was as a "grand tour," emphasizing culture over academics. Nevertheless, de Ridder-Symoens argues that study abroad was important in Europe until at least 1700, even if it was in the form of an early "grand tour" and the motive primarily pleasure.[11] Study abroad stayed an influential aspect of European universities, and today most often takes the form of ERASMUS and similar programs that allow European students to study in neighboring countries for part of their degree.

American Study Abroad

> " . . . I saw that no people on earth have such vagabond habits as ours . . . It seemed to me that nothing was more common for a young American than deliberately to spend all his resources in an aesthetic peregrination about Europe, returning with pockets nearly empty to begin the world in earnest."
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> -Nathaniel Hawthorne, while working as an American consul at Liverpool in the 1850's.[12]

While America founded its great schools early in its national history, for a long time before and after the Revolutionary War the smartest young men were sailing to Europe for an education, and in the process were bringing back educational models. Contrary to the trend today, writes de Wit, many more students were going from the United States to Europe for

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[9] de Ridder-Symoens, "Mobility" in *A History of the University in Europe.* Vol. 2: *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)* edited by Walter Ruegg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 417-418. Quoted in Wit, p.9

[10] N. Hammerstein. "The Enlightenment" in *A History of the University in Europe.* Vol.2: *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800),* edited by Walter Ruegg. Cambridge, 1996, p. 624. Cited in de Wit, p.7.

[11] ibid, p.442

[12] quoted in F.R.Dulles, *Americans Abroad.* Ann Arbor, 1964. p.1

an education than vice versa.[13] The young men whose brains were worth the fare back to Europe went to England, France, Austria, and Germany, to study medicine, Greek, philosophy and theology while also touring Europe. By 1890, of the 30,000 Americans touring Europe each year[14], 2000 of them were studying abroad.[15] Whether as a result of their Anglo-Saxon heritage or their pioneer environment in America, curiosity and wanderlust came to define early Americans. "Whatever the reason," Foster Rhea Dulles writes in *Americans Abroad,* "Europe has been a lodestone drawing back across the Atlantic barrier, first a thin trickle of expectant visitors and ultimately an engulfing flood."[16]

However, Americans had not always been so enthusiastic about returning to Europe for their studies. In the wake of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the United States saw travel to Europe as a betrayal of America's recently claimed independence. "Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam when refinement may be found at home?" wrote Royall Tyler in his play *The Contrast* in 1787. Noah Webster disapproved of European travel nearly as much as European spelling—he wrote in *American Magazine* that international travel had been permissible before the Revolution but afterwards it should "be discountenanced, if not prohibited." European ways were suspect; the de-nationalization and moral infection of young American men was just a few crepes away. The prevailing consensus was that if someone wanted to travel, they should do it in their new country. [17]

Even Thomas Jefferson, himself a traveler and a lover of European culture, was concerned about young people going to Europe, as it seemed to him " . . . that an American, coming to Europe for his education, loses in his knowledge, in his morals, in his

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[13] Wit, p.9
[14] Dulles, p.1
[15] Wit, p.21.
[16] ibid, p.2
[17] F.R.Dulles, *Americans Abroad.* Ann Arbor, 1964. pp.2-3

health, in his habits, and in his happiness."[18] Nothing good comes of young men running off to Europe, he said, and according to Joan Elias Gore, researcher at the University of Virginia, he designed Virginia's first university to be a place where American men could get an education equal to that in Europe. [19] With the close of the Napoleonic Wars, however, transatlantic travel from America became an annual trend, and established travel patterns that have not changed much since then.[20] Then as now, Europe represented art, drama, opera, theater, museums, and ultimately culture. Emerson wrote that "it is for want of self-culture that the superstition of traveling (to Europe) . . . retains its fascination for all educated Americans."[21]

American students flocked to European universities creating an eventual "academic flood," but it looked much different than study abroad today.[22] Most early international study was accomplished via direct enrollment at a foreign university, or a self-education made up of travel, language learning, and art museums. These students particularly respected German universities, which were considered the best in the world at the time. By the middle of the 19th century American scholars were going to Germany by the thousands, particularly to study the sciences. An estimated 10,000 Americans studied in Germany from the beginning of the 19th century to 1914.[23] A few of these students were women seeking professional training or graduate study. While admission to European universities was not a guaranteed thing for women, they generally had a better chance than at US universities.[24]

American students were particularly attracted to Gottingen, Heidelberg, Berlin, Leipzig, Jena, and Halle. John W. Burgess and Lincoln Steffens were two American students who studied at several German universities, and like their future compatriots,

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[18] ibid p.2
[19] Gore, p.36
[20] Dulles, p.3
[21] Emerson, quoted in Dulles, p.3
[22] Dulles p.3
[23] ibid p.121
[24] Gore p.36

allegedly enjoyed the student life of beer drinking and cheap excursions. They and other American students brought back to the US the German methods of graduate study.[25] Future Ivy League college presidents studied in Europe; most of John Hopkins' faculty had studied in Germany, and German study was an impetus for John Hopkins University's development.

Although these students were motivated to go to Europe for the academics, they likely travelled around the continent to see the famous art and sites of Europe. But it was not enough to merely see these landmarks—one had to experience them as the locals did. Most of the popular travel accounts stressed the distinction between traveler and tourist.[26] "Only the journey that involves fatigue and suffering leads to wisdom; pleasurable travel is mere tourism," wrote one long-suffering traveler.[27] One of the earlier proponents of this travel ideal was Bayard Taylor. In 1846, he published *Views A-Foot* and so developed the model of "Europe on a Shoestring"—going to Europe with almost nothing and sustaining oneself by wits alone—which young Americans have embraced and American consular officials have had to endure ever since.[28] This insistence for being a 'traveler' resulted in writers like Mark Twain going to the opposite extreme, and ridiculing self-proclaimed 'travelers' and 'tourists' alike in his *Innocents Abroad* and *Tramps Abroad* travel accounts.

Mark Twain wrote in *Tramps Abroad* that student life, including American student life, was the most prominent aspect of his visit to Heidelberg, Germany. In addition to describing the student beer gardens and fencing clubs, Twain explains that the attraction of the German university had a great deal to do with the gymnasium, the secondary school for German youths. Foreign students avoided it because of its difficulty, so instead they went to the university to easily "put a roof" over their education. In contrast, the German

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[25] Dulles pp.121-123
[26] Ziff, p.85
[27] Ziffibid, p.116
[28] ibid, p.127

students go to university with their roof already built—they go to add a steeple or a tower of some speciality. [29]

By the end of the 19th century, American men lost some of their interest in foreign universities, and Thomas Jefferson and Noah Webster could rest in peace. American women were still applying to the foreign universities though. "By 1900," Gore writes, "men found greater value in American higher education, while women continued to search for educational opportunities overseas."[30]

From 1900 to the outbreak of the war, travel to Europe was extremely popular, and many college students were amongst those traveling in Europe without passports, visas, or very much money in hand. Most countries were peaceful, and other than in Russia and Turkey, Americans could travel without needing documentation. College students could travel in 3rd class or steerage for cheap, or could work their way across the ocean on cattle boats.[31] When the war broke out, however, they were amongst the 150,000 Americans stranded on the wrong side of the ocean with no documentation or access to bank accounts and money. They eventually all got home, but in varying fashions. Dulles writes that a group of Wellesley girls finally came home in an oil tanker. [32]

The period after World War I saw the first developments of short-term study abroad and exchange funding. In 1919, Professor Stephen Pierce Duggan, Nicholas Murray, and former U.S. secretary of state and chairman of the Carnegie Endowment, Elihu Root founded the Institute of International Education (IIE) with a $30,000 grant. They wanted IIE to be the United States' center for promoting and coordinating international education. Another program was The Belgian-American Educational Foundation, established in 1921 when Belgian relief funds were liquidated. Seven hundred American and Belgian students exchanged places between the two world wars. So

[29] M. Twain, *Tramps Abroad.* London, 1907. pp.29-30
[30] Gore p.36
[31] Dulles, pp.141-143
[32] ibid, pp.150-151

enthusiastic was the reception of the Americans in Belgium that Herbert Hoover wondered if there was any other country "where the ideals and purposes of the American people are so well understood and so respected as they are in Belgium."[33]

After World War I, American troops still stationed in France had time on their hands. The *Cours de Civilisation* began at the Sorbonne as a result; here Americans and other internationals could learn French language and culture without having to enroll directly at the Sorbonne, or even know French. This became the model of future study abroad programs, and was popular with women who struggled to find a place in European universities. [34]

But critics disapproved of this model, namely because it seemed to allow Americans to have their cake and eat it too. Students could learn about France without having to know the language, could take classes without academic consequences, and didn't have to struggle to apply for a place. "Without a traditional European or American academic structure," writes Gore, "without full integration into degree-granting activities, and without a clear place in the academic sequence, the Sorbonne model contributed to suspicion within the American higher education community. Critics said it was designed not to capitalize on the strengths and depths of the European education, but rather to ease the discomforts of Americans in a foreign culture."[35]

American critics still say this today, but in fact the Sorbonne model is one that has lasted. Shortly after the Sorbonne began the *Cours de Civilisation*, three American colleges set up programs in Paris and Switzerland, based on the model of offering classes in English alongside language classes.

Of these first three colleges, one was the University of Delaware, which established

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[33] D.R. Dubois, "Responding to the Needs of Our Nation: A Look at the Fulbright and NSEP Education Acts," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Vol.1 (1995).
[34] Gore p.37
[35] ibid, p.38

a program at Paris at the University of Nancy and the *Cours de Civilisation* at the Sorbonne in 1923. The first year seven men came; the second year four men and three women attended.[36] Eventually the University of Delaware would transfer its program in France to the Sweet Briar Women's college, although boys were still allowed to attend. Additionally, Rosary College created a program in Fribourg, Marymount College created a program in Paris, and Smith created a program in Paris.

Smith's Paris program began in 1925; they added Spain in 1931 and Florence in 1932.[37] "The Junior Year Abroad was another device for the better education of the better student," said William Allan Neilson, Smith College President, calling it a program for "expanding internationalism in American thinking after World War I." The program was also academically serious—the students were "joyful, ready to observe, and avid to learn and understand."[38]

But when the Smith College study abroad programs began in the 1920's, their faculty, especially the French Department, did not think the project or desired results were feasible. One dean remarked, "The Junior Year abroad is in large part a tool of general educational experience; language, places, museums, general know-how; not the development of critical prowess and fine discriminating judgment on literary questions. The French Department at Smith can develop these powers for its students; in a comparable degree the Paris faculty cannot."[39] That perhaps faculty did not exist to develop thinking powers for students was one counter argument the Smith faculty did not consider; the overt arrogance of their statement was another.

The tradition of Americans going to Britain and vice versa also continued during this period of organized academic exchange. In the 1930's Sweet Briar College president

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[36] ibid p. 38
[37] ibid, p.84
[38] ibid, p.69
[39] Gore p. 69

Meta Glass set up an exchange between Sweet Briar and the University of St Andrews, Scotland.[40] Beaver College, later Arcadia University, was one of the leading US colleges offering study programs in British universities.[41] Martha B. Lucas who earned a PhD in Philosophy from the University of London and succeeded Glass as Sweet Briar College's president, worked very hard to continue their international developments. She wrote, " . . . I became increasingly aware, in my university teaching that followed, that I had brought from my studies overseas far more than a PhD degree. I had gained new perspectives on my American cultures and progress, the advantage of understanding, from experience how students from Europe, Asia, South America and Africa looked upon us and upon each other."[42]

In 1930 Europe began to destabilize and the American co-eds came home. Hans de Wit writes that Europe was a place "from which to rescue refugee scholars"[43] rather than a place to send American students. The only Americans going to Europe carried guns and flew planes.

> A new world calls for a new vision of our role in it. It was been said that those who mill around at the cross roads of history do so at their own peril. It is urgent that we heed that warning.
> -Senator David L. Boren[44]

World War II, far from stopping study abroad, actually brought about some of its biggest developments and highest level of support. When countries were ready for Americans to come back without guns, they did. Most of the Western world wanted to encourage peace and rebuilding, including the US government, which used the Marshall Plan, the Fulbright plan, and the GI Bills to promote overseas travel and stimulate educational exchange.

Educational idealism wasn't born in the twentieth century, but it gained popularity then. Cycles of war and peace, writes Gore, led to study abroad programs gaining renewed

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[40] Gore p.101
[41] ibid p.103
[42] ibid p.102
[43] De Wit, p.24
[44] Senator D.L. Boren, "For a Model Nation." From the *Washington Post*, May 2, 1990

vigor. After the World Wars, September 11, and natural disasters, people generally want to rebuild and promote peace-time studies.[45]

After World War II some universities sent professors and students to Europe for a traveling tour of history and literature. Eastern Europe was off-limits, but Western Europe, while still picking itself up from the wars, was accepting of all these visitors. The grand tour made a comeback, this time to the middle-class student. The transatlantic ships filled up with students and with the help of Senator Fulbright, the Senate gave votes and money to study abroad programs. Programs re-opened in Paris and Britain, and the students flocked there. New programs came at this time, turning study abroad from an opportunity of prolonged tourism to a learning process for the masses. Boats began going faster. Planes became safer, faster, and cheaper. Studying abroad became a way to get an edge, and for female students, this edge created new opportunities.

Study abroad also brought new, and somewhat mixed responsibilities. In the 1950s, the US government simultaneously gave study abroad the task of saving the world from communism, while also suspecting it of that very crime. Study abroad was, after all, affiliated with the State Department, which McCarthy accused of being, "full of Communists." The government denied applications from strong candidates and pulled grantees home if they even suspected communism; in some cases, grantees had done nothing more than spend too much time outside of the US.[46] Yet study abroad was seen as an opportunity to do the most good. Truman had a "campaign of truth"[47] in the face of Russian imperialism, and study abroad students were the designated soldiers, charged with promoting democracy and American values.

In the sixties, students went to Europe as scholars and tourists, clambering aboard chartered airplanes that, as Bill Bryson put it, seemed to take a week to get to Iceland

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[45] Gore, p.107

[46] W. Johnson, Walter and F.J. Colligan, *The Fulbright Program: A History*. (Chicago, 1965), pp.61-64

[47] ibid, p.66

where they would refuel.[48] The students weren't always sure what they would do when they got to Europe, but they were in love with the continent. Euro-tripping was born. Some were study abroad students, some just kids on summer break. Some never came home. From 1949-1957, Dulles writes approximately 10,000 students studied throughout Europe on government or foundation grants, and another 1500 spent a year abroad as provided by twenty-three American colleges. Those who did not study abroad traveled abroad in Europe. "During the summer and other vacation periods," Dulles adds, "the students traveled the length and breadth of Europe much as had the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages." They cycled, hitchhiked, and stayed in youth hostels in each country they visited. Some came with the American Field Service committee, while younger students traveled abroad with the Experiment in International Living.[49]

Enthusiasm for studying abroad dwindled in the 1980s and 1990s. Support, both financial and societal, for study abroad made a comeback after September 11, 2001, often in unexpected ways. After September 11 Stan Rosenberg, the director at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) Oxford campus, was told to plan on tightening the program's budget in case CCCU's Middle East Studies program in Egypt had to close. However, the budget cut never happened, because the program in Cairo became one of the more popular study abroad programs that the consortium offered.

This was not an isolated example of Egypt and the Middle East's popularity. According to other study abroad administrators and scholarship coordinators, Egypt became one of the most popular non-European study abroad destinations after September 11.[50] Many universities reported a spike in interest in both Arab language study and Arab and Middle-Eastern study abroad programs. IIE reported in 2005 that American students were seeking out study abroad destinations in the developing world more than ever. Of the

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[48] B. Bryson, *Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe. (*London, 1998)

[49] Dulles, pp.170-173

[50] Personal discussion with Stan Rosenberg and a representative for the Benjamin A. Gilman scholarship

more notable was the 78% increase of students going to North Africa, particularly Egypt and Morocco, and the 62% increase in American students going to the Middle East. While most of the students going to the Middle East were those going to Israel, 65 students went to Jordan, 23 went to Lebanon, and 20 to the United Arab Emirates.[51] Yet still, when European natives asked students if they were American, the students tended to respond with, "No, I'm Canadian," and a speedy exit.

The Fulbright Act and Precursors

In the wake of the world wars, the perspective of study abroad changed; it was no longer a variation on finishing school, but something that the world very much needed. Neighbors had been shooting at neighbors for the greater part of the century, and progress in everything but the art of war had stalled. Countries owed countries money. Spare parts of the war, mostly weapons, were still hanging around. As well, the Soviet Union suddenly controlled Central and Eastern Europe; a whole chunk of the continent was off-limits.

Senator Fulbright wanted to come up with a way to promote peace and rebuilding while also putting the war parts and debt behind. Claimants within the state department wanted to use funds for building and renovating embassies abroad. The lack of dollars was a problem, however, as at the time they could only get congressional appropriations for Latin American exchanges. [52]

Fulbright amended the Surplus Property Act of 1944 in order to rectify this problem. American war materials were still overseas after the close of World War II; this new bill allowed the Department of State to be responsible for disposing of them, and to

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[51] Institute of International Education. "U.S. Study Abroad Increases By 9.6%, Continues Record Growth" www.iie.org IIE http://www.iie.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Pressroom/PressReleases/U_S__STUDY_ABROAD_INCREASES_BY_9_6_CONTINUES_RECORD_GROWTH.htm

[52] *A Quarter Century: The American Adventure in Academic Exchange.* A Report of the Board of Foreign Scholarships. Department of State, Washington, DC. Board of Foreign Scholarships, (1971) p.9

allow the State department to accept foreign currency or credit as payment. As well, the Secretary of State could then create an educational partnership with these countries so as to finance the studies of American scholars and students in those countries as well as the transportation of foreign nationals to study in America.

President Truman signed the bill into law on August 1, 1948. The Act allowed a committee to select students from various disciplines and locations across the US and give them merit-based scholarships for one year of graduate study. Preference was given to qualified veterans. In 1948 the US Information and Educational Exchange Act meant that the US could now conduct educational exchanges around the world.

Travel began in the fall of 1948 to China, Burma, and the Philippines. Within a year, agreements had been made with New Zealand, the UK, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. By 1949-1950, the numbers had increased from 47 US students and 38 foreign students in 1948, to 823 US students and 967 foreign students in 1949-1950. [53]

When countries owed the US money, the funds were used to send students abroad. In the early fifties, various amendments and provisions allowed proceeds from WWII lend-lease agreements and the sales of surplus agricultural commodities to be used for educational exchange.

Later, in 1961 Congress brought the the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (or Fulbright-Hays Act) to President Kennedy. This act expanded the program, opened the program to new countries, and found new sources of funding in the private sector since the war surplus was gone. The Fulbright Committee asked universities to give awards to foreign exchange students, and the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation defrayed the cost for the first six months. The Fulbright-Hayes Act established the basic charter for all US government-sponsored educational and cultural

[53] ibid, p.11

exchanges. "If we are to avoid mutual destruction, we must achieve mutual understanding," wrote the authors of the twenty-five year report on the Fulbright program. Trust became the key to making technology, economics, and negotiations work around the world.[54]

And so the Fulbright program was America's effort to be " . . . both a teacher and a pupil in the world arena."[55] As of 1971, the Fulbright program had academic exchanges with 100 countries. While the acts of Congress helped the success of the program,[56] much of the success came from the program's binational approach. The Fulbright program works with all kinds of countries, from former enemies to allies, to industrialized countries to developing countries and authoritarian regimes. The Fulbright program was also one of the first exchange programs to allow German participation and accept Germans as partners in academic cooperation.[57] In general, program participants were dedicated to "long range goals, broad mutual interests," not short term foreign policy goals "where culture bears."[58]

The goal of the Fulbright program was and still is to not select a certain "type" of student, or to meet certain political interests.[59] "Unfortunately," Senator Fulbright said in 1965, "The distinction between education and propaganda is sometimes forgotten and pressures are brought to bear to use educational exchange for short range and short-sighted political purposes." In the sixties, the government's drastic funding cuts of study abroad decreased the programs around the world. The year 1968 saw a 33% decrease in funding from the previous year, and most of the reduction hit US grantees. The number of Americans participating in the program dropped almost 60% in a single year, which

[54] A Quarter Century ibid, p.11
[55] Johnson and Colligan, p.vii.
[56] ibid 12-13
[57] ibid p.16
[58] ibid p.20
[59] ibid p.26

caused other countries to mistrust the US government.[60] Gradual, the US voted back some funding increases, and in 1969, 2200 students applied for 300 awards.

While the Fulbright act is a form of foreign policy, it is primarily an educational exchange. While educational exchanges create some of the best diplomatic relationships, they are a slow process.[61] Rather than following political diplomacy, educational diplomacy normally precedes or keeps step with it, opening up and nourishing new possibilities for international cooperation. This kind of diplomacy develops relationships with other countries, reduces international misunderstandings and tension, and models cooperation and its value. [62]

But according to the Fulbright program, one's ability to meet and converse with other scholars is the most promising aspect of the program. David B. Davis, a student who spent time in Hyderabad, India, wrote of it as " . . . the most valuable teaching and learning experience that I have ever had. No American can honestly confront such a different culture without tremendous personal gain, and without being jarred a bit from his own ethnocentricity. This broadening is immensely enhanced if the American is thrust into the position of 'explaining' America." [63]

The student-generated interest in study abroad after September 11 led to government interest in what study abroad could do. Publically study abroad could help spread Senator Fulbright's hopes of peace and democracy; slightly less publically, it was seen as a means of improving the USA's reputation and popularity. The federal government began to articulate their interests in study abroad, particularly those interests pertaining to foreign policy, educational policy, and national security. In 2005, the US Senate declared 2006 the year of study abroad in order to boost visibility of study abroad in

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[60] A Quarter Century p.38
[61] ibid, pp.40-41
[62] F.A. Young, "Educational Exchanges and the National Interest." *ACLS Newsletter* XX, No 2 (1969) p.17
[63] A Quarter Century pp.50-52

US, and set the stage, to "develop and expand study abroad opportunities."[64] The government hopes that as a result of the Year of Study Abroad, study abroad numbers will grow and so will academic diplomacy.

In 1971, Fulbright wrote in the forward to *The Fulbright Program: A History* that civilization is a priority for academic exchange.[65] Students are learning about mankind first, art and sciences second. In the words of Albert Einstein, he said, he thought the act was the most effective way he could attempt to, "to deliver mankind from the menace of war."

[64] Year of Study Abroad 2006 Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (The Lincoln Commission) http://www.yearofstudyabroad.org/
[65] A Quarter Century, forward.

Contemporary Trends Within Study Abroad

> *The gentle reader will never, never know what a consummate ass he can become until he goes abroad. I speak now, of course, in the supposition that the gentle reader has not been abroad, and therefore is not already a consummate ass. If the case be otherwise, I beg his pardon and extend to him the cordial hand of fellowship and call him brother.*
> - Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain*[66]

Every year, more students decide to take at least a portion of their education abroad; some educators put the increase at 61% over the last 5-10 years. Study abroad educators, just like the travel writers and expatriates of the Twain's day, see this global mobility as a mixed blessing. While increases in study abroad help dispel the idea that Americans are happy to be culturally isolated, educators still have to deal with the downside—thousands of American kids abroad. And which ones come and which ones don't, where they avoid and where they flock to, their color, gender, academic major, and most importantly, what they do and don't do abroad, is a major topic of discussion in study abroad circles.

Racial Diversity

"A lot of these students have never left their home country; they've never been on an airplane before. That's the level we're working on."
LaNitra Walker Berger, senior manager of research and policy at the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education[67]

The color of study abroad students has been bothering educators and program administrators for some time now. Given that "students of color" make up only 17% of students going abroad[68], it seems apparent that study abroad is generally a "white thing." Hispanics represent 5.6 percent of study abroad participants, Asian Americans 6.3 percent (although some groups think they aren't actually underrepresented), African-American students are 3.4 percent of study abroad students, multiracial students 1 percent and Native

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[66] M. Twain, *The Innocents Abroad.* (London, 1916).

[67] "Study Abroad Isn't Just for White Students" AFS USA website (June 11, 2007) http://www.usa.afs.org/usa_en/news/afs_in_media/4449/ Downloaded August 18 2007.

[68] "Current Trends in U.S. Study Abroad and the Impact of Strategic Diversity Initiatives." *IIE Study Abroad White Paper Series.* Issue Number 1, (May 2007), pp.18-20.

Americans just 0.4 percent.[69]

According to an article on American Foreign Study's (AFS) website, "Study Abroad Isn't Just for White Students" program directors are slowly learning that their past approaches to diversification—adding more scholarships, sending African-American students to Africa—isn't upping their numbers. "We've picked all the low-hanging fruit in study abroad, "the humanities student, the social sciences student, the foreign language student, with means and a cultural orientation toward the world," Carl Herrin, a director at the Academy for Educational Development, says in the article. "If you want a more representative group, you have to work hard to get it. Not just for a little while: you have to sustain the investment."[70]

Bardoli Global, based in Houston, is one of the programs trying to sustain an investment. It is founded by twenty-six year old Anthony Jewett, who as a low-income African American student studied abroad with Rotary International and resolved to make study abroad more accessible, popular, or maybe even just more appealing to minority students. "[The lack of] diversity in study abroad has been a long talked about and lamented problem," Jewett says in the AFS article, "but we couldn't find great enough solutions, and action-oriented solutions. My experience studying abroad, from a background that normally wouldn't, led me to put together a program model of what a student would need to get from college to a study abroad program."

Part of that program's goal is confronting the "Five F's" of study abroad (a phrase attributed to Johnnetta B. Cole, president of Bennett College for Women): family, faculty, finances, fear, and friends. While these apply to any study abroad student, they can be particularly prohibitive to minority students. Jewett tends to think the "family, fear and friends" aspect presents the most problems. Study abroad scholarships for low-income

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[69] ibid

[70] "Study Abroad Isn't Just for White Students" AFS USA website (June 11, 2007) http://www.usa.afs.org/usa_en/news/afs_in_media/4449/ Downloaded August 18 2007.

and minority students are nothing new, and Bardoli is doing its part here as well, providing scholarships arranged by various cost-sharing agreements. But Jewett thinks that because minority students seldom have family, friends, or role models who have studied or traveled abroad, the idea can sound daunting, or even unappealing.[71]

Jewett begins addressing the F's during orientation for the 100 students participating. As with most people, students usually do not know what their cultural problems will be in advance. When they return from abroad, they participate in a semester-long leadership institute. Working in teams, the students select a global problem, write a paper, and use a small grant of about $1000 to create and administrate a solution. An example is American Youth Understanding Diabetes Abroad (AYUDA), a diabetes organization founded by two teens in the 1990's who wanted to create an advocacy group for people with diabetes in Ecuador.

As Tim Wright writes in his article, "Opening Doors, Crossing Cultures," "if one can afford college tuition, one can find an affordable study-abroad program." But he says students inevitably think a semester abroad is out of the question for two main reasons: they are afraid to leave their comfort zone, and they are afraid they aren't smart enough. He counters this by asking why adventure must have a negative, scary connotation, and also adds that being "smart" is a person making the most of her knowledge, knowing her limits, and working hard. Studying overseas, he says, allows you to immerse yourself in a new place and "prove to yourself that you can survive outside of your comfort zone."[72]

Students often use their study abroad option as a way to connect with the culture of their ancestors. Heritage seeking is defined as "studying abroad for the purpose of learning about one's own ethnicity," according to R. Alex Neff.[73] Heritage-seeking

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[71] ibid

[72] T. Wright, "Opening Doors, Crossing Cultures." *American Society for Training and Development T&D*, (May 2004) v. 58, I 5 p. 25

[73] A.R. Neff, "Discovering Heritage and More by Studying Abroad." *Black Issues in Higher Education*

motivates many African-American students to study abroad. Twenty-three percent of participants in African study abroad programs are African-Americans, as opposed to only three percent in other study abroad programs. Likewise, twice as many Hispanic students study at Brethren Colleges Abroad's site in Barcelona as at any of their other locations.

But students find that bonding with one's culture is often more challenging than they expect, and sometimes it doesn't happen at all. Neff cites examples of Koreans being suspicious of Korean-American students who only speak English, or African-Americans in Africa who find they often have more in common with their white classmates than their ancestral countrymen. "Many black, white, or Hispanic students who study abroad come to realize that people in other countries view them as simply Americans," writes Neff.

But even if heritage seekers don't find what they expect—and almost nobody does—they can learn a great deal. Studying abroad weeds out a lot of easy stereotypes, and makes students re-evaluate US culture by looking at it from another country's perspective. "It can be a time to rethink assumptions about what it means to be an American," Neff writes. "Indeed, the experience of not finding one's heritage abroad can be just as enlightening as finding it."

Location

A consistent trend, as well as a problem within study abroad is the so-called North-North axis—North American students going to Western Europe.[74] Part of this trend is historical, as much of America's background comes out of Western Europe. As well, during the World Wars, many academics in Europe emigrated to Canada, the US, or Australia. In addition to strengthening America's colleges, this emigration also strengthened the North American-Western European connection. A further factor was the Soviet Union's control

[74] G. Neave, "Institutional Management of Higher Education: Trends, Needs and Strategies for Co-operation." Unpublished International Association of Universities document for UNESCO, Paris, 1992. pp.15, 18. In de Wit, p.12

of Central and Eastern Europe as well as large sections of Asia. With large sections of continents off-limits because communism, it is not surprising that during the early days of study abroad Western Europe stayed a prominent destination for students looking abroad.

This is beginning to change; some note with regret, others with relief that American students no longer exclusively pick Europe as a study abroad destination. While most study-abroad students and summer back-packers still opt for Europe or Australia, many more increasingly seek out the Philippines, Vietnam, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. As well, more organizations are designing scholarships to encourage study in non-traditional locations. The National Security Education Program (NSEP) offers the David Boren Undergraduate Scholarship, a need-based award that sends students to "countries that are crucial to our national security." The program offers approximately 300 scholarships a year so that students can study in places like Cuba, India, Jordan, Kenya, and Russia, among others.

The Freeman Awards for Study in Asia strives to send more Americans to East and Southeast Asia, in locations such as Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Students also have to complete a post-study service requirement and write a report in exchange for their scholarship of $3000-$7000. The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, available to Pell Grant recipients, is need-based and also encourages study in less popular locations, such as Ghana and Singapore. [75]

But students still prefer to pick the traditional Western European destinations. To counter this, many universities are now insisting on "immersion," and send their students to more obscure locales to learn languages, while outright banning study abroad in "party cities" like Florence and Barcelona. CIEE only recently established a program in London, and its Paris and Madrid programs are only open to students with high language skills,

[75] "Scholarships available for study abroad". Occupational Outlook Quarterly. Spring 2003. FindArticles.com. 24 May. 2008. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5448/is_200304/ai_n21332953

while programs in less popular European cities are available to the beginning language student.

The major problem with these cities is their popularity, and the high tourist-to-resident ratio all year long. In cities like Venice, Prague, or Florence, thousands of visitors fill up the streets and students might never really need to learn the host country's language. The historical connection of Europe as the Grand Tour stomping grounds is bad enough, but cities that still are Grand Tour stomping grounds are even worse. No one wants to be associated with rich children playing in museums and bars for six months.

Those who did have the European study abroad experience, however, see it in a much different light. "For me, and for many thousands of my peers," William W. Stowe writes of his college days in the 1960s, "the summer in Europe represented a widely recognized, culturally sanctioned rite of passage." Like his ancestors, he followed the "classic nineteenth-century path from London to Paris to southern France and Italy. I had taken Art 101 and . . . felt a kind of moral imperative to come to terms with the masterpieces of Western civilization." He considers it the beginning of his adult life, as he had never spent a summer away from his parents' home before, and he never again spent more than a few weeks at that home.

Since then, he writes, Western civilization ceased to be a priority, and students started going to Asia and Africa. "Civilization no longer has one history," Stowe says. Nevertheless, he points out that American civilization with all its faults, developed heavily because of Europe and its faults, and so understanding Europe is very important to understanding American culture.[76]

Girls and Study Abroad

Why women are so represented amongst study abroad students, and what it means is a

[76] Stowe pp.221-222

question that has been circling the study abroad community for years. Amongst ERASMUS students in Europe and amongst American study abroad students, 61.5% of participants are female, while only 38.5% are male. .[77]

The findings as to why so many female students study abroad are inconclusive. Some believe that women have an experimental approach to their education, and female students might like to take their education off the beaten track. Others point to the disproportionate female-to-male ratio in certain disciplines, such as art history, literature, and Spanish. They also point out that these programs are much more conducive to study abroad. Others believe male students prefer a more "rugged" semester abroad in Australia or China. Yet, the male population is still underrepresented despite diversifying programs and locations. Some even make arguments that female students are less mature, and want a semester to play, while others argue the exact opposite point, and say that because female students are more mature, they take their education and personal development into their own hands and pursue a semester or year abroad.

Whether or not there is one "real" reason, it does seem apparent that women have a historical connection to European study abroad. During the nineteenth century wealthier American women knew that cultural acquisition made them a better catch—and a trip around Europe allowed them some freedoms from American cultural restrictions. But Europe also offered a chance of university education. 1350 North American women sought graduated study in German universities in the 19th century, according to Sandra Singer in *Adventures abroad: North American Women at German-speaking universities*. [78] More and more women were coming abroad towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of

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[77] E. Krzaklewska, Ewa and S. Krupnik Erasmus Student Network Research Report
Erasmus Student Network Survey 2005 in partnership with Petrus Communications www.europe-education-formation.fr/docs/Erasmus/rapport-Petrus.pdf

[78] Gore p.63

the 20th, even as their male counterparts sought their education at home.[79]

Some may suggest that women study in Europe strictly for the finer things in life, caring more about the quality of life than adventure or academic discipline. Gore, however, quickly discredits this assumption. Many female students, including those in Europe, have found themselves in uncomfortable living situations and have discovered innovative solutions. Gore notes that female students who had returned to Paris after WWII to study abroad cheerfully failed to mention that they had hot water only on the weekends, no electricity from Friday afternoons to Saturday noon, and that the apartments hadn't been repaired since 1939. The rooms were still drafty, and elevators and plumbing often didn't work. Many of the girls were required to bring their own canned goods, as milk, flour and eggs were precious commodities in France after the war.[80] Even, or especially in times of hardship, female students seemed to thrive abroad.

Susan Goldstein and Randi Kim wrote in their article, "Predictors of US college students' participation in study abroad programs: A longitudinal study," that "intercultural variables, rather than academic or career goals, predicted positive expectations of study abroad." In their findings, if a student had foreign language interest and low ethnocentrism, the student was likely to have the most positive outlook on the study abroad experience.[81] In general, female students generally score lower on ethnocentrism and higher on language interest and positive expectation of study abroad.[82]

Why so many female students study abroad is a problematic question; perhaps showing *how* women benefit from studying abroad is more useful. To begin, conducting the mundane, day-to-day activities of grocery shopping, buying a bus ticket, and asking for

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[79] ibid p.63

[80] Gore p.115

[81] S.B. Goldstein, Susan B. and R. I. Kim, "Predictors of US college students' participation in study abroad programs: A longitudinal study." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Volume 30, Issue 4, (July 2006) pp. 507-521. p.509

[82] Goldstein and Kim p.518

directions in a new culture and a new language gives any student, but especially women, a sense of self-sufficiency and independence. Regardless of the woman and regardless of the country she is studying in, she must deal with alternately curious, irritated, irrational, and annoying responses that come when people find out her citizenship. Often inadvertently, these experiences develop within her an interest in global affairs. And, as Sarah Bush and Christine Madden point out, almost all globally passionate people become globally passionate after living or studying abroad. "It was through studying abroad that they [women] connected a love of Romance languages with a desire to build better transatlantic relations, or through doing biology studies overseas that they discovered an interest in global health policy," they write. "We have found that the students who are most transformed are young women, for whom study abroad not only empowers but awakens."[83]

Student Behavior and the Process of Becoming Bicultural

Since the time of medieval Europe, when studying abroad became a common Western European educational practice, natives have been suspicious of foreign students arriving from far away.[84] Charlie Homer Haskins writes in *The Rise of the University* that even in the Middle Ages people had their doubts as to the value of migratory education. In the late 12th century, Nigel "Wireker" wrote the *Speculum Stultorum* a long narrative poem, which included a satire of English students "studying" in Paris. The protagonist of this poem spends seven years in Paris, and when he leaves, not only can he not speak a word of French, but he can't even remember the name of the city he has just left.[85]

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[83] S.S. Bush, and C. Madden, *Point: Counterpoint* "Women and the Global Generation: Study Abroad is a Vehicle for Women's Empowerment and Leadership. TransitionsAbroad.comhttp://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/studyabroadmagazine/2006Fall/women_and_study_abroad.shtml

[84] Gore, p.35

[85] C.H. Haskins, 1987. *The Rise of the Universities,* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 65. In Gore, p.35

Several nationalities have been described as the world's worst tourists, but perhaps none more than Americans. Whether they deserve the label "ugly Americans" or not, it has stuck since the term was coined in the 1958 political novel "The Ugly American" by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer. The book's publication coincided with the period of rampant travel to Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time of "diplomats on the loose," the boastful American combined with comparatively rapid travel meant many tourists were storming through Europe, stopping just long enough to complain, take some photographs, compare Europe to Illinois or Texas, and buy a postcard, never stopping long enough to pay attention to the local culture. They complained about local foods and the lack of ice water until, eventually, they got cheeseburgers and ice cubes. Passport applications reminded applicants that their behavior abroad "help[s] mold the reputation of our country," and President Eisenhower begged Americans to behave themselves, even if they couldn't quite bring themselves to shed their pounds, their hip-packs, and their tendency to consume European sights like popcorn. In *Americans Abroad,* Foster Rhea Dulles tells the much-repeated story of a Midwestern couple at Westminster Abbey. [86] The husband says to the wife, "You look at the inside and I'll take the outside."

But ever since America's early days as a country, her tourists have made a name for themselves as being difficult guests in new countries. No matter the century, Americans seem to always have struggled with how foreign lands differ from home, and with their own self-confidence in their country. In describing the nineteenth-century American travelers to Europe, Dulles writes, "They remained convinced of their own superiority but did not quite know how to establish it."[87] Alexis de Tocqueville described the American abroad further: "An American leaves his country with a heart swollen with pride; on arriving in Europe, he at once finds that we are not as engrossed by the United States and

[86] Dulles p.178
[87] ibid, p.5

the great people who inhabit them as he had supposed; and this begins to annoy him."[88] This annoyance no doubt led to the letters home complaining of European breakfasts, the dearth of good coffee, and the paltriness of Europe's famous mountains and lakes compared to those in North America.

Students in the twenty-first century come with the same complaints and attitudes. While some students are exceptional scholars, program directors say many students come with a consumerist attitude, as if they will be spending four months on a cruise rather than in college. The students see study abroad as something to purchase, not earn. They often expect the host culture to accommodate them, rather than them submitting to it. Some insist on getting new apartments rather than the awkward homestay. They insist on a homestay with internet access. And then there's the iffy aspect of travel. "Travel is an integral and exciting part of study abroad," says Thomas V. Millington [89] "but it has come to be seen by some as the basis of a study abroad program, rather than as a complementary aspect. Students who participate in study abroad programs to travel, with study as a spare-time activity, see the study abroad program as resembling a travel agency that caters to tourists between the ages of twenty and twenty-two." Millington suggests that students meet a required language proficiency and that they be required to study rigorously before leaving for the host country. He thinks this could give the students an increased sense of privilege and would cut down on "entitlement issues."

Study abroad advisors and theorists complain about American students abroad, and say many of them are looking for a shopping trip or a glorified spring break, not an academic term or a semester of cultural immersion. This isn't an entirely untrue accusation.

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[88] A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835). Quoted in Dulles, p.5

[89] T.V. Millington, "Consumers Study Abroad: International Education is Not a Commodity." Transitions Abroad Magazine March/April 2002
http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0203/Millington.shtml

A student in Amsterdam mentioned that two of her classmates (and their mothers) complained so much about their small study bedrooms that the director finally relocated them to bigger rooms.[90] Some interviewees in Florence expressed annoyance and some shock at their professors' policies of not letting them eat or drink in lectures, or leave class early.[91] In "Neither International Nor Educational: Study Abroad in the Time of Globalization," John and Lilli Engle discredit most aspects of current study abroad, including the pass/fail policies of many universities, classes in English, full email access and weekend travel. Joan Gore writes that the Engles, "denounced study abroad, especially its liberal arts content, as failed, frivolous, weak, and without serious professional purpose."[92]

Of all the myths of study abroad, the one most recited as fact is that the roots of study abroad are weak, and come strictly from the unacademic, un-multicultural Grand Tour. The second most-recited myth is that most study abroad students are still spoiled rich white kids on vacation. Because myths are based in truth, it is helpful to realize that many students went abroad and still go abroad to paint the basilica red and put the final touch on their party-animal resume. Many who go, drink too much and study too little. But lately, a few dissenting voices are beginning to argue that Europe and study abroad is not quite the spoiled child's playground of yore.

But the critics are loud and they have a long history. William H. Allaway writes in "The Many-Faceted Job of the Overseas Academic Program Director,"[93] that the problem of students behaving badly has been a university issue as long as there have been students. In AD 370, the Emperors Valentinian, Valus, and Gratian, Augusti, wrote to the Praefect of the city a letter detailing the conditions under which students from abroad could study in Rome:

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[90] Student interview, March 2007
[91] Student interviews, April 2008
[92] Gore, p.61.
[93] Allaway, "The Many-Faceted Job of the Overseas Academic Program Director". First part of CIEE Occasional Paper on International Education Exchange No. 2, 1965. Downloaded from http://www.ciee.org/research_center/occasional_papers.aspx

> The Consuales shall also see that each of them behaves in conferences as men who should avoid a shameful and dishonorable reputation and associations which we regard as bordering on crime, and they should not go too often to the spectacles, nor frequent untimely banquets. Nay, rather if anyone has not conducted himself in the city in such a way as the dignity of liberal studies demands, we give power that he be publically beaten with rods, expelled from the city, and at once place on shipboard and returned to his home."

If one inserted, "declared a course of study" in the first sentence and changed spectacles for strip clubs and untimely banquets for pub crawls, and suspension for public flogging, the Roman Emperors' decree would be nearly updated for today's world of erring pilgrims. In fact, Allaway points out that these regulations are almost identical to those published and used by the Department of State in 1965.

> Students return from study abroad programs having seen the world, but the world they return to tell tales about is more often than not the world they already knew, the imaginary world of globalized postmodern capitalism where everything is already known, everyone speaks the same language, and the outside world keeps its eyes on those of us who come from the center.
>
> —Ben Freinberg[94]

Ben Freinberg argues what most people know about study abroad and college-aged students—they are terminally self-absorbed, and they will interpret their travels in terms of *their* experiences, growth, and insight. Freinberg also recognized advertising culture and the world of reality TV at work in many students' responses. *I came, I saw, I learned how great I can be* was the mantra of every student he talked to. All well and good to realize your potential, he says, but if the only thing you get out of studying abroad is back-patting, then what's the point? These students he says, have grown up in an advertising culture that tells them nature can be tamed by our technology, and everyone is fascinated by America. We are a walking Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. To paraphrase Emerson, our giants go with us wherever we go.

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[94] B. Freinberg, "What Students Don't Learn Abroad." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 3, 2003) Vol. 48, Issue 34

Worse, Freinberg continues, students come home with misunderstandings about the natives who hosted them. He cites the example of a student who went to Zimbabwe and came home having learned that he can do anything he puts his mind to. Did this student realize, however, that the Zimbabweans are crippled by their dictator and AIDS, and therefore are less able to do anything they put their mind to?

Frienberg's answer is that while self-absorbed students and the tendency to personalize study abroad won't change, we can shift the focus. Instead of focusing on "group dynamics" and "individual growth" in pre and post orientation sessions, students can ask themselves if the tales they tell are just revisions of Survivor and Nike. What did they learn that wasn't about them? What weaknesses of their own did they realize? What strengths did they discover in their host culture?

Gore points out that most study abroad students make statements similar to the ones in Freinberg's essay: "I am a risk-taker"; "I learned a lot about myself" and other statements that seem to justify Freinberg's argument that study abroad is "a dubious voyage of self-discovery," at best. But Gore contrasts the language of Ben Freinberg's article (what students didn't learn abroad) to that of students who report an increased awareness "of their own cultural values and biases." And ultimately, she says, program participants reveal that they will risk a lot to learn this.[95]

"While they may not fully comprehend, much less fit into, their host social and cultural surroundings," writes Bill Hoffa, "they do experience something perhaps equally significant, but generally unacknowledged: a wake-up call to a complex sense of contemporary cultural heterogeneity, to the emerging global culture, to a new synergy between things 'here' and 'there.' They overcome their strong initial dose of disillusionment, even perhaps alienation, and then invariably find ways not just to cope but

[95] Gillespie and Slawson, IES outcomes assessment report in Gore, pp.124-125

to prevail in this bracing new cultural milieu."[96]

When advisors complain about students abroad, they complain that study abroad seems too much like being on vacation. Too much fun. Too little hardship. Too much drinking, traveling, and emailing. Hoffa writes, "Many students . . .seem able to avoid the time-honored soul-searching that has traditionally been seen as a positive side effect of the occasional (or even profound) loneliness of the study abroad experience." Another, Wayne Myles, writes, "Where as before students muddled through and adapted as best they could, some students now refer back to the home campus on every small detail."

As email became more readily available to study abroad students in host countries, study abroad advisors feared that too-easy access to friends and family via the internet would "interfere with the essential cross-cultural adjustment to the new environment"[97]or that it would be a crutch to solving problems. They feared students who used to have no choice but to learn self-reliance abroad would be robbed of this vital learning experience. And they were concerned that with too-easy calling cards and internet access, students would have what Jack Henderson calls, "the classic nearly invisible thread that spans the oceans, tugs at their attention, and keep them refocusing on the US, when they should be using their time and energies to concentrate on where they are."[98] Many theorists urged that students should have limited access to email and internet, because they fear students will spend all their time talking to people at home instead of meeting the locals and exploring the new country.

In some ways, those fears have not come to pass in the last thirteen years. Most students admit that they are behind in their emailing and even the most diligent students

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[96] B. Hoffa, "Learning about the Future World: International Education and the Demise of the Nation State." In Grunzweig, Walter, and Nana Rinehart (eds.) *Rockin' in Red Square: Critical Approaches to International Education in the Age of Cyberculture.* p. 71.

[97] B. Hoffa, "Email & Study Abroad: The Pros and Cons of Travel and Living in Cyberspace." *Transitions Abroad,* January/February 1996. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/9601/email_study_abroad.shtml

[98] Hoffa, "Email & Study Abroad"

opt for occasional mass emails or blogs in order to share their experiences with home. But program directors do point out the long amounts of time students log on Myspace, Facebook, or AIM, particularly when they have boyfriends and girlfriends back home. As well, rather than negotiating directly with the study abroad director about a class or housing issue, they will sometimes opt to email an advisor or parent at home. Given the current prototype of the "millennial student" however, this seems to have less to do with the availability of technology and more to do with the students' habit of always asking their parents for help first.

While study abroad directors agree that some of their students can spend "ridiculous amounts of time on the internet," it is seldom the distraction they worry about, or the distraction that keeps their students from completing their work or showing up for a mandatory field trip. If students have a choice between a trip to Vienna or a day on AIM, the daytrip will win out. The bigger distraction most on-site advisors point out, and one that has been there since the discovery of fermentation, is alcohol. Students will skip planned field trips in order to drink with their new friends, not to email their old ones.

But regardless of how well-connected students may potentially be, they each must confront the loneliness that comes with living in a new culture with new rules, new relationships, and new problems. And in this lonely place, they eventually learn to make connections that they can see, hear, and feel without the help of a wireless card.

The critics will also accuse students of traveling too much. And it is easy for students to make a bad habit out of never seeing the country they are being hosted in or even really getting to know the town; a common study abroad move is to take all photographs in their host city the day they arrive and, panicking, the day they leave.

But student budget travel is hardly escapism, and most students claim they learned the bulk of their lessons abroad while fending for themselves on a budget flight or getting stranded in a train station for two days with almost no money and no working command of

French. They learn much more of a country's customs and its neighbors when they take themselves out of their little American campus and survive amongst international strangers for a few days.

Edith Wharton wrote in *Italian Backgrounds* that Italy is like a Renaissance painting made up of a foreground and background. Everyone knows the foreground—it is the mother of God, the saints and apostles, the Vatican and the Uffizi. They are impossible to miss and they seldom vary. The background, however, says Wharton, was never a type in Italian paintings. While Mary and Jesus always had to look a certain first-century way, the background was decorated with Medici family members, glimpses of medieval life, and sometimes even a portrait of the artist as a shadowy figure in the corner. The background is where the really interesting life happens. In terms of traveling through Italy, the foreground is the guidebook recommendation for the tourist, while the back ground is for the "the dawdler, the dream and the serious art student of Italy." But says Wharton, we have to start with the foreground. One must be the sightseer before you can move to being the student, for "there is no short cut to an intimacy with Italy."[99]

Equally, it seems unrealistic to expect students to show up in a country and not be tourists for a while. Elizabeth Brewer, a study abroad researcher who has spent years living in a different culture, points out that Freinberg and the Engles don't have the whole story. One can't become bicultural in a semester or even several years. "Rather," writes Brewer, "we need to create study abroad opportunities that maximize students' abilities to investigate and understand another culture . . . The experience of being a foreigner in another culture, and realizing that biculturalism was not to be mine, has made me far more aware of the complexities of cross-cultural and multicultural communication." [100]

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[99] E. Wharton, *Italian Backgrounds*. Hopewell, NJ, 1989. p. 177.

[100] E. Brewer, "Short-term Study Abroad" *Point: Counterpoint*, TransitionsAbroad.com http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/9501/short_term_study_abroad.shtml

Brewer's article was not a direct response to critics of study abroad in general, but to critics of short-term study abroad programs. Most programs are now not the junior year abroad, or even the junior semester abroad, but often the 6-weeks-over-the-summer abroad. Language instructors and cultural theorists insist students barely have time to do anything with language and culture in just a semester, much less in six weeks. The timeline is more like that of a vacation than serious study abroad; as well, students often find the hardest part of a semester abroad does not come at the beginning but one third to halfway through a semester. The six-week programs avoid this problem.

With so many students opting for what seems to be the easy way out, the study abroad community is asking a question they can't agree on. "While any and all serious overseas educational ventures by US students are likely to contribute something to their education," Bill Hoffa writes about the inadequacy of some study abroad programs, "we owe it to them to encourage them . . . To seek the greatest challenges and concomitant rewards."[101]

The question everyone kicks around: is something really better than nothing?

In an age of skyrocketing oil prices, unpopular wars, lost jobs, and a future that virtually assures all of us will have less money in the bank, this is the justification for study abroad. The burden is not, as this chapter might have implied, that students must learn everything, prevent wars, convert someone from communism to democracy, or go abroad with the strictest of academic intentions. The burden is that they ask themselves *What did I learn?*

Because if in six weeks a student learns how to order a coffee in Spanish and buy a metro ticket in Paris; if she learns that Britain is very tiny and America unnaturally big; if

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[101] B. Hoffa, "The Global Job Market: Why Today's Study Abroad Programs are Often Inadequate." *Point: Counterpoint,* Transitions Abroad.com http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/9511/study_abroad_and_the_global_job_market.shtml

she learns that some socialist governments do work and are not indeed the antithesis to liberty; if she learns how to survive without a Visa card, use a phone card in Italy and sees that wine costs less than water, but the local people are, mysteriously, not intoxicated; and if nothing else, she learns that England is England and not Ireland, Scotland, Wales, or the name for that collection of islands off the coast of Europe, then she has learned more than 90 percent of her countrymen. And then yes, something is definitely better than nothing.

Chapter I: Leaving

> " . . . the greatness of the day and the import of the time broke in upon me with a flash of joy and fear. I was going away to England out of the warm secure circle to prove something. There would be the going away and the coming back, and whatever would greet me on returning, I would take stoically, accepting the responsibility of my own will, be it free or predetermined by my nature and circumstances." Sylvia Plath[102]

If she's lucky, someone at the check-in desk will decide she should be in business class. They may not know this is her first flight alone across the Atlantic, or that this seating arrangement is the first of several strokes of good luck she will have during the next harried day. Her plane does not crash. She doesn't lose her luggage, although sometimes she thinks it would be easier if she did. She finds a baggage cart, and only once do her bags tumble off onto the concourse. She gets on the right bus and isn't pick-pocketed on the underground train. Someone agrees to watch her mountain of bags while she hails a cab, and the hostel is actually clean and quiet. The operator puts the call through to her parents, and when she wakes up from a nap in the hostel, another American girl is in the room, ready to make friends.

But right now, she's standing in what she will soon learn to refer to as a queue, fingers and stomach crossed and praying no matter what her religion, that *everything goes okay,* just hoping to make it as far as the plane.

Six to eight hours later she'll still wake up spider-eyed and strung out, all alone halfway across the world from everything that's important to her. It is 7:00 a.m. in one of Europe's great airports, and her day has just begun.

Getting here requires at least a day, maybe a week if the study abroad student takes detours; many students spend a week or two exploring Europe before classes start. In less pleasant instances the detours are acts of God, or an airline. Because Glee's flight from Montana to Minnesota was delayed by 16 hours, the man at the counter took pity and gave her a 1st class ticket. In Minnesota, she boarded the plane that was three hours late and sat

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[102] S. Plath, *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*. Ed. Karen V. Kukil. (London, 2000). p. 148 entry 153.

in her first-class seat. "As I got settled next to some rich teenaged girl who was crying," she says, "a woman with a very shrill loud voice came to my seat, nearly grabbed me by the arm and threw me off saying I wasn't allowed on. She then grilled me about who gave me the ticket. I said I couldn't remember; she said she could find out. I had to stand at the end of the line to get to cattle class."

After a five-hour layover, an emergency landing, another five-hour wait for a flight at Amsterdam Schipol, and a long train ride from Vienna to Graz, Glee arrived in Graz with a huge suitcase, no money, and no ride to her apartment. She also didn't know how to use the phones. When some strangers finally helped her exchange money and make a phone call, her mentor said she would come pick her up, but only after yelling at Glee first for being late. "She got a taxi and then gave me the bed linen which I didn't know what to do with because I'd never operated duvet covers. She got all grumpy, put the duvet cover on, told me I had a meeting at 9am and left me alone. This was the 9th of September 2001."

Those who have taken transatlantic flights to Europe know how wretched that first day is, and most likely envy those passengers of fifty and sixty years ago who had no choice but to take a boat, because they could at least sleep, shower, and breathe fresh air before docking in Le Havre or Liverpool. Now, all passengers can do in the cabin bathroom is wipe the gunk from their eyes and pull their greasy hair into a baseball cap. Coffee will churn in their stomachs and breakfast drops like rocks into their stomachs. They will gasp for the few breaths of fresh air on the jetway as they de-board. Only a shower and later some sleep will help, and these could be a long time coming. Everyone who flies internationally knows not to take a nap as soon as one is alone in a room with a bed, but this is much easier said than done.

But first, she has to get there.

Taking the bus out of Heathrow will feel like riding wrong-sided on some freeway in Chicago. The train from Charles De Gaulle will be hot, sticky, and crowded with more ethnicities of people than she would have thought possible in Western Europe. From the airport to central Prague requires a densely packed bus and then a metro. From Edinburgh airport to the city centre, the view rewards with high bridges and a castle on a hill, and while she will not understand any of the calls the bus driver makes in his thick accent, this transition will feel like it makes sense. No matter which bus or train or metro though, she will be clutching her bags, probably sneaking glimpses at the General Information pages in her *Lonely Planet* or *Let's Go* while wondering if it is safe to so identify herself as a tourist on public transportation, especially when the guidebooks tell her that thieves operate on trains and buses, and so she must watch her bags at all times, and never to appear to be as much of a tourist as she really is.

Arrivals are a steep learning curve. Emma, a student in Prague, traveled for two weeks in Europe over Christmas break before starting her course. The day before she was supposed to arrive in Prague she missed her train from Frankfurt and spent an extra seven hours there. She spent the extra day of travel telling herself she would fly back to Massachusetts just as soon as she reached Prague. She changed her mind upon arrival but the sense of getting messed over by Europe stuck with her. Rena, a student in Oxford, left her laptop bag on the plane in London. When she went back to ask the airline employees for it, they said it wasn't there, and it took several days of her calling airlines in America before they would call the airline in London and even attempt at looking for the laptop, which was never found. "Buying a new laptop as soon as I arrived did not get my semester off to a good start," she said, and was part of the reason she considered returning to the US.

"We didn't have such a dandy time finding our B&B at 1:00 a.m.," Monica, a student from California said of her arrival into London with her boyfriend. "I wanted to go

home. There had been no time to stop and relax before we left, and then it was boom! Right into not-very-coolness."

Alex, another student from California in Oxford, spent two weeks in Paris before the semester began. While she describes her two weeks in Paris as "wonderful", she closed it by taking the train to England, getting ripped off by a taxi in London, and watching the sky get darker and cloudier as she got closer and closer to Oxford.

Few students actually drop out of a program once they arrive in Europe, but the directors in Graz, Austria, have seen it happen. One boy called them from Amsterdam to say he had just gotten engaged and was going home to start his family. Another girl made the mistake of telling her mother how homesick she was the first few days, and the mother ordered her to fly home. "I think the mother overreacted," Doris, the program director said.

Americans usually arrive in Europe saying "Wow!" saying, "Hand me my camera!" This Wow! period will last different amounts of time for different people; it could depend on how long one is staying. The travelers on vacation seem to have the most heightened awe of the Old World, but observation indicates it burns out quickly. Take a group of college students on a ten-day academic tour of Great Britain or Western Europe, and by midweek three-quarters of the group will sneaking, then walking shamelessly into Starbucks for breakfast and McDonald's for lunch. Full English breakfasts and French croissants and yogurt, gourmet dinners and ethnic delicacies will be exciting—for two or three days. Whether from homesickness or culture shock, the American chains will become the easiest and most irresistible options. If possible, the young tourists will demand that the first stop home from the airport is a Burger King or Taco Bell.

The first day, just off the plane—will this all seem shockingly new, or more familiar than expected? She may have never seen a shop named "Orange" or "Sainsbury", or cafes advertising jacket potatoes and morning coffee, or so many red phone booths and post

boxes. She might not be able to read the language of the shop windows, even if she studied German or French or Spanish a long time ago in school.

No matter how worldly she thinks she is, she will rediscover that there's nothing sex can't try to sell. A poster on a public restroom wall shows man grinning, his zipper fly half way down. "While you're down there," the caption says, "would you mind putting this in the bin for me?" A message from Keep Britain Tidy. A billboard advertising beer displays a close-up of a girl in a tiny braided fiber bikini. The caption reads, "All natural."

Billboards advertising Bacardi and the Sugababes will flank an ancient parish church. Pubs with regal-sounding names, like The Lamb and the Flag, could be serving nominal pizza and loud club remixes for lunch. A traditional Bohemian toy shop might be blaring the newest single by the Black-Eyed Peas. Teenage mothers in pink midriff tops will hassle her for change outside the Ashmolean.

Sometimes these cultural contradictions are less glaring; when the quayside French bistro plays the soundtrack to *Amelie* and the sun is shining and a man sells flowers outside the metro while another plays his accordion, she will feel her heart could break. But later she will see trash in the streets. Later unemployed men will slouch against a newsagents' wall and diesel fumes will hang thick in the air—and this is the neighborhood where she will live. Is this is really what she signed up for? This place, this neighborhood without the clock towers and outdoor cafes, the one with the bars and condemned takeaways?

The best thing for the new arrival to Europe to do after bathing and abandoning her luggage is also the scariest—exploring her new home. Because this land is pedestrianized, she can use her two feet to do this. If she is in a medieval city, a map is more necessary even as it also tends to be less helpful. Most large cities plant pedestrian signs at each intersection, and even in Italian or French it is not so hard to find the way. In Prague, the signs are in Czech, but accompanying each label is a picture or icon of the landmark being pointed to. All a traveler must do is decode church steeple A from church

steeple B, or the national art museum from the Charles Bridge. Wherever the city, she can expect to feel like a lost toddler during this first outing. If there is no goal for this exploration, it may be best to just pocket the map and start walking. It will be okay for the first steps to feel a little uncomfortable. As long as she keeps moving, and does not give in to the temptation to stop in the middle of the sidewalk and stare at the street signs, she is doing well for her first day.

The metro almost anywhere is easy to use, after the hard part of buying the ticket for the first time. Some travelers without pride will try asking at the window for a ticket, in English or a broken version of the national language. This might get the ticket they need, or it might send them to the Palace of Versailles when they really need to get to a hotel on a street named Versailles. For those not wanting to practice their French or Spanish on an underpaid metro worker, there are the ticket machines, which sometimes have directions in English, sometimes take American credit cards, and sometimes will take the national currency. Should she ever go to Newcastle Central Station and use the metro, it is worth knowing that there is one machine that will spit out every third pound coin she inserts into the red ticket machine's slots.

Nothing will be quite so unnerving as the moment she puts her foreign coins into a machine and prays that the right ticket comes out. Nothing—except when she begins walking down the stairs or escalator towards the metro tracks, glancing from map in her hands to maps on the walls to see which wall posts the name of her stop. In Prague, she must hold on to the handrail and be careful not to look up and down quickly, as the escalators are as steep as a ladder and hurtle towards the lower level. Any metro escalator provides a good opportunity to read, or try to read the posters and advertisements lining the walls. It can be like decoding a puzzle, determining exactly what the poster of a woman's belly juxtaposed with the DANONE yogurt logo in the corner is to mean.

She must look, take in, but never stop moving. She must pay attention to many things: the end of the escalator, the man behind her, people with luggage, the directions on the wall. When the train comes, she should board quickly because many metros are not particular about a last-minute boarder's fingers and bags. This first trip could be gently unnerving and successful, or she might end up back at the airport where she started. But it is an important exercise in self-confidence to learn to use the city's transportation system quickly, even if she can and will walk everywhere. Knowing how to communicate with transportation will be the next best thing to knowing the language. She should watch her bags and money belts closely, and perhaps should not choose to wear an American Eagle graphic tee and Nikes.

If there were a command I could give her for her first days in Europe, it would be this: Remember the way you first see your new city. It is an impossible command, because in some ways the only thing the new arrival can remember is a jumble of buildings and streets that someday she will know by heart. It may be that she will be staying in a hostel or B&B until finding permanent accommodation, and her current orientation to the city won't last long—someday she might be taking other streets and going to stores in another part of town. At some point though, she will try to remember her first impression of London, Rome, or Edinburgh, and be disappointed with the memory that is there. The best she can do is build a memory of a place in jigsaw puzzle pieces.

The Unknown

This isn't like moving into college, she thinks, for she's just now grasped how much luggage she has, and how many stairs she must climb up and down in order to leave the train station. Somewhere over there are taxis and a rotation of buses; she can see the drivers smoking cigarettes by the road. But she is here with two big suitcases and two carry-ons that just sneaked through security under the size limit. At the time, maximizing her luggage seemed like a good idea. The more sweaters, photographs and books she shoves into her duffel bags, the less homesickness, the less chill, the less money spent on semester-long replacements. Now, she wishes she could set her pile of luggage on fire.

Tucked into her hand is a carefully written and memorized address worn with checking and rechecking. When the cabbie asks, "Where to?" in the heavy, old country accent she has been dreaming of but cannot understand, she consults her paper, and fumbles to say "19 Fraser Avenue, but I have to go to New Hall first." Her words are not even that articulate, but he nods as if he understands and guns the hatchback out of the parking lot, dodging the bus for DUNDEE as it swings into the bus station. She squints at the yellow hills, trying to decide if she remembers Fife from a memory of a former life, or this one. Everything seems golden in that way that agricultural places are at 4:00 p.m. late summer when the light strikes off the sea. She can't see the sea from here, or really even smell it; the last she saw of it was three seals sunning on a rock near—what's it called?—Burntisland.

But what if there are two New Halls in St Andrews? What if he forgets? What if she's not really on her way to St Andrews at all?

The cab passes the Welcome to St Andrews sign just as she sees the water. They pass the Old Course and its hotel hulking like a fort above the green. An old cyclist pushes on against the wind.

The driver whips around a roundabout and she feels her stomach quake. If she felt hunger on the train, the headache growing out of her neck has killed it. She looks out the window. Some buildings here are unquestionably old. Others, like the one they are pulling up to now, are ugly and 30 years new. But nothing looks like the buildings left behind at home. There is little tradition of brick in Scotland, so the mainstay of Virginia colleges and Ivy League universities is distinctly absent. Everything is stone. Grey, wind and water-worn stone buildings with limey black tears streaking down the corners of the walls. Physics. Math. New Hall. All surrounded by a silent mob of purple and navy blue Peugeots.

She almost assumes disaster: the receptionist won't have her key, will have given it to someone else, the desk will be closed. She imagines what she will do when inevitably turned out on the street with a pile of bags. She stares at the green carpet until the girl in front of her finishes explaining how her key still won't work. Then she looks up, bites her lip and reminds herself of this command: "I'm here to pick up my keys." She wonders if communication would be easier in a country where she wasn't fluent in all the wrong words. Americans and British—"a people divided by a common language" indeed.

The woman understands her though and brings a wad of keys with red and green and pink plastic labels on them. The woman makes her sign a slip, pay a deposit, and then keys are hers.

The cabbie pulls into a quiet residential area. Here we are, he says, that's £10. She hands him the bill, plus too much change as a tip. Her arms shake as she picks up her bags and looks at the conjoined network of grey pebbly houses all intertwined and silent. She stops in front of the door labeled 19, and without thinking too much, walks inside. Her first thoughts: *hide, food, phone card, mom*, and maybe *boyfriend*. But first she brushes her hair, wipes the mascara smudges under her eyes, and trudges upstairs to make friends.

The next morning, at orientation they are queuing—she likes this word, queuing, but is unsure about it—into the music hall two by two. Every third girl wears skinny jeans regardless of body shape, although she notices that most university girls in Europe are not overweight. Registration, or rather, matriculation, is when the world sees how the Milan, New York and London fashions have trickled down.

During the daylight they all look like nervous students trying not to look nervous, queuing in a queue they clearly want to break out of, touching their hair, consulting their mobile. No one takes their coats off as they wait. All the side doors stand open to function as one-way exits, and further chill the already barn-like building. Their coats are boiled wool in red, blue, green, or anoraks in black, taupe, or the blue and black North Face all-weather jackets.

The Xains, the Chens, and the XXXs denote the Chinese students who, along with the Americans, dominate the international student body. They beam and scurry, get into the wrong lines, and miss entire sections of the matriculation process. "I need picture" they say, holding out their matriculation schedule. Some of the girls travel in pairs. Most of the boys travel in silence.

The Americans try to accept this is not the first-year college experience they've worked through before. Some of them attempt to blend in, digging deep into their prep school roots and brushing their hair straight, donning pristine jeans, loafers and sweaters, topping it with a scarf. Some of them huddle in their university sweatshirts. Some have been here for years and arrive in glorified pajamas.

This American girl's photograph has not arrived and thus she has no ID card waiting for her. This flusters her. "I'm so sorry," she says. "I'm very organized. Someone else sent it for me. I know I should have done it myself," even as the photo tech guides her to a seat in front of the camera.

The boys are tamer, and also confused. "That lady over there said I had to come over and get a card?" one says, hopefully.

"Did you send in a photograph?" the technician asks. The boy stares.

"Do you have a passport-sized photo with you?" she continues. This causes more wide-eyed head shaking, except for a few intrepid boys. "Yeah! Yeah I've got a photo," and they walk over to the photo tech at her scanner, and thrust their state drivers license at her. "Oh," they say, when she tells them she needs an actual photograph, and begin to get the hang of feeling a little stupid.

Managing

Danes celebrate birthdays with Danish national flags stuck in the cakes like birthday candles. National identity is very important for Danes; it is troublesome for Spaniards, who still associate flamenco, football, and bullfighting with Franco and his mandatory Spanish nationalism. The American students learn their national identity is a permanent accessory. Getting rid of it is not an option; changing how they wear it is. The American student abroad initially has two choices: reject American national identity or cling to it. Every student finds their place somewhere on that spectrum.

In *Impacts of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates*[103], Susan Opper, Ulrich Teichler and Jerry Carlson describe study abroad students in terms of xenophilia—loving their new culture to the point of wanting to adopt it—or xenophobia, when they are scared of it to a point of disgust. Between these two extremes students line up like toy soldiers.

One might attempt to describe a typical example of each kind of student. Perhaps xenophobes wear their American-ness on their Abercrombie and Fitch sleeves throughout the duration of their stay. Perhaps the xenophiles adopt each European uniform in turn, from fur-lined boots to enormous scarves to 80's tunics. The xenophobes frequently use *dude* and *like* during their four to twelve months abroad, and ask loudly in Tesco why the *hell* there's no Betty Crocker brownie mix. Often, the Europe-loving students are verbally impressionable, and will learn to stretch their *a*'s and use the local slang as quickly as they learned to swear when they were thirteen.

But mostly they are naive. Those who studied the cultural notes in their *Let's Go* or *Fodor's* are only ahead of the crowd in that they know how to order a jug of tap water in

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[103] S. Opper, U. Teichler, and J. Carlson. *Impacts of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates.* ." Higher Education Policy Series 11, Volume 2. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London, 1990. p.122.

French (*une carafe d'eau*) or that eggplants and zucchini are called *aubergines* and *courgettes*. They won't know the important things that guidebooks can't include in a chapter on culture, like that *pants* means *underwear* to English-speakers on this continent, or that at the end of an event, whether a rugby game, multilingual scavenger hunt, or a day at work, it is expected that they stay for a cup of coffee or a pint. They might go to London knowing that it won't be just the white people who have a Cockney accent, but it is a sure guarantee that someone of Chinese descent and a heavy Scots accent will startle them. They may expect the French to be rude, but will not expect all the political questions from the Danes, the pushing, shoving, and *sorry!'s* in the Tube from the Londoners, and the unabashed bluntness from Czechs. The first time they arrive at a shop at 2:00 p.m. in France or 5:00 p.m. in Britain and find it shut, or at midnight in Spain and find it open, they'll wonder which planet they landed on.

American students arrive surprised that Europeans have video games, yet horrified at Victorian plumbing and crate-sized refrigerators. Things like a bedroom with one electrical socket, and a twenty-minute walk to class dumbfound them. And this is before they realize their host family is still using dial-up, pay-per-minute Internet access but the call shop across the street features Skype and World of Warcraft for pennies an hour.

Sometimes the shock is a little more unexpected. "My big surprise," says Maya, "was not being able to read signs. I assumed because Danes speak English that it would be kind of like in Canada where they have signs in French and English. I can't read the signs and I'm not able to pronounce words very well, which makes asking for directions hard. People in my *kollegium* speak Danish, and I spend a lot of time not talking. I'm not used to that."

For others, the surprise is how they have cut themselves loose and look down at the severed apron strings with no remorse at all. Benjamin said his parents had no idea why he was going abroad. "You'll go crazy," they told me. "You'll be too homesick." But is

he homesick? He laughs. "I miss my dog." Megan would happily not go home, and that scares her. She came to Amsterdam planning to graduate in a year, spend a semester at home while applying to law schools, and then go to law school. This is the plan she told me about at the beginning of our session, with a certain amounts of hesitation in her voice. Now, the only thing she knows she's doing for sure is traveling in Europe this summer, dependant upon her parents' generosity.

The student bridges the gap between tourist and resident with a slow, crushing sense of being born. What the students first find cute about the Old World—the narrow winding streets of cobblestone, the ancient homes—becomes annoying when trying to walk quickly to class in heels, or trying to stay warm in their flat. They gradually realize that what seems hideously American—the Starbucks, the *hypermarches*, the McDonald's—comes with the awkward bonus of providing all their homesick needs.

All, but the ability to make life abroad easy. "I kind of knew what I was getting myself into, but still, coming abroad is a surprise," Myrna, in Florence says. "You can't believe you're hearing other people speaking a new language. I didn't know what to do at first. I didn't know the city, no one was here with me, and I didn't know how to read a map. I didn't want to get lost."

So what did you do?

"I started traveling. I remembered that I came here to see Europe, and that got me moving."

Why?

> It liberates the vandal to travel--you never saw a bigoted, opinionated, stubborn, narrow-minded, self-conceited, almighty mean man in your life but he had stuck in one place since he was born and thought God made the world and dyspepsia and bile for his especial comfort and satisfaction.
>
> -Mark Twain, The American Abroad speech, 1868

Laura came to Austria largely to see what would happen to her in a new environment. "A good friend of mine studied abroad in Rome," she says, "and came back much more mature and able to take care of herself." Her academic goals were to learn the language, but "I wanted to get to know myself," she says. "You don't really know what you're capable of until you don't know what the hell you're doing."

Ask a study abroad student why she or he thinks they need to go to another country to study. Most of them are capable of coming up with an impressive answer; however some of the honest ones will laugh; they aren't really going to Europe to study. Unless students intentionally pick rigorous academic programs, they are very likely to look at a semester away as a semester vacation. At Naropa University's creative writing program in Prague, most of the students said that they came to Prague to focus on their writing. But the two administrators, Lisa and Jolie, said that most of the students came looking for an easy semester. "The Naropa students' grades transfer directly back to Naropa," Lisa said, "but students from the other universities can choose to not count the grade from a class. So if they bomb a course, it won't necessarily hurt them. Some of them were definitely taking advantage of that option."

Classes at the Prague program included an optional film studies class and yoga class. Do the students attend the optional classes? "No," Jolie laughed, who taught the film studies class and translated for the yoga class. The only student who regularly attended both optional classes was the older, non-traditional student who was there on a no-credit basis.

A young man from Cornell University admitted in an interview with the *New York Times* that he chose to study abroad in Seville because he would be legally able to drink and his grades there would not affect his transcript.[104] According to the article, this was common to many of the students in the Seville program, and as with many programs, the American students socialized with each other instead of making friends with the Spanish students.

Some people, often parents and educators, say that twenty and twenty-one year olds aren't responsible enough to handle being thousands of miles away from parents and a university, in a culture where drinking is permitted by age 18, lectures are optional, and sex can be as casual as they want it to be. If students go abroad for the wrong reasons or at an underdeveloped maturity level, they risk spending a great deal of money without ever getting the cultural enrichment and global perspective they came for. Their traveler's checks might go to Prada bags and alcohol instead of train fare, pot houses instead of art museums, and spring breaks recovering from hangovers and one-night stands instead of 11th century cathedrals. And lots of times, they will.

At the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CMRS) in Oxford, applicants must have a high GPA and good references in order to be accepted, which means that unless they are lazy geniuses, they are used to working diligently at their studies. CMRS also uses Oxford's tutorial system, which require a paper a week per tutorial. If the paper isn't written, or written well, the student must survive for an hour alone in a room with the tutor and his wrath. The only two opportunities to really procrastinate are for the research essay and the integral exam, but one learns very quickly that while no one will hold your head over a pile of books and make you read all of *The Consolation of Philosophy* weeks before the final, you will suffer all the same on exam day. There is no cramming several books' worth of possible essay questions the night before.

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[104] G.C. Altschuler, "La Dolce Semester" *New York Times Online,* Apr 8, 2001.

Some students try, and squeaked by as necessary. Other students attend universities participating in the Great Books program, which means they have special tutorials and fewer written papers. Lisa, the junior dean at St Michael's Hall as well as an alumnus of CMRS, mentions this and shakes her head. In her opinion, when American kids discover a culture where they can drink at 18, fewer requirements do not lead to a better study abroad experience.

Graduate students do not always set a better example. International grad students are expected to be in grad school to study, to work hard for a higher degree. Overseas masters programs, however, particularly those that don't ask for a GRE score, do not always attract this kind of thinking. They do attract good students—American students cannot get in without a good showing from their undergraduate studies. But when the students realize how infrequently they're required to be anywhere, and how little they *must* do on a weekly basis, American students just out of college are very likely to see it as an affordable way to have a year of fun and get a degree in the process.

Some of these students are Ivy League graduates who can write very adequate essays overnight, and do enough work to pass, sometimes even with a distinction, their year of graduate work. Some might skip workshops and lectures, avoid scheduling tutorials, ask for extensions, and turn in mediocre work. When one student at St Andrews was asked why he applied for a graduate program if he wasn't going to do much of the graduate work, he said, "Well, I'm not really over here for the master's degree. It's a cheap way to live here and do a lot of stuff besides study. I mean, I sure do a lot of golfing."

Others manage to spend most of the year on American time zones by sleeping in late and chatting online late at night. Others spend expensive weeks traveling through Europe and seeing nothing. One American girl went to Madrid with a male friend and they started dating during the week together. "So what did you see in Madrid?" her friends

asked when she came back. "Oh nothing really," she said. "We spent almost the entire time in the hotel room."

American pop culture expectations of a semester in Europe involve squandering money and taking some years off one's life. But the students who study abroad to drink at noon are an exception. Amy wanted to learn in a foreign country from a different teaching style, take classes that would not be offered at her home university in North Carolina, and to learn about the culture and fully submerse herself in a new country.

Many of the students in Amsterdam were studying abroad in order to select a senior thesis topic; many of the students in Graz were there trying to learn German as well as fine-tune their major, and almost all of the students in Oxford were preparing themselves for grad school. Reva and Fenelly in Florence, and Aaron and Britt in Amsterdam, actually studied abroad in order to improve their grade point average. Aaron and Britt needed bigger academic challenges; Aaron said he performed better in classes where expectations were high, and Britt said she was "unamused" by life back home at her state commuter school. "There, you know that if you do exactly what's on the syllabus you'll at least get a B," she says. In coming here, she wanted to exceed her professors' expectations and go one extra step—not just do what was required but obtain individual knowledge. Reva and Fenelly correctly guessed that classes in Italy might be a little easier, thus improving their grades while also gaining international experience. Additionally, Reva studies fashion design, and a semester studying her topic in Italy was invaluable.

Kimberly says, deadpan, that she wanted to meet the Princess of Denmark. In seriousness, Kimberly is from Mississippi where it's warm in the winter and always sunny. She wanted to deal with the challenges of the dark, cold winter, learn about Danish culture, and assimilate with her host family and succeed in classes.

Sometimes, though, the students simply need to save themselves, and they visualize their salvation happening through total change. "I'm one of 35 people from my high

school who went to the same university," Lauren, in Denmark says, "and I've always had a safety net with them. But my friend died of an overdose in December, and I wanted to separate myself from that lifestyle. I wanted a change of pace, and put myself in more situations where I'd be challenging myself."

Kendra wanted to "let myself be changed by the experience, and get a perspective on things that I couldn't possibly predict." Sarah, who grew up in the suburbs in Pennsylvania, wanted to see how big the world was by going to Denmark. "It's not atypical for me to be here," she says, "but I'm trying to live out of my comfort zone."

"We're all at an age where we're trying to figure out who we are," Kendra says, "and college is the perfect opportunity to live abroad."

"My philosophy is that college is your time to be selfish," Kimberly adds. "You're on your own, and you make your choices for you."

Amy had only two or three academic goals compared to nine or ten personal ones; as study abroad advisors and directors are discovering, this is not rare. Amy writes that her top goals were to, "become more independent as a person, to have time just for me, to make my own decisions, be on my own, do what I want, make new friends, find my own niche—and adapt." Her final goal was, "To not be an ugly American." When asked what her actual priorities became over the semester, her number one answer was, "Be Amy."

Whatever your motivations, they got you here. They could have been as simple as a world map or a piece of literature. They could have been as revolting as an overheard opinion in Kmart, or one more twenty-one year old getting engaged that made you post your study abroad deposit as fast as possible. Other people will tell you that you're so lucky, and they only wish they could be doing what you're doing now. Don't take these words too seriously. You are not simply lucky to be here. You are here because you wanted to be, wanted to be bad enough to get up at 5:00 in the morning to call the cash office at your university across the water and see if your loan has cleared yet. You had to

rush your passport. You had to make multiple appointments with European visa offices, hours away. You did this and other inconvenient things to get here. Spread the news: It is not bad luck that holds people back.

The polls disagree here. Of all American college students, a tiny portion study abroad each year, making them immediately a specialized class. The statistics repeat that year in and year out, the runaway majority of these students come from comfortable, white, well-rounded homes. A fraction of the students are black, Hispanic, Asian, and Indian. The white students will automatically seem lucky for what they were born into, the minority students for what they weren't.

Of the minority students, most choose to go somewhere other than Europe, often seeking out the countries of their heritage, and a place where they can try to blend in and be accepted. Many are disappointed to find that wherever they go, they are still seen as American.

Goals

> "My main goal was to have a life changing experience—whatever that was going to mean." -Kendra
>
> "I wanted to look forward to something in my life and have stories to tell that no one I know can compare to. I was young and had nothing holding me back." –Melanie
>
> "When one's top goal is to leave the country, why have any other priorities?" –Glee

Why they come abroad and what they want from Europe always varies, as do the backgrounds, academic interests, and levels of cultural ignorance. What always seems to be the same is the tiny fire inside, with words like *hope, push, reach* written in the flames. Like a little steam engine or propeller, it pushes them out of the small circle of daily life in their small circular worlds.

You can leave your comfort zone in America, at least one little circle of it. You can change jobs, move, go to school, get married, have a baby, join the army, or take up street

preaching. But you're still enclosed in a time zone that only varies by three hours, a language that can return to English during a bus ride, and a subculture that is always under the arch of American culture in any city and any state. You're still on one great big slab of land, and have no idea how big it is or how far out to sea.

Chapter II: Destinations

> "Students are apt to be working with an imagined present that is really as much a mythic construct of the past. Thus they may build their expectations about study abroad in the UK as if they were planning a trip to a 19th century theme park."[105] –Jane Edwards

Little Americas pop up all over Europe, and they paint their own versions of Europe. Mid-western universities develop programs in a chateau, villa, or castle that the countries' natives can no longer afford. The programs put on "Oxbridge-style dinners" and take the students on tours of English towns, Roman settlements, and German castles. Often they manage all of this without the trouble of living amongst real modern-day Europeans.

For students who do not mind real, modern-day Europeans, and who do not like having their hand held and told which way to walk each day of the week, direct enrollment may be a viable option. Direct enrollment also works to the advantage of students with good language and cultural abilities. It can allow students to attend an English speaking university in an English speaking country, or, if at a certain level of language proficiency, attend a foreign language university. If attending a program like the Sorbonne or the Goethe institute, students can opt for language and culture programs. Other programs, such as Danish International Studies (DIS), Vesalius in Brussels, the Swedish Program, and the University of Amsterdam, offer classes arranged for foreigners and taught in English.[106]

The types of students who go there are the types who are more comfortable with taking risks and running well away from home. Students who opt for direct enrollment will take risks and wander far from home by themselves. In some cases, they want to pursue

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[105] Edwards, Jane, " "The Other Eden': Thoughts on American Study Abroad in Britain" *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad.* (Winter 2000) vol. 6 p. 85

[106] W. Nolting, William, and B. Hoffa. "New Rules in an Old Game: Patterns and Trends in Direct Enrollment." *Point: Counterpoint*. TransitionsAbroad.com. Last accessed 29/08/2008. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/9609/study_abroad_patterns_and_trends_in_direct_enrollment.shtml

their ethnic roots; in other cases, they simply want to save money, study far off the beaten track and spend a semester without the company of other US students.

For those students who have been to Europe and need to come back, or for those who never got the chance to study abroad in college, masters programs abroad are becoming a popular option. At a year long, graduate programs require more endurance than a semester abroad, but less than the two years required for a US graduate program. Funding at the masters level is nearly nonexistent, but with the $18,500-22,500 Stafford Loan, it is easy for students to forget about the money they are parting with. The amount of money they spend on food, bills, transportation, buses, shopping, travel and souvenirs will be more noticeable, however. The money goes quickly; it comes in slowly or not at all.

Study abroad changes, and stays the same, and changes some more with each program and country in Europe. A representative example does not exist; what do exist are the varying types of programs described. For some the emphasis is academics, while others prioritize culture, and still others leave it up to the students as to what they should prioritize. The key challenge is making the program work somewhere in the margin between North American education, European education, and the students' goals and expectations of a semester abroad.

St Andrews, Scotland

When you go to buy a train ticket to St Andrews, at first you will search and search and think this place must not exist, as there is no station for St Andrews. Instead, you are told to get off at a little two-platform station called Leuchars in the middle of a cornfield. While you stare out over the golden fields and watch the occasional car zip past on the road and the multiple jets take off from the nearby RAF base, you wait for a bus and wonder if buses really do arrive here. You will repeat this question to yourself later when you wait for a train back to whatever civilization you came from.

A bus does come, much later than the posted schedule says, and your fifteen minute ride to St Andrews begins with a meander through Guardbridge, which is a street, a roundabout and a paper factory with a tall smokestack you can see from miles away, from both the rail station and the beach in St Andrews. Then left, and unless you have the misfortune to be on the bus to Strathkinness and David Russell Hall, your course more or less follows the beach and the line of water and golf courses into St Andrews. Like the Guardbridge smoke stack, you will see the outline of St Andrews from miles away, and this view is one of the most evocative of St Andrews. From here, you will see the Old Course Hotel and the Royal and Ancient Gold Club. A reddish brick building on a hill and just behind, a dark clock tower with a gleaming brass clock.

She doesn't remember this about her first visit to St Andrews though. What she remembers is the fields surrounding the train station, and the Sunoco gas station where she called her mother, and the cathedral ruins, which will always remind her of dinosaur skeletons. One photo taken from St Rule's tower shows a boat perched in the mud. She eats soup and two coffees for dinner, because she was only just catching on that there are no free refills in Britain.

It was back at the railway station, in the extreme gold of the evening sun and the fields that she had a profound feeling of beautiful loneliness, the sensation that this could

be a place the world might easily forget. The train might never actually come, and she might sit on this platform, unnoticed, for years.

She's stopped feeling this about Leuchars for the most part, because she knows that the trains do indeed arrive and depart, just like at other train stations all over the country. But occasionally the wind blows some feeling of absence through, and she can't help but feel that she's waiting for a train in a ghost town.

Not that St Andrews is a ghost town, other than a few weeks in January and April during the University holidays, when most of the students have fled and the weather is still not inviting enough to bring in golfers and tourists. Commercially, it is flooded with charity shops, coffee shops, pricey restaurants (everything from American to Thai to tapas), and several not-too-tacky souvenir shops. And of course, many places to hire a kilt.

Since St Andrews is an old, old city, the stone buildings are turning blackish green after years of being weathered by salt gusts from the North Sea. The brightest colors are the flowers and the boats down in the harbor. Because of this, residents learn to pay attention to the subtle colors—the changing colors of the farmland crops for example, or the shades of the sea, from slate-grey to blue grey to green.

It is all about contrast here—the gold wheat field juxtaposed against a patch of green grass against a sometimes-blue sky. A grey sea, a brown strip of beach, and the delicate skeletons of the dark grey cathedral.

Students take planes, trains, their parents' lovingly packed cars up to St Andrews at the end of September, and after their exams in May they haul their used clothes to the charity shops. From one end of the academic year to the other, from pier just beyond North Street to the bottom of Lamond Drive, an echo follows, and that echo is the sound of American students trying to figure out Scotland.

Other UK universities may have more American students and study abroad students per capita than the University of St Andrews, but in this tiny Fife university town

with three streets and 7,000 students, they seem to be everywhere.

While Prince William gets blamed for the influx of American girls arriving each year, royalty alone did not make this happen. St Andrews has working relationships with a number of universities who want to send their students over for a Junior Semester Abroad or Junior Year Abroad (JSA/JYA). One of these universities is Elon University in North Carolina. The students pay Elon, who then pays St Andrews for the tuition. The students pay a housing supplement as well. Most undergraduates opt for a fully-catered residence, like the ship-shaped Andrew Melville Hall. The food is not exquisite but being fed is one less thing for them to think of taking care of on their own.

Oxford, England

"Sometimes as I walk through Oxford, cursing at her traffic, marveling at her obscurity, and wondering when on earth they are going to bring her up to date, this old magic momentarily dazes me, and I lean against some gold-grey stone beneath the ragwort, and think how lucky I am to be grumbling there at all." –Jan Morris, *Oxford*[107]

Surrounded by a kaleidoscope of languages and produce and commerce, Oxford has been a starting point for learning how interesting the rest of the world can be. It is a starting point in lessons of Britishness, but it is not, by a long stretch, exclusively British, Anglican, or even very English, despite it being a cornerstone of all these things. Everyone has their place; the Welsh used it as a right of way for driving their cattle to London and, Morris writes, approximately one out of eight students at the University comes from abroad. It is a place as made up of Danish blue cheese and Italian wines as it is brown sauce and beans on toast.

Morris adds that American connections permeate the city.[108] Some have suggested that Roger Bacon's Opus Magus first gave Columbus the idea of a westward passage. The founding of New England happened because of Oxford President and Chancellor Archbishop Laud. Oxford men settled Eastern Seaboard—Georgia, Maryland, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. George Washington's great-grandfather studied at Brasenose, as did John Adam's grandfather. Architects on the East Coast and Chicago modeled their designs on Oxford buildings, and Oxford inspired various college systems in the US.[109] Oxford itself was fourth on American tourists' lists of English sites, after London, Stratford, and Scenic Beauty. American bases were established in Oxfordshire during WWII, and it was said that until the Prostitution Act, Oxford prostitutes profited most from the US servicemen stationed there. [110]

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[107] J. Morris, *Oxford.* Third edition. *(*Oxford 1988) p.51
[108] ibid, p.238
[109] ibid. pp.238-239
[110] ibid. p.239

The best example of the link between the US and Britain manifests as the Rhodes scholarships. Rhodes scholars demonstrate, "that special relationship that has, often against the odds and sometimes against national inclinations, linked the destinies of Britain and the United States," Morris writes, and adds that some of the most "loyal Oxonians" have been American students.[111] In 1940 a group of Rhodes scholars were forced to return to America before taking their finals. The exams were set for them at Swarthmore College, and the students dressed up for them according to Oxford prescriptions.

". . . Oxford depends more than ever, for her vivacity, her style and her prosperity upon the wide horizons," Morris writes in the close of the chapter. "The worst thing that could happen to this city would be a withdrawal into national pride or self-sufficiency, reducing it to the level of a Salamanca—once among the great intellectual centers of Europe, now merely a historic spectacle. Oxford is not only the Welshman's but the world's right of way." [112]

Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies

As the world's right of way, scores of American programs work to bring students to Oxford. One such program is the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CMRS), established by Dr John Feneley in 1975. He had two purposes in mind: to establish a permanent institute in Oxford for interdisciplinary study of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and to provide academic training for overseas students who want to study in Oxford for part of their higher education. The curriculum is based on a liberal arts tradition. Students enjoy a reciprocal relationship with one of the Oxford colleges, and can use the college's library, music room, Dining Hall, sporting facilities, fitness room, and clubs.

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[111] ibid. p.241
[112] ibid. p. 242

CMRS emphasizes scholarship, with students able to focus on specialized medieval and Renaissance studies or on more general liberal arts study. The teaching is made up of seminars, and lectures, and one-to-one tutorials that "ensure the closest possible cooperation between teachers and pupils." They prioritize "rigorous training" within a "broad and well-balanced academic, cultural and social life." The practical interpretation of this is that students should not plan on merely passing their classes, and they should plan to read all the required reading (and then some), write at least one ten-page essay a week, and learn how to use footnotes. An enquiring mind, a critical approach to facts, and a creative, analytical mind helps too.

In contrast to most universities, Oxford and Cambridge use a tutorial system of education, and supplement it with lectures, labs, and seminars. The student attends a one-on-one hour-long meeting with the tutor where, accompanied by a 5000-word essay, they bash out the topic of the week pertaining to the tutorial, which might be old English pronouns, Titus Andronicus, or English Norman Cathedrals. In this system you are producing work every week, sometimes very quickly. Students who have lived through it look at the body of work produced and feel exhausted and proud. Critics say it is an expensive system and not a good distribution of resources; they add that the tutorial system encourages sloppy, shallow, academic writing. However, Nigel Frith and the other CMRS tutors disagree. "It develops fluid, quick thinking," Dr Frith says, adding that it is an excellent way to get students to think hard and write fast every week.

The students first learn to follow obscure English rules when Fiona, the administrator, tells them that no, they cannot get new laundry on a different day, nor can their best friend from home stay in their dorm room. They learn how little they know when Dr Philpott, the head tutor, quotes the entirety of British history at his leisure. They learn they are smarter than they think they are when Dr Crowe compliments a line in their essay. They learn how the Enlightenment can be blamed on tea and coffee from Nigel Frith, and

they learn from Dr Alun Thornton Jones that the ideal serving temperature for beer is warm, and one of the better examples of a half-timber house is now a Boots' in some mid-sized English town. And they learn, in addition to how to appropriately fill out a library request form, the details for UK regulations for library chutes, that owls like ruined carpet, and the expression "choccie biccies" from Mrs. Feneley, the resident librarian, cat-lover, and artist.

Ted Lerud, a visiting professor of Shakespeare and drama, teaches at Elmhurst University. As an alumnus of CMRS in the 70s, he has been encouraging his students to come to CMRS for the last fifteen years. The changes both of Oxford and of the experience of studying abroad amaze him. The old prison has become a shopping mall, complete with a Krispy Kreme donut shop. "People insist they will never shop there because people were hanged in that prison," he says.

But the thing he notices most about this new generation of students is the way they are constantly able to interact with everyone here and back home. "Making a phone call was an adventure thirty years ago," he says. "There's much more of a cultural shift here now." When he was here as a student in the 1970's, there was no American fast food at all. Even the first students who came here fifteen years ago had a much bigger cultural shock. "Now the student have much more maintenance of connections back home—it's become a smaller world." He waves his hand at the view from the window. "I walk down Cornmarket Street and see McDonald's and mobile phone companies and think 'Oh God,' but that how the world is now."

He notices that many of the women from Elmhurst who come here were the cautious type at home, but opened up to travel and intercultural experiences after a semester here. They have openness to new experiences, he says, and are enthusiastic about opportunities. They are adventurous in their approach to studies as well, and are less likely to ask themselves, "What does the teacher want?" when they go to write an essay.

"I believe in CMRS and what it is trying to promote," Nigel Frith says. "It's good for anyone to go away to a totally different place for a year, and it's good to come someplace old, like Oxford. . . . I like it being Medieval and Renaissance—it's good for modern people. It tells them things they didn't necessarily want to hear."

Scholars Semester in Oxford (SSO)

When Stan Rosenberg wanted to create a study abroad program in Oxford, he had two key goals: to get his American students into Oxford lectures, and to get them full library access at the Bodleian Library. As an American scholar, he needed someone who was an Oxford insider to help him accomplish these goals. Liz Baigent, former Oxford post-grad, and current lecturer, was perfectly suited to help him do this. She has developed the academic aspect of SSO, and also acts as a liaison between the American students and the university and British culture.

Liz is grimly cheerful of the punishing pace of Oxford academia, and beams when she says the students tell her they have never worked so hard in their lives. She insists the really clever ones love it though, as "it may be the first time they've been pushed this hard." One of her key jobs is finding the right lectures for students to attend, and she takes this seriously; if the students aren't attending lectures, they aren't plugged in to the university and won't know what the Oxford standards are.

The main problem with some students, she says, is that many haven't done enough background reading to keep up with the tutorials, or they come with the wrong expectations. Their entrance application essays are a source of consternation for Liz and Stan both: inevitably the essays are exercises in piety, the students' efforts to prove how nice they are. "I don't care if they're nice," Liz snaps. " I care if they are clever."

Liz is partial to the clever ones. When she recalls the past and present students she recalls them according to cleverness, beginning with the ones who are clever enough or

almost clever enough to be full Oxford students. Some of them have been praised their whole life and after a few weeks of blistering Oxford scholarship, they realize that the high-praise-high-feedback system is for kiddies. "They tell me, 'I've had pats on my head my whole life until I came here," Liz says. "They realize how good they are, and now are dissatisfied with just A's."

"While most are coming for the academic draw of Oxford, many regret not being able to travel more," she says with finality that suggests the students spend the semester chained to library desks. "They don't really regret not being able to participate in sports and theatre, however," she says. "The students are not here because they are interested in Britain but because they are interested in the academic experience."

Her show and tell exhibition is a list of Oxford-style questions ("*real* questions" she says) straight from the handbook. For example, "How did Robin Hood come to be an Anglo-Saxon?" or "If English cathedrals are works of art, is it a problem if we don't know the artists?" These little gems from hell are for the SSO lecture course, which precedes the Oxford term during the fall semester and follows it in the spring. The students don't like the lecture series as much as the tutorials, she says, "but it is nice to bring them all together to teach them about Britain. The students get long serious reading lists with Oxford-type questions. The essays are marked hard, and the students are marked entirely on the basis of submitted essays. Sometimes they complain about the questions—they ask why the questions can't be more straightforward. "You can answer those kinds of questions at home, sweetheart," she says. "You're in Oxford now."

Despite these essay questions, a few students manage to join some clubs, volunteer at church, act in plays, or learn to row. If they do sports, it is usually on a college team. A few manage to be Blues (the highest level a sports team can achieve at Oxford and Cambridge) in sports that Oxford students don't traditionally excel in, like women's football and basketball. They are not Blues in sports like rowing or football, Liz explains,

because those teams don't want a team member who can only compete for a semester or year.

Most of the students are middle-class white students from the eastern seaboard, the Midwest, and Southern California. A few come from the South. They complain about money, but none are wearing rags, and all of them travel whenever possible. Their lack of racial or socio-economic diversity is a reflection of the small, private universities that these students come from, and is something Liz regrets.

Some students arrive and leave thinking Britain is too liberal, Liz says. But others find that here that it is easier to live more ecologically—to ride bikes, to recycle, to do the right thing. They learn something new about global warming and the environment by living next door to apparently normal people who recycle their glass, turn off their lights, and don bike helmets and reflectors for the morning commute to work.

This is a first step. For the religious, learning they can opt for Catholicism or Methodism or the strange animal of Oxford Anglicanism or no church at all, is another. The four months are a blank slate and what they do here they can do a little less self-consciously, amongst disinterested strangers. Except for speaking. Except for buying a bus ticket, or shopping for shoes, or ordering a coffee with cream. The unfamiliar things are easy. The old habits are what trip them up.

Stan Rosenberg used to work with CMRS, but in the spring semester of 2004 Stan began a solo study abroad program. While still based on a firm tradition in the humanities and the liberal arts, SSO, contrasted to CMRS, offers more diverse classes, and students do not study only within the medieval and renaissance time periods. SSO is also developing some math and science opportunities, as well as language opportunities. At the moment they offer classes in French, German, and Russian, all strong Oxford programs.

His goals are to develop the students' skills and confidence, and to promote a life of scholarship. He wants them to engage in issues in a scholarly way, to see and interpret

these tools to their benefit, and develop confidence. He coaches them to think in the language of graduate schools, and help them think of their scholarship outside the box of pious academics. Most US colleges don't teach their students disciplinary tools until grad school, but he tries to get them learning about these skills now. He wants to maintain this vision of scholarship; his goal is not to repeat what's being done at the colleges in the States, but to enhance and build on it.

Stan believes that when his students come to Oxford, they enjoy the freedom to think, research, and to not just be filling in seat time. They like self-discovery. However, they struggle with all of these things too. They are forced to think for themselves. They are given discrete bits of information and their job is to put it together. A few come expecting to travel, and they're often disappointed. All of them struggle with the level of work expected.

When the students begin to struggle too much, Simon Lancaster, the student affairs officer steps in to help them with any non-academic problems and to ensure the students get the most out of their time in Oxford. "It's an opportunity not repeated, and it goes quickly," he says. He wants them to get to the end of the semester with a genuine sense that they did all they could while they were here. Some students leave saying, "I now know grad school is not for me," and he considers that a success.

"Everyone has baggage," he says. "Some have paralyzing baggage, either because their support network is gone, their expectations have stressed them out, or they have problems they are not able to talk about around their school or family. The distance makes them realize they're suffering . . . My goal is not to heal them, but to get them from a point where they can't cope to a point where they can at least cope until they get home."

Two thirds of the students come with personal as well as academic goals. "Some say I want to prove I can do it," he says, "which is an academic as well as a personal goal. Some come to be different; if it doesn't work out, they have a clean slate waiting at home."

Prague, Czech Republic

Dark skin and with a lot of long dark curly hair, Lisa talked and spun, twirling her poncho over her bright pink top and handing out Twizzlers and Blow-Pops to the two girls standing outside an apartment block drinking Earl Gray tea out of glass jars. The girls pounced on their Twizzler breakfast and sighed over the lack of "good candy, especially sour candy" in Europe.

They were part of Naropa University's creative writing study abroad program in Prague, and they were about to take a minibus to Czesky Krumlov, an impeccably preserved Romany village to the South.

Prague is appealing to backpackers, tourists, students, musicians, royalty and scum. It was and still is a tourist Mecca, drawing hordes every summer who come for the music, cheap beer, and castles. In addition to being a popular stopping-off point for the American student-backpacker, it is also an option for studying abroad. CIEE offers a program where students can study at Charles University in Prague; the program is geared towards students studying politics and economics. For more artsy students, Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, offers a Creative Writing program in Prague. A much smaller program, in the spring 2006 semester it housed and taught ten students. Lisa, who is from Australia and is allergic to cold (she breaks out into hives when she touches ice) does most of the teaching, and Jolie, who is Czech, is the administrator and teaches and translates for two classes. The rest of the lecturers are native Czechs.

Naropa is a Buddhist college, and was founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who was born in Tibet and trained in the Buddhist traditions there. After the Chinese invasion he fled to India, and eventually went on to study at Oxford. In 1970, he began teaching and establishing meditation centers around the United States. Naropa was established in 1974 and would later be accredited as a university. It was founded as, and

continues to be, a university where contemplative studies combine with traditional Western scholastic and artistic disciplines.[113] In the writing school, the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, the focus is less on the religious and Buddhist influences but the idea is certainly still there. It is a school open to all faiths, as contemplative education is not just a Buddhist idea but is available in various religions.

The Buddhist emphasis on community, relativism, and paying attention to alternate voices carries through here in Prague. Entitled, "The Writer as a Witness" this program is fairly unique amongst study abroad programs. The students can take optional yoga and film studies classes, Czech language classes are mandatory, and travel is encouraged. The fact that it is a creative writing program is a study abroad anomaly as well. Most degree-specific programs are for art students or business majors; specialized courses are generally reserved for summer programs.

Here in Prague, Naropa is using writing as a contemplative practice. The students are here for their own reasons, often to escape a boyfriend or write a novel. The reason Jolie and Lisa are here has less to do with creative writing than with teaching the students about the world outside of American borders.

The students come for the writing, Lisa says, not for the country, although the country can eventually distract them. The writing remains a priority over the semester, even though the Czech bars and music festivals can get in the way. Lisa and Jolie can't always tell who will be a worker or a slacker in the beginning. Some students start off dedicated and then fizzle into drinking; other students start as drinkers but actually stop drinking to focus on their writing and their emotional growth. They realize how their writing strengthens.

Jolie is the administrative director, and in addition to managing the budget, salaries,

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[113] "History: The 20th Century" Naropa University webpage http://www.naropa.edu/about/history.cfm July 14 2008

locations, and all aspects of student life, she also translates the optional yoga class. As well, she teaches the film class and leads discussions of her favorite Czech movies.

The required classes are Czech language, writing workshops, and literature classes. In the writing classes, Lisa tries to expose the students writing they probably wouldn't get at home— non-traditional poems and short stories well off the beaten track of dead white males. Students also complete an independent learning project called the Investigatory Travel Journal.

The program doesn't have many limitations, other than that the students must know how to write. One student was 18 and in her first year of college while another was in her 40's and just in Prague for the writing experience. Most of the others are traditional students from either from Naropa or one of several East Coast liberal arts colleges. Most of them smoke, so much so that Jolie and Lisa have taken up social cigarettes. The student uniform is sandals, frayed jeans, and tank tops. A vague sense of hangover lingers about.

Prague is a party city, and creative writing students have a literary legacy of absinthe and beer to live up to. Usually half of the group have an easy semester, and do only what is necessary. Most get by—just.

The biggest challenge for the students is the Czech language; the second challenge is their own disregard for it. Although they are required to take an introductory level Czech language course, they are not required to use the language In Czech, K's, V's, and Z's pile on top of each other. When English is an alternative, as it often is in centers of tourism, the students tend to opt out of learning the native words. Natrona's program site is in downtown Prague, where English speakers are everywhere. Additionally, after 1989 English was taught in schools, so most college-aged people know English. It is only the old people the students must avoid or learn to communicate with.

"Culture shock is different for everybody," Lisa says, "but they rely a little too much on Jolie and me, for everything from buying light bulbs to monitoring their sleep schedule.

Sometimes they are trying to strengthen their ties with home via ridiculous amounts of email and MySpace." If left to their own devices, they have no interaction with the local community, whether because of the time spent on the internet or time spent with English-speakers. "The experience of not being understood is different for everyone," Lisa says, "but these students are somewhat overly concerned about not being able to communicate. They want English-speaking bars and cafes and hairdressers. They frequent a lot of ex pat cafes and bars. The low point of the semester was at a group meeting when a girl asked if anyone wanted to take her hair appointment at the salon. Another girl said, 'no, don't go there—go to my hairdresser because she speaks English."

Some of the students do very well with the Czech language classes. Some have even gotten the hang of Czech idioms. One of the girls orders her meal entirely in Czech and throws in "tak," the Czech word for "so". For example, "So sexy", or "I am so tired". In this case it was, "So . . . I will have potatoes with my trout."

Students also struggle with the very blunt Czech temperament. Americans are used to the ice cream sandwich approach to criticism—a compliment, a criticism, a compliment. Jolie has had to explain to the students that to a Czech, that style of confrontation is hypocritical, and an approach that invalidates whatever the comment might be. The students know this, and yet the feeling that all the waitresses in Prague hate them never quite goes away.

"You bring your weather with you where ever you go," Jolie says. Some students will integrate fine; others will insist on staying at the fringes of their new country. Regardless of how cheerily the students acclimate to the Czech culture, Lisa and Jolie insist that the students show respect for it.

Part of why Jolie works with these difficult students every spring is because she feels responsible for Iraq and America and all the things in this world that are so very messed up. She is not attacking the big things, though; she is attacking the big things via

one little person at a time. "I want to change the perspective in just a few people," she says. "There's footprint in there and it will manifest someday."

But the other reason why Jolie works with these students is because she enjoys them. Her favorite request for help from a student was as follows: "Jolie, I need your help finding a midget strip club for a report I'm writing."

Copenhagen, Denmark

Watch students arriving for the first time in a functioning social welfare state. They will ease their way into it as if very cold water, watching suspiciously for Communists and bread lines. What they will see instead are a few drunks, noticeable for their rarity, and thousands of people on bikes. After they adjust to the fact that food costs twice as much here and the winter nights are twice as dark, they begin to see what works. In Copenhagen, lots of things work—the streets are clean, the people thin and healthy, the air quality good, and unemployment lines low. For US students in Denmark this is the most mind-blowing thing: that a country can operate successfully on a totally different economic and political system from the United States.

Danish International Studies (DIS) was established in 1959 and is affiliated with the University of Copenhagen. Danish faculty members teach the courses in English, but students must also take Danish language classes. 89% of the students are from the US and can integrate into various forms of Danish culture by either opting for a Danish homestay or a room in a *kollegium*, the Danish dorms. The program runs year-round and the primary objective is that students develop intercultural communication skills. They aren't just put into a study abroad program, but are asked to constantly re-evaluate their involvement in this strange new culture.

Their home page advertizes "academically challenging courses taught in English," "Intercultural skills for the global job market," "Copenhagen as your Home, Europe as your Classroom," and "Cultural Immersion Through Unique Housing Options." It is one of the bigger "island" study abroad programs available, hosting 500-575 students each semester. Though the majority of the students come from the USA, many also come from China and Europe (particularly Eastern Europe and Russia). It is one of the few programs to offer classes for science and medical students; it offers a wide variety of classes for business students through Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and the arts and humanities

students have a wide range of classes to choose from.

The director gives some DIS facts. Many students come from private institutions. Five years ago the female-male ratio was 50/50; now it is 70/30, which the director believes is a result of more women getting an education now. However, in the architecture and pre-med programs, the ratio is 50/50. 95% of the humanities students, however, are women.

DIS's location in the world makes it unique; very few Americans study abroad in Scandinavia. Consequently the ones who come here discover new value systems to consider, like Scandinavian welfare and the environment. Students can ignore national health care and global warming in America. They can't in Scandinavia—if their host parents don't remind them of the need for social awareness, the countless bikes, high car and sales taxes, trains, and recycling bins will. In addition, Denmark can offer unique academic perspectives on the students' subjects. The most popular courses at DIS are Architecture and Design; Humanities; Politics, Pre-med (DIS is one of the few study abroad programs offering science and pre-med classes), Psychology, and Migration and Minorities. Many students also flock to the Hans Christian Andersen class.

The faculty emphasizes high academic output, and the enhancement of intercultural competence. "Twenty percent of the students arrive already interculturally competent, and twenty percent never will be, and are here with a cruise mentality," the director says. "But sixty percent of the students are changeable, and those are the ones we target."

Anne Mette Christiansen, and Rikke Kolbech Anderson are both professors of a class called Communication Across Cultures, as well as the DIS interim director for business, and consultant in cultural competencies for DIS. They are at least six feet tall in their boots, skirts, and blonde hair, and look like slightly tamed valkyries.

The students enjoy the discussions of Danish culture, and that the class facilitates what they're experiencing. "The students had experience of culture but not the chance to

reflect on it," Anne and Rikke say. "They wanted to get beyond just the experience. The students are going home knowing something about country. If we can contribute to helping young people from the USA to understand there's another world out there, we are succeeding."

Some would just like the Danish part to be a little less oppressive—if only they would talk about something besides politics, if only they would talk at all, if only the road signs were not so littered with umlauts and consonants. But mostly, if only she could meet a few of them. While one studies abroad, the failings of the program, if not the country and natives too, is oppressively obvious. In Denmark many of the groceries do not accept American Visa cards, something we do not learn until we have fully bottle-necked the queue in the narrow grocery stores. The food is all expensive and money must be counted out in the hundreds when paying for a small block of pale yellow cheese, biscuits, and Carlsberg. No one goes hungry here except the tourists and those who insist on drinking or injecting their welfare check rather than buying food with it.

The Danish are not unkind, but they don't go out of their way to speak to the strangers or show us the way or carry the conversation forward when we feel it is their turn to speak. You can speak with a Dane for half an hour without ever learning their name, the students say, and you will never get a Dane telling you his life story. The Danish have a sense of humor though—huge billboards in the metro showed first a photograph of a condom and the Danish word for "life". The a second photo, of the same condom but now with a safety pin drawn through it, and below the words, "More life."

The students make complaints: *my homestay is far away, my family is not the typical Danish family because there's no family centre, everyone's in their rooms with the door shut, it's hard to meet Danes, it's hard to talk to Danes. I want more Danish friends. I want to take classes with Danes.* Few however, hate it here or find DIS entirely at fault. Erika, a Biology and English major from New York, finds herself making many unfavorable comparisons between DIS and

her direct enrollment semester in Edinburgh before this. She isn't crazy about her homestay, and finds herself much more critical of this program, and having a much harder time adjusting to it. In Edinburgh, she lived in a flat with two English students, had a varied circle of friends, and was the only American she knew. Classes had 500 students or more and it felt like in Edinburgh, she knew Edinburgh. At DIS, she's in an essentially American cultural immersion program where she feels like she's here to "see the wild Danes out in nature. In Edinburgh, you were just there."

But she doesn't have all bad things to say about the program. She admits it is much more academically challenging than her semester in Edinburgh, where she took primarily first-year courses and no science courses. Because she can take science courses at DIS to meet her biology major requirement, she is able to study abroad again.

The Danish family structure also surprises Americans. The independence of the children, the casual commonness of people living with each other, and the fact that sex between teenagers is acceptable if they are in a steady relationship is new, and somewhat shocking for the Americans. New, and somewhat more pleasant is the fact that everything circles back to the family anyway, and the term "coziness"—the national descriptor for when you are indoors with the people you love and all is right with the world.

The students' own stupidity eventually surprises them the most. Part of their Communications Across Cultures class involves a visit to the Northern House, a culture house for Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Greenlanders and residents of the Faroe Islands are two totally distinct ethnic groups that look somewhat like a mixture of Native American and Siberian-Asian, and they are ubiquitous in Copenhagen. As former colonial subjects of Denmark, they come with their own social problems. Many Greenlanders sit at the bottom of the social class, tending towards unemployment, alcoholism, and mid-day park benches. The Americans, who barely know how to differentiate an eye slant, weren't sure what to think of this aspect of Danish culture. "At

the beginning of the semesters," Anne says, "a lot of the American students ask why there's so many drunk Japanese lying around on the park benches."

Students abroad inevitably meet foreigners who know more about America than they do, but students in Denmark seem to experience it all the time. Europeans are generally socially aware, but the Danes seem to absorb knowledge, to be always collecting it. Knowledge puffs up, say the Psalms and the southern Baptists; perhaps the undergrad from North Carolina thinks it too when her host father is reeling off a long list of America's environmental crimes. She may be thinking it; she may also feel finally, that her deflated ego could use a bit of puffing up. Students who go anywhere return saying, I had no idea how much I didn't know.

Seville, Spain

The buildings on Universidad Pablo Olivade (UPO) were pink and yellow, and all connected by a breezeway. Construction was ongoing in the orange-yellow mud. In the cafeterias, students did not wait in line, but got served by getting attention, much like in a bar. Campus notice boards were covered with notices advertising lectures and opportunities to meet with language partners. The campus had a North American influence, being larger, more self-contained, and more pastel than the much older and prettier University of Seville in the city center. It was a warm twenty-minute crowded bus ride from the city center, and North Americans were packed on board each way.

After Barcelona and Madrid, Seville is one of the top study abroad destinations in Spain, and Spain is one of the top five European study abroad destinations. The appeal may be the language opportunities, or the weather, or heritage seeking, or simply because the student has taken high school Spanish and thinks if she can't study in an English-speaking country, she should study in the second most-useful language in her country. Students come to Spain mostly to improve their Spanish, as opposed to Amsterdam or Copenhagen, where they go to improve their social awareness and take some conversational Dutch or Danish for fun.

Joanna, the director of UPO's international office, explains the way Americans can study abroad in Seville: through individual programs, through university exchanges, and through direct enrollment. She adds that most of the classes offered are some version of Spanish language, culture, civilization, history, and art. While programs are affiliated with the University of Seville, most American universities and programs send their students out to UPO since it is in many ways an American-style university and they have a strong network for handling international students.

Joanna mentioned that UPO offers almost all its classes in both Spanish and English, with students having the option to take the class they were best suited for.

However, she struggles to get students with a strong Spanish background to actually take the Spanish classes, and one of her goals was to find a way to make Spanish-taught classes mandatory for eligible students.

A girl in the English-taught classes put it a different way. "Well you see," she said, "all the dumb kids take classes in the morning, because those are the English classes, and the smart kids take classes in Spanish in the afternoons."

In most European spaces the American students have to learn how to keep their voices down and their clothes on, as the American reputation for being loud and easy precedes them. In Spain, they have to adjust to a culture that is more exuberant than they've ever seen. People eat huge meals, drink at every meal and never seem to go to bed. The host mothers are seemingly yelling at them all the time. The Spanish young people will have sex on park benches and in ATM vestibules, and no one except the Americans will give them a second glance. But the intoxicated Americans in public will be objects of disgust.

As one American student said, Spaniards seem to be in love with love. Her professor didn't disagree. "While you are here," she said, "you should really fall in love with a Spaniard, or better yet, get one to fall in love with you."

The twenty-four hour day, while still organized into those units, took on a new structure for the study abroad students in Spain. Their stomachs, used to waiting until noon or one for a sandwich, now had to wait until two or three or four for a huge meal: the next one might be arriving sometime around midnight. For a plumber, "morning": could extend until 4:00 pm. These students were twenty, twenty-one, and suddenly living with a mother again, and this one had a new set of rules, a new language, and a new decibel level.

Almost all of the students come to Seville to improve whatever grasp of Spanish they have. But when they arrive in Seville and realize how inadequate their Spanish actually

is, they lose motivation to use it. Subconsciously or otherwise, they are frustrated and spend all their time with Americans, particularly since the Spaniards often don't speak much English. When their host mother loudly asks what time they will be home for dinner, they insist she hates them because she "screams" at them. They come with the language tools collected in high school and college, and find that, in a real country, those aren't good enough.

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Hannah, the director of CIEE Amsterdam, likes to watch students. Sometimes she does this by checking their blogs to see where they were over the weekends and if they're getting their essays done. Other times she watches them out the window as they cycle up the street in the sunshine, high on endorphins and the fact that they can navigate the bike lanes with the natives; plus they have just discovered how to follow the bike path to the next village. For reasons like this, Hannah doesn't give away all Amsterdam's secrets during orientation. "I like for them to be able to discover some things on their own," she says.

CIEE Amsterdam is one little outpost under the umbrella of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). Established in 1947 to haul students over to Europe on passenger ships, CIEE now has 95 programs in 33 countries as well as several teaching programs. Three interrelated but independent sites in Portland, Maine, Tokyo, and Boston operate the program.

CIEE Amsterdam offers classes through the international language school, which houses the CIEE classrooms and a cafeteria and computer lab for the students. Most students take a combination of Dutch language and gender studies, with the major degree focuses being law, communication(s), gender studies, and environmental studies.

CIEE's Dutch language class had the tone of a small liberal arts college somewhere between Grand Rapids and Milwaukee. Girls in miniskirts and unfortunate jeans ate cereal bars and drank tea under the "No Food" sign. Boys discussed last night's Snoop Dog and 50 Cent concert. A sprinkling of students around the room were talking about how to make their money last the rest of the semester without cutting cannabis out of the shopping budget.

Jackie, from the University of Southern California, was late to class because she'd been volunteering at a women's detention center in Utrecht, where the Dutch government holds trafficked women and those without proper paperwork. Most of these women are

Asian and since Jackie speaks Mandarin, she talked to them. She talked to them about home, a place most of them said they wouldn't go back to, because they say they have no jobs, money, or chances there. They also have no passports or identity; as far as their government is concerned, they never existed.

"I've never been to a detention center before," she says. "I wanted to do some volunteering or an internship because I have more time here and I'm tired of doing nothing." She adds that some of the women are as old as her grandma, and a few minutes of speaking to someone in their own language means so much to them.

The students don't expect Amsterdam to be as relaxed as it is. They expect excess on a scale of an 18th century Venetian carnival. They expect anything will go, because almost all the tamer sins have been made legal in Amsterdam—pot, prostitutes, and gay marriage. But students soon learned that the average Dutch person does not go walking down the street with a joint hanging out of his mouth, and they shouldn't either. They learn Dutch politicians can be both openly gay and conservative. It is possible to smoke up on the street but you will find yourself alone in doing so. And as one student learned, the gay lifestyle is not thrown in one's face, but rather, can be hard to find. "Amsterdam's a great place to come if you're gay and want to settle down and get married," he said, and frowned. And ultimately, they learn about moderation, although the students might not learn the practical application of this in one semester. As in any city in Europe, the drunkest, highest people in Amsterdam are American students.

Amsterdam may be the students' first introduction to practical environmental awareness. There is little chaining oneself to trees, just recycling and taking the tram instead. It may also be the first time they've lived somewhere so affected by the environment, that is, by the constant presence of water tamed by canals and bridges, ditches lining and dividing fields. From where they stand waiting for a train, the sea lock is just a few miles away, holding back the water.

Not everything is so heavy in the students' world though. They go to concerts and clubs, miss the train, and all of them fall off their bikes drunk.

Brussels, Belgium

When people discuss Brussels, it is as the hall monitor of Europe, and a place that just happens to serve up chocolates and mussels too. Though Brussels is not an anonymous giant of a city, one gets the feeling that it is the least Flemish city in Belgium, and not just because most of the population speaks French. Rather, it is because nearly half of the city isn't Flemish at all. Brussels is less a Belgian city than a European one.

Vesalius College is an international school in Brussels that describes itself as offering an American-style education in an international European community. Academically strong in business, politics, economics, and marketing, it provides Dutch and French language classes for English speakers. The college works closely with a number of study abroad organizations, primarily St Louis University and CIEE, who brings a large group of students to Brussels each semester and works with Vesalius to arrange their classes and many extracurricular activities. Vesalius also works closely with the Vie Universiteit Brussel (VUB)—the Flemish-speaking university immediately beside Vesalius—and Université Libre de Bruxelles, the French-speaking university in Brussels.

Vesalius is one more entity that could really only work in Brussels. The student body does not belong to any certain type. The school's official figures state that the top third of the students are the wealthy who's-who of the Flemish upper class, the middle third are North American students (often children of diplomats), and the rest are mostly Asian and Eastern European students.

As Brussels is international so is Vesalius, and the college encourages an international dialogue. While the American students complain about not interacting enough with the full-time international students, about not meeting the Dutch students at VUB, and about not being able to improve their French enough, a richly diverse community surrounds them. They can't inhale in Brussels without feeling how cosmopolitan the city is; each

breath of air has been used to form the words of scores of different languages.

The program director, Virginie Goffaux, outlines their surprises. They don't expect the Flemish university design; Vesalius has a tiny campus, and while VUB is big by Brussels' standards, it is not a big beautiful campus like those in the US. Brussels also isn't as clean as some cities in America, she says, and students complain about the dog excrement on the sidewalks, and the cleanliness of public facilities. Commuting to school from the homestays can been a hassle. "But that's Europe," Virginie, the Belgian-American director tells them. "Europe isn't the USA."

They also don't expect to work so hard. Virginie, describes the program as 'very rigorous.' "The quality of writing and research is high," she says, adding that the papers are longer than what the students are used to. "There are a lot of research projects. A lot of students look at it as vacation, but these classes are not Mickey Mouse classes." Some students also complain about the limited course offerings. But because the classes are small, the students get personal attention, unlike students at the enormous, sink-or-swim Belgian public universities.

As well, Vesalius offers excellent internships, and is one of the ways Vesalius markets itself to study abroad students. The top internship is the European Parliament Internship, which as many as ten students opt to do. They also offer business internships. If a company accepts a student, the student starts working right away. Some work in government internships, some are in NGO's, or work with lobbyists, and others work with big international businesses, like MasterCard. Some work for lawyers in specialized law firms, and others work with the BBC and several other journalism and communication outlets.

Marketing for study abroad is important, and part of that is marketing the destination, Virginie adds. "Getting students requires that you need to market Europe and Brussels as the capital of Europe—something few cities in Europe could claim. Students

love Brussels. Most of them are very happy with their homestay and the teaching, and they feel like they're getting good education."

Daniel Riley, the director for CIEE Brussels, has worked at the program since 2004 managing groups of thirty to forty American students a semester. Some of the colleges represented are University of Colorado Boulder, George Washington, Penn State, and University of Wisconsin Madison. The two main requirements for studying at this program are that the students take a language class, and they take the CIEE core sociology course on Belgian culture. The students used to return to America not knowing anything about Brussels, Daniel says, and CIEE wants to avoid that now.

Daniel describes the personality type of the students as "a mix." They tend to be good, with a few star students and a few "bright" and "festive" students thrown in. Generally, however, Brussels is not a party destination, and CIEE rarely has to discipline its students. The kids tend to be calmer, and just indulge in the fact that they can go to bars and drink.

Living in Europe, especially in a Latin culture is a new experience for them, he says; the people tend to be less strict and punctual. Belgium is where Germanic and Latin cultures meet, and Latin generally wins out. 85% of Brussels is French-speaking, and one rarely hears Dutch. The Latin influence also means girls have to prepare themselves for sexual harassment in every language, although both Daniel and the students say that the less they look and act like Americans, the less likely the men are to harass them.

Daniel wants the students to realize how much of a world there is outside the US borders. He wants it to be a period of self-examination as well as a way for the students to learn to be comfortable outside home, and to enjoy themselves while learning to cope with unusual and uncomfortable situations. Some of them learn this, and as a result, their confidence increases. They adapt to Belgium mentality and begin to incorporate a lot of French vocabulary into their speech. He wonders if anyone will understand them when

they get home.

"Students can waste time in study abroad," he says. "I like to think that ours don't. If they only travel, they don't get to know the culture. If it were up to me the students would have to come for a year. If the students are dedicated then a year is so valuable. At the end of the semester they're just finally getting a handle on the language and culture and can then begin to really enjoy it and put it to use—but instead they have to go home. If I had gone home after a semester I would have only gotten twenty percent out of my stay that I did."

Michael Husseyne teaches political science at both VUB and Vesalius. Michael does not prefer one institution over the other, but notes that Vesalius monitors students more closely, and usually gets good study abroad students who are interested in EU, and come to Brussels to learn. They are usually serious students, not party students, and they tend to be more internationally minded to start with. They appreciate the chance to visit the European parliament, to learn a great deal of information they never thought about before, and to enjoy a diversity of experiences. Belgium is a place where people work systematically at developing solutions to a complexity of problems. "I want the students to develop an eye for understanding," Michel says.

Luc Hens also teaches classes on political science and statistics at both Vesalius and VUB. Luc wants his students to learn to think for themselves in a critical way, like scientists. He prioritizes thinking clearly and writing clearly, which are essential to his courses in macroeconomics, International Trade, and statistics.

The Americans at Vesalius for a full degree are rarely students who grew up in the US or even have family in the US. They are usually children of expats, and that is the target market for Vesalius, Luc says. Brussels is a cosmopolitan city, and within the city is a large group of parents looking for a college for their children.

After working in both systems for several years, Luc has nothing but good things to

say about the American university system. In his opinion, the European system is a waste of resources, and he can't see how students would get a good education. In the first year of European university, 50% of students will drop out. There is a risk of people drowning in the European system, Luc says. In the Belgian university system, there is a one-size-fits-all approach, where they assume each student is fairly similar. Lots of students fail out in this system. He notes that there is a distinction between the big under-funded public universities with huge classes and many dropouts, and the slightly better-funded universities. In general, Northern Europe tends to fare better than Southern Europe.

Carlene Adamson, who teaches a composition course made up of mostly non-English speakers, agrees with Luc. Some of her students are "escapees from the flush-toilet system of the European university. That kind of system demands the maturity of a 35 year old when they're 18," she says. "Here we offer pats on the back."

She does get some of the American students who have decided to start their life and education over by coming to Brussels. "Those kinds of Americans are always welcome,' she says. "I think they're very brave." She starts reminiscing about some past students, like Eleanor, a former professional ballet ballerina who got sick of the dance world, and came to Brussels to start over. "Most of them had another life or career somewhere else and decided to come here," Carlene says.

"Some Americans seem beaten down by the experience," she says, "but most love it here. Some thrive, some want to extend their time here, and some never wanted to leave home in first place."

Some people are completely threatened by life in a foreign environment, she says, mentioning a program in Florence where the students lived together in a big house, flew home at Christmas and Easter (or to Thailand, for those who couldn't get home), and hardly did any academic work. "It's tougher here," she says. "We're focused on the study and want the full-time students getting their money's worth of classes. I wouldn't want my

child to go on paid holiday; I would really want her to be in a program where she has to work. There have been a few dismissed from this program because they did so badly and we don't cut any slack. But I would think that's what the students would want."

She mentions the tendency towards an "American ghetto" at vacation programs—where the students live in a group mentality all the time and struggle to step into foreign culture. "It's pretty easy to do the knee-jerk easy thing. They leave never knowing what the value of a foreign education is." She mentions the students at the Florence program never met Italians or spoke any Italian. "That's why I find students who come on their own so interesting. It calls for a braver, more courageous personality, and usually a slightly older student. The students decide to walk on the wild side in order to get over the reaction of "we don't do it like this at home."

Equally, the students learn to not judge. They learn to be neutral, and to observe. They learn to criticize their own equally. Some won't ever change. Others feel liberated that they don't have to look and act a certain way. She mentions a student who came with the "Why did I get a B+?" attitude. "Different was wrong, and she was stereotypically southern in her mentality of 'you have to do it this way.' She didn't cope with some aspects of foreign life very well," Carlene says. On the other extreme, she says, "there was one poor guy that just didn't want to leave."

40% of people in Brussels are either expats or immigrants, depending on how much money they make, says Scott Gassler, professor of economics. "Everyone has four ambassadors here, and Vesalius is designed to cash in on that. The students come from sixty different countries. Even calling roll is fun here." He adds that "If you want to be homesick in Brussels, you have to be homesick in a specific way," and points out the McDonalds, the KFC, the Flemish TV stations that run US TV shows, and the fact that DVD's come with twelve different subtitles.

Scott had been teaching in southeastern Pennsylvania at a coed Protestant college

("It isn't my favorite part of the world," he says. "That area is like Ohio—any town with a gas station has a college") and he and his wife decided the only way to not have a mid-life crisis was to move. "I wanted Columbia University and she wanted Singapore," he says. "We didn't get either one and decided to come to Brussels. We love it here. Our son speaks three languages."

An amusing element of his job is "the Americans who come in with no clue. They come in wondering if everyone hates us or loves us—and then they realize that no one cares. They tend to come into my International Political economy class to straighten out Europe's politics. I had one girl from Virginia Tech—a blond who always wore pink. In my day she would have been at college looking to get her MRS. One day I must have said something a little left of Dubya and she came into my office afterwards and asked why I hated Christians so much. I didn't have the presence of mind to ask why she was acting like a 14-year old girl. When she got back to the States she sent me a forward about some soldiers in Iraq helping sick children, and attached a note saying, "This kind of story doesn't get told enough." I wrote her back and said, "Yeah, my nephew is over there, and I'm sure he's doing the same thing. I never heard from her after that."

One thing he loves about his job now is the intellectual ability of the students. "I notice that most professors' version of having high academic standards is giving the students an easy book and then yelling at them when they don't get it. I give them difficult reading material but help them grasp it. Sometimes I cut out tough parts of a syllabus, and they love me for that. The philosophy of that is that it helps me be on their side mastering the material rather than fighting with it."

He adds that the only American students he notices are the study abroad students, as the degree students are likely to be a child of an Ambassador, speak with a French accent, and never set foot in the U.S. "I notice them in an amused way," he says. "There are a few I like to watch to see if they transform, and yes, some of them do. They usually don't mix

as much with the international students, which is always on the student agenda at every student debate.

"The ones that come who are ready will change," he says, although, "some of them are just here to spread the word about the glories of the USA. You have to be weird to study abroad. They do adapt to the culture, although I suspect they're too drunk to notice. I used to be smug and say Europeans don't binge drink like the American college students do—but I've since realized they just do it at a younger age."

The students can be exquisitely clueless; Scott cites one student in his European Studies class who didn't understand "why we had to study a bunch of losers." But only half a dozen in his career fulfill the stereotype, and he notes that the smart ones blend in much better than the dumb ones. "Most come predisposed to learn," he says. "Their biggest disappointment is that their French isn't good enough. "

"I have a feeling that studying abroad for any amount of time puts something in the back of people's minds," he notes. "I went to South America when I was 7, and that was on the back of my mind for a long time. I don't know if one semester is long enough. I noticed that when I lived in the US, the one place in the world I paid attention to, other than where I lived, was Waco Texas. The world looks a whole lot different when you live on the other side of the world. Study abroad is never a complete waste—those who didn't seem to get much while here, you just can't be sure."

"My students are amazing," Geoff Gibas, professor of business and marketing says as he describes the former prima ballerina, the Iron-Man athlete, and a celebrity photographer that have come through his classes. But he doesn't just teach students principles of business and marketing, but makes them practice business and marketing in his classes. They present so often that one student complained that he "didn't come to Brussels to listen to his classmates talk." "My reply was that forty brains are a lot better than mine alone," Geoff says.

As a result of constant presentation, Geoff's students have "frightened the hell out of MBAs" and have created projects ranging from a new mobile phone interface to a sensory mitt to putting computers in African classrooms. In addition to teaching three days a week in Monaco and four in Brussels, and working as a consultant, Geoff is also a certified football (soccer) coach, and attributes much of his students' success to this training. "As a football coach, I try to make my players so confident in their abilities that they're able to go out and do something amazing. People have told me I can't use the same philosophy in my classroom, but I do and it works."

"There's some degree of academic tourism to it," he says of study abroad, but adds that the value of international education is "immense". "If you speak a second language, black isn't black and white isn't white." He mentions how salt and pepper shakers have different holes in different countries, how "tabling" an argument means different things on different sides of the Atlantic, and how Americans are appalled by nudity in French advertising in France, but the French are surprised by the lack of it in America. "Normal isn't normal," he says. "The starting point is to translate concepts, not words."

Brussels offers visitors its parks, mussel restaurants, and extraordinary beer, but its expats say it is a better city to live in than to visit. Tourists are regularly frustrated by not being able to find where anything is. The "downtown" historic city centre is a cobweb of medieval streets in the middle of an approximate grid. Where are the shopping streets? Where does tourism congregate? While the waffle vendors and chocolatiers are easy to find, you might stand outside the train station for fifteen minutes trying to understand where you are on the labyrinth of your map.

When the sights of Brussels are reached, you have found a statue of a urinating child, and a grand market place, extremely good for photographs and an atmospheric glass of beer, but little else. What you are left with are some churches, some tucked away parks, and five or six museums that while interesting, do not have the drawing power by half of

the Louvre, the Met, or the Tate. While the American students and professors enjoy Brussels greatly, for those with classmates in Brazil or France or Spain, it can seem they got the boring end of the stick, and so they make tracks for everywhere else. When class lets out, the Eurostar can take them to London and a direct train goes to Paris and Amsterdam. With so many international people coming in, it's not hard to become motivated to leave now and then.

Three topics repeated themselves in Brussels. These were travel, sexual harassment, and the complicated, somewhat Yankee-less world of global politics. "There's also the way men treat women," Janine, a study abroad student from Smith says about her culture shock in coming to Brussels. Brussels may come off as grey-suited and straight-laced but it is a French culture and so comes with a certain dose of machismo and a very overt sexual harassment. In Brussels, on any given evening any man could be a construction worker.

To the American student, Brussels is chocolates and waffles and *frites*, and the UN and NATO too. But all of those may even take a backseat to the realization that Yankee politics aren't necessarily present or needed in Brussels. It is big, governmental, and global, but it works here. It's not the American way at all, and students arrive surprised to find that no one thinks this is immoral, that no one cares about American opinion very much at all. This may be the first time the American students have thought about this. Students are shocked when they see that not only does the world not share America's point of view, but can even get on without it.

Graz, Austria

It is the beginning of Advent in Graz. Across the city the *gluweinstandls* begin selling their warm spicy brews. A woman dances with fire while a man eats flames. A lone woman waits at the pretzel stand, guarding her cold pretzels. In a courtyard just off the plaza the Graz nativity ice sculpture melts in the 40-degree temperatures.

This is where the international students spend their evenings, in a city centre environment virtually free of tourists. In the mornings, they might spend it visiting the university's international office where Doris monitors their study abroad experience. Doris has dark curly hair and is always prepared with her hat, gloves, scarves, and sensible shoes for a walk to lunch somewhere in the university district. In the office, she glides around on slippers while answering students' questions about their mandatory insurance payments or German classes next semester.

The international program at the university of Graz was established in 1992. At the time the American Studies department handled the US students, but eventually, the international office took over the programs. "We offered a more comprehensive service," Doris says. "We did more administrative work, and gradually got all the programs."

She explains that foreign exchange and study abroad in Graz is not covered by just one program. Some students come through university-wide programs, where the partner in the US is a liberal arts college, and students come and go from across the faculties. The students don't have to pay tuition at the guest university. They go to registration, which is made up of week-long activities. They also attend one day of intercultural seminars, where they cover the peculiarities of Austrian life.

Another program is International Student Exchange Project (ISTEP), which is a network program as opposed to a bilateral program. ISTEP is made up of 100 US universities and colleges who participate with universities across the rest of the world. All

students pay their home university, but the Central office in Washington DC. makes the final placement. The students get €300 for food expenses, and most of them spend it on rice and beer. The one perk is that the Americans in this program know it will cost exactly the same as at their home university.

Doris and another office colleague list off the memorable students: the girl from China who arrived and immediately wanted an abortion; a girl with epileptic fits; a blind girl who came with her seeing-eye dog. The more troubling, and often more time-consuming students are those who don't tick any boxes or fill out the blank spaces on their medical questionnaire. They are less memorable because they are many, and because they frequently stagger through the semester without asking for or finding help. They have ADD, anxiety disorders, depression, or a tragic combination of seasonal affective disorder and an Austrian winter. They are on the wrong medication. They are on too much medication or not enough. They throw up their dinner, or never eat food at all. Many of them drink way too much. Some fake sickness to skip class. Ulla, who teaches German literature, recalls a student who wrote her an email detailing how sick and bed-ridden he was. Fifteen minutes into class, he walked in, laid a wallet on another student's desk, and walked back out. "Some students have gone home at the end of the semester 'because my friends here are different," Doris says. "What assumptions do they come abroad with?"

Doris and Ulla notice the little problems and the common ones. They cannot do much, because it is a big university and the students, like the sidewalks, are responsible for their own wear and tear. If a staff member suspects mania, anorexia, or untreated depression, they have done most of what can be done, other than watching and worrying a little more.

Money is always an issue for the students who can go karaoke-ing and drinking every night, but also have mandatory health insurance bills to pay. "The students say, 'Well, nothing happened,' Doris says of those who "forget" to pay their insurance. "But what if

something happened? It's much more work when students let their insurance lapse, and then need to get re-accepted into the program."

Parents are big part of the application process, sometimes annoyingly so. Doris cites the case of the mother who ordered her homesick daughter to fly home after only a few days in Graz. And because of the controlling nature of the parents, the students are often afraid to tell parents things. One student missed her flight to go see some family, so she told her mother she had gotten sick and had been in the hospital. Her mother, of course, panicked and called the program to find out what was wrong with her daughter.

Despite the parents' attachment, the study abroad students in Graz usually don't go home for Christmas. The semester students don't go home because the semester ends in January with their exams. The year-long students don't go home because the flights are expensive—some said they paid $1000 for a round-trip ticket. Missing a holiday doesn't sound like much, but look at other study abroad programs; not only do they end the fall semester promptly in December, sending all the students home for good by December 13th but everyone who comes either goes home, or takes an expensive Christmas trip through Europe. In Graz, where some students are still paying regular university fees and some students must pay rent and some students are living on rice, there is a culture in the community to be poor, and to commit to Austria for the full duration, no comfort trips home. A few, maybe two, say they are flying home for Christmas. The secret lies in that these students never mention money troubles; nearly all the other students do. Many parents are flying to visit a child or two in Europe for the holidays. Others are girding their loins for the great Christmas markets of Europe; others will be waiting till Easter for their Christmas presents from Tulsa.

Benjamin, a student from New York, says the students are "thrown right in" with the Austrians—they share study-bedrooms with them and sometimes even take classes with them. The students are supposed to have some rudimentary knowledge of German,

he says, but most take classes in English, while others as required by a scholarship or German major must take classes in German. Some students actually cannot get enough credit for their German classes because the classes don't meet for enough hours a week, as determined by the home university.

While the students have internet access in their rooms, dorm managers will threaten to shut if off if the students forget to take out the garbage or leave dirty dishes out. As well, the students get 1.5 gigs a month, but due to Skype, adding photos to email or uploading photographs to Skype, most of the students run out of internet a week before the end of the month. The Austrian students have learned to navigate around this—the Americans haven't.

Kathy is what college people call a "mature student" and resembles a leaf about to fly off the edge of a stone. She is in her forties, having started or gone back to school late and has a sixteen-year-old daughter, an ex-husband and a second husband back in New York. When she is attending college at Binghamton she works part-time as a cashier to make money for school. Her major is German and comparative studies. She doesn't quite understand the comparative studies major, but it allows her to write lots of papers on literature, which she loves. "I just love to read," she says. She wants to do translation work someday, as well as do research on her German family tree.

The big reason she is here is because she has a scholarship, and her German professor encouraged her to come. One of the least likely student types to see abroad is a woman who is forty, returning to education, nervous and with no end of expectations tugging at her from America. But Kathy is perhaps the type who needs to be here most, faraway from her just-shy-of-middle-class-life. To his credit her German teacher approached her like any other of his twenty-something students and repeatedly told her that in order to really learn German, she should immerse herself in a German-speaking country. Against what all the statistics record and predict, she did. She lives in student

accommodation, although mercifully in a single room (most students are in doubles), and makes great use of Skype, in spite of issues with the university Internet limits. Mostly, she studies a lot. Whether because of her age or her German ability or the fact that all her classes are taught in German, she doesn't feel that her German is very good and spends a lot of time translating in order to do her studying.

She walks a lot, keeping an eye out for the bikes and the cars veering suddenly into an imaginary parking place on the sidewalks. She loves traveling, and wants to see all of Europe now that she has seen Germany, Croatia, and Vienna. In her opinion, a lot of the students are wasting their time here. They skip field trips to stay home and drink. There were ten local field trips with international relations, and two weekend history field trips, but as the semester progressed, fewer and fewer American students showed up.

One of her best moments was in Vienna. She climbed a mountain, stood on top and felt her breath get taken away; she calls this one of the best moments of her semester. Vienna is also where she became closer with some of her American friends. This trip has been a high point of her semester, and one of the few things that she will smile about unapologetically.

Laura, who studies law and dresses like a model from H&M, has Austrian parents but grew up in Alfredo, Georgia. As a pre-law and history major at the University of Georgia, she appreciates the chance to take law classes here in Austria. "It's good being exposed to law classes so I can figure out if I like law," she says, explaining that in the US, students are not allowed to study law until law school. "I found out I actually have a bigger passion for it than I originally thought. I'm really interested in international law."

In spite of her heritage, she has a slight southern drawl when she gets excited and she thinks Austria is "cold, real cold." But then so do Austrians. Her heritage has given her a good grasp of German and fashion sense as well as dual citizenship and extended family in Innsbruck. She can finally visit her grandmother on long weekends now. Where other

students ration their calling cards to phone grandparents and learn to miss them on birthdays, Thanksgivings, and Christmases, she is surrounding herself with more family than ever.

She hasn't been very homesick, but when things get hard she misses home more. A very close friend passed away unexpectedly, which was hard because although she would have flown home for the funeral, there was no way for that to happen. But she had friends in Graz who, surprisingly, rose to the occasion and helped her through it. "You bond so much faster being far away," she says, and having bonded over pain, she thinks she will stay close to these friends and to these people here.

The students' semesters have lighter moments too though. Karin, from Williams College, was at the train station with her friend. Her friend tried asking for an advantage travel card, but instead asked for a "prejudice card". Another time Karin was in Zurich, and the marching band in a Christmas parade played "YMCA". "But 'What's going on?' has kind of been the theme of my semester," she laughs.

"I haven't thought about my future and how study abroad will affect it," she says. "The most important things I've learned from this semester are that I know I can survive on my own and can make my own life, and that I appreciate my friends and family back home. It's really great to have friends. Study here is a great experience but it's weird that people at home aren't a part of it. And one random thing about being abroad is that it makes me want to get married and have a family. I want to have a group of people with me who can experience life and adventures with me."

Ryan was born in Scotland but grew up in New York City. He's studying creative writing, and is in, but not exactly in, a new master's program at his school, which requires that he attend a European university. He loves Austria, and Graz offered him the most money for his graduate studies, so he's studying here.

He wears enormous red headphones around his neck like an amulet. But he also

doesn't mind being honest, even if it makes him look whipped and shallow, the kind of American no good worldly student would want to resemble. Someone who admits he's bad at German, and is here to not-break up with his vegetarian girlfriend. Someone who got beat up at Oktoberfest, and says, quite frankly, he deserved it.

He doesn't list his girlfriend's other faults, but seems to hope that if he's far away enough for long enough, their relationship will vanish. No breakup, no crying. So far, he still has a girlfriend.

Rob, from Wisconsin, always wanted to study abroad. German wasn't really a major he decided on; rather, he was good at German, and had never been good at anything else, so he decided he might was well do a major in German. "It's really the only thing I'm good at that I enjoy," he says.

"That's the saddest thing I've ever heard," Ryan says.

"Also, Graz was in my mind a different country, a different country to study abroad in," Rob continues. "No one studies abroad in Austria, especially not in Graz."

Rob's first goal was to learn the language and his second goal was to have a good time. "School isn't a big deal," he says. "I thought I would be a slacker at home. And nobody takes us seriously here." He has to write a paper on banking systems at the beginning of the 18th century for a class, and while the Austrians have to write 20-30 pages in German, the professor has told him he can just write five pages in English. Ryan agrees. At the beginning of term the mayor of Graz gave a speech to the students, and told them to study but to have fun—that 80 percent of their time should be studying and the rest should be fun. "And don't forget to drink," the mayor said.

Florence, Italy

The cities of our dreams are dangerous. The dreamers sit on armchairs dreaming a dull communal dream the colour of pansies and cotton candy about a metropolis they have never seen—London, Paris, Rome, and always Florence. Michelangelo came from there. Machiavelli, the Medicis came from there. Gelato and Tuscan romantic comedies came from there. And where imagination stops, someone else's version begins. Thousands of pickpockets and refugees. An orgy of art. A city sent from heaven. Palaces, fake handbags, and Lotharios lying in wait for the naïve American student.

The truth is there are economic refugees hawking purses and umbrellas in Florence, but in April they were not oppressive, merely present. They were also trilingual and entrepreneurs. The watches and handbags got swapped for umbrellas at the first rain cloud. Most avoided the *No Falso Grazie* signs in the city centre, those big, permanently affixed billboards in the tourist *piazzas* showing a handbag with a red X through it. No fakes, thanks.

The truth is Italian men do not all menace the female population, although if the student complains to an Italian about being sexually harassed, the Italian will insist these men could not be Italians, never Italians. It is the Albanians the Moroccans, the Nigerians I tell you! A real Italian would never do that!

They do, of course, do that—following girls, harassing girls, touching girls, taking advantage of drunk American girls in tiny skirts—and the nationality of these men seems to matter little. Whose fault? Mutual feelings between both nationalities are so low that assigning blame is pointless.

The truth is Italy is not all sunshine and terra cotta stones of the previous millennium, and Italy is not all baked sun and cobblestone, although it is an awful lot of cobblestone. Here the feet begin to realize what it means to hurt. Here you look at Italian streets and wonder why they bother making shoes at all, much less designer stilettos. Even

in sensible shoes Italy hurts. Something about the constant adjustment required to walk on slabs of old stone makes the balls of the feet, the shins, and various ankle ligaments ache. The pavement is narrow and so are the streets, and everyone must share the space. The road cannot get wider so we spill into it and the cars occupy a space between rage and tolerance; they use their horns to let us know when they're leaning towards rage.

Florence is not a labyrinth like Venice, but there are no Parisian boulevards. Streets stay narrow and buildings are high and visitors have the feeling of being in somewhat of an open-air tunnel. When the sun is too hot or the rain too hard, shop awnings and overhangs aren't hard to find. Palaces, called palazzos, line the up-market streets. The bank workers, millionaires and students enter through a high dark door to a high dark foyer where a courtyard bubbles a fountain in the back. They ring a doorbell to open the gate and run up the dark stairs. In these buildings, the stairwells still feel a little like the outdoors. Everyone lives on different floors, and they are less like palaces than privileged apartments.

The Florence campus of Richmond American International University is located on the first floor of an Italian palazzo, often called the *piano nobile*. It is an assortment of rooms on one level—a busy office, classrooms divided by a partition in one big space. The corkboard features the standard study abroad greetings and messages: Sign up for field trips! Remember to pick up your meal cards! Interdepartmental football game with Italian college!

Monica Giovanni, an olive-skinned, articulate and immaculate, friendly Italian woman, explains Richmond University and the Florence campus. The academic life appears cushy, as the students can choose from a wide variety of courses on art, politics, economics, fashion, Leonardo da Vinci (huge during the Dan Brown craze) and the Italian Mafia (huge during the *Sopranos* craze). The students go to wine tastings, cooking classes, and have a meal plan based on meal vouchers at a variety of Florence restaurants. "I think the

students' reviews of our food came back at something like 98%--we only wish the reviews of our academics came back that high," Monica volunteers. They go to soccer games, practice their Italian, volunteer as tour guides and food distributors, and work as interns in art galleries. Yet the students who expect a travel semester say it is too hard, she says.

A few weeks before the end of the semester, Monica guides the students through a reflection on the semester, which is something the students have probably not taken the time to do while in Italy. "Everyone says they have grown in self-esteem," she says. "Everyone before leaving has some fear—what if I get sick? What if I get lost? Will I be able to budget my money? What will the society be like? What if? They analyze these fears at the end of the semester and see they have been overcome. They have all been doing work on themselves. They all get to the end of the program, and so they can all feel success."

Chapter III. Guardians at the gate: Applications, loans, and suitcases

"The way in which I have been suddenly brought here constantly surprises me." -Thomas Merton [114]

Chastity: I know you can be overwhelmed, and you can be underwhelmed, but can you ever just be whelmed?
Bianca: I think you can in Europe.
Ten Things I Hate About You

Study in Spain! China! Dublin! the flyers on your advisor's door shouted. Or maybe they didn't; maybe they just showed a godlike Aussie surfing across the COME TO AUSTRALIA brochure. You weren't even that crazy about Australia, or surfing, or gods, but you picked it up anyway, and let a thought grab hold.

The student's journey abroad, or even to the airport, is seldom an easy or straightforward thing. Someone will stand feet planted in the way, questioning whether the student really wants to do this; at the same time they function as the final push towards the plane. Sometimes the guardian is a parent reminding the student she really doesn't have to go if she doesn't want to. For some it is a student-loan officer who keeps losing the loan paperwork, or the boss who declines to hire her for a summer job.

But the guardian at the gate is probably the student herself. Which is why 99% of college students do not study abroad for the long scary semester or terrifying year. Of the one percent who do, 100% of them don't know enough about what they should buy, pack, read, think, plan on eating, or even the language they should speak.

A study abroad coordinator from the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) told a story about her son, a university student in balmy North Carolina. He came to visit her at her apartment in New York City one autumn weekend. She came home from work that Friday afternoon to see him shivering in a T-shirt outside her apartment building as the first few snow flakes of the year began to fall. "Why didn't you

[114] T. Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton,* (New York, 1975), p. 103.

bring a coat?" she asked, hurrying to unlock the door.

"That's a really good question," he said.

Students often don't think to ask the really good questions, she told the group during her presentation. Part of a study abroad coordinator's job should be equipping students with the right expectations, or at least not the wrong ones; another part of the coordinator's job is helping them ask the right questions. Students don't need to be enabled, but someone has to get them thinking before they're stranded in London with four bags and no raincoat.

Visual demonstrations of life abroad could do students some good. The study abroad coordinator recommended wheeling out an overhead projector stand, and telling students, "this will be the size of your closet in London." Only then it will begin sink in that things actually *are* smaller in Britain. Hand them a wind-dried towel. This is how all their t-shirts will feel after being washed and hung to dry. Hand them a glass of room temperature water. This is how cold their drinks will be for the next year. Hand them a jar of mayonnaise and a fish stick. Lunches in the university dining halls will look a lot like this. Hand them a dime. This will pay for their first shopping bag at a grocery store in Paris. Hand them two dollars. This might buy one a third of an Underground ticket, a cup of coffee in Spain, or half a bottle of beer at a hostel in Denmark. Hand them a charred hairdryer or printer, and say, this is what will happen if you don't buy the right converter.

Stop there. This is about the best you can do from home. Anything else and they may start calculating the cost for each grocery bag and cup of coffee, and decide the intercultural components of their education can be met by going out for Mexican more often. The worthless dollars of cultural immersion add up before they even take off. Pat their heads if you find them in this cellar of worried mathematics, and tell them to bring less stuff, more money, and they'll save $100 in excess luggage at the end of the semester. Give them the web address for Skype, and a packet of Oreos, in case they get homesick.

Funding

Many students abroad go thinking it will improve their resume, grad school applications, and sex appeal. This isn't a lie, but living abroad, as well as affording it, involves a far less glamorous side. Alison spent a year studying electronic media in Munich and because of that year has decided to pursue a life of travel and living abroad. In between stints abroad, she worked a series of unsatisfying jobs in Ohio. One of her jobs was working for the city of Dayton child services. From 7:30-4:30 five days a week she checked in on children named Shadynasty, Lettuce, Fine, Beautiful, Vagina, T'uesday, Th'rsday, Bad, Badder, Baddest, Fri'day, and twins named Lemonjello and Orangejello.

She's been cussed out on the phone and asked out on dates. She's worked at inner city libraries where the most dangerous part of the day was walking from the job to her car.

Alison doesn't take these jobs because she can't get better ones. She takes them because these jobs allow her to pursue a TEOSL graduate degree, in the hopes that someday she can get a job teaching English and live abroad again. What she's looking for is a ticket back to Europe.

What study abroad students pay varies depending upon the study abroad program and the home university. Erika, who studied abroad in both Edinburgh and at DIS in Copenhagen, pays regular tuition and fees to her university for whatever her study abroad program provides. So she pays her university's room and board fee, but not the gym fee, because DIS doesn't provide a gym in its program costs. Janine, who studies in Brussels, pays what she would be paying to go to Smith, and all of her financial aid transfers. She also gets a stipend for food and travel to classes.

Glee studied in Graz, Austria while a student at the University of Montana-Missoula; her tuition in Graz was no different than what she normally paid to Missoula. "But the kicker," she writes, "is that Austrian universities are thousands of dollars cheaper

if one applies directly to the university. I did the ISTEP exchange where one pays home fees while the kid I was being exchanged with was paying nearly nothing."

Once abroad, students find they are far more concerned about money than they are safety. Terrorism is much less likely than going broke, and also less likely to keep them from traveling or eating. Like Glee, their scholarships and stipends may be nonexistent, and as Ryan, who has a stipend and his fees paid for will attest, sometimes it doesn't matter how much money you start with because the money spends itself anyway. Their bank accounts, always low as a college student, now are nearly dried up. They will go to Turkey this weekend, but there is no paycheck next week, or the week after to make up the loss. Melanie scrimped so much to pay for travel that while in London, she never ate out, and bought almost no groceries besides milk, bread and fresh produce. When her family visited they brought food from America. This allowed her room in her budget to travel, but she wishes now she could have enjoyed a little more variety in her diet, or at least tried a few of the national dishes in the countries she visited.

Because of recent changes to EU laws, most semester abroad students cannot work abroad. Whereas in the past students worked at fruit and vegetable stands, shops, cafés, and pubs, now students have to plan on their summer job and their parents' generosity getting them through a semester. In the case of students in continental Europe, there's little chance of them getting a job anyway unless they are either fluent in the language or come specifically under an internship agreement, as Alison did in Germany and Michael did in Spain. When asked about lifestyle changes when living abroad, most students pointed to the fact that they weren't working this semester. Some enjoyed the change; others felt guilty after working three jobs at a time most semesters.

Other students looked for the more creative, under-the-table means of making money. Glee writes, "I was already working as an administrative assistant and when in Austria I sold plasma. That was a laugh. I babysat, taught children English, distributed

Ryanair flyers in March (but I did not like this) and corrected papers written in English by non-native speakers. I lived off of mustard (which comes in tubes), crackers and lettuce."

Graduate students can work abroad, providing they get the right stamp on their passport and seek out a national insurance number. But being allowed to work does not make the jobs easier to find or more appealing.

Students might make beds at a hotel or clean toilets. They may sell entrance tickets and ice cream cones at the local castle, aquarium, or arboretum. They might wait tables at a coffee shop; in St Andrews, an American student might end up serving coffee to American golfers in Starbucks. In Austria the students accept cash under the table for teaching English and babysitting; most of them also sell their plasma. The lucky students at any university get jobs in a study abroad office, or teaching occasional tutorials. Whatever the work is, it usually involves some form of cleaning, teaching, picking and selling fruits, or waiting tables. When students come home, these jobs are often still waiting for them.

Do they consider these thankless jobs, these debts as sacrifices? "Hell no," Alison laughs. "Everything, loans and all, were still worth it." She knew she had wanted to travel a lot but after actually going overseas she knew she wanted to make a life out of it. "I'm not looking to buy a house or improve my line of credit," she says. "I didn't know about TESOL when I finished in Munich, but if I had I would have decided then and there to do it." Her electronic-media degree has taken a backseat, as her goal now is to teach English abroad and write films, novels, and poetry. She would love to live in Europe, but not sure how possible that is, as she could get a job in Asia immediately after graduating from Wright State. "I see myself going back to Europe, but I'm not sure when and how."[115]

[115] At the time of this writing, Alison just returned from three months of teaching English in Switzerland.

Housing

She walks for a long time away from the city centre and the pretty buildings, and ends up on a road the garbage collectors seem to have forgotten. What she remembers in the late afternoon sun is dust, weeds in the sidewalk, a painter's ladder inside the front window, and sullen, small row houses lining both sides of the street. No one skulked down the street or leered at her, but her memories are peopled with shady characters anyway.

Students deny going into culture shock when they arrive into a foreign country, but all of them admit being somewhat horrified of their new living space. "Our room [in London] was like a single dorm here, but with three people in it," Melanie says. "And my shower…wow. It measured 1.5 feet by 1.5 feet. I couldn't extend my elbows fully to wash my hair."

When Alison went to Munich to study German and electronic media for a year, she moved into a student residence hall where each floor was made up a five-person apartment. Of her four new flatmates, three were deaf, and all of them ignored her. Their friend Boris practically lived there, and usually roamed the apartment naked or in his underwear. No one in the flat particularly liked to clean. When she had visitors, Alison sent them to the shower the next floor up because the bathroom on her floor was disgusting.

When Aaron H. went to Durham, the university's description of the residence hall didn't mention that it was a barely-converted retirement home with shared bathrooms, flooded showers, and an industrial kitchen that smelled of years of fried food and burnt toast. No one had taken the low handrails off the corridor walls; all the mirrors in the rooms were still hung at what would be eye level for someone hunched over or in a wheelchair. No internet would be available in the rooms until after matriculation the following week, there were no phones in the rooms, and there was one working payphone in the entire house. The fire alarm would screech for hours at a time, fuses blew, toilets were suddenly out of service for weeks, and thieves routinely snuck in through the

windows to steal laptops, sometimes even when students were in their rooms. One American student got locked in the shower and was not rescued by the porter, but by some other students breaking the door down with a fire hydrant. At the end of the year, the door was still hanging halfway off its hinges.

No matter what kind of dorm life students were used in America, this will be different. Most students end up in a group-living situation, sharing showers and cooking and living space with forty or fifty other students—something they probably haven't done since their freshman year of college. No matter how prepared they think they are for their new home, the first look at the apartment, residence hall, and neighborhood will always be at least a little disillusioning.

Most students who study abroad stay in some kind of residence hall, either owned by the university or by the program the student has decided to study with. Sometimes students live in small flats, again, owned by the university or program; those could be at the program site or a few miles away, in a residential area. Still other programs set up home stays with a local family. The most unfortunate students have to find their own accommodation, and spend their first few weeks in a hostel. Lara, a student for a year at Trinity University in Dublin lived in a hostel for her first two weeks, and then moved into a shack on the north side of Dublin, "where everyone told me not to live—they were practically still using horses and buggies there," she says. "It was a tax haven," she adds. "Our landlord built it himself on the back of another apartment building." When they left, they didn't pay the heating bill because it was too high.

European universities usually assign single rooms; however, programs on a tight budget, particularly in programs that work with American universities and students, will often put students in doubles. The spartan rooms will have one, maybe two electrical outlets per room, curtains that do not shut all the way, and a lumpy, narrow bed. The desk might just be a wobbly table, or a makeshift too-low dresser table with a too-low chair, and

the one single light might not illuminate all corners of the little room. While some residence halls have internet in all or most of the rooms, this isn't the rule, and certainly isn't the case with an off-site apartment or flat, which could be owned by a landlord that hasn't even opened up the phone line. Some halls are supposed to have internet in all the rooms but never quite get around to fixing the rooms that are lagging behind. Some just have a computer lab in the main common room. Some buildings don't have internet at all, and while these are usually scheduled for renovation, sometimes there is only so much renovation to be done to a 16th-century building.

On this note, students may expect to be living in an 8th or 12th or at least 19th century stone building a la Harry Potter. What is more likely is something like Gannochy House on North Street in St Andrews. Set back from the street, it is a square of wind and salt-blasted stone, with big square windows opening out like the eyes of drunks. Bikes in shapes of rust and disrepair cluster under the overhang by the front door, which opens into a brown foyer and a selection of doors. Everyone has their own sink and bedroom, and shares the showers and toilets and kitchens. Everyone refers to it as the ugliest building in St Andrews.

One of the first things study abroad students learn, after how to get to the grocery store and back and how safely cross a road, is a rule of physics. Things fall apart, and they fall apart much more often in a student residence. Students who live in university-owned houses live at the whims of whoever last maintained the house. Landlords, who often have contracts with the university, will let the electricity go out, either because they have not put more money on the account (American study abroad students are dumbfounded by pay-as-you-go electricity) or merely out of neglect. They will bribe students with nothing to not complain to the university. When they do send electricians, they will lock the students out. Promised washers and dryers will be second-hand and often a long time in coming. Shelves will be positioned over the toilet and will send an assortment of toothbrushes into

the commode. Bedrooms are painted Cookie-monster blue and mustard yellow, or burgundy with silver stencils.

A contention among study abroad students is where they should live, whom they should live with, and what their housing should look like. In Italy and Spain, the students usually live with host families; in Brussels and Copenhagen, host families are an option, but not the only one. Home stays are rare in Britain. Other programs house students in the common university dorms, while still other programs arrange their own housing for the American students.

Most people with an opinion on studying abroad rate a home-stay as the best intercultural experience, and living with one's compatriots as the worst. However, home stays are not feasible in every country and program, and many American universities with their own campuses abroad find it far less of a logistical nightmare to buy or rent a house for all their students to live in than to manage forty or fifty students scattered amongst various dorms and host families. It also simplifies the task of monitoring students and attending to their problems. However, for small, underfunded programs located abroad, home stays remove the need to buy additional buildings. Programs like Adelante, in Spain, often run their office out of the director's living room. Investing in a piece of property for housing is ridiculous when so many middle-aged women are happy to supplement their income with study abroad students. Additionally, since the majority of US students come to Spain for language acquisition, living with their compatriots would be an unwise academic choice.

Jonathan is the junior dean for an American student house in Oxford. While he thinks it would be great if the students were living with other British students, he adds that if they were living with British students or family, it would be one more cultural experience to deal with. In their mini-America they can relax a little after a day of immersion. "They experience British life like a zoo—it's interesting but they can't relate to it," he says. He

also adds that in Oxford, visiting students are treated kind of like a second class, while in Crick House they have a great sense of community. "If they were fully integrated into the university," he says, "they would probably risk falling between the cracks."

In the Danish International Studies (DIS) brochures and in the conversations with alumni, no one has a bad thing to say about home stays. Most of the current students are less enthusiastic. While they agree the opportunity allows them to learn a lot about themselves and the Danish culture, the experience wears them out. As one student, Erika, says, her host parents knew a lot about US culture and not always in a favorable way. "They told me we should have elected Al Gore because then the environment would be in better shape," she says, a little disgusted. "They invited me to go see "An Inconvenient Truth" with them, and after it was over they kept talking about how Denmark is so much more environmentally aware than America. I feel like I always have to be open to Danish culture while putting up with their criticisms of America. I'm always on the defensive."

Students offered excuses for not loving their homestay; some insisted their host family wasn't a "typical" Danish family, while others stressed how long their commute to DIS was, saying that caused most of the stress. But all of the homestay students had long commutes, and no matter how typical the Danish family, they were nothing like an American family. "My host family has a weird sense of humor," Martha says. "They make me feel like I'm doing something wrong the way I do stuff, and they assume I know where things are and how to do it. They also say I eat too fast." Another student said her host mother got a little miffed when she used the wrong color towel on the wrong day of the week. Kimberly said that she liked that her host family was so eager to talk about politics and society, but found the lack of small talk rather disconcerting. She also learned what was missing from the house. "It's a great experience, but it makes me feel so spoiled. Like I realize now what a luxury it is to have a bathmat to step on when I get out of the shower, not a cold hard tile floor."

What the students all ended up saying is that Danish culture is different from US culture, and living in a house full of it is demanding.

Janine is one of the few students at her program in Brussels living in a homestay. Her hosts feed her breakfast and dinner five days a week. She says the homestay is great, but it hasn't been the French-language immersion that she's hoped for. The kids don't speak much English so she tries to talk to them, but the parents insist on speaking English to her. Janine lives with another student, Laura, on the fourth floor. In a way, she says, they're just living in the house, and it would be nice to be more involved with the family. Their paths don't cross much. "I love dinnertime though," she says, "and we went out for ice cream once. The daughter rides horses and I've been to some of her horse shows. Sometimes we watch TV together. Sometimes when I come down for breakfast the family is gone and I clean up all their breakfast stuff. I like doing that because I feel it's the only way I can help."

Laura, her roommate, is happy enough in the homestay. "But I wish my family integrated more with us," she says. "I think the family hosts students so they can practice their English. I haven't been too assertive about asking them to speak more French with me because they are very assertive. Sometimes I've been so unhappy that I wanted to find another place, but Sabine, who works in the study abroad office, said most students' home stays are that way. Some of the families are so blunt as to say that they want the students gone on weekends. My family hasn't been that way but she does want us to get out more. I went away for a weekend and she was so happy, I swear she nearly kissed me."

Most of the American students in Seville live with a host mother, and generally all of them seem to love it, particularly the immense lunches and having someone to do their laundry and take care of them. Spanish homestays are not without their demands either though. According to the staff at University Pablo Olavide, the main student complaint was "my host mother hates me! She's always yelling at me!" To which the staff must gently

explain that no, the host mother doesn't hate them, and no she isn't really yelling, not by Spanish standards.

This doesn't make the host mothers easier to live with. A semester student with the Adelante program said her host mother wouldn't let her keep a wastebasket in the bathroom and was very particular about how things were done around the house. Language barriers between student and host mother can also cause problems; what one student interprets as a snide remark from the host mother another correctly hears as instructions for dinner. When David, a direct enrollment student, was studying abroad in Madrid, his host mother asked him something in Spanish in front of a group of her friends. When he asked her to repeat the question, she turned to her friends and said, "See? David doesn't know much. He is very slow."

"Interesting," Reva and Fenelly both say about their home stay, and roll their eyes. "We had to do a home stay. It was part of 'the deal' with our schools," Reva says. She adds that some kids live in apartments in the city center, but they have their own problems.

The girls say they like their host mother, although they are getting frustrated that she's messing up their clothes. They aren't allowed to do their own laundry and she does it her way, which is to throw everything in together. They also don't get any food on weekends, and they have to be out of the house by 11:00 on Saturdays so the host mother can clean.

They describe the food as "interesting"—sometimes good, usually weird. "She put our soup in a *blender*," they say. Reva said for a while she had a problem with the host mother not giving her enough food, but giving the other girls more. When she said something, the host mother gave her too much. "And, I have night classes, so I always have cold food," Reva says. "Although sometimes she'll put my plate over a pot of boiling water, and that kind of works."

They miss American lighting. "We have one little light bulb in the corner of the room. I guess I'm just used to being wasteful," Reva sighs. "My host mother doesn't believe in technology. She actually *said* that."

Overheard sexual escapades happen to everyone, but they don't really ever get more pleasant or easier to overhear. Lara admits that she was "completely sheltered" when she arrived in Dublin. "I mean I was twenty-one and hadn't had my first kiss yet when I got there," she says. "But one of my other roommates was younger than me, and while I really, really liked her, she was very promiscuous and I had a hard time with that." The two girls had a thin wall between not only their bedrooms but also their beds—their headboards were on either side of the wall. "I spent a lot of nights on the couch, and I was just kind of miserable because I couldn't really say anything to her about it. She knew I was sleeping on the couch, and her attitude was 'Get over it.' She was a lovely person, and I had a really hard time justifying the fact that she could be wonderful, and also promiscuous. I didn't know what to say or do about it."

Learning from roommates wasn't all socially awkward though. "We had a lot of political conversations, which I wasn't used to in the States," Lara adds. "They raised me up to a higher level of social and political awareness, and showed me I was deficient in that area. I realized Irish people know a lot more about America than I do."

"All the challenges were seen as opportunities," Amy laughs, and knows how "textbook" her answer is. "It was shocking walking into my teeny-tiny wee room in St Andrews with blank walls and two suitcases that had my life in them for the next 3 months. But everything was exciting, everything was an adventure, and everything was new and beautiful."

Academics and Expectations

Academics, particularly challenging academics, take on a new life abroad. Students outline an essay in the hallway of an Amsterdam hostel and type it on the ferry home. They take their laptops with them to a pub to finish a paper on Jane Austen and come home early from Scotland to type a paper immediately before class.

For some students, the academic life is slow to happen, and the consequences for an absinthe-loaded weekend in Prague will be minimal. For most of the students, academics and culture are a balancing act. They complain that the academics are limiting their cultural experience. But are they really busier and under more pressure in Oxford than at home? Probably not. They have more assignments and class meetings and extracurricular Frisbee games in Indiana. They have more legitimate distractions in Oxford, like weekends in Scotland, or bars, and longer reading lists, and although their classes meet once a week, the one-to-one atmosphere keeps up a level of expectation that tends to dominate their week.

Stan Rosenberg's students in Oxford have complete use of the Bodleian library, attend lectures that fit their tutorials, have full affiliations with the Oxford colleges, and have more significant transcripts as result. They also have far more work than study abroad students in other locations, and far more at stake. All the CCCU schools have a consortium agreement, which means credits received at the CCCU program in Oxford get full credit at the home universities. While some schools just take the credit, most factor in the grades as well, proving that a semester in Oxford can be dangerous for one's grade point average. Stan was asked in a video promo for the CCCU programs what the risk would be for students coming to Oxford. "Their GPA," he said. Not surprisingly, that didn't make it into the final edit of the video.

But what the students risk in their GPA they gain back in opportunities. Several students have gone to Yale, Harvard, and the University of Chicago on full graduate

scholarships. Stan offers workshops on prestigious grants, which most of the CCCU students know nothing about. Big schools groom their students for applying to the major grad schools, but most small private schools don't have the resources.

Struggling to comprehend a new academic system is not unique to students in Britain. "The biggest struggle for the American students is the difference in academic structure," says Doris, the director in Graz. "The courses don't start at all the same time. They are lecture courses; there is no homework, just independent learning. Deciding on course studies can be a challenge, as the students have to work out what courses will transfer back. The course schedule for September is only available in July. SUNY classes really aren't online; rather the students hear about the courses when they arrive.

"There's not many science students here in Graz," she adds. "Our courses in science and math are more specific in biology and chemistry. It's hard to get into a lab class, and there's almost no general overview classes." Like so many universities abroad, the students study mostly liberal arts and humanities. One of the more popular classes taught in English is an International Relations class on law. The one math student I interview is also a double major in German, and all of her classes in Austria pertain to her study of German. She thinks of this semester as an easy one, because no math is involved.

The European system changes slightly from country to country and also varies according to the economy of each country and the type of university. But the general teaching pattern goes something like this: attend some lectures, do a wide range of reading, and your grades will be based on a few essays and one huge exam. Teaching consists of lectures and in some places, usually the UK, complementary bi-weekly tutorials, often led by postgraduates. Neither the lecture nor the tutorial functions as a review of the reading. Most UK university professors hand the students a reading list to take to the library, not a textbook list to take to the campus bookstore.

For American students who have completed several years of earning C's for

showing up to class and turning in regular homework assignments and essays, the lack of hand-holding and regular grades can be a hard adjustment period. The European system ignores conventional American educational wisdom (give lots of assignments, always let the students know what their grade is), yet many students interviewed said they first learned to study under this system. The idea of expecting students to be personally responsible for their own work while also not structuring their time with constant deadlines eventually becomes attractive.

"How did we do homework back at home," Sharon asked halfway through her semester at Oxford, "when we had all those classes to go to?"

Another academic expectation abroad is that of a white girl studying social sciences or the arts. While all study abroad advisors want more science students, they are shocked when these students actually go abroad. Usually these students must take a semester of general education requirements abroad, as either their home university restricts the courses they can take off-campus, or the program abroad doesn't offer enough math and science courses. The CIEE Science and Engineering Report found many, many views and reasons as to why so many barriers exist for science students who want to go abroad. "Regrettably," the authors of the report say, "it appears that they [reasons] are more frequently used in a rationale for doing nothing than in seeking ways to increase participation in science study abroad programs."[116]

The report found nine common reasons for the lack of science students abroad.[117] One is a lack of institutional and departmental commitment to internationalization. Another is an inflexible science curriculum and teaching preferences. Because science professors have insufficient information on study abroad opportunities and no awareness of study abroad opportunities and processes, they have no appreciation for study abroad

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[116] "Study abroad for science and engineering students: Barriers to students and strategies for change." *Progress Report of the CIEE Working Party on Science Study Abroad.* 17 March 2003; Modified 10 July 2003. p. 21

[117] "Science Study Abroad" p. 21-28

benefits. Science professors aren't all to blame though, because sometimes the advisors give inadequate or inappropriate advice. Then too, the language barriers, the inadequate resources, and the lack of science-related study abroad opportunities, even if just two weeks studying turtles in South America.

The other issue for students is how much of their study abroad will earn credit. It becomes extremely important for the student to check just how the university counts credit earned abroad. Some universities only give credit or partial credit for study abroad, while others transfer the grades as well. In Graz, for example, some American students found out they only got half credit for their German classes because their class didn't meet enough days a week to meet their American university's requirements. For students who had been potential valedictorians, transferred grades from a semester of new teaching methods and lots of distractions can be damaging to their GPA. A student can go abroad, study harder, become wiser and more knowledgeable, only to be rewarded with one less cord draped around his or her neck at graduation.

Students complain even more about academics abroad if students within the same program come from universities with different academic policies. "It's unfair," says Kendra at DIS, whose grades transfer back to Elon. "This is a really challenging program but 75% of people only have to get a C because the grades don't count towards their GPA. All American institutions should have a standardized approach to credits."

"It definitely makes me work harder," Laura says of her transferred grades at Vesalius, "and it is really disappointing that mine do. The school aspect ruins the experience. It's tough to balance school and the tourist and cultural aspect. The classes aren't harder, but the papers tend to be bigger, although the quality doesn't have to be as high."

Faculty, and many students are more concerned with the quality of the education, and how to assess it. Janine, from Smith, struggles to compare the quality of the academics

in Brussels to that of Smith, particularly since Smith is such a good college. She appreciates the small classes in Brussels, and the fact that Vesalius has around 250 students, but describes her French class as a joke, even though students have to take a placement test at the beginning. Her other courses, including "Intro to International Relations", "Conflicts Since 1914," "Intro to the EU," and "Belgian culture," are great lectures, but only one class assigns essays that require thinking. She writes much longer papers at Vesalius than what she's used to, but they are strictly research; she thinks this is partially to give more writing practice for international students. While her mid-term exams were crunched all into one week, she did fine on all of them without studying very much. For her, the most disappointing part of being here is doing a lot of work but not thinking.

Reva and Fenelly's academic motivations for Florence were an easy bump to their GPA, and the program did not disappoint in that regard. But the girls think the professors here take their jobs "way too seriously" despite the fact that most of the classes are small, with American-style teaching and American professors. "They don't let us eat in class, they don't let people who aren't enrolled in the class sit in on lectures, and they don't let us leave early. I say if I've paid for the class, then it's my money I'm wasting if I want to leave early," says Fenelly. She adds that some of the professors don't seem to know what they're talking about. "I asked one professor about some of the terms he was giving us," she says, "and he told me to go look up the definitions on Wikipedia."

Rena's academic problems began at home, since technically she was supposed to take her last 32 credits at University of Nebraska. She was also allowed only 24 pass/ no pass credits, and every credit from CMRS would transfer as a pass. The hardest part, however, was leaving people. In November she got engaged, and shortly after she was swamped in final exams, planning the wedding, working four jobs, working at a women's ministry, and debating whether a semester abroad was really worth quitting all of these things. All the things she would be leaving made her seriously think about coming home

the first two weeks at CMRS. So why is she here then? "I've always studied just enough to get by. I wanted to actually study for a semester." She says this half-incredulously, as if she hasn't quite convinced herself yet.

Internships

In 2001 Alison received a scholarship through Proctor and Gamble to spend a year at the University of Munich studying electronic media. The president of the University of Cincinnati's electronic media program was from Germany, and he arranged the program as well as setting up a scholarship through Proctor and Gamble.

"In a way I was scared to apply for Germany. But I kind of had a feeling I would end up going. The year before I was going to do Italian, but something inside me was saying, "take German, take German." She took six quarters—three regular and three summer quarters—of German before heading to Munich, and she said it was definitely not enough, given that she interviewed—in German—for an internship within a month of arriving. Previously, the scholarship students had interned with the Discovery Channel. But when the previous intern ended up in jail before she even got to the internship, the internship agreement fell apart and Alison had to arrange her own internship. "At the interview I could understand what he said, but couldn't articulate what I wanted to say. He essentially told me to work on my German and come back."

Her interview for her April internship was in English, and she interned for a software company and was responsible for demonstrating certain products. All the meetings were in German, and given that the topic was computers and software, would have been confusing enough to understand in English, much less in German with all her coworkers talking very fast. However her boss gave her specific instructions after the meeting so she could complete her work assignments.

"I worked alone in a great big office with a dude who didn't speak two words of

anything, and a Russian guy," she says. "My boss always invited me to come to lunch but wouldn't speak any English to me there—his idea was to get me to speak more German. I accepted a few times, but when I did I would just sit there while they all talked around me. By the end of the internship I actually was hanging out with my colleagues, but they also spoke English. So I did get better at my German, but I am definitely, definitely not proficient in it."

She says she didn't have any culture shock upon arriving, saying instead she was "mesmerized," and knew right away that this is what she wanted to spend the rest of her life doing. Her living situation was a bit uncomfortable, in that she was living with deaf Germans who "hated my guts" and didn't clean the apartment very often. "The first thing I did when I got home was to go to Taco Bell and have a Mountain Dew," she says. She said the one thing that did suck about Germany was that everything closed at 6:00 on weekdays and 3:00 on Saturdays and nothing at all was open on Sundays. "But you get used to it. It's not that big of a deal, and you can always go to the train stations and get schnitzel."

What she loved about Germany was the transportation. "I loved the trains," she says. "I loved that Munich was safe and clean (Cincinnati is a fun city, but neither one of those things). The architecture was awesome—something about it tells you you're in a different world."

"I never lived at home again after that," she adds. "I came home for Christmas and I wanted to go back right away. I missed my cat, that's about it."

She adds that one of the most rewarding aspects of her year abroad was that, "all of my credits transferred as straight A's for first semester, because all of the classes were taught in German. Our entire grade was based on one exam at the end of the semester, and all I had to do was try. So at the end of the semester I had an American guidance counselor make up a transcript for me, and my supervisor from UC was impressed and

gave me straight A's, because he had never seen anything like that before."

"Of course," she adds, "for second semester I was taking film classes, which were taught in English, and I actually did have to work hard in those."

Michael is not a student but an intern; he is also a college graduate, not a college student. But in many ways he is the ideal study abroad student. He speaks fluent Spanish, lives happily with a host family, and does not go running to his mother for Christmas, much less when he loses his bus pass. He has happily adapted to Adelante, his internship organization, and their relatively hands-off program in Seville. Because his language skills are so strong, he works as an intern for a Spanish translation company. He is the kind of student program directors pray for.

He majored in translation studies at the only university in the States to offer that major. He picked it because he had dabbled in six different languages but didn't want to teach them. His job in Spain requires calling clients, talking to them, translating documents, and translating meetings. He does simultaneous translation, where he translates as the speaker speaks, rather than translating in chunks. It is very difficult to do and requires an excellent grasp of Spanish, but it is his favorite job.

He spent a few weeks at a language school and he can go back there at any time to brush up if he needs to. Adelante set up the internship, his housing, and then turned him loose. The other Adelante students and he have semi-regular meetings with the director, but Adelante is clearly a means to getting to Spain and a minimal support system once they do.

For Michael this is fine. Other than his housing, which has now been changed, he has few complaints about the program. He had been living alone in a three-bedroom flat with tile floors that echo. He wanted more interaction with Spaniards, so after some cajoling and begging, Adelante placed him with a host family. This makes him happy. The mother feeds him and does his laundry, and the family has "a tiny cute dog."

Despite his years of foreign language study, and his ability to translate at NATO meetings and flirt with Spanish secretaries on the phone (sexual harassment is a whole other animal in Spain), one of his major cultural shocks was the language, because "it felt like I was in beginning Spanish again." He also isn't quite used to the food, and although he likes the deep-friend sweetbread, he doesn't like how much oil and frying are involved in the cuisine. He also thinks the Spanish are heavy drinkers. "They drink like college students," he says, "but you'll never see a drunk Spaniard." He adds that they're also a private people. Outside of the house they will be very friendly, but it's rare for them to invite someone back to their house.

"The majority of the Adelante students are in home stays, and some of them don't seem to get along with their families, which is usually due to the language barrier," he says, mentioning two girls he knows who are in the same home stay. One has a fairly proficient command of Spanish, while the other doesn't. The one who doesn't speak much Spanish insists, as most students do, that her senora hates her, citing a specific incident. The other girl corrects her, pointing out that the senora really said something else. "Students come with the wrong expectations," Michael says. "They expect to be fluent in a few weeks and can be easily discouraged when they realize that's not happening. That leads to even more communication problems and a lot of them give up trying."

His goals in working abroad are to see as much of Europe as possible, to improve his language skills, and to better understand the culture by working in it. He hasn't seen as much of Europe as he wants but thinks he's doing fairly well, considering that he got invited to a wedding in Portugal after spending a weekend there. In working in Spain, he realizes how much more friendly people are here, even if they do take long lunch breaks. He tests his language skills by writing in a journal, and every two days he writes in Spanish. Lately he looked back at his journal, and realized how much he had progressed. "My language abilities are definitely much more confident," he says. "Also, I don't want to

waste my parents' money."

Chapter IV: Challenges

The adventure abroad turns less exciting when students must file a police report in German for a stolen bike, call their landlord again to fix the electricity, or sit on hold with the UK branch of Apple, because their laptop is spitting out keys like a dead man's teeth. The police station and the call center Muzak are uncomfortable proof that they're not just tourists in a hotel anymore, paying for breakfast and postcards.

Elizabeth, a student in St Andrews, calls the university "Byzantine" in its efficiency and structure. As a business student, she finds the management of her dorm a disaster and the library a train wreck. She has never noticed how smoothly the background noise—student loans, interlibrary loans, linked computers, and one card to bind them all—operates at her home university. In St Andrews, things get lost and things fall apart. Wrong codes end up on the right forms for another year, and program guidelines are vague because no one has articulated them to the school yet. The changing of laundry happens in a corner cupboard for half an hour Fridays mornings at 8:30. The pipes leak. The telephones miscalculate students' credit and give them a phone bill anyway because customer service is not important to a university telephone company.

What Elizabeth would have done at Elon is tell herself, *all I have to do tonight is my homework*, whether reading a chapter from her business textbook outlining a presentation or doing workbook problems in Spanish. But then she came to St Andrews. There is no homework. This makes her nervous. And she is already nervous, what with the NHS and hall meals and her angry friend at home and the feeling that she's the only Catholic left under twenty-five. It isn't a good time.

Jessica, in Graz, complains of the work involved in printing out a document. It was not a simple matter of going to the library and pressing "print." It was a matter of going to the library, buying a print card, jumping through some turn-of-century Austrian hoop in order to find a computer with Microsoft Windows 98, finding her credit, and then

maybe, maybe printing a document. The first time, it didn't quite happen.

But now, she can print a document and no one but another student who has mastered the art of printing in Austrian will understand why she is pumping her fists in the air when this old ink jet printer spits out her economics paper.

Here she must reach her hand way back into the darkest part of the oven, trying not to think of Sylvia Plath (but she is, anyway) as she looks for the pilot light. The antiquity of her life here annoys her, and she thinks she will not miss it when she is back in America with her mother's enormous self-cleaning Jenn-Air. She thinks this, until the moment the match and pilot light strike in unison and for a second, a small flash of pride does too.

Rena, Amanda, Maya, Rachel, and Melanie begin their list of annoyances with the topic of food. They had pre-paid for meals that came from a cafeteria, or, in Maya's case, they had to eat out a lot. Those who had paid for cafeteria food either had to eat the mayonnaise salads and lumpy meat stews or lose their money. For some students the problem with the cafeteria is a matter of taste; for students like Rena, in Oxford, or Melanie, in London, it is a problem of IBS and dietary restrictions. The food has no fiber and too much sugar. Vegetarian meals are essentially some mystery food smothered in cheese. Maya, who is lactose intolerant, complained that in Denmark even the vegan meals were served covered in butter. Hospitality annoys them all and they "are sick of having the food thrown at them".

One would expect food to only be a problem on the British Isles, but even in Southern Europe students still struggled with their meals. In France there weren't enough vegetarian options; in Italy the food was all carbohydrates; in Spain the food was too greasy.

The business hours are irritating, and the fact that Borders is open until 11:00 p.m. is their salvation as it was mine. You don't know the value of a cup of coffee at 10:00 p.m.

until it's taken away from you; one begins longing for weak cups of Maxwell House from the Waffle House during the first few months.

Fenelly is from New York City, and this will tell you a lot. The man with the toy gun at *Carnivale* didn't scare her. ATVing on Corfu in a lightning storm and cutting off angry Greek motorists didn't scare her. Getting hit by a Vespa her first week in Florence scared her a little but not as much as the thought of going to an Italian hospital. She was not impressed with the professor who told the class to go look up the unfamiliar terms on Wikipedia. But then, she didn't entirely come to study. Almost no one comes to Italy for that reason.

Fenelly doesn't remember why she came. Only that it's time to go. "I miss my friends," Fenelly says. "I feel like this has been a really long vacation." It could be living in someone else's house (although she complains about the homestay, she thinks all students should live in one) or it could be living out of a suitcase every weekend. It isn't homesickness because she could go a long time without seeing her parents. But she misses her friends and "all the stuff about America.' Internet, not just on demand, but there if you want it or not. Dryers. Dishwashers. Sterilized latex gloves. Pasteurized cheese.

"I would be far away from home anyway," says Reva," but in Hawaii I would at least call home everyday, and lots of times I would talk to my sisters three or four times a day. Telecommunications are hard with the six hour time difference."

"Learning Italian was a goal of mine, but I'm not because I'm not actually using it. Everyone speaks English here," Reva says. This is true. When she orders a sandwich she doesn't have to speak; when she orders a gelato she does it entirely in English,

Samantha, in the Vines in Oxford, eats gumbo in one bowl while out of a plastic measuring jug she scoops spoonfuls of tuna salad. She has green cat-eye glasses, a loose light brown ponytail and some secrets to the universe tucked inside her Texarkana accent. "I'm ready to go home," she says, citing marriage in the spring, her family, her campus.

Engaged and married students often study abroad without their partners, but no one is sure why. They count down the days as soon as they arrive. "I was really happy the first two months here. I'm still happy, but I'm ready to see my family and friends. I'm shifting towards getting married and grad school. I mean, I wouldn't be upset if I had to stay another semester," she says, "but I'm ready to go."

She doesn't have a problem with the level of academic work, because she wrote many essays as an English major at her home university. But she doesn't necessarily like the system in Oxford. She learns a lot but is very tired of "pillaging the text and vomiting out words" twice a week for her essays. If she could do anything over, she would have taken different classes. "I have to take critical theory because I'm missing it at school. I need to learn it anyway so why not here?" But this is not the most enjoyable class.

"And maybe it's because I'm from the South," she adds "but people here seem too abrupt, less caring. On bad days I don't do well with it. I learn to deal with it but it's not what I prefer." One morning after term started when the roads were busy, she rode her bike the wrong way down the short one-way street reserved for buses coming in from North Oxford. Here they drop off passengers and sit. She didn't see any harm in cycling past sitting buses, but one of the drivers, who was probably just having a lousy day, yelled, "What, are we in the US or the UK?"

"Why do you wanna know?" she drawled, trying to be as sweet as possible.

"Because in the UK we know how to ride on the right side of the road," he snapped. Her retort was something in between the lines of "What's it to you?" and sticking her tongue out at him. "I wasn't hurting him. I didn't even get in anyone's way but he still had to be mean, and it hurt my feelings. What the hell?"

Coincidentally or not, the hardest of period of study abroad usually comes just in time for bad weather. Students in Europe deal with the October rain, the February grey and damp for a certain amount of time, but around the halfway point for the semester or

year they lose the plot. The birds fly away; the seals swim hundreds of miles away. Even the tide does not want to stick around. It rolls far out and in to its center just under the moon where it hides and begs to sleep. The sun is stranger and stranger every day and sometimes it doesn't exist at all, just grey and clouds and the inevitable rainfall and wind. Even Southern Europe loses its sense of paradise mid-autumn, and just rains instead. Students struggle to get their bearings on their internal compass in a land they believed would not be so far from home, would not be so tiny, grey, cold, wet and expensive. Surely language could mediate all these things by now? Surely language can get us some Oreos? In this unknown they alternately thrive and want to die. They sleep under computer desks and finish a Chaucer paper over a 4:00 a.m. breakfast of cheesy chips in grease-paper wrapped packets.

In Europe, the abyss makes its point by the wet gale pounding on your window or the rain spitting in your face right now or the low cloud of gray for days at a time. It appears most cruelly as a deception. You will see sunshine early, early in the morning if it is April, May, or June. The skies look blue, and the only clouds are innocent white cotton balls. At last, the foreigner thinks, a nice day. By noon, the sky is a little overcast, and it was certainly warmer at 8:00 than it is now. By 3:00 it's drizzling, then pouring the rest of the day. With any luck, this is just about the time you must walk to class or the store.

Hang your laundry, sweep the back garden, plant flowers, and walk to all the shops in the morning. Hold barbeques at breakfast instead of supper. You'll begin to understand why the older people are walking their dogs so early in the morning.

But then there are also dismal mornings from the very start, when it would be best to find a long book to read, have an essay to write, and a warm corner to work in. You thought you paid attention to weather in America, but realize you were wrong. In America, you paid attention to tornados, thunderstorms, blizzards, and heat warnings. Drizzles didn't matter in America. They matter here.

Here, you live twenty minutes from everything and there will be so many puddles to walk through. All the bottoms of your jeans have been soaked by the puddles and rainwater splashed up by cars. You may notice that fashionably bright and patterned galoshes are popular with children and college girls alike. Umbrellas are almost always useless or doomed to a short life. Getting rained on can happen every day between the end of September and the beginning of May.

After October, subtle colors anywhere in Britain become even more crucial. Every day out the door is a little greyer, a little more impossible to bear under the weight of the winter skies. Though never so cold as in America, it is also never so grey in the States, and so we pray our back garden lawn lasts green, our bushes stay a healthy brown. We give thanks for the few handfuls of snow, white to absolve the granite hue of all we see, above, below, before us.

Sometimes consciously, sometimes out of habit you will find yourself saying, if I were home right now what would I be doing? In October, in France when it is starting to rain more and the city begins to shut down parts of the summertime show, you might look for turning trees and baked apple, hot vegetable soup and pumpkin muffins like only your mother can make, and find that this year there will be none.

Guilt compounds the wet and the dark and the feeling of being alone. Guilt could be a continually black, mold-edged thought on her heart now, even on happy days. Why? Because of the aging grandmother, the patient, long-suffering parents, and the toddling cousins who will be cracking their voices by the time she comes home. She sets her jaw, and tells herself it is easier to stay than to leave continually. Blessed are those with no ambivalence about the country of origin, for they shall not know what it means to be rootless, to always be the stranger, to always have $1500 in airfare on their credit card. Some college students have arguments and lunches with their mothers. She has major holidays with hers.

"Sometimes I feel like a loser for graduating a semester late," Jackie says. "People are getting into grad school, starting their careers and I'm not. My grandma is really old, and I keep wondering if I should be spending five months away from her."

But she's still not sorry she's here. "I have realized that I study so much better here, and am learning a lot more and am less distracted," she says. "I feel guilty but not too guilty. I get to read books. I have time to figure out what I'm going to do later . . . at home, I factor other people into my decisions. It's a lot different being here and thinking about my future without my parents in the room." She stirs the remains of her hot chocolate. "More things seem possible."

The chain on the bike falls off anyway though, and breaks into three pieces. She must walk for miles home along the muddy towpath pushing where she thought she would pedal. Her father's best friend suddenly goes in for open-heart surgery, and will probably die. Her new crush invites an ex up for the weekend. When she calls home, her mother, father, boyfriend, girlfriend no longer have excitement in their voices, but a tinge of annoyance that she hasn't called sooner.

The abyss opens up underneath her squeaky seat where she is writing the introduction to the last paper of the week. She no longer counts days because she doesn't know what days mean, and she's too busy counting down the essays anyway. Today was one essay and rain cloud too many. She hates the smug director and all the reasons he can't fix the house's broken water boiler. She hates the senior tutor for drinking Nescafe as she stumbles past his door. She hates the administrator who won't give her anything without the correct form and the classmate who won't give any money for groceries and the other roommate who won't give up any sleep for an essay. She hates her housemates who left raw chicken out on the kitchen counter all night.

She piles her books on loan in a corner of her bedroom and uses postcards to decorate her spare walls. She stacks her sweaters in a pile on the wardrobe, uses a card

table for a desk, the couch for a study area. She wears gloves to the library and eschews her flowing skirts and trousers for sturdy clothes that won't get tangled in her bike chain or drenched in the potholes. She tosses her stilettos and platform shoes back in the suitcase or in the trash, even as the drunken girls clatter past.

She does so many things alone—dinners, long cycle rides, shopping trips, the walk to class surrounded by people. It isn't too hard to get on a train or an airplane alone, or wake up on a morning in Scotland and go cycling around a loch or seek out the TIC by herself. It's doing everything alone, all day long for days at a time.

But, the students have some ways of getting by. Butler's Deli in St Andrews has won UK foodie awards and readers' polls, and provides students with chili peppermint dark chocolate bars, sun dried tomatoes, smelly cheese, and—Reese cups. When they arrive in September, the American students come to Butler's because they want the goat's cheese and sun-dried tomato spinach wrap. By Thanksgiving time, all they want is some canned pumpkin, and a bag of Oreos.

We huddle under a blanket with our fellow expats, also out at sea on this tiny peninsula, and watch how the wind moves. Even when making friends and enemies and walking in groups to the pub or class, she still feels like a kite cut loose and drifting along with a group of other severed kites. Even when flying together, no one can hold hands.

Things we wish for: a teleporter, free airline tickets, waterproof shoes, an all-powerful umbrella, and an all-weather jacket that will morph to meet all our climactic needs. Portable space heaters. Globally compatible electronic devices. Free international calls home. A trust fund for travel; another for tuition. Instant international friends, the stuff dreams are made of.

Page, a student in Durham, got what many of us wish for—a brother who is a commercial pilot, which in turn means ludicrously cheap international flights. For $150, she shows up one hour (not three) before the plane leaves. She is not island bound, or even

Europe-bound. Unlike the rest of the study abroad students she knows, she can fly home over the Thanksgiving weekend and twice over the summer. She fetches her friends graham crackers and Reese cups and Triscuits, acting as courier to the other world. She goes home for her mom's birthday. There are no real goodbyes.

Instead she has a life straddled between two continents, a relationship that won't work, and a PhD that she takes back home with her for months at a time. We should know better. We learn again and again that what we wish for doesn't keep us happy, and easing the painful parts of studying abroad sometimes doesn't make the really hard parts any easier.

The child travelers don't know this yet. They think they're here to learn German, run away from their evil vegetarian girlfriend and move on up to some thing better than a Wal-Mart cashier. This is all kind of fun, buying fruit outside from unintelligible hairy Austrians and riding bikes. I may want to do this longer, they think, or less, and they have no idea at all.

Sacrifices

Students go abroad expecting sacrifices: a season off the university sports team, the end of a relationship. They are prepared for the major sacrifices; it's the little ones that tend to punch them in the gut. They know in their heads that there's no going home for national holidays, but when Thanksgiving actually rolls around, years of conditioning for a four-day weekend, no classes and no work kicks in. Instead, they find themselves in class or writing an essay. It's a Thursday, and no on even wants to go out for a drink.

Some students avoid this problem by ignoring the holiday and making a show of cutting their national apron strings. On a first Thanksgiving abroad, a student might take the night train to Glasgow or the continent, and share some Chinese food with her roommate on the way. Later, she will proudly email that detail to her parents. Or instead she might try to replicate her national holiday in Europe and get frustrated by the lack of canned pumpkin and Stove Top dressing available in the stores

In every sojourn abroad she sacrifices something, and often this something is tangible. She can put the finger on the calendar and say *today I am missing a homecoming soccer match. Today I am missing the fountain run. Today is my twin sister's birthday. Today is the psychology seminar and I am not there to present.* Or, she may simply realize that today she has less money than she did yesterday.

The Oxford students quickly realize that they are sacrificing their GPA's over the semester. They feel the summa slipping through their fingers as they turn in another essay and might realize that they have invested ten weeks of hard, hard work for one less cord around their necks at graduation. The essays can make you mad, as Liz proudly pointed out. An essay describing the Anglo Saxon evolution of Robin Hood could make you ram your head into a wall. Yet it can make you brilliant too.

What sacrifices did they make? Monica sacrificed taking certain psychology classes, which meant she sacrificed her minor as well. Daniel had been nominated to be on the

orientation board, the work for which was taking place this spring. Both of them could have take advantage of research opportunities and the chance to present at psychology conferences; Monica in particular could have worked in Tasmania over the summer, but only if she took basic Swahili in the spring. "How many other people can say they know Swahili and have had an experience like that?" she says.

In answer to her own question, she shrugs, content to be one of many American students in Oxford instead. Oxford outweighed it all. In fact, what she has really appreciated about her studies here is learning more general knowledge. "I knew nothing about British history when I came here, and now I think I could write out a timeline. It can be discouraging, because the more you learn the more you find out how little you know. But I appreciate being more well-rounded, and being exposed to all the knowledge of my tutors. I like knowing stuff after I've 'learned" it. You learn a whole lot better when you're put on the spot for an hour."

Alex is a double major in English and physics student from California. The fact she has any kind of a science focus and is still studying abroad is highly unusual, particularly since certain physics classes at Alex's university are offered only every two years and she is missing some of those. She was also president of the Society of Physics Students, which required that she organize parties and club activities. While saying this she blushes at being an obvious science geek, but explains that part of her duties had been to organize middle school science programs, and when she stopped being president the programs dropped off. A favorite physics professor was teaching for the last time this semester. "But you always have to make sacrifices," she says.

When her sister catches her up on the university gossip, Amanda twinges and says she realizes how much she is missing at home.

Maya is nonchalant when she says her year and a half relationship quickly dissolved when she and her boyfriend left to study abroad, he in Egypt and she in Denmark. She is a

little more concerned about the MCATS, which are offered in the spring. "Most MCAT courses are offered three to four months in advance of the exam," she explains, "but some people take it a year or more ahead of time, or even take it twice."

"I'm also Jewish and I'm missing some of the Jewish holidays," she adds. "But I'd planned on studying abroad so I knew the consequences a long time ago. My time here has already made up for everything I've missed."

Fenelly is also fairly certain she sacrificed her boyfriend, as he hasn't called in three weeks. "But I've come to learn things about myself," she says. "I don't care as much about the little things anymore. So he hasn't called in three weeks? I don't whine about it." She's also sacrificed money; her $6000 private loan will turn into $24,000 when she repays it.

Danger

In 2002 Ted Lerud, a professor at Elmhurst, had to cancel the J-term trip to Greece. September 11 had shaken up the study abroad industry and students weren't signing up for the class. But on the other hand, no students dropped out of the spring semester at Oxford. And it wasn't the first time Ted had led or sent students abroad during international crisis. He was leading a J-term trip through England called "Finding Shakespeare" in 1991 when the deadline passed for Iraq to leave Kuwait. Parents flooded the school with calls when the war broke out, particularly after news stations in the US showed footage of tanks at Heathrow. Some of the students went home because their parents insisted they get on a plane.

Iraq and Kuwait, however, hadn't been his biggest concern. "The larger threat at that time [the 1990s] though was the IRA," he says. "Every time I've traveled there's been something. Life is always going on."

American study abroad was born during the unrest of the 1920's in Europe. Even

earlier, in WWI, American women in Germany kept right on studying.[118] And there may have been champagne, roses, and confetti when the Smith girls sailed off to France in 1925, but the clichéd year abroad Grand Tour cruise stopped there. Despite the fact that "from day one there was political turmoil from the monarchy's collapse" the Smith Spain program was extremely popular. The college's next two programs—Italy and Germany—were also formed during the uneasy early 1930's.[119]

In the late twenties and early thirties when European nations rumored of a new war and social implosion, the study abroad students stayed in Europe and their program directors stayed enthusiastic. No one could have been more energetic. When the Spanish society finally collapsed on itself and the country was a full-blown civil war, the girls did not go home, but merely relocated to other study abroad programs.

The terrorist bombing of Pan American jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 killed some US study abroad students from Syracuse University who were returning home. However, enrollments stayed steady. As of a 2004 survey, students' primary concern abroad is money, not safety. For example: on March 11, 2004, terrorists bombed trains in Madrid. 191 people died; 1,755 were wounded. Ashley Mills was studying abroad in Spain with IES and though not always comfortable with her nationality, she had no plans to leave. Three days after the bombings, she took the train to Valencia, leaving from Atocha station where the first bombs detonated. "I was a little freaked out," she told a *Chronicle* reporter, but, "I already had my ticket."[120]

And when things are safe, it doesn't mean they aren't difficult in little, myriad ways. While critics rail against full internet access in program computer labs and phone cards (one author complained that students no longer have to even deal with an international operator), much less dorms and homestays, it is safe to assume that these theorists perhaps

[118] Gore, pp. 110-111
[119] ibid, p. 111
[120] ibid, p. 114

do not have to walk for 30 minutes to access the internet in a lab or call their mother on her birthday from a call shop or a payphone. The daily student habits can be a pile of dust once abroad. Students cannot always go down to their local pub in Africa, as their drink might get spiked. Female students in India cannot always go over to their male classmates' dorm for some cards and a drink—not if they want to be on respectable terms with the Indian population. That British coffee shops shut at 5:00 is a huge disappointment to the students who rely on their local hometown coffeehouse for study purposes.

Many parents worry about what will happen to their children while they run around overseas. Parents cite backpack bombs and anti-American riots as primary fears when their children think about studying abroad. The unspoken fear is what trouble their children will get into all by themselves. Their irresponsible babies will be in a heightened version of college, but in lands with a lower drinking age, perhaps more or less relaxed attitudes towards drugs, a different language, different judicial system, and different cultural norms. Deep down, parents fear what strangers will do when they've finally had enough of the annoying American tourist-students. "For parents, often the only connection they have to their child's overseas experience is worrying about it," Dr. Crowe from Oxford says

The inverse is that bad things can happen to the student's family while she is far from home. They won't, necessarily, but you should leave knowing that a grandparent could have a heart attack, your brother could be jailed on false drug charges, and a group of suicidal terrorists could fly a plane into the World Trade Center. Sarai, a student in Oxford, learned three weeks into her term at Oxford that her grandfather had died. She knew he was sick when she left for England, and prepared for the possibility that he might die. Her church at home had been planning to pay for her flight back to America. But no one was prepared for September 11, and no one could get her home for the funeral.

Powerless is a word and a feeling she might need to learn about.

When Aaron H was a student in England, a drunk shirtless man punched him in

the face while he was walking to the train station one night. The hour wasn't that late, the street not that deserted. But the man was drunk, and had no problem giving Aaron a concussion anyway. And since Aaron was rushing to meet the last train to the airport, he didn't stop to call the police or even do anything except keep walking.

Accidental dangers are one thing; the dangers students go looking for is another, and this has parents and professors and program directors concerned. Particularly in places with a high US student population and a party atmosphere, like Florence and Barcelona, there is a very real danger from alcohol-related violence and accidents. But in any part of Europe, students are capable of getting themselves into trouble by drinking too much. Alison ignored instructions to get off the *S-Bahn* at its last stop one night because she was drunk and laughing with another American student. The fact they were about to be locked on the train didn't sink in until they were in the train yard and the doors slammed shut. The conductor walked by, waving and laughing at them as they pounded on the doors and windows and begged to be let out.

Bari Hochwald is a former Hollywood actress now working in Florence with Florence International Theater Company. She is trying to create a "correct version of regional theatre" while also providing opportunities for study abroad students. "I believe artists are responsible to the communities they live in," she says, "and part of that responsibility is to connect to the communities they live in."

A difficult challenge in Florence, where community theater struggles to stay solvent and where one of the bigger communities in Florence shows little responsibility or connection to the community it lives in. "There are 5-15,000 USA students living in Florence during any given year," Bari says. "Most live a fifteen-minute walk from the city centre, and the feelings from the Florentines towards these students is at an all-time low. There's a lot less tolerance for the students and their drinking now. Every semester there are rapes and the students are victims of violence. Earlier in the semester two Italian boys

beat up two American boys . . . From what I've heard, things weren't this way ten years ago."

She adds that Florence is now considered a "party city" because there's too much tourism, drinking, and partying for it to be considered a true study abroad experience. At a recent study abroad conference, Florence and Barcelona were deemed the two top undesirable cities for study abroad. But study abroad is the second largest market in Florence after tourism—so the two entities have to cooperate together.

"So," she says, "I'm here and saying, what do I do?"

Drinking is not just a Florence problem, but there are lots of Americans here and considered part of the problem. If 10% of the students are here to get drunk, Bari wants to create a program where 15% of them are here to do something else. But first, that requires space. Other than bars, Florence does not offer any nightlife besides drinking after 9:00 p.m. If Bari wants to give students something to do, they have to do it out of her apartment. This was fine when she had five students; now she has fifty from twelve different universities, and 200 counting the students who come to the events.

Bari has no space, no money, and very little support, and yet, she does have students and she has projects and she's had success. The students have read stories and acted out plays for children, created art projects on the theme of stereotypes, participated in art crawls, and created a memorial event for the Holocaust, in addition to producing and performing in stage productions. In Bari's program, professional artists and actors work in the programs, but the students are as involved as possible, often with Italians who speak little or no English.

"My long-term goal is to use Florence as an example of what the arts can do to help," she says. "Part of figuring out problems of young people is the lack of passion and hope in this generation. Some of the hopeless students can be helped. I had one student whose job was to create a Myspace site for a project. She told me, 'I feel like for the first

time in my life I'm doing something important.' Many of the others tell me, 'I wouldn't have met any Italians,' or 'I was resigned to wondering around with no connection at all,' if it weren't for this."

In an NPR report by Sylvia Poggioli, an Italian saleswoman complains about the American drunks as she clears the sidewalks of the alcoholic detritus of the night before. "Italians go to those pubs only on weekends, but the Americans are there every night," she told the interviewer. "And then they complain about Italian men seducing them. They go around in miniskirts up to here, half undressed. They get drunk. What do they expect?"[121]

Florence loved the American students in 1966 when they flocked to the city to help save the artworks from the flood. But Florence loves them much less now, when groups of American girls are vomiting in the street at 4:00 a.m. City council members in Florence recognize that only a fraction of the American students are problematic binge drinkers, but the American students massed in the city centre of Florence are a source of resentment to the Florentines who feel as though the historic city is no longer quite theirs. According to the American consulate, a violent act related to alcohol happens every week, and many of those victims are Americans. "With the increased number of young women in Florence drinking until the wee hours," writes Poggioli, "has come an increase in the number of reported rapes, and perhaps many that may go unreported."

"I tell my students, 'Go to the *Duomo*, walk twenty minutes in any direction, and pretty quickly you won't hear English spoken anymore,' Bari says. "That scares them, because they're suddenly in a foreign environment and they don't know what to do. The study abroad directors don't have any patience—they think the students are all a bunch of spoiled kids, which in some cases they are. But on the other hand you've got girls who have guys not only saying things to them, touching them, following them. The girls have no idea

[121] Poggioli, Sylvia, "Study Abroad Students Gone Wild in Italy?" National Public Radio website, npr.org March 23, 2008. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyld=88683687accessed June 1, 2008.

what to do. Some of these kids have never been out of Iowa, but the schools think a one-day cultural immersion program is going to do it."

As Bari pays for the coffee, she asks the owner of Café Michelangelo his opinion on study abroad students. He speaks Italian and she translates as he answers, it's a shame to see, disturbing to see students going to the market and buying big bottles of whiskey and alcohol, wandering around drinking and drunk. But he knows other students are here to study. He says they need psychological support—they don't have support to be abroad, all the freedom, independence. They don't pay attention to rules and regulations, not only civic laws but Italian customs and manners. About twenty percent of them think they are at *Carnivale* for six months.

What is a huge issue in Florence is at least at the back of everyone else's minds around the world. Some are starting to study the facts. In an article entitled, "Risky Business: Student Behavior Abroad" Jeannie M. Bonner writes that it is universally accepted that study abroad students are more "adventurous" or perhaps risky, depending on one's definition.[122] She conducted an informal survey of study abroad students asking how often they participated in the following ten "risky" activities: alcohol, intoxication, cigarettes, drugs, sexual activity, asking strangers for help, associating with "different" people, participating in "daredevil" activities, trying something new at the risk of looking dumb, and finally, having a discussion where the student's values, beliefs and background was challenged. She found in her survey that most of the students engaged in (often for the first time) six out of ten of the behaviors: drinking, intoxication, asking a stranger for help, associating with different people, daredevil activities and trying something new. All of the students imbibed alcohol, mostly because they could legally.

Contrary to expectations, students were not more likely to continue "dangerous"

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[122] Bonner, Jeannie M. "Risky Business: Student Behavior Abroad." Transitions Abroad Magazine May/June 2001 http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0105/bonner.shtml Last accessed September 29, 2008.

behaviors after returning to America. While almost all study abroad students in every study abroad survey report drinking more while abroad, they usually did not continue drinking in America. For many of the students, their first drinking experiences happened in Europe, and regardless of whether or not they were old enough to drink in America, those same conditions and drinking experiences did not exist in America. Drinking in one's Nascar-emblazoned strip-mall sports bar is hard to do after a semester of village pubs and picnic baskets stocked with red wine.

But this doesn't change is students' desire to drink, a lot, while abroad. What changes is the amount, the drink, how fast they get drunk and depending on the country, how big the bar tab is. Their voices carry across and down the streets and this is a change too, but they don't notice.

When asked if there have been any bad changes, most students stop at, "my alcohol tolerance has gone way up, hah hah." A few venture on to, "I've spent way too much money here." They don't really see these as bad things though. While most students are drinking more frequently, they are also, in many cases, drinking in settings that encourage restraint, such as a church dinner, or a meal at a professor's house. They also recognize, for the most part, when the consequences of drinking are too much. "One night was particularly bad," an American girl in Copenhagen said, "because the next morning I couldn't quite remember if I'd said what I thought I said to the person standing next to me in the kitchen. That was awkward."

They also learn their new culture's rules. An article in *Journal of Social Work Education* quoted an American student as saying, "in the United States, drinking is used to excuse unacceptable behavior. Glaswegians, however, do not seem to have created a similar culture around alcohol consumption. They drink on a more regular basis than Americans and do not seem to use drinking as an excuse for anything." While one of this student's colleagues wondered how "people can function in any sort of productive way when so

many of them seem to drink so much" as well as "how large the fellowship of Alcoholic Anonymous must be here in Scotland," the student came to the conclusion that spending large amounts of time in a pub was a perfectly acceptable way to socialize in Scotland, and was merely a cultural difference, not a flaw.[123]

Eating Disorders

"Living and studying in a foreign environment frequently creates unexpected physical and emotional stress, which can exacerbate otherwise mild disorders. Studying abroad does not provide an antidote to health problems experienced at home."[124]

Pick a Western European capital city, and look down to the high street. A girl, who may or may not be wearing her University of X hoodie, speedwalks down the cobblestone, clutching a bookbag. She skips over a selection of puddles, just to see if she still can. Her hair may be missing its sheen, her knees may be bonier than most people's elbows, or she may simply be wearing an extra sweater under her thin coat. This is an unworried day. Her eyes are not bloodshot and her hip bones still jut out, proof that *Thank God, I'm not putting on weight*. But when she passes a deli, she walks a little faster.

She came with worries, habits, and strange food rituals; she licks her yogurt spoon instead of taking normal bites, and she eats ridiculous amounts of celery. If anyone traveled with her, they would notice that on the road she barely eats at all. She regrets these eating habits sometimes, particularly when she thinks of how hungry she was under the orange trees in Italy or down by the river in Bath when she gave half of her sandwich to the swans.

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[123] Lindsay, Elizabeth W. "Study Abroad and Values Development in Social Work Students." *Journal of Social Work Education*, Spring-Summer 2005, v 41 p.13 University of St Andrews Expanded Academic ASAP http://web3.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/395/541/98969599w3/purl=rc1_EAIM_0_A136709880&dyn=7!xrn_3_0_A136709880?sw_aep=stand

[124] University of California Education Abroad Program. EAP Health Clearance for Students Planning to Study Abroad. http://www.eap.ucop.edu/common/Forms/Health_Physclear.pdf

Her semester abroad was meant to not only be an enhancement of her resume, but an escape ticket too. She may feel that she is running away from home and all the cloying, under-the-skin irritants that send her fingers down her throat. She probably does not, however, think she's running away from an eating disorder. In fact, the reports of lots of walking and lower obesity rates abroad may appeal to her.

But like all her study abroad compatriots, she's a little horrified by what doesn't come with her. Upon arriving in Europe, the lack of preservatives, the abundance of fresh ingredients, and the miles of walking are not as obvious as the lack of fat-free salad dressing and low-calorie bread. She notices that few are obese but fewer have the sculpted arms of someone who makes exercising a religious experience. When she asks about a gym, she's either laughed at, or told it is expensive, far away, and smells of testosterone. If she goes to France, she may find that certain "support networks," such as pro-anorexia websites, are now illegal. *Doom*, she thinks, *I'm doomed*, and then she receives a cheery email from the well-intentioned advisor back home, who asks if European food has made her put on five pounds yet.

Study abroad students are overwhelmingly white, upper middle class, and highly motivated females. So are most students with eating disorders. But the literature on the topic is limited to a few sentences of advice in a program's webpage. At most, study abroad directors will mention that a few students a year come to the program with an eating disorder. They do not give examples, usually because they don't find out until the girls are heading home. The students keep quiet altogether.

But if eating disorders are commonplace in American high schools and colleges, then even the 1% of study abroad students must have their eating-disordered representation. On the other side of the world, no one is making them eat meals, or stopping them from eating too much, or can prove that if they're vomiting in the bathroom, it isn't from the ever-present student flu or hangover.

But a question remains—if a student goes abroad with an eating disorder, what happens? "On one hand," Kristy, a recovering anorectic says, "the students are unsupervised and around people who are unfamiliar with their condition, and therefore a student's condition could worsen. There's less emphasis on fat free, low-fat, low-cal foods abroad, which could be both good and bad." She adds that the combination of a naturally healthier lifestyle and a more flexible approach to size in other countries could permit a girl with an eating disorder to gradually feel more comfortable in her skin. "And you're farther away from whatever it is that triggers you in the States," she says. "Greek life, boyfriend, parents—they're not the cause, but they can make situations much worse. I could see where maybe a student with an ED (eating disorder) would look to study abroad as a means to escape and try to start over."

Doris and Ulla work with American students studying abroad at the University of Graz, Austria. Every semester they see students who are depressed, anxious, and anorexic, and every semester, they wait to see if these students will make it. If things go really wrong, the staff can phone America, and the necessary parents and university advisors. Until then, Doris and Ulla question roommates and friends, keep an eye on attendance records, and encourage students to confide in them. They try to head off problems by asking students to list any health problems on their application forms. "Anything we know ahead of time helps us to help the students better," Doris says. But no one can force students to admit their shortcomings on applications, and in the limited-applicant world of study abroad, students who are preconditioned to sell themselves will be reluctant to admit that they're starving to death.

Simon works as a student affairs director at one of the small, highly academic study abroad programs in Oxford. The close nature of the program means he has a fairly good idea of the students' problems, and he knows each semester, three or four girls (and

sometimes boys) would be classed as eating disordered. Eating disorders aren't the only problems, but they are one of the most common issues for the female students.

Monica Giovanni looks after the 200 American students who spend a semester or year at Richmond American International University's Florence campus. Every semester, she says, one of them has an eating disorder. She usually finds out about these students accidentally, sometimes towards the end of their stay. She takes this as a good sign, as proof that studying abroad didn't make them worse.

The toilets in Richmond's classroom buildings in Florence have signs in them that read TOILETS IN ITALY ARE NOT LIKE TOILETS AT HOME. DO NOT PUT ANYTHING BUT TOILET PAPER DOWN THE TOILETS. All students, particularly those who are eating disordered, would do well to remember this lesson: things here are not like they are at home. The University of Wisconsin-Madison reminds its students that, "There are many cross-cultural differences in the meanings of food and in standards of beauty. Students with eating disorders may find these differences create additional challenges for them. A well-meaning host may insist on serving more food to students than they care to eat or someone may intend to compliment them by saying that they have put on weight."[125] Students offended by these actions are supposed to remember this is just culture at its most basic and tricky. However, the likelihood of any female student, much less an eating disordered one, being comforted by this explanation is decidedly small.

On someone else's turf, where students are expected to treat the house (and plumbing system, and meals) with respect, one's irregular eating habits are on display. The cultural norms around food can cause problems. Spanish host mothers get concerned and shrill when their American host students eat an apple and a granola bar instead of a three-course meal for lunch. French host parents serve their exceptional national cuisine and

[125] International Programs, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business. Health and Medical Insurance Information page.

only that; Kristine, a student in Lyon, points out that what you get served for dinner is what you get—don't bother arguing that the *Boeuf Bourguignon* is a little too heavy or that you don't eat full-fat yogurt. The socially conscious Danish families will not take kindly to shunning food, hiding food, throwing up food, and certainly not to complaining about food.

Irregular eating and exercising habits are easier to maintain in student halls,. Housemates may stare at one's decision to boil a hot dog with rice or eat peanut butter on carrots but this is college cooking—meals are allowed to be as wrong as you make them. Food obsessions and food disorders pass as normal in American colleges and ED students try to take these abroad with them. Marya Hornbacher writes in *Wasted* that "the rumours were true: College dorm bathrooms rarely worked because the pipes were perpetually clogged with vomit."[126]

At the Florence campus of Richmond University, the students get meal vouchers to use in shops and cafes. While 98% of the students love the meal plan, and 75% of them are in love with Italian food and see it as very natural and healthy, a worried minority are uneasy with the Italian culinary tradition. A student from Miami writes, "At home I usually eat very healthy. It seems all Italians eat are pastries and pasta. While at home I eat non-fat and whole wheat everything, it barely exists here." Another student writes that one of her main challenges is buying groceries because, "the nutrition labels are in Italian," and she fears how much fat and sugar may be in the food.

Another student in Florence writes that she struggles to keep up her eating and exercising regime. This might not be entirely true, because students who need to exercise usually will. Almost all of the female joggers at Piazza Michelangelo were American college students, evidenced by their NYU and Syracuse t-shirts. These students will brave the cat-calls and unreadable street signs to go running and biking. They will run up and down the

[126] M. Hornbacher, *Wasted,* (London, 1998). p. 101

stairs of their dorm, do lunges in the foyer of the hostel, use bricks and heavy books as dumbbells, and jump rope in their back garden. Sometimes they do this because they are healthy, sometimes because they are addicted.

"Directors need to be careful about sending or accepting students with psychological problems, like bulimia and depression," says Ulla, "because going abroad is like being under a magnifying glass—students' problems will only be aggravated." Doris agrees. "Everything will be so difficult anyway," she says, implying that it's best to come with as few obstacles as possible. The small amount of research agrees with her; Stephan Van den Broucke and Walter Vandereycken write that, "Detection should ideally occur *before* the potentially disruptive change of culture takes place. Thus, a deterioration of the problems, resulting in a painful experience for both the student and the host family, and often necessitating an intensive and specialized treatment, can be avoided." [127]

Some programs try to take out the guesswork. While all the programs reassure students that, "Being sick is nothing to be ashamed of, and shouldn't stop you from studying abroad," they ask that students get medical clearance from a doctor, that they be stable, and taking their medication according to the doctor's specifications. They ask the students to take responsibility for their own choices, to make sure they share their eating issues with the staff. So if the student doesn't lie on the medical form, and doesn't lie to the doctor, and the doctor is competent enough to figure out if they're lying or if they can be trusted, then the program has nothing to worry about. But Marya Hornbacher writes that most anorectics and bulimics are good liars, and many doctors startlingly incompetent in regards to eating disorders.

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[127] S. Van den Broucke, Stephan, and W. Vandereycken, "Risk factors for the development of eating disorders in adolescent exchange students: an exploratory survey." *Journal of Adolescence* 1986, 9, 145-150.

Few of the students look like half-dead supermodels and fewer still say they have problems with an eating disorder. But neither do they say they struggle with alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity, and the program directors, professors, and local townspeople would beg to differ. Students misbehave abroad, and often the bad behaviors are bad coping mechanisms when things go wrong. And things certainly can go wrong abroad.

The students have a past and for better or worse they often treat study abroad as a blank slate. No one at home is watching what they do, no matter how many web cams their mother buys buy or how many times she checks Facebook. No one can see them smoking, drinking, skipping meals, or questioning their morals. Some of these student-children have just realized they have room to stretch out their arms and run without looking.

The American students in Oxford often end up crashing into a wall. Simon's goal is not necessarily to fix these students, but to get them through the semester and help them find better ways to cope with their baggage, whether it be abuse or controlling parents or a loss of country and even faith. Some girls have to deal with a thought process that says *my worth is equal to the numbers on my grade card, the number on the label of my jeans.* For some of these students, mainly those who come from religious backgrounds, there is a feeling of being haunted, of an un-benevolent, Old Testament God looking down, scowling.

Some students could still enjoy a semester abroad despite rotations of fasting, binging and purging, but Simon approaches their stay abroad as if it were the chance of a lifetime. Their time is short; every minute is gold. He doesn't think they need to show up or even go away healthy so long as they can function well through the semester.

"In my opinion," Monica Giovanni says, "the students who have problems here in Florence are the ones who gain the most. If everything is easy then you are living on the surface, and not much change happens. If you have to work hard to adjust . . . you are doing work on yourself, and you get to the end of the program feeling success." She

pauses. "However, if students come with serious problems—depression, anorexia—then that is a different story. Being away from home is very hard."

The semester abroad is, as Doris says, a magnifying glass, a pressure cooker, trial by fire, all the over-used metaphors. One must remember how to speak, must try and fail, must feel like idiot and resort to pointing, staring, and asking for help in any words but the right ones. When a student's entire world changes for three months, do they need to cling more tightly to their habits, or give them up altogether?

The world is safe for anorectics as long as there are grapes, yogurt, and celery, says Kristy, as long as they can make enough trips to the toilet to silently throw up their sangrias. If they can't get their safe foods, they might just stop eating altogether. But she says that girls with that level of disordered eating probably won't leave home. "I'm sure you can buy "safe foods" in Europe," she says, "but if I were traveling abroad I would want to be out and experience the place I was in - which would mean eating out, being social." The girl who wants more than a checkmark out of a semester abroad must realize that in order to truly study abroad, she must be willing to let go of some of her old ways.

Eating disordered students may be an invisible staple of study abroad as long as upper-middle-class white girls with success in the eyes and failure barking behind them continue to be the steady majority of Americans studying abroad. And Europe and its magnifying glass may continue to make young Americans break down, violently, or in little ways. Leaving home is not a cure, and taking your baggage with you to a new country will not change your baggage. But even when your baggage is real clothes and shoes, another country changes what you do with them. Some things are no longer worth carrying around.

Sexual Harassment

Brussels is known for chocolates, waffles, the European Union—and to the select—sexual

harassment.

50% of visitors to Brussels wouldn't be aware of this, because they are men. To them, Brussels is continuum of quaint (chocolates, lace, the statue of a peeing boy) to dull (the UN, NATO). Daniel Riley, the director at CIEE Brussels, can argue otherwise. "In Brussels, women will get men yelling at them, telling them what they'd like to do to them. They'll yell first in French," he says, "but if that fails, they'll move on to English. And when they're ignored, they'll yell louder. But don't reply," he adds quickly. "Shouting back is the worst possible option."

"Most men probably have no idea it goes on,' he says. "If one guy is with a group of girls, no one will say anything to them."

Daniel says this is a result of Belgium being split between Germanic and Latin cultures. While geographically Belgium appears to be more aligned with countries in northern Europe, its population and regions are divided into Flemish and French subcultures. While Brussels is home to both cultures, the city is primarily French. The city is also home to large groups of immigrant populations as well as large groups of expatriates, which results in somewhat of an uneasy tension.

The foreign girls in Brussels confirm Daniel's analysis. "I didn't feel safe here—the men, they are always saying things at me, " said the Brazilian girl in the hostel room. "I wanted to have some Turkish food for dinner last night," said the German girl at hostel's breakfast room, "but all the restaurants and cafes were full of men."

She prides herself for moving through crowds without a grope or a wink; she prides herself on going many days without getting hassled. So eventually she gets lazy, dresses like an American girl, carries her camera like a tourist, and pride comes before a fall. The man selling leather jackets sweet-talks her outside his shop; the man at Piazza Michelangelo suggests with a wink that they tour Florence tomorrow. She might be in Brussels, walking alone and clutching the best waffle in the world. A wolf-pack of men

walks towards her. The shore of the other side of the street is too far away. All she can do is keep walking, even when one breaks ranks just long enough to run at her shouting drunk in French. She growls in useless English, and somehow it works. He veers right, laughs, and they all laugh with him. She huddles a little farther into her coat and walks a little faster.

Harassment is a reality that never seems to be far from her thoughts, even when sleeping. She dreams of walking in Middle-Eastern marketplaces with her sisters. She asks directions in a dining tent but a man keeps trying to grope her. "You idiot," she finally screams, flashing a plain gold wedding band, "I have this. I'm married. You're supposed to leave me alone."

Advice for female travelers always includes traveling with a friend, watching her drink, and learning to completely ignore catcalls. At the most, she should learn how to scream, "Go away!" in the local dialect. All the guides suggest buying a plain gold band to wear on the ring finger to deter admirers. In her dreams, and so far in real life, the ring hasn't been much help.

When she'd go running in Spain in the early mornings, the old men would chuckle *guapa,* make kissing sounds. The word *guapa* means beautiful. It did not sound beautiful coming from them; it sounded like something a good deal more lewd. She knows that Spanish culture considers these actions "complimentary" particularly when directed towards an attractive, sweet, or well-mannered person of the opposite sex. But no matter how many times American females are told that they aren't really being sexually harassed by the Spanish males, they don't feel much better.

You look at a guidebook description of Brussels, and you probably don't think of being verbally raped in three languages while walking down a street. You probably don't think of the extensive Turkish and Moroccan populations either. The tour guides don't advertise these facts. These facts also don't necessarily go hand-in-hand; while the

Levantine populations in Brussels were more intimidating to female American students, they were not more likely to harass a woman than a white man was.

Some women, particularly the French, are born with the ability to deliver withering glares, and some women are good at pretending the hooligan slouched against the wall doesn't exist at all. For the rest of us, it takes work and time to enamel over that soft nervous spot inside when walking past the delinquent thirteen-year-old boys shouting at you, or the aged dog walker leering against the fencepost. Doesn't matter if it's cultural, doesn't matter if it's appreciation, not harassment. In any language the tone a man uses to call at you when passing on the street always sounds the same, and it always translates.

Several girls at Naropa's program in Prague were sexually assaulted after they had been out drinking one night. Their friend, an older student, gently suggests that the constant drinking might have been a contributing factor, which makes me think that the statistics are true, and that the girls had probably known their assailants. One of the girls who had been assaulted still insists Prague is the safest city she has ever lived in, and that things like that have happened to her before in American cities. She also says this is the first time she actually handled it the right way, getting therapy and emotional help.

While almost all guidebooks include sidebar safety notes and sometimes entertainment guides for gay and lesbian travelers, much of the study abroad research is silent on the issue. A few universities, such as Brown, released case studies based on their students' experiences abroad. They publish an occasional news articles about hassled students abroad, and provide online handbooks with links to webpages with more links, and finally to a webpage with articles on gay attitudes in countries and cultures. Some of these final webpages conclude with paragraphs like this:

> "Amsterdam is a very beautiful place, with its meandering canals and arched bridges, quaintly narrow cobbled streets and majestic Dutch architecture dating from the 15th century. But, it is the sense of near total equality and complete freedom, which gay and lesbian people have there, that

makes it the serene Mecca of the queer universe."[128]

The gay student in Germany, Holland, England or Scandinavia will probably feel his worries are over. He can dye his hair pink and wear skirts and leather if that is his persuasion, particularly in the bigger cities because in Berlin there will always be someone more flamboyant. He can hold hands and affect a lisp. Some gay students from the US report feeling more liberated while in Northern Europe, and say they felt they had to retreat back into the closet a bit when they returned back to America.

On the other hand, a student from Berkeley went to Spain and found the gay life was a little more difficult, and certainly much less open. He had no trouble finding a boyfriend, but one evening he held hands with him in the park and soon found himself being chased by a crowd of men with stones. [129]

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[128] Mayorga, Daniel Soto, "Europerspectives." Fall 1998 edition of Lesbigay SIGnals. http:/www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay

[129] Rubin, Amy Margaro. "Gay Students Abroad: Study Abroad Programs start to Consider Needs of Gay Students" http://www.colorado.edu/ealld/atj/Bridging/ABRD-faq2.html

Racial Harassment

Students from America may be surprised to discover that Europe is ethnically diverse. Every city has its immigrant population: Turkish, Moroccan, Pakistani and Indian populations; most large British cities have a Chinatown, and most universities have a diverse student body, due to Erasmus programs, international relations degrees, and English-language learning courses. However, as many study abroad administrators have noted, a foreigner in Europe is an immigrant unless he has enough money to be an expatriate.

Students may also be surprised to learn immigration is a top issue in Europe today. Some Britons embrace the new clan of Polish plumbers while others welcome them as warmly as the Four Horsemen. If a student is more dark-skinned than the rest of the population or has any kind of defining features, the natives of many countries will assume he or she is an immigrant.

This can complicate matters for an ethnic minority student choosing to go abroad. Depending on where she goes, everyone will notice her or no one will. In Oxford, Sarai, who is Korean-American and knows more about Dutch culture than Korean, often mentioned that it was so nice to not have people greeting her in Chinese. In Oxford, many of the students with Asian features have British accents, and ethnic minority students seem nearly as common as white students. In parts of Spain, however, the locals will stare at Chinese Americans and refer to African-American students as "the dark ones". Most dark-skinned people in Italy are economic refugees, and most Italians see them as second-class citizens. Eastern Europeans will innocently, and without a drop of prejudice, refer to a black person as a negro. And in Brussels, Scott Gassler explains, the rules for politeness differ. "In the States," Scott Gassler, from Vesalius says, "if you meet someone with a defining characteristic, like dark skin, an accent, or Asian features, you don't mention it until they do. Here it's the first thing you ask because you need to know the language.

One time I heard a landlady ask a black woman, 'So is your husband dark too?' Either system is okay and every system can be abused. When two come together, it s fun to watch—the Americans don't know what to do."

Southern Europe, particularly Italy and Spain, can be a challenge for non-Caucasians. Anyone who doesn't look Italian stands out in Italy, and those who stand out are either tourists or immigrants. Tourists, particularly blond-haired blue-eyed women, run a risk of constant attention and even having strange men touch their hair. Immigrants will also be stared at, but often in a more despising way. One white student from Brown University wrote, "Immigrants from Africa, Albania, Morocco […] are not really accepted as "normal" residents and are referred to by most as *extra-communitari*—literally outside the country/community even if they hold jobs." Another commented, "I was disappointed when I realized that Italy is in many ways a racist society.[130] This comes from a number of things—ignorance, anger about immigrants taking their jobs. This especially affects African-Americans. I think it would be especially hard to be an African-American woman since it would be assumed that you are a prostitute." Another girl seconded this even more strongly: "Black women do indeed seem automatically viewed as prostitutes or touchable, fuckable objects."

An African American female from Brown, however, only wrote, "Italy was a weird experience for me because although I had fun, by the end of the experience I was definitely homesick for people who looked like me and wouldn't stare at me and be fascinated by my look."

Cash studies in Austria, where right-wing political parties have political control and Turkish and Nigerian neighborhoods cluster around the city. As a result, immigration is a contentious topic. All over Graz, posters proclaim an "Austria for Austrians", promising to

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[130] *Diversity Issues in Study Abroad* booklet. Office of International Programs, Brown University. http://www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/pdf_docs/diversity_st_abroad01.pdf p. 17. Accessed 18/08/07.

ban the building of mosques, and showcasing a white-toothed, blond-haired, steely-eyed candidate grinning at the masses.

As a result, Cash has become interested in immigration issues. On one hand Europe is easy as far as he's concerned; so easy he doesn't feel pressure to speak German except to Germans. But on the other hand he met a fellow student at the bar one night who exhibited strange behaviors.

"Before we realized it we were goose-stepping with him down the street," Cash says. "He kept talking about how wonderful Bismarck North Dakota must be. He came into the student house and read the names off doors, and yelled, 'These are foreigners!' He kept shouting at me, 'Are you Roman Catholic?' When someone mentioned San Francisco he shouted, 'They shall not be tolerated!' I found out later his grandfather was a very strange man who was some kind of Super Nazi. This student may have belonged to one of the fighting fraternities, which are usually conservative, and highly political organizations. You can tell because the people in them have scars on their faces from fencing."

When confronted by racism, sexism, and irritating cultural stupidity, study abroad organizations tell their students to count to ten and to see these actions as mostly curiosity, not prejudice (as long as that's what it is). They tell the students to take it as an opportunity to clarify misconceptions about ethnic groups and Americans in general, since that is what most native cultures will see them as anyway.

They also advise accepting the fact that in most European cultures, tact is not taught in school. Sandwiching criticism between compliments is seen as almost as bad as lying in the Czech Republic. Raising one's voice is not yelling in Spain—it's talking. Are you offended? Go ahead and sulk. No one here will care.

They learn that living abroad and taking what comes to them after it's been lost in translation will help them develop a thicker skin. When people run into them in the Tube they are still annoyed but they get over it. Half-exposed bikini girls on billboards don't

surprise them anymore. They don't need to be quite so furious with restaurant staff who dump orange juice on their shoes and do nothing about it. Ultimately, the students stop reacting so much.

But it's still possible to be hugely inconvenienced, offended, or even hurt. All guidebooks, particularly the student and adventure travel guidebooks, recommend traveling light and traveling cheap. As the student guidebook series *Let's Go* writes, flying low to the ground lets you experience and see more of the culture because you see it and experience it as the local people do. Flying low and traveling light can also mean opening yourself up to their inconveniences and your own ignorance. Trying to experience the new culture as your home-away-from-home, not your vacation, is harder than it looks. From going for a morning jog to buying your dinner to catching a bus: you're a stranger here, and you really don't know what's going on at all.

The Worst Day

When they ask her what her worst days was, she replies it was the day she missed the ferry across the Channel, and had to wait eight hours for the next one while writing a paper in the restaurant of the boat terminal. That was the worst day, but it started much, much earlier.

Because the train out of Amsterdam was at 5:45, she decided it would be much easier to stay awake. The hostel put two Korean boys in her room at midnight. Later, her friend mentioned one of them slept naked. The other came out in the hallway to practice his English by telling her about selling fruit in London. She nodded, reorganized her notes, and left the hostel with her roommate at 5:00 to tromp off to the train station. They followed the signs through the onion-like layers of Amsterdam in the dark. She thought she knew where she was, but realized they were looping the long way around to the train station. The signs in Amsterdam literally do read train station *this way* and train station, *that*

way. She began to lose faith, feel the funhouse setting in. She began to breathe like she was under a rock. Then the doors to all the brothels and shelters opened, and thousands of men came pouring out into the street. Her roommate was calm; she was not. Back in America, this would be dangerous.

And here at the start of her worst day, she learns a lesson on safety abroad—that you are nearly always safer anywhere in Europe than in your hometown American city.

Kristine studied abroad in Lyon and took the crowded metro to school every day. On her second week in France, she says, "I was talking very low in English to my friend and was getting jostled by all the people on the train when out of nowhere this guy just kicked me, from behind, in the leg-- it was awful because everyone saw, no one did anything, and I couldn't say anything—and he knew it—because as soon as I opened my mouth everyone would hear my (poor) American-accented French. I felt pretty helpless, and really angry—because I was sure nothing like that would ever happen in the States."

Duncan tried to buy a jacket from a department store in Graz, but discovered at the counter that they wouldn't take Visa. When he put it back and went to walk out of the store, the security alarm went off and he had to explain that he hadn't stolen anything—in German. "I'm not a dangerous person or a bad person," he says, "but having to explain myself in German is extra incentive to behave."

"I got hit by a Vespa the first week I was here (in Florence)," Fenelly says, "and the guy who hit me was yelling at me that it was my fault, because I had one foot on the pavement and one foot in the street—I had just been crossing the street and he came flying around the corner and hit me. My housemother wasn't answering the phone, none of my housemates were here yet, and I had no idea what to do or how much it would cost to go to the hospital." She adds, "And the one time I did called my roommate in the US and we talked for like half an hour my phone bill was like $200."

One of Aaron's best and worst moments in Amsterdam was missing the last tram

home from the Heineken Centre after seeing 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg. "So we decided there was nothing to do but walk," he said. "We had a group of people who seemed to think we knew where we were going so they followed us. About four hours later we finally got home." He shakes his head, indicating he'll never do *that* again, but he's not sorry he did it once.

Madeline, in Amsterdam, "got really drunk and fell over on my bike, and Dutch people came running from everywhere to help and make sure I was OK." She adds, "That wouldn't happen in LA." Britt, too, fell off her bike, a result of a combination of being drunk, riding on the back of a bike, and "tram tracks were involved." Megan broke a bottle of olive oil in a supermarket. "It was all over the floor and I had no idea what to do. Do I clean it up? Do I pay? Do I run away?"

Megan's other worst experience was returning from a field trip to The Hague to find her bike gone. At first she thought it had been stolen, but then discovered it had been impounded for being locked to a post rather than a bike rack. In order to fetch her bike, she had to take a train and a bus to the next town, pay bail on her bike and then cycle six miles home.

Michael was asked to buy crack in a shady neighborhood in Seville. When he refused and kept walking, the man tried to beat him up. A boy in England admitted his worst experience was getting drunk and cheating on his girlfriend, who was far away and had been all semester. Camille's worst experience was going to a beach city in Spain with a bunch of students, and finding out when they got there that all these students wanted to do was inebriate themselves.

Their worst days are swift and unforgiving, like when Ryan got mugged on a tram in Munich after Oktoberfest. He doesn't harbor any ill-will though—-"Hey, I was the drunk tourist." Like when Erika was part of a riot at a rugby game, police clubs and all. "At the time I didn't realize how dangerous it was." Like when Kathy was propositioned on

two separate occasions by elderly Austrian men. In one case, the man was on crutches and trying to hobble off a bus. Kathy smiled at him out of concern, and he sidled up to her and said, "My wife lets me sleep with other women."

But being propositioned was nothing compared to Kathy spending a semester away from her teenage daughter. This is because their worse days are slow to end. Students run out of money. Their long-term boyfriend will not be joining them for a year in Scotland after all. Their friends at the ball abandon them in order to do drugs behind the building. Every day they walk thirty minutes just to check their slow email. The old woman who was mis-assigned as a host mother moans over her broken hip in the tiny Italian apartment.

Their worst days are a form of travel. You think you're hiking up a mountain, but you're really hiking in a blizzard with less than ideal supplies and you have no idea where the hiker's hut is. You spend the night in a train station. You read your flight itinerary, notice your flight departs at 6:00, and show up at the airport at six p.m, when the flight was actually twelve hours ago. Your boat is tossed in the sea for thirty-six hours.

Maybe it's true that if you don't struggle while abroad, you don't learn a whole lot. And maybe many of our worst adventures are our fault. But who wants to get hit by a Vespa? Who wants to hear that their close friend suddenly died, and there's no way to get on a plane to go back for it? Some struggles we don't wish on anyway, and we wonder if personal growth is really quite so worth it.

Things redeem themselves though. We get some Grace. The next morning Camille and her friend went running on the beach, and climbed a trail high along a cliff where they saw the sea from the perfect viewpoint. She could forgive anything now. Later, she flies kites with her boyfriend on another beach in Spain.

The best days are much, much simpler. Maya's and Megan's best night was simply going out clubbing with a new group of people "It was like—well it sounds really cheesy," Megan says, "but we were all these different people but for that night we all had this jive

going on, totally connected." She struggles to put it in words, gives up and smiles instead.

Laura's favorite moments were going to a soccer game, and taking a cycle tour of Brugge. Janine's favorite story was buying a computer adaptor, returning it, and buying another one at a new store, and carrying out the entire transaction in French.

Sometimes the stories are a little more adventurous. Reva was in a shop in Florence when the slightly unhinged shop owner pulled a Taser out from behind the counter. While Reva visualized getting kidnapped and sold on the black market, the man waved it around, and claimed he'd robbed a bank and killed a man in his youth. To appease his guilt, he uses his Taser on men who mistreat women.

At the beginning of the semester, Reva was in a café with some new friends. At this point, Reva still didn't like to go to the bathroom by herself, but Fenelly refused to accompany her this time. While queuing for the toilet, a man walked in, pulled out a gun, pointed it at Reva and started counting down—in English. She immediately tried to hide behind another girl in the bathroom. Then the man put down his gun and tried to explain it was just a joke, but wouldn't let her leave. Fenelly laughs, and says she knew the man was just dressed up for Carnivale. "The thing is," Reva says, "if we had been in America the gun would have been loaded." The story terrified her when it happened, but now it is her favorite one to re-tell.

Jackie's happiest moment of the semester was the first time she rode her bike home from CIEE. "I had this feeling of 'wow, I'm alive," she says, then adds, "I almost did get hit by a bus running a red light at Centraal station though."

"Through my internship at Modus Publicity," Rachel writes in an email, "I had the chance to work London Fashion Week. This was by far the coolest thing I have ever done. I got to see the how the models were fitted for their clothing, how the arena transformed into a catwalk and I was able to meet top designers and editors of well-known magazines. They also put me in charge of the door, so it was my responsibility to let people in or keep

them out. I felt as though I played a vital part in the production of the shows and it felt good."

"Also, the people were my favorite thing," Rachel adds. "London is an amazing place in itself. There are tons of people who come from all over the world. I had never met so many cool people from different backgrounds. My one boss was Canadian, my other boss was Australian, my mentor at work was Italian and my three best friends from work were English. I can truly say that I will do everything in my power to keep these people in my life forever because they made my experience."

Would anyone be impressed if she told them one of her best days was right now, in the garden looking at the begonias and marigolds, listening to anonymous birdsong, and church bells? Would they be impressed by her memory of sitting outside the Bodleian at dusk, looking at the spires in the blue-gray sky, drinking a latte? Probably not. No one understands how big the little things are until the little things happen to them in a big place.

Chapter V: Travel & Play

She sleeps for a day or two after landing in her new country, and then takes the train, almost without thinking about it. Soon she will have classes, soon she will be out of money, soon she will have to turn around and leave, so she jumps on a train and heads for the border of her new country. She plays international twister, tries home-brewed liquor for the first time, hikes in the rain, and misses the last train. When she finally gets back to her home away from home this semester, she moves into her new place and feels like she's at international summer camp. This would be a routine she could happily continue: travel, photograph, sightsee, and drink. Rinse for a few days and repeat.

On Monday morning she finds out she'll have two essays due a week, as well as essay exams, extra tutorials, and a research paper. Out of all the travel and culture "study programs" available in Europe, she has somehow managed to choose one of the most rigorous academic programs. And, yes, her grades will transfer.

Travel may someday become one of the more divisive issues of study abroad, if it isn't already. Critics point out academic tourism, minimal class work low expectations, a credits-only transfer. Supporters point out learning about and experiencing new cultures. Critics respond by pointing out that when intoxicated, the culture of any country's bars sinks to just about the same level.

When the students decide to spend a semester studying abroad, the key word for them is *abroad.* They like that this particular program allows them to take classes in their major and specializes in their academic area of interest, but the reasons students study abroad is because they can go far, far away to a place that's both tragically hip and endlessly quaint—and the legal drinking age is 18. The idea that they might be too busy for much traveling or sightseeing doesn't even cross their minds while they're writing their application essays. Months later they're writing their tutorial essays. The idea still isn't

crossing many of their minds.

Despite whether or not the students have to work hard, whether or not they have classes five days a week, and whether or not their grades transfer, most of them are traveling. This could be the result of their youth, or merely the result of Ryanair's £9.99 airfare to Spain. Something of both creates the cheap, intense, and often unplanned weekends trips that make up the study abroad semester. No classes Mondays and Fridays? Easy enough to see Paris. No classes Thursday? Take a day trip to Stonehenge. Reading week—where shall we go? Madrid? Rome? Florence? Zurich? Berlin? Simple—do them all. Get hammered in Dublin, stoned in Amsterdam and food poisoning in Morocco, all in the same week if the price is right. We keep reminding ourselves that each weekend is time we'll never have back. We'll never have the money back either, but that is less of a concern as long as there's always a little left.

When asked their priorities, Melanie's answer of, "TRAVEL TRAVEL TRAVEL, studying the people, TRAVEL and documenting the whole thing with my camera," could be considered fairly standard. She visited about nine countries while studying in London and almost never spent the weekend in London. "I didn't make many friends, hah hah," she says.

Before they leave they want to prioritize travel, but during and after their stay they realize that their travel stories can join the annals of study abroad history. During Reva's spring break, she took an overnight ferry from Athens to Santorini. The journey was supposed to be twelve hours long. The ferry rode through a storm all night, and the storm tossed the passengers and the cargo (including the cargo trucks underneath the deck) all night long. In the morning, the passengers could see the island, but the boat wasn't moving. It didn't move for the next twenty-four hours, as the port conditions were too bad for them to dock. Finally, thirty-six hours after boarding the boat, they arrived on Santorini, and rode donkeys from the port to the city, and found out they still had to pay

for the night they'd missed at the hostel.

Reva also took a volcano tour on a fake pirate ship, hiked up to the crater and then sailed towards a hot spring. While changing into a swimming suit, Reva heard an announcement that getting to the hot spring would require not sailing there, but swimming there. The pirate ship's crew hadn't mentioned this beforehand. The hot spring was not close and the water was frigid, but when small children were jumping in to swim she decided she would too. She found out later that in order to get to the hot springs, participants had to be strong swimmers. She said the hot springs were rather disappointing. More exciting was when she tried sneaking into a Louis Vuitton show during fashion week. She didn't make it in, but still calls it a travel highlight.

Most students find themselves in this category— wanting to see as much of the world as they can, and being deliberate about doing it, not necessarily being deliberate about where they go. This view bothers many study abroad educators, however, as well as some students. "I don't believe in shallow travel," Madeline says. She is refusing to go to London with a large group of other CIEE students for a weekend, because she doesn't feel that she can really see anything worthwhile in London in two days. But she says she feels like she's being socially punished as a result. Madeline prefers to spend her weekends exploring every inch of Amsterdam, and then perhaps venturing out into other villages and cities in Holland.

She isn't alone. Elizabeth, a study abroad student at St Andrews, had hardly traveled at all by spring break. Her one traveling story so far was spending the night in Glasgow at another friend's house, but to her, this had revealed a great deal about life in Scotland. "I was actually staying at a house, not a hostel," she says, "and was able to see another side of the culture here. A lot of people who travel here don't experience that."

"I thought I would have traveled more," she continues. "Not traveling doesn't really bother me though, because I'm developing relationships with people here. I would rather

develop relationships with Scottish people than go see Scottish towns. Does that make sense?"

By contrast, Aaron, a student in Amsterdam, sees this semester as a present to himself. "Not as a free-for-all party, but I'm a firm believer that so many more times I learn way more out of the classroom than in it. I learn from people, adapt to new situations—enhance the goal of learning more. I know I can handle living in Amsterdam. I won't think I wasted the semester." He's traveled to Paris, Brussels, southern Holland, and Scotland, in addition to studying abroad in Israel, London, and now Amsterdam. Traveling, going to concerts, and going out with friends is just as important in his eyes as attending class. "One weekend in London I hopped on the tube right after class, barely made the connection for the Eurostar, and spent the weekend in Brussels alone," he says. "I went out for some drinks, did a night of karaoke, and had a blast. You can meet people from all over the world. Here people seem to be more open to meeting new people."

Madeleine measures shallow travel in terms of time spent there, or how much you can learn about a place vs. the effort you put into getting there. For Aaron, not traveling at all would be a cop-out, because you wouldn't be gaining more experience. For Melanie, not traveling was wasting a semester's worth of limited opportunities. If she lived in London every weekday, she would live across Europe every weekend. While her classmates were paying £3 a pint to get trashed in London, she would be photographing the Eiffel Tower and the Berlin wall.

Students must wander across places. If they stand still, the days miss them, like it or not. The books on the tops of their desks deepen, the emails home begin to ramble, and fairly soon they are drowning in their inbox and essays, the red-X'd days on the calendar. There are so many photographs to take and new voices to hear, and they are running out of time.

To educators, study abroad is often better translated as "academic tourism." Some

study abroad programs are increasingly trying to stamp out the tourism aspect of their programs, even as more and more travel programs crop up. At study abroad conferences, administrators discuss overachiever study syndrome—the key symptom of which is spending more time out of the host city than in it. They try to solve this problem by assigning more mandatory activities within the host city, as well as mandatory classes outlining the culture of the host city and country.

Some educators want to clamp down on travel; others want to clamp down on its causes. The marketing of study abroad programs can be one of the chief culprits, as brochures and pamphlets list off the limitless opportunities waiting for students across the water. Study abroad administrators and directors say students need to understand from the beginning that study abroad is an academic sojourn, not travel.

They agree it is hard to not promote the adventurous side of study abroad as a way to pull in prospective students, particularly since the U.S. government is encouraging study abroad. To make the percentage of students studying abroad increase from 1% to 2%, something has to appeal to them.

But in order for there to be no discrepancies between what is marketed and what students are expected to do and experience, the brochures and pamphlets need to be compatible to the program. "If you change what you market to your organization, you will change what the experience and situation is," says one presenter at the CIEE conference. She encourages directors to be more honest about academic requirements at pre-departure meetings. "Don't depend on tourism language," she says, "language like 'trips', 'excursions', 'scream of the jungle', 'sound of the sea', 'pub crawl'—to promote study abroad."

The students in Prague must travel as part of their three-week independent study. The students choose a place to visit over spring break, pick something to investigate, journal about it, and then create a project out of it. One student went to Berlin and compared and contrasted the racial reparations happening there with those in the US.

Another student explored landscape sculpture by traveling to Scotland, creating and photographing a sculpture, writing about it, and using an antique photo album to showcase it. Another student wrote a series of letters to a friend based on characters she invented in Spain. She bundled them in a jar with sea water and a candle and sent them across the ocean. Vivian wrote an extensive email to family and friends about the food in the Basque region of Spain. Another student went hunting for fairies and magical creatures, supplementing her writing with pastel drawings of what she saw—or didn't. Another student took a pilgrimage to Medujorge to visit the "Star Children" who get visions of the Virgin Mary. One child is still waiting for the last message.

What does travel across a European country look like? It looks like a fine Monday afternoon late in the autumn, just another day to catch the train home from the Lake District via a train from Birmingham to Oxford. Just approximately 1200 extra people on it due to other services being cancelled due to a shortage of drivers. Eighty people packed in the vestibule and toilets between cars, and she is crammed between the wall-mounted trashcan, the door, and a guy with a bike. A washout from Reading tells her the best drug-induced moments of his life. "I'm just a recreational drug user, mind," he says, and gives her his number.

When British trains are at their best (on time, not overbooked, and not a financial blood-letting) they are wonderful and the American student vows to return home and reform the rail industry. But most of the time they're likely to be somewhere just shy of their worst, which is exorbitant, late, and crowded. With any luck, a football fan will begin shredding a seat cushion with his bare hands and will verbally abuse the quiet Indian man across the aisle, which necessitates a lengthy stop at the next station while waiting for the police to arrest him. And then a cow will commit suicide on the lines.

Trains on the continent, however, are things for the gods to envy. While their pricing system may leave you scratching your head (for each country, there are

approximately three different pricing systems corresponding to how fast the train goes and what day of the week you will be taking it), very rarely will you arrive at a station to find out your train has been cancelled or that a coach service will be helping you make part of your journey. If the trains are not brand-new, then they are at least clean.

German trains are the most reliable, punctual, fast, clean, and appropriately equipped for the journey. Almost all *S-bahn* and *U-bahn* trains in Berlin have room for the cyclists connecting to various points on their journey. In Denmark everything of transportation is good, aside from the price tag and trying to read the name of your stop. The trains roll in and out on time. The metro is clean. However you travel, you may look out a window and perhaps see evergreens, cycle paths, small clean wooden villages, and the sea.

The budget airlines that can take you to these marvelous places seem too good to be true. Don't worry; they are.

Behind the 50p airfare is a tax of £15; behind the hour-long flight to Anywhere, Europe, is an hour and a half commute to and from each airport and two hours in the departures lounge. Budget airlines were the first to charge for checked luggage and to invent fees for airport check-in, priority check-in, and donations to offset global warming. They sell alcoholic beverages in little baggies that look like a Doritos packet. If you ask the stewardess for anything besides the time, you run the risk of being charged for it.

The airlines come with upholstery stains and tight restrictions on inflexible tickets. The prices match the flight times; select the 6:00 a.m. versus the 14:00 flight to Prague and the price will change, as will the clientele. You don't have to be young to fly budget airlines, and endure an hour's flight without a free tea. But it takes a certain amount of youth, and the wallet that comes with it, to spend the darkest hours of the morning hunched over a backpack and an airport café table, waiting until check-in opens at 4:00 a.m.

Americans call Ryanair "the Greyhound of the skies," although most Americans in Europe have much more experience with European buses than American buses. Sometimes, European buses do not do much to improve the reputation of bus journeys. A ten-minute bus ride in a rural section of Scotland will cost a passenger £2.00, will not be on time, and if headed towards a train station, will not meet the train. That is considered a steal, however, compared to the £11 needed for a local taxi.

But in Spain, €1 on a bus will take a passenger anywhere except the airport, which costs a little more at €2.50. And the right Spanish bus is delightful. In Seville, most of the buses have TV monitors that alternately display location on the bus route, upcoming events, health tips (*bebe mas agua*) and the local weather forecast. It is nearly as good as watching the news.

German buses are equally prompt, and display the name of the stop, while a chime and a pleasantly computerized female voice announces it as well. In Denmark, the bus drivers have the courtesy and professionalism of a banker, and although you cannot pronounce the name of the stop you need, they will ignore your terrible Danish and will often remind you when it is time to disembark.

In Eastern Europe, the buses make stops at roadside garages where passengers can buy a drink or a snack. Sometimes the bus drivers show American movies dubbed into the local language. Sometimes the air conditioning works, and sometimes there's a traffic jam, and passengers sit for an hour on a now-silent, motionless road along the Black Sea, watching a spaniel and a man in a Speedo stroll down the road. A man drives a donkey cart through a field of sunflowers, and the American on the bus is the only one who notices.

Melanie has IBS which complicated her travel plans more than once. "Knowing where a bathroom is at all times is something that is very necessary for me," she writes. "I had to pull over a 50 passenger bus on our way to tour Bath and Stonehenge. There was no bathroom on the bus and we were in the middle of nowhere. I spotted the first thing on

the highway and ran to the front of the bus where the tour guide was on the microphone telling us, ' . . . and to your left is the field where Princess Diana's body was thrown . . .' I swatted the microphone from her hand and said 'Pull over now!' I was sweating, crying, and desperate. They fought me until they realized I had no time to lose before they had a huge mess to clean up. So the driver pulled over and I ran across 5 lanes of traffic (hopping a cement median) and ran into a gas station under construction. Found a port-a-potty in the back and praised Jesus. Ha."

"Needless to say we got dropped at Bath first and didn't get to go onto Stonehenge," she writes. "Thanks, stomach."

Fortunately travelers also have transportation to provide their stories. "My cousin and two aunts and I were in Scotland for the weekend. We rented a car," Melanie says in her email, adding a parenthetical note "you know they drive on the left." Her male cousin was driving because "he didn't trust a woman to drive." He hit a curb and got a flat in the middle of St Andrews. "We were four stupid Americans trying to fix a flat on a cold rainy day," she writes, noting that the natives walked by and laughed at them. "It sucked, but we laughed then and we laugh harder now."

Eric slept at a train station, and as a result learned a little bit about planning. He got a ride to Munich, wandered around the city and then Oktoberfest by himself, and then realized he didn't know where to sleep. So he slept in the train station until 5:00 a.m. "I didn't sleep in the vagrant section though. I didn't get much sleep, because there were a million loud machines. I tried to make it look like I was just reading a book but I'm sure the people knew better."

"I hung out overnight in an airport and rode on one of those machines that cleans the floor," his friend Jessica adds.

"I also slept in a winter hut in Slovenia," Eric continues. "We were hiking up this mountain, and it was snowing on the way up the mountain, and praise the lord we get to

this hut. We open the door, hear a noise, and slam it. We knock, open again, hear a noise, and slam it. Finally we open the door and realize it's just some other guy sleeping in there. The three of us slept all in the same bed because it was so cold. In the morning this guy was in our hut and he gave us some *schnapps* to warm us up, and then he hiked out into the snow." Eric pauses. "I think I'm not so good at the planning," he says.

Amy traveled from St Andrews to Provence during her reading week, and learned most of Europe's traveling rules first-hand. Her first traveling mistake— assuming 6:30 means p.m., not a.m.—is a common one when American students meet Ryanair flight times, and have yet to get the hang of twenty-four hour time. The second was assuming Ryanair airport hubs are easy to get to. Amy did learn she had to show up in the morning, not the evening, and at Glasgow Prestwick, not International, far enough in advance to plan for a night at the airport. She even planned a nice dinner to take along, which finished baking immediately before their taxi came to rush them off to the train—which was forty minutes late. Because their first train was late, they missed the second train, and thus the third train to the airport out in the middle of nowhere. "We finally made it to the airport," Amy says, "to get a wonderful nights' sleep on airport benches. That clearly went over well."

Aix en Provence was so beautiful, and the park so pleasant that they decided to take a nap on a park bench. When they woke up in the dusk they realized they missed the last train and bus to Arles where they had a hostel waiting. They freaked out, then laughed and found a hostel in town. "Everything, I mean everything was flying by the seat of our (trousers)," Amy writes, "and it was incredible. In five days, two things went according to plan—the plane trip and one night in a hostel. Had the plans worked out," she says, "we wouldn't have seen nearly the amount we did… nor had the amazing time we did."

"The more I see the more I realize how big the world is," she adds. "My parents were really wonderful about providing trips for us," she says, listing off Australia, the

Philippines, and various locations in Europe. "They said, 'We're going to do this right and you will appreciate it. We're not eating at McDonald's while we're here. The country isn't supposed to make you feel comfortable."

Like all of their predecessors, the students have learned, "the follies of tourism," as Thomas Merton called it, and "The dissolution of one's touristic duty into incredibly long blank areas of time," of waiting in airports and rail stations and queuing for buses.[131] They have grasped too Henry Adams' "illusion of productive work and of accomplishment which arises simply from getting oneself and one's baggage from one place to another."[132] They know that figuring out how to get the £0.99 seats on Ryanair does not make them more qualified for a job. They know that figuring out how to order a vegetarian sandwich in Poland does not really give them a diplomatic edge. They know they travel with the express purpose of having a good time; yet, they get back to Iowa and feel that somewhere in the nine months away, they've learned something about the best parts of being young while also grasping the concept of adulthood.

"People still smoke on European buses," David says. "All I remember is the pitch-black night, the nappy blue seats, and the cigarette smoke wafting in and out of my sleep. We pulled into Valencia at 4:30 a.m., and with nothing to do, I headed to the beach to wait. Circles of young people lined the beach, sitting around campfires that were the remains of the night before. I took off my sandals, pulled a pear from my backpack, and headed across the sand towards the water. And there, with my flannel shirt laid out on the ground, I sat in my white t-shirt and blue jeans watching the sun rise over that ancient sea, behind a lighthouse that has been there a century. And I do believe that I have never, before or since, felt so free as I did in that moment."

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[131] Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton,* p.212

[132] Stowe, *Going Abroad.* p. 195

Snapshot

There's a tiny space between the students' traveling and the students' studying and their arriving and their leaving. In this space, they eat dinners and burn their Spanish version of brownies, and lounge against the kitchen wall while waiting for their clothes to dry. In this space, the students are an example both of what they came from and what they are becoming. And here is where they learn some of their key lessons. Most students learn to cook, they all learn to manage a dish-washing crisis, and they learn to talk to people who come from a very different place.

Crick House is a huge brick ramble-down thing set in a millionaire's neighborhood in North Oxford. On these streets, the brick homes have either a score of creaky purple, blue and occasionally orange bikes out front, or a Mercedes SUV. Big business owners and students, cheek by jowl.

Inside, a dark-haired student chops a pile of chili ingredients on the counter before her. Soon twenty-three students and a junior dean come trickling in and out of the kitchen, poking their heads into refrigerators and cabinets and complaining about their essays due at 5:00. Even with twenty-three students, the house feels less like a student dorm and more like a spacious B&B or a small hotel, except that everyone checks in and out together.

A girl with shiny blond hair, who introduces herself as Ellie, from Wheaton, cooks sausage while she talks. Over the growing lunchtime noise, she explains that she burned her first few sausage attempts of the semester but now she is, "nailing the sausage cooking."

Another student, Carri, eats a salad and explains that she began her year abroad last spring, and is now the only second-semester student studying in the fall semester. Like so many things in study abroad, but specifically in Oxford, change one set detail just a little and you have new rules and hardships to live by. Carri must write a thesis since she is a full-year student; however, since no one expects a second-semester student in the fall, they

keep forgetting to give her the necessary information. She mentions while digging through the refrigerator that she's not going to get credit from her home university for the thesis. This annoys her, but not as much as it might have in another lifetime. She adds, off-hand, that "Mark (a peer) lost his summa because of grades at Oxford, and I lost mine too."

Over the hot skillets and chopping boards the other students in the kitchen laugh at each other's runaway couscous, burned sausage, and frozen eggs. Katherine, a music and Biblical studies major, is from Gordon College in Massachusetts and is required to stay in Oxford for a year. Katherine has no problem with this rule. "I need to be here for a year to get used to the system," she says. "You have to learn how to use it—then actually use it."

From their position as head tutors, Liz and Stan think the students are working harder than ever before. Megan, however, disagrees; she finds the program more intense than anything else. For the first time in her academic career, what she actually writes is as important as the writing form. "We're good writers," she says. "We don't want to hear about our vocabulary; we want our content critiqued."

If the students in the kitchen could do anything over, they would bring their own mattress, put more time into their subject matter they're studying, and would have packed less—except for Kreigh, who packed three shirts. Megan would have started babysitting the infants and toddlers at her church a lot sooner. "I wish I had gotten to know more Oxford students," is a common sigh in the group.

A student named Matt, from Arkansas, will miss the library resources, and the fact that he can have any given book in twelve hours (although he will not miss the discomforts of the Bodleian). Megan is reluctant to return to the "Christian school bubble" of her home university. They all think the Iraq war is a mistake now, and appreciate that in Europe, Christians are allowed to hold what would be considered "liberal" views. "In the States," Matt says, "you're not a Christian if you believe in global warming."

From somewhere over by the stoves, Ellie is still absorbed with her sausages and is

having a conversation with the room about G&D, the students' favorite ice cream shop. She begins to laugh at herself. "I was walking home the night before and thinking to myself, 'I'm so independent now.' But then I thought, 'No wait—I'm not independent at all—I live in a house with twenty-three other people."

Marisa is another student with an excellent academic resume, and in addition, she is an adventurer. She has taken cooking classes in Moscow, traveled fourteen hours on a Russian train, asked strangers for directions in London, and stayed in a cottage in Wordsworth country in the Lake District. But she says, quite simply, here in Oxford, she feels she has permission to make her learning more important.

During dinner at the Vines, SSO's other student house in Oxford, the boys talk about their recent trip to Ireland. Because they are boys, they don't mention that during the week none of them could figure out how to make the rental car go in reverse. What they talk about is how broke they are, all the time but especially when traveling. "We were on the last day," one boy said, "and we drove and drove to this castle. All of us were running low on money. We all said, 'If it's more than say €3-4, we're not going in.' Trent says no. 'What?' we say. 'No,' he says. 'If it's more than €2 I'm not going in.' We're like, we drove all this way and you won't pay more than €2 to go in?" The boy shakes his head.

"But that's Trent," another student says. "He *never* spends money."

"Have you gone to Tesco with him?" a girl asks. "Seriously he can spend £5, and he'll eat on that for a week."

The student with the long beard and South Carolina accent has made dinner, and still has to finish a paper, pack, and possibly nap before leaving for a Ryanair flight to Rome in the morning. But he doesn't rush off. Neither do his dinner companions. They all have essays due tomorrow but the kitchen lulls them into sitting a little longer.

A girl announces she is going to salsa lessons, and disappears upstairs. She reappears almost unrecognizable, hair in a sleek ponytail, eyes aflame in green and silvery

black eye shadow. "I'm making up for my lack of fun clothes here in Oxford with fun makeup. I love makeup," she says, and looks and sounds nothing at all like a Barbie doll. "I love what you can do with it—the face is my palette."

Another girl slumps in her sweats and a polo shirt. Little butterfly clips hold her short blond hair back, and she balances a bag of ice on her leg. She has to head off to the river soon for another rowing practice. She groans, and doesn't want to move, because it will be 10:00 p.m. before she's home, and right now everyone has a paper to write. Her friends keep asking her to come salsa. She keeps shaking her head, and says, "Ohhhh . . . I have to go soon," when anyone asks if she wants to go salsa dancing, proofread an essay, or do the dishes.

Clint and Jackie, the Junior Deans at the Vines, take it upon themselves to keep the kitchen clean, to remind students that public intoxication is against the rules, and to keep the noise down. They sympathize with them when they say the British people are too curt, for Clint and Jackie are Americans too, and sometimes they are ready to move home too. In between discipline and homesickness though, they make s'mores with the students and share stories of home.

Jonathan, the Junior Dean at Crick House takes it upon himself to educate the students in their free time. This may involve taking them on optional field trips to Rome, or it may be showing them movies they were unlikely to encounter at private liberal arts colleges. Sometimes their parents are less than appreciative of his efforts. One night during the semester he rented the Full Monty and showed it to his charges at the Vines, who all enjoyed it, and they had a discussion about it afterwards. The next day he emailed them to say he thought it was the best movie about male strippers he'd ever seen. "Sometimes I'm a bit tongue-in-cheek," he says. Someone forwarded what they thought was a very amusing email to his mother, who was horrified that in a supposedly Christian program a godless Brit was showing movies about male strippers to the students.

The way back to Oxford from the Vines is lined in enormous dark houses and steady rain. The hill down to the city seems miles long. But Cowley roundabout is alive, and on a halfway point in the circle the door to a bar is open. Inside, thin students are lined up across a wooden dance floor trying to keep up with the instructor's cha-cha. With awkward gusto they try to salsa with each other and end up giggling instead.

Chapter VI: The End

And certainly it is a treasure, but it is also a certain suffering . . .
-Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune[133]

You breathe in and out for days and suddenly, there are no days left.

The night before you packed and triple packed and re-weighed your suitcases and took another bag to the thrift store; you cleaned your room and threw an entire stack of papers and essays into the trash. If you developed a conscience this semester, you took them to the recycling point. Your roommates and classmates and drinking mates spilled in and out of bars, getting tipsy on Bellinis. You photographed each other charading as letters of the alphabet, then giggled your way home, like the lost kids you'd be in a few weeks' time. No one thought of going home or never seeing each other again.

Students seldom say they regret studying abroad or entirely hated it. Some fell out of love with Europe after a week, some find the cultural challenges of the Old World a little too unrewarding, and some simply miss a family member or partner. But if students abroad are miserable, and suffering without Jiff and the extra pair of Converse for three months, they aren't saying. While abroad, even the discomforts are part of the treasure.

But somewhere over the ocean or in an airport terminal they begin to feel like uncertain refugees. They feel it a little while packing up; while burning the last candle, drinking the last of the juice in the fridge, deciding whether to keep or throw out the tattered black trousers and sneakers and *Let's Go* guide to Europe. They feel just an inkling of *I'll be a little sad. I'll miss this. I'll miss all them, my housemates and even the ugly commercial streets.*

What's she's thinking about is the excitement of the flight and seeing her family and Christmas, of the last-night show in London and getting her film developed. What she isn't thinking about is what next month will be like, after Christmas, or even before, when she remembers that at home, all the salads come with fried chicken on top, everyone is fat,

[133] E. Murphy-Lejeune, *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* (New York, 2001). p. 161

and no one recycles or walks to work.

America

At the airport, there were flags. There were flags for the city and flags for the state, but mostly just the movement: one enormous star-spangled banner, waving the students in.

American airports are a shock of chicken grease and Cinnabons mixed with stale coffee and staler pizza. Everyone talks loudly to someone, and even louder if on a phone. Drinking fountains appear every hundred feet. The bookshelves hold different best-sellers and are written in a language we used to recognize. But what do we know? We are stumbling through passport control in the vast clinical room, smirking at the angry man in front of us, watching the dogs sniff for prunes from someone's mother's back garden in the homeland.

One day in autumn 2001, study abroad students around the world were buying apples at a quaint little indoor market stand; two hours later they were clustered with other foreigners in front of the frozen screens of an appliance store TV. Still pictures of a fuzzy blue sky filling with smoke. A building on fire. A plane circling. A woman they had never met cried next to them, and in some cases, the crying woman was definitely not American. Later, they will remember this moment and think *She was crying for us. How nice of her.*

After 9/11, the American newspapers carried the reports of the way foreigners scolded Americans. *You Americans are bringing war to the world* a village of Indians told a New York student who only studied a month before her university brought her home. [134] The state department told students not travel to Florence one weekend, to avoid demonstrations and big crowds and American hotspots. They also advised students to not

[134] J. Steinberg, "For Some Students Studying Overseas, a Reconsideration"
New York Times (1857-Current file); Oct 20, 2001; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)

live in their blue jeans and American college hoodies; they were not to broadcast their loud Americanized English language. They were told, in short, to blend in. Most of them took to this advice. Some didn't. A Texan boy went cycling up Cowley Road wearing an American flag draped over his shoulders.

When America was firing on Iraq, Americans at home were reconsidering their summer vacations to Europe. Friends who had promised to visit emailed to say, "With all of the anti-Americanism going on, I don't think I'd feel safe." On a discussion board a couple announced breathlessly that they were not canceling their summer trip to Ireland, but if any Irish spoke out against America and the president they'd be getting a piece of a righteous American mind. "Save your money, don't go to Ireland," another chatroom member said. "No point spending money in a country that doesn't support us."

The Americans safely tucked inside America must have envisioned stampedes, riots, burning flags, and blood all over the old city walls. They must have imagined a scenario that resembled the running of the bulls combined with a rock festival, where terrorists and liberals embraced, capitol buildings went up in flames, and everyone threw cans of organic chickpeas at statues of Victorian war heroes.

But it didn't happen. A group of feminists protested at the local RAF base in Fife. Some debates sprang up within student circles, and a few limp, "Support Iraqi Independence" posters appeared around the city, but never outnumbered the countless, quiet "No War" signs across campus. Peace protests marched through London. Barbs flew between Washington and everywhere else, and more than a few individuals demanded Tony Blair and George Bush be put on trial for war crimes or just lynched at the earliest possible convenience. But no one threw bombs, or even water balloons. Americans were not chased back to the airport.

Kristine was in Lyon at the time, living with a French host family. The war offered her and her family the opportunity to see how reasonable the French people actually were.

"I realized how unique every country and culture really is", Kristine writes. "So as a result I really reject and loathe the generalizations people tend to make, particularly about the French. I was in France when the Iraq war was starting and relations between the two countries were at an all-time low, but the people were still incredibly kind to me and my family-- and if they learned that I was American, they would say 'I don't like your president, but I like America', or something similar. I don't know if Americans would have had the same attitude. I also learned that actions do speak as loud as words—helping around the house, being kind to the host children were the initial means I had of demonstrating to my host family the kind of person I was, because my language skills were still a bit rough."

CIEE writes that this attitude has been the case through the ages of American history, most markedly during the Vietnam War.[135] Europeans may not have liked American politics, but they were willing to give the individuals a chance. CIEE believes this is no longer the case; they believe that since we elect our trained monkeys, the world holds us just as culpable as the monkeys themselves. They also point out their displeasure lies not just with Iraq, but also with the devastation of Black New Orleans and our lack of interest in being environmentally responsible. And they don't even start on our schools, health care, oil rigs, detention camps, and our old white men preaching democracy and capitalism.

Use anti-Americanism to each the students something, CIEE says. Show case studies. Bring in people from an opposite viewpoint to talk to them; CIEE Amsterdam does this in part by bringing in prostitutes, transgenders, and politicians to give their sides of the story. The idea is to give students a safe, somewhat less intimidating introduction to drastically un-American points of view.

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[135] "Down With America: Anti-Americanism and Study Abroad" *Our Views Essays*, CIEE research webpage. http://www.ciee.org/research_center/our_view/down_w_us.aspx. Last accessed 9 September 2008.

Inevitably though, it will happen anyway, unless they stay in their rooms all semester. "I was interrogated one night for nearly 30 minutes with a series of bizarre questions," Amy, who studied in St Andrews, says. "He was asking things like, 'Why aren't you fat? Do you have a gun? What do you mean you don't smoke pot? What do you think of illegal immigrants? Do Americans really hate Canadians? Do you believe in abortion?' It is hard when people make sweeping generalizations over all Americans and then are shocked that we aren't the 'ugly American' that the media portrays. I answered the questions to my best ability, keeping my cool on the outside, boiling on the inside… but in the end I suppose it was best. I hope I helped change his perspective on Americans. I guess the hardest thing is feeling 'American' – not that I don't love being an American, or am proud to be an American, because I am without a doubt," she says. But being asked if you are a gun-toting overweight stereotype over and over again will wear you out.

Like all the other students though, Amy thinks the critics are few. "For the most part, people are incredible," she says. "I've even had people apologize to me because they felt that everyone made misjudgments about Americans and the country as a whole, but really we weren't anything like the media and government portrayed us."

Cash groans when he sees Americans in Austria, because in his opinion they are only here because they can afford it. He sighs and says "Austria is so Western" that he doesn't see a big change from the US. He also doesn't think the US needs to have its students going to study abroad programs in Spain, France, or London. "The programs US students need to go on are in the Middle East, African, Russia, China, and India," he says.

American issues are less of a problem in Austria, but students still show up a little nervous about their international reputation. Ryan had the double advantage of living abroad before and having been born in Great Britain, so America's reputation abroad was a minor concern. He has surrounded himself with a British friend group, which he thinks has negatively influenced his attitude about the States. But he also feels he has to defend

the country against his British friends. Bush is a big deal.

Karin struggles with the perception of America. "No, I didn't vote for Bush," she says, exasperated, "but I can't blame myself. I feel someone else's attack on America is a reflection on me. No, I'm not stupid. And the criticism isn't even coming from another American. When someone else makes fun of your culture it's especially annoying." She adds, however, that she has gained a new appreciation for what the international students in America go through.

"Actually, it's nice having a crazy president," Rob says, "because he's not reflected on the individual people." He laughs. "I do find myself defending guns because it's really funny to watch people's reactions here. I don't even own a gun."

When the students return to America, they learn new lessons about their countrymen and their home. "I realized how much Americans suck," Melanie writes after her return from London. "Lazy, mean, and rude. It was hard for me to return here, even though my stay was so short there. I have an extremely artsy, cutting edge personality, so I fit in perfect there. No one judged me or made fun, I was normal for once, and they were more off the wall than me." Americans were not, very "off the wall" however, and Melanie was reminded how small Americans' lives can be in their choice of food ("my friends only eat food that requires ketchup"), in their choice of health ("I forgot how Americans looked for the closest parking spots because walking 40 steps was too much work. Heaven forbid they walk half a mile to and from the tube!") and in their choice of clothing ("I forgot how Americans are afraid to wear color. I love bright shoes and clothes. Black and white is lame").

"I knew since living in Montana that my mental health improves with every thousand miles between my parents and I," says Glee.

"As far as my relationship with America, that is more complicated," writes an anonymous student from St Andrews. "I love America, but have serious issues with the

current administration, and those were certainly magnified by being abroad. I realized how biased and incompetent the American media was, which I knew to an extent already. But the BBC and The Guardian would report things much earlier and in much more detail, and far more objectively than even the New York Times on line. Talking to people from other countries and hearing how disappointed (not angry, but truly disappointed) they were with America was really hard. America/Bush's stance on the war with Lebanon was particularly appalling. Living in a village with no supermarket, only a butcher, baker, and green grocer, also helped me to see how dependent Americans are on things. My life was so much simpler in the UK, and I really liked that. American's have come to believe they "need" far more things than they really do."

"I realized a few weeks into the program [in Amsterdam] that LA isn't beautiful," Megan says.

"I thought my perspective of the US would be the other way around," Laura says. ""I was always kind of an America-skeptic because of what I thought the world thought of us. But since I've been here I've also learned how well we're doing in certain areas. In Economy class, we learned that the US is powerful because we do a lot in research and develop value in education. Vesalius is here because of the US education system. It's all made me appreciate home more."

They learn, too, that they took the conveniences of America for granted. "You press a button and you're connected," Fenelly says. You press a button and you have hot food. You press a button and your car has started, your phone call has connected, your bills are paid. Some of the students add that people are friendlier too in America, and some of them miss the convenience of driving everywhere.

"I miss Target. I miss Orville Redenbacher's movie theatre popcorn. I miss peanut butter." Reva says, then pauses. "Although, I really like Nutella. And I do understand now why Italians see us as wasteful."

Oddly, Fenelly mentions that after a semester in Italy she misses health insurance. While most students who experienced European health care found the actual doctors' office or dentist appointment less pleasant than in America, they loved the idea that they automatically had health insurance, or could automatically have health insurance if they were a citizen. Whether because she couldn't qualify for Italian health insurance or because she did not know about it, Fenelly bought health insurance in the U.S. before she came to Italy, and she found that just a simple doctor's appointment was expensive. "There's just so many more free things, and health care is so much more accessible," she says, and mentions the expense was why she didn't go to the hospital after she got hit by a Vespa. "And I was worried about how hygienic they'd be here, if they'd use gloves, if they'd sterilize their hands. I think that's the thing—it's not sanitary enough for me here, and America is."

"Poor people can't afford vegetables and fruit in the USA," Kathy says when asked about her perspective of America after living in Austria, "but they're cheap here. The lifestyle is healthy, there's health insurance for everyone. It's wonderful. I had to have a root canal, and the insurance took care of it. You pay $22 a month and it's required. Everyone should have teeth."

From Home

They don't see it coming. None of them see it coming, the wave of sadness after the joy, the tears during the in-flight snack as they think to themselves, *I have come from Europe, I have come from the Epiosses and baguettes of France, the yogurts of Greece the vineyards of Spain, the pub lore of England and yet in the end, I sit here and cry into my stale baguette and processed cheese airline sandwich.* Because it is all a dream in the end, and she is waking up to the sound of hard American A's telling us to fasten our seatbelts.

Going home is the great equalizer. They're all just Americans again on the plane,

just kids with a big backpack stuffed with dirty laundry, beer mugs, and smuggled cheese. They threw half their clothes away and can't even remember what they came with.

They don't see it coming, how different America will have become after four months. All the flags! All the God Bless America *now!* bumper stickers. The ear-splitting twang of voices not mellowed by a telephone receiver. How very far, and very small distances people will drive for a Rally Burger or an ice cream.

Her countrymen have gotten so much fatter, and so much louder. They spend some many hours working at nothing, and have automated machines for everything else. She asks herself *when did this happen?* And then she realizes the Yankee bifocals fell off somewhere in Madrid three months ago. She felt them slipping but when they came loose she looked the other way or was carefully pouring her first glass of dinner wine. She's never missed them until now.

She thinks of the flowers and how she would describe them to people at home. They would nod and smile too, and then she realized that of course they would expect there to be flowers at the train stations in Europe, just like of course they would expect a walking Mickey Mouse at Disneyworld. Europe is a far-away theme park and they do not think of the flowers making up a real person's life, but decoration for the steady stream of visitors.

Students bring home the gifts of their travels most often as rolls of film and memory cards, postcards and successful essays, the notes to a lecture that changed their mind, a clean napkin from their favorite coffee shop, a coaster advertising their favorite European beer. They bring home new words: cheers, cheerio, bloody, fabulous, brilliant, or maybe as much of the native language as they managed to learn. Mark Twain was one of the first to print a description of the American who has tried too hard—who calls everyone *Monsieur*, tosses *après, pardon!* into his sentences, and asks for *la pommel* and *le dessert*, *s'il vous plait* after dinner while he makes a point of pouring a glass of wine.

The girl sits in her American dorm room counting the electrical outlets on the walls. She could almost do with something shabbier, rather than the spanking new mediocrity of cream walls, taupe carpet, fake brickwork, and a view overlooking car park after car park.

Homelessness. Exile. 78.5% of them will never know this word existed so close to their study abroad semester. They go home, move through the re-entry process in Kentucky and New York. They pine for Europe and gaze at their photographs and recycle for a while. Eventually, to keep their friends and feel less weird, they stop walking to the grocery store and ordering Fair Trade coffee. They resign themselves to Bud light. In short, some of them get over it, like people get over religious experiences, near-death, true love and organic diets.

But still, students may realize with some grim foreboding that a semester abroad probably did not "get it out of their system." As Nicole Rosenleaf Ritter writes, "The student who goes abroad and has a life-changing experience will not likely be content to come home and never again venture out of the bounds of his or her own country."[136].

In the article "The Journey Home" a woman writes on her return from Russia that, "I find it difficult to come back, because I really miss the stimulation overseas. The daily chores, because of the different cultural situation, requires effort. Here, life is automatic." The woman is depressed, and the author compares her depression to the mindset of someone in withdrawal. She is planning her next trip abroad to cure it. "The US is a mindless temple of plastic,"[137] the woman says, and is planning her next trip abroad in an effort to feel better.

Rob came home on the fourth of July and wanted a beer, but ordered barbecue

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[136] N. R. Ritter, "Wearing Many Hats" *Transitions Abroad Magazine*, March/April 2000. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0003/ritter2.shtml

[137] J. Quarles, "The Journey Home." *Transitions Abroad Magazine* March/April 2000. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0003/the_journey_home.shtml

chicken and a bottomless cup of coffee instead. He went looking for the Americana he'd missed; what he, and many other students found instead was the need to talk about what they'd done, and a lack of an audience for it. "My parents and a couple of close friends were really the only people that I talked to about Austria," he writes, "mainly because they seemed to care. Everyone else asked, "Where have you been?" "Austria? What was it like?" My only response to this was either "Austrian," or "You know . . . Austria," or maybe I'd make up something to solidify the stereotypes people have of Austria, to avoid pointless questions."

"Was returning easy for me?" Melanie asks herself. "Absolutely, but absolutely not. Absolutely because I missed my family and friends dearly . . . I was watching nieces and nephews grown up via webcam." She also mentions that while she loved commuting to work by the Tube and walking, she missed the convenience of her car. She wonders how she lived without it now, but still retains some nagging laziness when she remembers how she used to walk everywhere.

But returning was also absolutely not easy for her because she missed London. "I miss the crazies that made me feel 'normal' for once in my life," she says. "For instance, the outfit I wore to school to teach in today made everyone think I had lost my mind. In London, I fit right in and no one gave me a second look! I loved that. I miss being accepted in whatever kind of goofy outfit I feel like wearing. I miss people taking the time to ask me how I'm doing. Everyone in the States makes judgments.

"It was ironic to me that before I left everyone told me stereotypes about countries," Melanie adds. "Especially France. Everyone told me that all of Europe hates Americans and they will run the other direction instead of helping me. I couldn't wait to tell people how wrong they were. My experience was the exact opposite. People bent over backwards to help me there. Always. People wouldn't just point me in the direction, they would walk me all the way to the destination."

"I wasn't 'shocked' like I was told I would be, which I attribute to a pretty bad study abroad experience," writes Anne, a student from Graz, "but I did have one interesting thing happen. For the first couple weeks I was finding myself extremely irritated when I was spoken to in English at stores. I forgot where I was and that the first language of storekeepers is English! I just thought they were so rude to assume I only spoke English--something typical of what would happen in Europe."

"Also, I find it hard to be friendly in a truly American way," Anne adds. "As I walk around and people greet me, it's a little strange for me to be greeted or to greet others. That's just not how it was done in Austria."

"I would have to say that my experience coming back from being abroad was less about reverse culture shock and more about the difficulties of returning to a life after a long absence and missing the one you left," writes Janine, who studied in Brussels. "In terms of reverse culture shock though, I didn't really find it all that difficult to slip myself back into a North American lifestyle. Sure there are things I miss about Brussels, like the food, the general feel of living in a historical European city, my interesting tram rides, and the cafe-lined streets, but they are not things that made it hard to adapt to life in the US and Canada." What has made it hard was the pace of life in North America. In Brussels, Janine's priorities were school; after that her schedule was very open. "After I came back it was hard to fit back into a tightly scheduled life," she says. "I felt like I didn't have the time to breathe, enjoy dinner conversation, or simply relax the way I used to in Brussels. I suddenly had millions of commitments that I had been free of all bearing down on me again, when all I really wanted to do was sit down and regroup and process everything I had been through."

She continues, "Another thing I noticed when I came back home was so much had changed yet so little had changed that I often felt in flux." On the one hand, she pointed out that spending a few weeks with her family over the summer felt the same as it always

had, and she could "easily slide back into the life they had led without me." But yet she couldn't, not quite, because she knew she was different. Whether anyone else noticed or not, Janine knew being abroad had changed the way she thought about herself and how she felt about her values and beliefs. "It was hard to make others understand how much my experience had affected me, and how simple life seemed back home compared to the wonderful adventures I had abroad," she adds.

"In fact, that was another thing I struggled with—the fact that really my experiences were my own, and I couldn't share them with anyone close to me. All the people I met while abroad were miles away. We all returned to our own separate lives, and most of us found it difficult to integrate both our abroad life and our home life. Gradually I lost touch with all but several people whom I met abroad. So while my memories of my semester abroad are unforgettable, sometimes they are lonely and bittersweet memories. Sometimes I think back and find it hard to believe that it all ever happened." She reassures herself it did by creating a scrapbook of postcards and photos a year after her return.

But still, "I think what I really miss now is the excitement of a different life. Of being somewhere where the days were less predictable and I felt there were always new things to do and discover, and a lot less "real life issues" to worry about. It felt great to be independent and adventurous in Brussels, and I think I gave some of that up when I returned home. I think it all stays with me, and has shaped the way I am today, but it's not as present in my daily life as it was when I was abroad."

Janine stresses, however, that the discomfort and loss of contentment upon returning weren't bad thing. "But the feelings I had when I came back were absolutely not a reason not to go abroad. Even if I had known what would happen when I returned I would absolutely one hundred percent still have gone abroad. In fact, I'm already looking into ways to go abroad in grad school. My semester abroad will always be sort of a magical memory, and a part of school that I will never forget."

What she won't expect when she comes back is how she can expect disappointment, but she can never expect how she will respond to the loss of things like sidewalks and people walking on them. From her bedroom window in Europe she could see her whole neighborhood walking by. The closest thing now is the side walks of her college campus or in the early mornings the ladies power walking to and fro. Suddenly she has to throw plastic and glass bottles away again. Suddenly a quarter of a mile is too far to walk and Mom's apple pie doesn't taste like she remembered it anyway. The sunshine is as dull as the neighborhood of pre-fabricated houses she passes on the interstate and the Wal-Mart going up in another cornfield.

"When I came back to the States after being in Europe for six months I was extremely depressed," Rachel says. "I felt as though people in the States are extremely ignorant and close minded. Life is was not the same back in the States as it was in London and I hated that. I missed the carefree attitudes Europeans hold. Now I don't want this to make me sound conceited, even though it is going to, but I truly felt like I was superior to individuals who had never been out of the States before. I felt like I had a leg up when it came to awareness of other cultures and I prided myself for that."

She expands. "When I came back I was a complete mess. My best friend was studying in Chile for the whole summer, my other best friend was staying at school and my other two girlfriends had opposite schedules from me. I felt as though no one understood what I had gone through while abroad and no one really cared to listen to every detail about my experience. I missed the people I lived with in London and all the people I worked with as well. I also missed the way of life in Europe and was not satisfied how things were back in the States. I found myself picking everything about the States apart.

"My behavior was not like me at all and I knew that it had something to do with the reverse culture shock I was experiencing from returning from being abroad. I began to

work a lot and constantly kept myself busy. I also found it very beneficial to surround myself around as many people as possible. This helped me deal with the feelings of depression I was experiencing and I was slowly able to get back into the swing of things.

"In Austria I can walk right into the room and slap the switch," Justin writes, "but in the US when I did that nothing happened. I realized I had to start flicking the switches again instead of slapping them, so that took a bit to get used to again. One thing I still miss about Austria is that there is no small talk at check-out lines . . . I also miss not having to show my ID to buy alcohol at bars or stores, as well as being able to buy it at any grocery store I go to."

Justin has been doing a lot of driving across the expansive Midwest since returning to America, and all the driving highlights the absence of trains. "Every time I look at that empty median in the middle of the highway," he says, "I think 'There could be a train there!' It just feels so backward to me that we have to drive everywhere and it really makes me resent the route our country took back when train travel was a viable alternative." He adds, "The bus system here is very lacking, and just made me miss a European city where everything is so close together, and you can walk or take the bus to a number of grocery stores in just a few minutes. Walking to a grocery store in 10 minutes is impossible within Kansas City, and it makes absolutely no sense why this is the case there."

Doing laundry in America also highlighted the difference in the two countries' energy usage. The washing machines in Graz were twice as small and the drying was done on a drying rack, not a dryer. "Simply doing laundry back home in the US made me realize just how much energy we actually use," Justin said, "and I felt very conscious about this fact. I have even bought a drying rack so I no longer have to use the dryer."

"My transition back into the States was fairly painless," a student from Amsterdam writes. "While in Europe, I missed drinking fountains, cheeseburgers grilled in your backyard, and openly religious and spiritual people. Upon returning, however, I did miss

the European awareness and advocacy of environmentalism, and it became strikingly clear to me the contrast between Europeans' and North Americans' attitudes toward their government. Generally, North Americans fear their government and European governments fear their people. Europeans view their government more as an organizational body empowered by the people to care for the people and answer their needs, where North Americans view the government as some supreme & corrupt body that infringes on our liberty. I wish we had a more positive relationship with our leaders."

Home isn't so bad, abroad isn't so perfect. But studies are continually proving that many students literally cannot go home again. While they love home they have been in another place for too long. You've seen the different person you've become. In a study in *The Journal of Counseling and Development*, Victoria Christofi and Charles L. Thompson write that literally, "You Cannot Go Home Again."[138] Christofi and Thompson researched and interviewed students from Greece, Russia, Africa, all over, who had studied for three years in the USA, returned home for a short time, and then made the decision to return to America. Because they had idealized home—forgetting the inconveniences while remembering Grandma's apple pie through rose-tinted glasses—home broke their hearts. They tried to like being home. They even felt guilty, and a lot of them still do, but they couldn't stay there.

Culture shock, according to psychologists, occurs "when individuals become immersed in a culture different from their own,"[139] and was described in 1960 as "a disease precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse."[140] The reverse is also true: reverse culture shock has been defined as the

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[138] V. Christofi, and C. L. Thompson. "You Cannot Go Home Again: A Phenomenological Investigation of Returning to the Sojourn Country After Studying Abroad." *Journal of Counseling and Development* (Winter 2007), Volume 85. pp. 53-62

[139] M.J. Westwood, W.S. Lawrence, and D. Paul, "Preparing for re-entry: A program for the sojourning student." *International Journal of the Advancement of Counseling, 9,* pp. 221-230. 1986

[140] Oberg, K. "Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology, 7,* 1960, pp 177-182. P.177

"temporal psychological difficulties returnees experience in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time."[141]

The individual's background, the host culture, reentry environment, gender, age, and readiness to return home all affect the reentry process. In particular, living abroad can negatively change relationships with friends at home, which strains an individual's reentry process, as Janine and Rachel realized.

She learned after the fact is that she isn't quite sure what there is home to go to now. The price for purchasing her place in a land of new drinks, foods, ideas, and social structures is the war in the back of her mind as to why she's not still there, and why she can't be a little happier in the place that everybody knows is the best country on earth.

"When we first left Scotland I was just really, really depressed to be leaving," Lauren, from St Andrews writes. "I hadn't realized that I'd gotten used to hearing the accents everywhere. Returning from Scotland back to Hawaii was especially disorienting. It's a very different culture here even from mainland America, so the transition from London to Maui three days later threw me a bit. I did not see a single flatbed pickup truck the entire time I was in Scotland. Here in Hawaii, the roads are ruled by monster trucks that are jacked up two feet above the tires and tailgate you mercilessly. Drivers in America are not, I think, as smart and considerate. Coming back really made me think about how much we have that we don't need or use. Like car space—the cars here are so much bigger, but don't fit any more people. We complain a lot, especially considering our relative affluence as a culture. The price of gas- not to mention taxes- is so much higher over there, but here people whine about it all the time.

"However," she says, "I do appreciate not fearing for my life whenever I enter a crosswalk! It's nice to get back to someplace where the pedestrians have the right of way.

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[141] A. Uehara, "The Nature of American Student Re-entry Adjustment and Perceptions of the Sojourner Experience." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10, 415-438*. 1983, p. 420

Although I'm still not sure which way to look first before I cross the street".

"I can't think of too many other things pertaining to reverse culture shock," Rob writes, "but most of my friends that went abroad to other countries seem to feel the same about a lot of the things they experienced."

What They Learned

> Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.
> -Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*[142]

As many American travelers have learned, Europe and its social grace, its homeward pull, is neither guaranteed nor easy. "Cultivating distinction by traveling to Europe is risky business," writes William Stowe in his chapter on Henry James.[143] "The European experience as James describes it can be genuinely revelatory and deeply disconcerting," he writes, "teaching travelers things they did not know and really did not want to know, subverting their sense of self and of place in the world." In Stowe's opinion, James represented Europe as "elusive satisfaction"—disappointments, lessons, but never a neat prize or a "life redeemed."[144] As well, "James loved Europe as he loved art but he also understood the enervating, demoralizing effect both could have on his almost universally ill-prepared compatriots."[145]

If he could do anything over, Rob says, he would have a non-American roommate. Ryan gets along with his Polish roommate, but probably would not have let him surf for gay porn on his laptop. He definitely would have been more financially stable before coming abroad.

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[142] M. Twain, *The Innocents Abroad.* (London, 1916).

[143] Stowe, 193

[144] ibid, 194

[145] ibid, 194

"I would have started speaking German earlier to my friends," Benjamin says, "and I would have pretended that I didn't know English to a lot of people." He admitted to a language pattern of speaking nothing but English, feeling guilty, and then using German again.

They would all do things over. Christian would work harder on the language before he came, and would have studied a little harder. And, "I would do more traveling," he adds.

"I would have paid my rent earlier," Eric says.

"I wish I'd gotten a single," Jessica says.

"Me too," says Christian.

"I wish I would have known to not be so afraid when I first got here," Eric says.

"I used to think I could be alone for a long time, and I've realized I can't," Myrna says at the end of her semester in Florence. "I need to be around other people. I was all alone in Florence at first, because I got here earlier than all my other housemates. It felt like I was in a prison. If I had to travel alone I'd get lonely. So I definitely appreciate friends more. You also don't know what you've got until you don't have a vacuum, a dishwasher, a dryer, until you have to hang your clothes to dry."

The final question then: Is study abroad a way to learn or a way to play?

"Leading question, there should be no 'or'," Glee replies in an email. "It is good and can be a easy semester. It seems terribly puritanical to assume that one precludes the other. I wish all students, regardless of income could have this opportunity. Europeans believe that Americans are too egocentric; they do not respect other countries. I explain that there is reason for this. It is easier for Europeans to holiday to another country with new language and culture, from Graz, one can travel an hour south to be in Slovenia, an hour east to be in Hungary, an hour or so southwest to be in Italy. I travel an hour from Havelock North Carolina and I will be in Kinston or Camp Lejune or Little Washington.

The American landscape does not allow for much international awareness. And very few Americans can afford to travel outside the US. So, it would be super cool if the US was a more socially responsible nation and support all university students to have at least a semester abroad to promote global awareness."

"I think studying abroad is a good cultural and academic experience," an anonymous student writes, "whether the student be an undergrad who is more interested in partying or a postgrad that is obviously more focused on their studies. You learn things from living in another culture whether you seek out those lessons or not. The European University system is much different from ours; there is far less hand-holding. I think this is a positive thing for students to experience, whether they are serious about their studies or not. I also think that in the present political climate, and with the increasing globalization of our world, it is important for Americans, who are typically very isolated culturally, to spend time in another part of the world-both to observe other cultures and to realize how other cultures view Americans."

"I think studying abroad has the potential to be the best experience of any college student's life," Rachel says. "The catch is, you will only get as much out of the program as you put into the program. If one goes abroad with a close-minded attitude, they are obviously not going to have neither the best time nor the best experience. By pushing and forcing yourself to step out of your comfort zone, you are able to gain everything the experience has to offer. Some students do treat the opportunity as an easy semester with lots of drinking, but they will ultimately not be getting that much out of the experience."

"Regardless of the student, study abroad is good for everyone," Kathy says. "It makes you more mature, and self-reliant." She has a son who has just dropped out of college; she wishes he could be here too, because she thinks this would help him grow up a lot. In her case, it is also making her husband and sixteen-year old daughter more mature and self-reliant too. She can tell that her daughter and husband have become closer, and in

a telling moment, she laughs and says they appear to have learned how to clean and cook on their own too. Now her daughter doesn't call her everyday. "But the longer I'm away, the less I think about them," she says. "That's a good thing—if I thought about them all the time I would never stop worrying."

"If you isolate yourself from your surroundings—to party or study," says Megan, "you're wasting time, because you're not encountering new things or new people."

"You can go in completely polarized ways," Britt says of study abroad students and the sometimes drastically different ways they approach a semester abroad. "If a student is here to just get by, and take what the city offers—they still can have a good experience, because they still have to figure out a new culture—they have to take the stairs, they can't get a big cup of coffee. Something from somebody's experience abroad will stick. Just the idea of getting on a plane and surviving in another country for four months will change you."

Ned thinks students are wasting their time if they're abroad just to study. Like several other students here, he uses the sponge metaphor to translate his approach to the semester abroad: he is here to soak up as much as he can. "I came here to study but to have fun too. Sometimes I think that if I had been more out of my comfort zone I might have been happier. If I could study abroad for another semester, I think I'd go to Africa, and if I could do another semester after that, I'd go to South America." Regardless, he says, if you're studying abroad, "You should go balls to the wall."

"I would tell anyone to study abroad," Melanie says. "I gained too much from it. I want people to see outside the box like I do. And I will do anything it takes to send my kids abroad. It was really hard for my folks to know I was so far away, but now they can't believe what I've done in my short life."

Alison's opinion of studying and travel abroad is that it's probably not for everyone. "It would be cool if everyone wanted to do it, but I'm not sure if everyone

would appreciate the experience. You can't really be a homebody if you're going to spend a year abroad, although anyone can change. You just might spend a lot of time being miserable. I would still be the same if I hadn't gone to Germany, but I can't imagine life without having gone."

She grins and adds, "I just had a ton of fun. It was the most fun year of my life. I got to sleep in, travel, read, shop, and drink good beer. I caught up on literature, and I think that's really when I revived my love for it. I also developed a lot of ideas for my creative writing, and since then everything I write takes place in Bavaria."

Being twenty-three instead of twenty, and an intern, not a student, Michael doesn't entirely relate to his fellow students at Adelante. They tend to look at him as the "old man" of the group. The difference between Michael and the other students is that, he says, the other students are here to drink and party every night, and are not making the most of their time. Many of them say the classes are easy and the professors are even more lax about the foreign students. "You still get something out of studying abroad," he says of the students who have made partying their goal, "but you're not getting enough out of it. These students think they're getting a cultural education when going out to bars, but they're not."

"Everyone should study abroad because if you never leave your comfort zone you won't learn," says Maya. She realizes that the reality is that only certain people will study abroad. But she thinks anyone is capable of doing it. "People don't realize how strong they are until they try."

Changes

> "I'm too little to go so far away," I said. And she replied, with a smile, "That's exactly why you should go. It will make you bigger." And so it did.[146] -Kristin Hayes, "Why Go abroad"

[146] K. Hayes, "Why Go Abroad?" Transitions Abroad Magazine, March/April 2001. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0103/why_go_abroad.Shtml

She was changing all along but this is her first sharp inkling that something is different. When she finds her clothes are too big and she is antsy to walk even just a half-mile to work, there will be other inklings like this. She thought a semester in Europe would make her more worldly and cultured. She thought she'd be fluent in a language, dress better, and know all about wine and cheese. Coco Chanel would always linger on her skin and she'd have at least one, maybe three foreign boyfriends. And obviously she'd have an accent. She didn't have any idea that one day thick lenses would fall from her eyes and the world would have changed shape. She didn't anticipate being uncomfortable in her hometown, cringing at what had been familiar accents and suddenly having to trash her 10-year plan for the future.

Those who have had a chance to work with the good study abroad students say they have increased commitment to peace and international cooperation, heightened interest in transnational affairs, greater emphasis on international understanding, and greater empathy for other cultures and nations, improved work habits and greater persistence. [147] But what does this change look like?

"I have no hair now," says Britt who shaved her hair off her last month in Amsterdam, "and I have a tattoo on the back of my head, and I'm so OK with it."

"Everything that could happen to you in three or four months has happened to me," Laura laughs. "I met a person I was very, very impressed with, and he turned out to be a horrible person. But I learned. I've learned that how I thought I would respond to situations is different from how I actually respond. I learned that sometimes I respond better than I imagined."

"I'm more independent," Karin says, "but I'm also more dependent on other

[147] Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz, 1990, in Lindsey, Elizabeth W. "Study abroad and values development in social work students." *Journal of Social Work Education, (*Spring-Summer 2005) v. 41 i2 p 229

people. I can cook on my own, travel on my own, but if strangers weren't nice to me I wouldn't make it. No one tells you how to have an experience abroad. It's easier than I thought it would be. I've learned I might be little but I'm tough."

"I think I have changed for the better because I am a much more confident and independent person," Amy says. "But – I don't know why it took coming to a foreign country to figure out that I was completely okay being by myself, doing things on my own, taking care of myself, and truly enjoying 'Amy' time."

"I used to think Muslims were Arab," Rob says, "but now I'm friends with Bosnians who are Muslim, and I'm like, 'Oh, white people can be Muslim too.' It's breaking down my preconceptions. I'm getting a better understanding of other people. I've never been in a place where there's so much diversity."

"When crossing streets by foot," Rob adds," I still wait for the light to turn green." Other examples of his cultural transformation are that he no longer enjoys meaty American meals, he finds himself staring at people all the time ("because people in Austria blatantly stare"), and, he struggles to grasp bar culture in America (because he learned to drink in Austria). "Also I can't talk with women at bars anymore. My confidence has gone down, not so much because of Austrian culture, but because in Austria I was intimidated by the language barrier. There are only so many flirty, simple and seemingly stupid conversations you can have in a second language, especially when the person with whom you are speaking has a dialect that limits you to keeping it in the constraints of what you can understand."

"I've learned to take responsibility for myself," Ryan says. "One of my female friends was listening to me whine about my girlfriend and she basically said, 'Why don't you do something about it?' It's stuff I knew but being here has reemphasized the importance of taking charge of your own life."

"When I was getting my paperwork together at my college office last year," Jessica,

a student in Oxford says, "one of the women working in there told me, 'Now don't you go getting stuck up while you're overseas. I know people who have gone abroad and they come home thinking they're better than everyone else.' So I try to keep that in mind. I don't think I'm getting stuck up though. I hope not."

Melanie says because of the kindness of strangers, she is more giving of her time back to then. "I missed accents and the language barriers. It was kind fun playing charades with people to figure out where the hell the bus stop was…or whatever I needed!" She also cares much less what the unfriendly strangers and acquaintances think because, "I respect people's differences more than I already did." When she wears her striped socks with hot pink shorts, blue tank and orange shoes to her teaching job, she doesn't care what her co-workers think. "And I tell my family I love them more," she adds. "Being without them for so long really was a struggle."

"I don't think I changed too much," Rachel says, "but I do think I am a more open-minded person now that I've been abroad. I am an extremely liberal person as it is, but studying abroad made me realize there is a whole world out there that is waiting to be explored. I now find myself wanting to try new things all the time just to keep myself entertained. I most definitely believe that the changes that occurred while I was abroad have stuck since I have returned home. Nothing really shocks me anymore. I learned that there are millions of different types of people that make up this world and that not everyone is going to share the same thoughts and ideas as me. I've learned to keep an open mind when talking to new people because I may really benefit from them. I also feel as though I have a little more patience with things since I've returned home. While in Europe I found myself in very difficult positions at times and I learned that the only way to overcome a difficult situation is to remain calm."

"I'm more reserved because I have to listen more," says Maya. "But I'm also more independent—I'm out of a relationship, and I'm alone a lot. I also have a higher tolerance

for alcohol."

"School was always my priority," she adds, "and sometimes I go back to my old priorities, but I'm trying to let myself be more social. I'm trying to be less self-conscious. I'm always self-conscious here because I'm American, but I'm assuming that once I'm back to my comfort zone I'll be super confident."

"I mastered the public transportation system," Kimberly says. "At my home university my professor was telling me I needed to be applying for internships in New York and Chicago and Washington. I was scared to death, but after this semester, I know I could do an internship anywhere.

"I don't know," Laura says, "I always knew my family was important to me, but now I've realized how valuable they are. I've learned I can't be so far away from them for so long. I've kind of been learning this all my life, but times get tough, but there's always something there to get you through it. The experience helps you realize what's important to you, and helps you think about things twice, analyze things more."

It's not that studying abroad makes her a better person, although she will be tempted to think so. It's that studying abroad simultaneously adds millions of dense trails and wrinkles to her grey and pink brain, while also blowing the top off her head. It is like being resurrected or levitated, only she doesn't notice until she's back home, transformed and stunned.

Eduard, a professor of history in Graz, is typing away behind a desk full of books. Books are tumbling out of the bookcase, stacked on the floor, piled on the table and seemingly suspended in midair at various points in the room. A whiskery Austrian accent comes from the depths of his beard, and a face that remembers wartime years. He teaches history paying close attention to special lessons, like genocide, the Cold War, Post-colonial times and European integration.

It is meaningless to ask a history teacher why he teaches history. Those who know to ask the question have heard the answers already. But we like the answer every time we hear it. And so I ask him. But first, I ask him about the American students in his classrooms. He says he teaches a few Americans each semester, but because he teaches in German, any American students must have a high grasp of classroom German. But he does get some, he says nodding his head, and they sit together, take notes together, and take exams together. Sometimes they get offended together. The American has no idea how non-universal his and her beliefs are until she walks into a classroom abroad. In this case, she discovers neutrality is not a stepping stone to communism and socialist are not necessarily anaemic grey-suit wearing cousins of commies. They learn that American ideas are not everyone else's ideas, and this thought alone can make them feel they are walking a fine red line. So they get defensive. So they argue immediately when America becomes a topic, trigger happy uneasy ready to put a verbal bullet into any suspect remark.

Most grow out of it, though, and with a terrifying sense of calm begin to acknowledge neutrality and universal health care even as it seems like so much fence-sitting; they let someone make a statement about torture in Guantanamo, oil wars and rigged elections. It is the history of this moment, the never-ending puzzle full of holes but putting together a pattern, a view we can work with. These students may be in the here and now, but the oil wars and greenhouse gases they protest against are nothing new; their right to vote, wear pants and return to this country is based on past actions, all of them.

Merely being a study abroad student is a lesson in history they may or may not discover. Perhaps not in Austria, where most of the foreigners are from Nigeria, Turkey and England. But in Oxford, Florence, Venice, they cannot ignore the footpaths of Americans before them. Bill Clinton's library desk here, Harry's Bar there, Sylvia Plath's footsteps across the bridges in Cambridge, the uncle of an aunt who came to Paris and never left, the first American to graduate from St Andrews, the grandmothers who sailed

from Italy, the Hemingway sangria drinkers and bullfight watchers in Spain. A long road trails behind them. They think they are breaking new ground or that perhaps the new ground has been paved smooth for them by their ancestors. They think they're breaking new ground but the only ground being broken is inside.

Grace

Life abroad consolidates in a limited present the work of personal deliverance from the past . . .
-Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune, "Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe"

She wakes up one morning and can't quite tell in those murky seconds where she is or where she belongs. She comes down in a dream of cucumber sandwiches and the overnight train to Aberdeen. Maybe, this is what it's all about. She is not her place, her country, her hostel on a hill, but the witness. The person not sleeping or thinking, but lying in the dark, reaching her hand up. If her hand touches a ceiling or a bed above her, she knows she is in a hostel, still abroad.

She will outline her semester for you. It begins and ends with travels most often alone, and punctuated by how cheap she must live in order to move and stay between these countries. A litany of lockers in trains stations and hostels. The green light blinking as she feeds it coins. IKEA bunk beds, the corner lights above her bunk bed. Breakfast buffets of toast and lukewarm milk, tiny packets of Nutella, and Nescafe from a vending machine. Yet she eats it and calls it good. Those were the best moments. She had a cup of coffee and a map, and like Columbus on the prow of the Nina, she has a day and a land to explore.

Was it worth it? Years later she will remember this semester as something that sets her apart. A student cannot go to Europe and come back the same girl in heels and a mini-skirt. She is not the same girl who double-checks her hair in the mirror, or at all, now that she has cycled in so many days of rain.

She has made mistakes, like wax museums and Buckingham palace hot dogs. She lived through essay exams. She learned things, like how to recycle. She learned that immigrants and poor people are not so different from her, just another version of foreigner and stranger. She came dripping money but didn't know it. When she left, it was all gone. And after several train station nights, after an airport bunk bed, and after eating cookies on

the morning ferry to Skye, she learned a lesson about the hard life. She took a glimpse at the other world, the world where people zip themselves up tight in rotting sleeping bags and cuddle in the doorway of an ATM vestibule.

When she talks about Europe, though, she doesn't know what to say. She finds herself every day starting and failing at an essay, clueless as the day she fell off the plane. Yet she thought she had learned so much. She thought that getting pick-pocketed, and the kindness of the surly bus driver would mean something by now. But she finds that things are hard to summarize. She can make an excellent argument for the holiness of Gothic architecture, but her mouth goes dry when someone asks, "So, what are the Italian/German/English people really like?"

They say the process of becoming bicultural, or at least not adamantly monocultural involves six states.[148] What do psychologists know? Nothing. But they make guesses. They take notes on other people's panic attacks. They say it begins with denial. My culture is the only real one, just as I am the only real mind here. You are all robots, pets, put here for my enjoyment. It explains why you do so many of the stupid things you do. I like French culture until the shops close at 2:00. I cannot visualize anyone living this way.

The second stage is defense. My way is best. Eventually, when I have achieved some level of biculturality, I will bring myself to spell it *defence*, but not for a long, long time. In this stage, I notice all the cultural differences better, and they frighten me. The way the British pronounce the T on the end of *fillet*. The way Spanish men gurgle *guapa*. The way you are not the least bit patriotic at all. We are not the world; you are your side of the world, with your falafels and curry, and I am mine. How much longer must I stay?

Now I minimize. I must insist on similarities, from what my host country says to

[148] M.J. Bennett, "A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (2), 1986. pp.179-195

what it believes and does, and ultimately, to how it meets my expectations at the door. One does not say banana with a soft A. One does not approve of universal health care. One does not listen to Britney Spears in the pub and one does not call a can of Irn-Bru, "juice."

Someday, we must stumble out of the woods and land at the feet of acceptance. We don't like it here but there is no choice: other people act differently than me. Other people think it's perfectly all right to not have internet in their homes and to pay a quarter of their income in taxes. They think it's OK to not leave a tip or to bring one's sandwich out half-cold. I don't like butter on my sandwiches but I can accept that others must.

From here, just a short tumble towards adaptation. I can empathize in another language. I can listen in another culture. I can go along with this standing at breakfast thing, this going for a drink all the time and I see your point when you say guns, SUV's, and my president are bad.

Now I don't quite call any culture home. I am integrated, which is its own punishment and reward; I have to come to terms with sitting on a cultural fence. "They constitute their identities at the margins of two or more cultures," Hammer writes, "and central to none."[149] A person at the margins. I am a person on the cusp, a character from a short story, the girl who lives on a change of clothes and apples, the girl who drinks air and water, who slips between countries.

The truth is that she knows she is only ever halfway here. None of us will be bicultural in a year or a semester. And how we pronounce words or order coffee means nothing, nothing. Not even opening a mind wide enough to accept someone else's political beliefs means a damn thing. Even psychologists know Bennett's model of intercultural understanding only described the surface layer of what we are trying to get it: that behavior

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[149] M. Hammer, M. Bennett, and R. Wiseman, "Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, (2003), pp.421-443.

and attitudes say something about a worldview that loses and finds itself somewhere far beneath. How she acquiesces to British pronunciation and advertising says something about what she's willing to give up, one little piece of her past at a time. She is only ever halfway there, but once in a while, she just about gets it right.

Early one morning you woke up after having finally collapsed into twelve hours of sleep. Yesterday's lesson was a mixed bag; your tutor said, over a cigarette, that your paper was the best of the semester—and you could have many more of those but for the fact you're insecure. He released you from the office and you walked away out the corridor and down the stone stairs, no longer noticing how marvelous it is to walk up and down 19th century corridors to class. You found your bike, and with its small red lights blinking, you eased your way into the homeward-bound traffic. Are you insecure with a pen? Then ride a bike. And you do, all around the dark little town, like a restless ghost. You are a ghost. The ghost of what is going away and what is coming. Your body just pushing the pedals, inhaling.

Essay. To try. You lay out your line of words, round them up like Scrabble, but only in the right combinations will they be a string of something that will take you places, like a railroad track; a string of something lovely, like pearls; or a string of something that will save your life, like stepping stones over the river.

When she walks down to the river each morning she knows she should have her camera over her arm, not a bag of books and sandwiches. The lazy part of her, the part that knows the most *(someday I will die, but first I will see another autumn riverbank)* shrugs and looks a little closer. But she thinks *tomorrow* and writes a note to herself to carry her camera more often, a note she will forget immediately.

Today the sun cannot be bothered, but she doesn't mind today, even though she is no longer the Midwestern summer girl watching for rain clouds over the corn. She crosses an uphill cobbled bridge on a busy weekday noon, inhales the gray stone, the brick, the red

ivy. Her breath does not quite puff, and a few insects struggle in the air but this is clearly the beginning of winter. With the clicking of heels on the cobbles, the rustling of sandwich papers, the tinkle of shop bells, she couldn't be happier, even though the ladies in the street say *miserable dark day today, isn't it?*

She's glad, even grateful. Europe should feel like a different place, even if a sometimes not-what-you-want other place. No one can resituate a culture without bringing along the weather. European stones and European people are not the same in North Carolina or New York City, no matter how artfully the cathedral goes up.

She isn't the same now either. For God's sakes, she's caught herself saying fille*t* now. She is more different than she imagines or knows, and certainly can't put it into words. She tries anyway, creating little strings of sentences and throwing a rope bridge over the chasms, across the water and continents, inching forward like a dancing bear on a tricycle, daring to look down.

> I picked up a stone and tried to throw it down the hillside to the river. I could have children, and maybe no worries. But I was a person walking down a track in Baltistan all alone on a Wednesday morning. I was capable; and sometimes, a glimpse of what we could be opens in our minds like the fearsome blue crevasses I'd see on glaciers . . . No matter how ridiculous the discovery, the hint of possibility, it poses a choice; either you act upon it, or annul it.
>
> -Kathleen Jamie, *Among Muslims*[150]

A year before we had never dreamed that we would drive across Ireland, much less drive across Ireland without knowing how to reverse the rental car. We didn't know we would coast downhill in the rain around Loch Lomond, spinning the wheels of our rental bike. We didn't know we would cycle to the pub by night, look at the stars, find our way to the next village, or make our way to our temporary home, one bike light at a time. We never realized we knew so little about driving a stick shift, or taking our life into our hands, or wet roads in Scotland. But what do you do when 4000 miles out, hell bent on the Blarney Stone and the ring of fire and the graves of the heroic dead? If you can go forward, you go

[150] K. Jamie, *Among Muslims.* (London, 2002)

forward. You pull sideways up along the most necessary stopping points, then pull straight out again the next morning, and race toward another crumbled castle on a hill.

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