



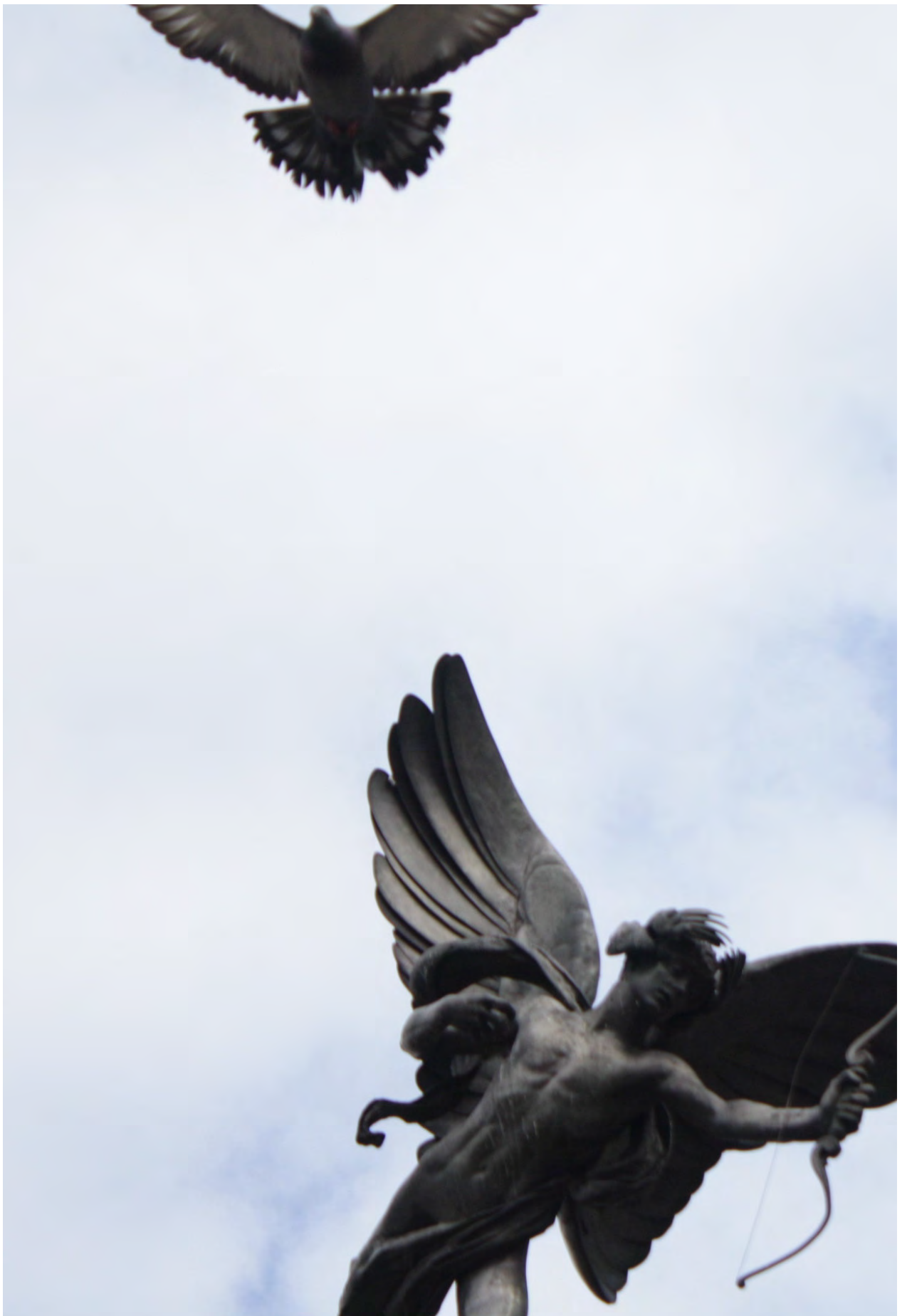
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BRANDEIS ABROAD





WANDER: BRANDEIS ABROAD



Letter From The Editor

To my friends, far and wide,

I had been in China for almost six months, and I was finally out on my own. Away from my language teachers, away from my tutors, away from tour guides with flags and loudspeakers. Xishuangbanna, the Chinese area bordering Laos and Burma, had lured me in with its tropical November weather and world-famous Pu'er tea. Officially, I was there to study the development of the Chinese tea trade. I discovered, however, that while roads in China may not always lead you exactly where you intend to go, they do always lead you somewhere interesting. I was warmly invited to sit and drink tea with the villagers. The tea came from the three-hundred year old tea trees in their backyards, but their families had lived in the secluded mountains of Xishuangbanna long before the roots of those trees grasped the earth. We didn't talk tea, or history. Not at first, anyway. Instead, they shared their food with me. The rice grown in their village is sweeter than the rice I had tasted anywhere else in China. They told me stories about their families: their sons and brothers moved to far-away cities for construction jobs, and only visited during the New Year. They told me what they thought about foreigners—tea merchants occasionally visit the village to buy tea, but the last group—much to the locals' consternation, "couldn't even use chopsticks!"

We did eventually get around to tea talk, and I did write a paper, but the paper is not what I recall when thinking about my time abroad. Serendipitous discoveries reward the traveling student with an experiential understanding that no class can ever provide. The small talk with other passengers on a train, meals shared with strangers, and embarrassing moments of mistranslation all lead to a deeper understanding of the ever-changing world—certainly a much deeper understanding than can be expressed in fifteen pages of twelve point type, double spaced. I wanted a way to share these experiences, the ones that really mattered, and to hear the stories of other Brandeisians who had found the place that, to them, is what Xishuangbanna is to me.

So, it is with great pride that I introduce to you the first issue of Wander. As an institution of the global liberal arts, Brandeis students and alumni conduct research, volunteer, and work all over the world to further our vision of Social Justice. Through essays, creative writing, photography, and other forms of visual art, Wander seeks to document not the conclusions of Brandeis students' work, but rather the processes of exploration, adventure, and discovery that underlie those conclusions.

I urge you not to think of the poetry and essays within this journal as mere pieces of writing, but instead as experiences. These letters are a glimpse in upon our fellows' triumphs, struggles, fears, and, if luck shines upon us all, elucidations. When done properly, writing can connect the reader directly to the experiences of the author, just as traveling helped the author connect to something deeper within themselves. So let us travel together, and not worry where the road leads. Let us be content just to know that it is a road, and that we are wandering upon it.

--Jake Laband, 2012

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When In Beijing, Do As The Beijingers Do

BY JAMIE FLEISHMAN

*Class of 2011,
Politics Major
Beijing, China*

On my first Sunday in Beijing, I completed my first game of 麻将 (majiang), took my first drink of 茅台酒 (maotaijiu), and tried desperately to communicate with my host mother and a friend's mother who both did not speak any English. Just when I thought my day could not have any more "new," my friend's mother told me to 闭眼 (biyan), close my eyes. A minute later I opened my eyes to see in front of me a box of small bags filled with scorpions. I knew my initial repulsion was no competition for the prodding of my friend's mother. She told me to 入乡随俗 (ruxiangsuisu), the Chinese idiom for "When in Rome do as the Romans do," and down went a scorpion. The mother told me a second one would taste better after another drink of 茅台酒 (maotaijiu), and I complied. After a third and final 干杯 (ganbei), I had, within a span of five minutes, eaten three more scorpions than I had ever eaten in my life.

The idiom 入乡随俗, also the title of my second-year Chinese textbook, stuck with me for much of my first weeks and months in China. Through a Chinese friend at Brandeis, I arranged to live with her parents for my first five weeks in China; parents who did not speak English. I didn't have much of a choice other than to live like the locals. I consciously chose to jump straight into full immersion in order to confront the linguistic and cultural barriers of China.

Confrontations against those did not always involve absorbing the new and the different, but actually revolved around not falling back on the old and the familiar. While living with my host family, I would not rely on the many packets of western medicine, but instead would try Chinese medicine. When going out to eat, I consciously stayed away from 必胜客 (Bi Sheng Ke - Pizza Hut), 肯德基 (Ken De Ji - KFC), or 麦当劳 (Mai Dang Lao - McDonalds), but instead

tried hole in the wall restaurants with no English menu. I successfully avoided any place that would make me forget I was in Beijing. I must admit that once during my first five weeks I completely failed. That was on Super Bowl Monday (Beijing +12 EST), when I woke up at 5:30 am to attend the official NFL sponsored party held at a Mexican bar/restaurant with a special performance by the New England Patriots Cheerleaders.

In retrospect, my willingness to put myself in a cultural and linguistic environment, open myself to new customs, and do nearly anything my friends and family asked of me proved to be a crucial part of my successful transition. However, the transition didn't always go as smoothly as my third drink of 茅台酒 (maotaijiu). My host parents worked during the day, and I spent many days alone watching TV or exploring my neighborhood always feeling quite overwhelmed and lonely. Study abroad offices always speak of "culture shock," but I felt more of a "culture overload" during much of my time in China. I developed a complex where I would constantly look at the people around me, amazed at how each person could grasp this incredibly deep language and culture. I spent much of my first few months feeling as though I would never be able to crack the linguistic and cultural walls that stood immeasurably high in front of me.

In my last few months in China, I found patience, persistence, and a constant willingness to use my mistakes as the most important tools in breaking through the linguistic and cultural barriers in front of me. I did not have these tools when I first arrived to China. I only gained them through eating scorpions, watching many hours of unintelligible Chinese television, avoiding McDonalds, and doing anything I could to 入乡随俗 - When in Beijing do as the Beijingers do.

Transference

BY MEGAN MCGRATH

*Class of 2012
Biology Major
Tanzania*

The dappled brown goat stood in forced immobility beneath the tree he was tied to, regarding me with a tense bodily expression. I was allowing myself, for a moment, to mourn for him, pre-mortem, and I think he knew it—he saw my stance, my eye contact, my contemplation—and I think he was sensibly alarmed to be the focus of that attention. I want to thank you, I thought at him. You are about to die. I am about to watch them kill you. Your breath will stop and mine will not. Tonight I will eat the muscles off your bones and I will continue living, and I want to thank you. I had no illusions that the goat could hear my thoughts, and if he could have I do not think it would have mattered—having your life taken from you is the worst, most hated, most terrifying possible end for any living thing, no matter how thankful the recipient—but still, I stated my

thanks, voicelessly. It was a selfish act. I knew I was about to witness the forcible taking of life. Not peaceful death, but killing, and the living anguish that goes with it. I wanted him to know that at least I was thankful. And even though I had no way of telling him, in a silent way, I tried.

When the time came to kill him, two Maasai men—both young, warrior age, enrobed in their shukas, bright purple and red—untied him from the tree and led him into the shade of another, where they had collected branches full of fragrant leaves, a bed to keep off the dirt. My friends, my fellow students, had gathered around, and as the warriors led the goat to us by the rope around his neck he bucked and reared, resisting with more fury than any of the countless others I have seen being led by boys across Northern Tanzania. “He knows,” someone said. Animals, especially those that we



BY MEGAN MCGRATH, 2012: Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

have domesticated, are better, I think, at reading human intent and emotion than we know. Maybe in that instant the goat saw that all of us knew more about his death than he did. Maybe all animals that die for us know from the start that we are predators, but it's only in the final moments that it matters. He saw his final moments in our faces, so he tried to run away.

The two warriors

worked as though their bodies were one, a four-handed thing. One pulled the animal's legs out from under him and laid him on his side, and he held them in his hands, front legs and back; the other wrapped the goat's muzzle in one hand and clenched it like a vice, and then he knelt, head bowed, with his right knee on the goat's outstretched throat, cutting off all of its internal workings, breath and blood. The rest of us stood and crouched around, silently watching, as the goat struggled in the only tiny movements that he was allowed. He flexed against the men's iron hands, clenched his eyes in agony, and mewled again and again, sounding like a child who is being smothered (and so he was). It sounded like a cry for help and also a cry of despair, the sound a thing makes when its own fear overcomes it and it must scream despite the fact that there is no use in screaming. His fear found its outlet in his breath, which was then breath wasted, because it was what he needed more than anything, and there was no recovering it once it was gone.

His cries became weaker and weaker, his struggles were less and less. The warriors began to relax as they had less of a life to contain and press out. The goat's life left with his breath, and he slipped away. I think it was only about a minute before he lay still and seemed to fall into a sleep. Catatonia. I know little about death, but I think that that quick sleep ended his pain. It was the beginning of his death, because his knowing life left him. That was what struck me the most: how fast it left. How fast they crushed it out of him and then it was gone. It was merciful. He didn't know about dying for very long at all.

When his eyelids slid open to reveal glassiness and blank, distended pupils, the warriors let go his legs and rose off of his neck. One of the men kept his hand around the goat's muzzle for several minutes still, bringing the animal the rest of the way out of life. I wonder what it was that the warrior felt that finally told him to let go. The process of dying was done; the goat's nose and mouth, now released, would not suck air and chase life, because life was fully gone. How did he know that it had happened? What did it feel like? From a few feet away, I couldn't

see the transition from dying to dead, but the warrior felt it, let go, and then took out his knife.

Once the goat was dead, it was meat, bones, and viscera, without the animation that usually protects bodies from knives. The warriors slipped the blades through skin and around joints like painters making brushstrokes. Two of my friends, fellow students, knelt to help them in the butchering, and so eight hands, white and black, moved over the corpse with equal sureness, making neat decisions with their knives.

The goat, with his lifeless staring face still intact, lost his legs at the joints—revealing, for the first time, the slick red of muscle—and then lost his ribs, which were lifted off of him in one piece. His organs spilled out onto the sweet-smelling leaves, tumbling blue piles of intestines and a vast, slippery stomach. The butchers lifted all of this away, and only then was there blood. It flowed into the body cavity and sat, a gore pool that began to congeal in the cool air. At the warriors' urging, we lined up and dipped our hands in. The blood is the spoils of those present at a slaughtering. Left to stand, it gels—you have to drink it while it still holds the warmth of life. I watched as my friends' faces became smeared with blood, and then I was kneeling in front of the carcass, dipping my fingers in—and it was warm. I raised my hand to my mouth and tasted the goat's life, salty and tangy like my own blood, but also sweeter, meatier—it tasted like sustenance. This was what he had died for. His blood became ours. The warriors slipped the goat's kidneys out of the carcass, and cut them into slivers. The kidneys are usually reserved as an honor to the most senior person who has participated in a killing, but today a piece was given to each of us. The small chunk of purple organ also tasted of blood; I closed my eyes and chewed, refusing revulsion at the strange melting crunchiness. I want to thank you, I thought. From his body to mine.

That night, we ate goat meat and goat soup. I ate until my belly was full, and every bite was delicious.

Nepali Haiku

BY CARRIE WATKINS

*Class of 2012
International and Global Studies Major
Nepal*

HATTERIKA! BAAPH
RE BAAPH RA MAAPH GARNUS MA
MICROBUSMAA CHHU

DAMN! OH MY GOODNESS
OW I'M SORRY. I'M IN A
CROWDED MICROBUS

HALA RA SHANTA
SURYA BAADAL AKHAASHMAA
KATHMANDUMAA CHHAN

CHAOS AND SILENCE
SUN AND CLOUDS BOTH IN THE SKY
THIS IS KATHMANDU

SOCHDAICHHU, KASTO
JIWAN DAAL BHAAT BINAA TYO
JIWAN DUKHI CHHA

THINKING ABOUT HOW
LIFE WITHOUT EATING DAAL BHAAT
THAT IS A SAD LIFE

DHEREI AGHI EK
WATAA SAANO KAMAL YO
UPATYAKAA THIYO

LONG LONG AGO ONE
LITTLE LOTUS THIS VALLEY
OF KATHMANDU WAS



BY ELENA KORN, 2013: Trastevere, Italy

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011



Past and Pending - Reflections Before Leaving India

BY KELSEY GRAB

*Class of 2012,
Studio Art and Sociology Double Major
Bangalore, India*

Today, as I reflect on my trip I realize, I could easily write beautiful stories about my travel, what it was like to get off my crutches finally, about meeting famous Indian architects and designers- but what I really want to talk about is my desire every day to enjoy my morning tea.

Because I'll be gone soon. It's not the tea or the masala dosa that I crave every day -- it's the being here. I crave existing in this world. I cannot capture it. I cannot take it with me. It won't ever be once the intercom announces "Welcome to the United States." India will not be there, instead it will be me and my suitcases. Welcome 'back' everyone will say. Welcome 'home' everyone will say. I've been stuck on this for a while. "I can't wait till you are home!" everyone says... but what does it mean to be home? Is it not where you are cared for, understood, appreciated, loved? In this case, I have been blessed to have many, many homes. And if this is true, are we ever truly "back?" How can one "belong" anywhere with a world so vast with connections made between people so easily? My whole reality of place and space seems to have transformed in just two months.

I feel so strange about the unpacking and repacking that I did yesterday. The Western-style clothes that I intend to leave here, the nick nacks that I brought from home to comfort me now feeling like dead weight on my back. These are pieces of my life I am willingly leaving behind. I choose what I put in and leave behind -- physical, spiritual, emotional, personal -- all these parts of myself I must check before I begin to move on. All

these parts of me are changing and rearranging and entering that plane differently.

I am constantly asking questions of myself. Who was I before, who I am I now, who will I be after... my past, present and future selves seem to be complicating one another. Reality sets in and it becomes clear that we are all at once the conglomerate of each and every part of our lives -- in each moment we are our present past and future selves, struggling for who gets the control of the next move. All three are the same, awaiting our recognition of them -- awaiting our concept of time to label them. When does something become the past? And how do we decide what we are in the present without acknowledging that past and inviting the future to persuade our change? Our bodies tell stories of all our lives. We are all pieces of the past, present and future trying to reconcile the challenges of being.

And so, when you ask, "How was India?" I will have trouble answering. Not just because the complexities of this question are beyond my plausible explanation, but because how India "was" and how India "is" and how India "will be" are all the same for me. The idea of past present and future have flowed together leaving me with the actuality that they are one in the same and my stories of what happened two weeks ago impact me as deeply as the story of this morning's cup of tea.

And I imagine when I get to the US it will be similar. How "India was" will change from day to day. My story of the day will change. My recollections will vary. The stories of the past will lose their luster as the reality of the pending



BY KELSEY GRAB, 2012: *Bangalore, India - The Conversation* (Painting)

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011

future will outweigh their glory. The past and the future will merge in the present moment.

This is to say that I will be back. There will be no “was” India; rather, I prefer, how “is” India, because as if by magical chance and destiny’s making this place has become a part of me. The sun has knitted its stories into the freckles of my skin and sang songs in my heart in languages I do not understand but comfort me in ways I could never explain. It cannot be determined in numbers and figures or in small shared stories. It cannot be written. It can only be experienced.

I am nervous about this. About the coming “back” process. When one feels as though they have the fabric of another weaved into their skin the original stitches have shifted and new ones must be placed differently than before. My U.S. home will not be the same as I left it. I am arriving as a different set of past and present and future than I was on June 2nd. There must be care taken with this. Understanding and respect and admiration for the changes that come and go and bring us joy. And it will be a challenge to accept that there will be misunderstandings, but there will be

no giving in to fruitless anger. It is useless to feed frustrations toward our personal misunderstandings and the misunderstandings of others. There can only be acceptance that misunderstandings are just another part of our lives. Misunderstanding walks with us wherever we are and we mustn’t be afraid. Real understanding is only found within, and even when we have our past, present, and futures each to console us, understanding ourselves is a difficult task in its own right.

This is something new and beautiful: to see misunderstanding and not try to transform it, rather allow it to live in us. To learn to be around misunderstandings and accept the virtue that none of our lives are understood in black and white. The range of colors that we are make it impossible to simplify us to just our primary sources. There are complexities and layers within us and around us that we may never fully understand.

But this is not misunderstanding. This is change. This is growth. This is living.

It is divinely human to misunderstand our many beings and there is beautiful solitude in this.



BY CARRIE WATKINS, 2012: Kathmandu, Nepal

Worthy of Our Study

BY JESSE APPELL

*Class of 2012,
International and Global Studies & East Asian Studies Double Major
Beijing, China*

As I become increasingly accustomed to China and the Chinese language, the wow-factor of being in a new culture does tend toward wearing off. Of course, not everything gets old: for instance, the older Beijing locals' habit of adding an "arr" sound onto the end of their words never fails to make me feel like I am speaking to a motley crew of octogenarian pirates. (What is the Beijinger's favorite day of the week? Tuesday, or XING QI *ERRRRRRR!!!!*)

However, day-by-day progress—not being able to read a restaurant menu, and then discovering the next month you ordered your food without even thinking about it—comes less and less often. I felt fortunate, then, to experience one of those leaps earlier this week. When three of our program's Chinese roommates gave us an in-depth introduction to the Chinese education system, I felt a dawning realization that not only was I understanding every word they said, but I was also computing their information in the same way I would when taking in a lecturer's words back in the United States. The process of merely understanding had always been my unspoken, concrete goal in China. In an unseen instant, that concrete goal of five months found itself irrevocably replaced by a new, more nebulous standard: how to best incorporate what I have learned into my new and ever-expanding worldview. When my range of vision shifted, I found myself confronting new, hitherto unforeseen issues... and, of course, enjoying every minute of it.

What we learned about the specifics of Chinese student's long hours can perhaps best be summed up by the fact that the example sen-

tence for learning to use the Chinese phrase 朝九晚五, "Zhao Jiu Wan Wu, To work from nine to five," was, "students are very busy, and they would be thrilled to wake up late and work from nine to five." In essence, elementary schoolchildren work the hours of full-grown adults. Some of them even wear ties, but theirs are smaller.

My mother, an elementary school teacher herself, surely cries anathema at the importance placed upon pure hours spent whiling away at the grindstone, along with China's almost tunnel vision-like emphasis on standardized testing. I myself felt a gut reaction that this system was one of lamentable waste; I can't study more than a certain number of hours a day until I hit a break-even point and begin a slow, muddled decay into ineffectiveness and lethargy, to be deterred only by caffeine or a string tied to my head which upends a bucketful of cold water upon me if the offending cranium droops too far. I think that my own experience, while certainly personal, does speak for something more basically human: no person, when pushed past their personal limits, will take as much out of any experience as when they are fresh.

But when I looked at the issue on level, I realized a part of my reflexive reaction was nothing more than insecurity arising from the fact that while I thought the Chinese have overshot reality by working too intensely, perhaps we Americans have missed the target as well by aiming too low. In Chinese, there is an expression that translates to "something is worthy of our study," and the strangest thing about this sentence is not the

translation but the fact you hear it all the time.

There is a general desire here to learn the ways of others—the beneficial aspects of other cultures that can be applied regardless of cultural differences—that I have found sorely lacking in America. When the Chinese elementary school child does something in the course of their regular day that I shake my head at in awe and aspire to, it means that even here there is surely something worthy of my study in this system.

Most importantly, I have found this to not be at odds with my preference for one system or another. The work ethic and single-minded confidence that comes with recogni-

tion of one's profession as that of a student is something that stands on a pedestal above the vagaries of class schedules and testing systems. Until we are able to crane our necks up to see what we at first believed to be beneath us, we may in fact be missing out on some of the most glorious things there are to see. This is in fact because there is no such thing as up or down, better or worse... The sun and the earth's core are both boiling hot and brilliant; whether we look to one or the other for inspiration is entirely a matter of perspective.



BY SUSAN PAYKIN, 2011: Xi'an, China - Halal (On Display)

Beghara

BY BETSY HINCHEY

*Class of 2012
Creative Writing and Anthropology Double Major
Debli, India*

You tap against the window of my taxi and hold up an arm heavy with the weight of a hundred beaded necklaces, only thirty rupees, you say, please buy one. I shake my head, nahin, I say, go away.

You raise and drop your tin bowl against the pavement, the coins inside ringing, and from under your dirt white turban, your black eyes look up at me as I stare at the stubs that used to be your legs and wonder how long it took you to crawl out into the middle of the street.

You run alongside me, tugging at my sleeve, yelling in your slurred six-year-old Hindi for money that you know I have. You motion with your hand to your mouth that you're hungry and even though you look cute with your dark hair sticking up in all directions and snot dripping out of your nose, I know if I pretend you aren't there then eventually you won't be.

Walking home from the market, my hands full with the handles of swinging grocery bags, I race against the sun to get in before dark because not even my whirring space heater can keep my feet warm on the marble floors,

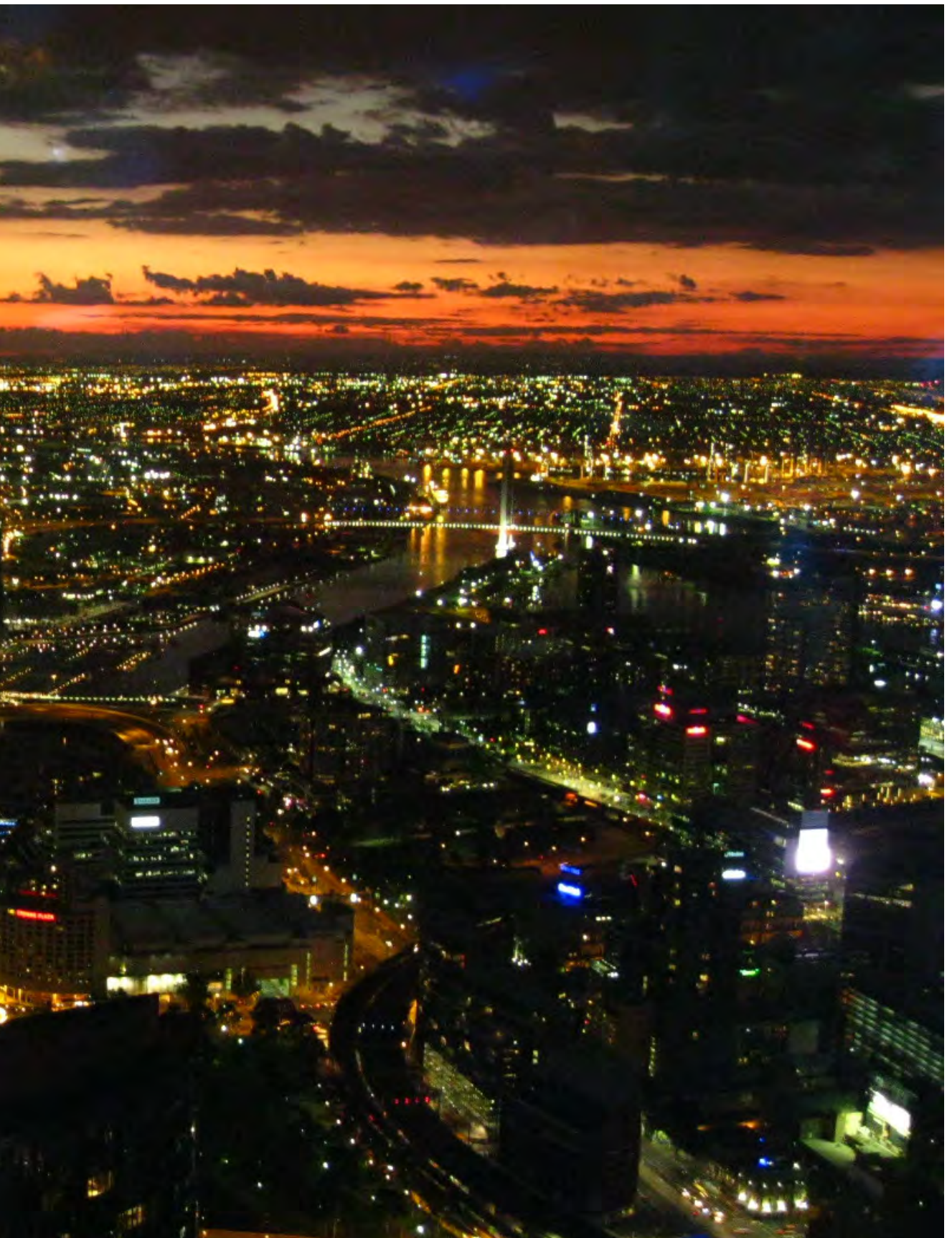
and I hardly notice as you, sick, old, young, mother, grandfather, child, sit around a pile of sticks that you'll make into a fire, your bodies buried in stained grey blankets, your blue tarp tents behind you blowing in the late January Delhi breeze. As I pass by you after only one week in this country of contradictions, I'm not sure what's more heartbreaking: you, dying, or me, walking by.



BY KAYLA DINCES, 2012: Mumbai, India



BY PHI LE, 2012: Melbourne, Australia - Melbourne Landscape From 88 Stories



At Home in Turkey

BY JESSICA SCHULMAN

*Class of 2012
Anthropology Major
Istanbul, Turkey*

They say it is the place where East meets West, not only in a geographical sense, but in a more theoretical one. Istanbul, Turkey, home of the legendary Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, delectable Turkish Delight, visually stimulating carpets and the majestic Hagia Sofia is where I have been lucky enough to live for the past two months. And while I am still only in the middle of my study abroad experience, I feel that I have been given a taste of culture just big enough to leave me craving more.

I recently noticed that I have been referring to Istanbul as my home. Interesting, I thought, because I usually consider myself a Californian and a Brandesian. Bearing in mind I do not have an ounce of Turkish heritage in my blood, I found this a bit thought provoking. When on earth did Istanbul become my home? Was it when I successfully navigated my way through the public transportation system all by myself? Was it when I was able to order a meal speaking solely Turkish? Or when the Islamic call to prayer (*Adhan*) became a natural, innate sound? Regardless of the defining moment, or even if there was one, the realization that I adopted Turkey took me by surprise.

While I was travelling around Europe during my spring break, I would randomly blurt out Turkish phrases and craved cups of Turkish coffee. I longed for the cool breeze of the Bosphorus River and the comical, yet verbally aggressive street vendors trying to lure you into their shops. While I had a fantastic trip, by the end, I was ready to go home to Istanbul. The place that had just been outside of my comfort zone had evolved into a place of reassurance.

Amusingly enough, my new home has become a place where instances of miscommunication are almost a daily occurrence. But I guess that's just part of the fun. There have been moments of confusion and misunderstanding where I have ordered and been served the wrong meal (I am pretty sure I did not order octopus salad), paid the wrong price (\$0.25 piece of baklava?! Nice. No? \$2.50. Bummer), taken a cab to the wrong place (Shoot, were we supposed to be in Karakoy or Kadikoy?), and been given faulty directions (Left, Left, Right. Or was it Right, Right, Left?). Regardless of mishaps and awkward situations, the interactions with local Turks are among my most memorable moments thus far.

In my experience, the Turks just want to talk to you and use the few English words they know, while I attempt to converse using my minimal Turkish skills. Here is a typical conversation I have had with salesmen and shop owners.

Salesman: "Where you from?"

Me: "Ben Amerikalıyım." (I am American in Turkish)

Salesman: "Oh! Kobe Bryant!"

Or

Salesman: "What's your name?"

Me: "Benim Adım Jessica." (My name is Jessica in Turkish)

Salesman: "I am Al Pacino."

I find it hilariously entertaining which celebrity names I have heard when walking through shops and marketplaces. Here in Turkey, I have come to understand it as a means of forming connections. The Turks try to relate to you in the best way they can by demonstrating what they know about your country. It's essentially the same interaction as when we meet new people back in the States and play the "do you know (insert person)" game, just this time with well-known individuals. Here, household names are utilized in order to create some sort of friendly relationship. And the foundation of every "home" is built upon informal bonds and links. Perhaps this is why I have found Turkey to be so incredibly inviting and a place that I can call home.

It still fascinates me that one can adopt a place so different from their previous loca-

tion in such a short amount of time and I am positive that I am not the only student abroad that refers to their respective country as their home. I wonder, though, once my time abroad expires and I return to my life in America, will still refer to Turkey as home? Regardless, for the brief remainder of my time in this country, I will embrace my new home to the fullest and the instances that might define it as home. Maybe it is being able to tell the difference between districts of Kadıkoy and Karakoy that have allowed me to feel more at ease in Turkey. Or maybe just the basics of knowing how many sugar cubes I need to add to my tea to make it taste like perfection. Or even the gained awareness of the tremendous nationalism found within the Turks. I have this incredible opportunity in front of me and am delighted to definitely be at home in Turkey.



BY JESSICA SCHULMAN, 2012: Turkey - The Evil Eye



BY SUSAN PAYKIN, 2011: Beigao, Guizhou, China - Poised (2010)

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011



Imprisoned Out of My Comfort Zone

BY ELI TERRIS

*Class of 2011
French Major
Yaoundé, Cameroon*

Daily life in Cameroon was a wild river of adventures. From learning how many passengers fit into a taxi (five in the back row including a baby and two in the front), to warding off insistent locals determined to exchange contact information. I was constantly challenged, pushing my limits, and learning. Going anywhere with Dou, my 26-year-old host brother often referred to as Fou Dou, (Crazy Dou in French) was, to say the least, always a trip. Towering over me at 6'6", this internationally ranked boxer, certainly lived up to his nickname. At the end of my first week, Dou decided to show me the after hours of the capital city Yaoundé.

Beginning the night at 9pm, Dou, a couple of his friends and I, took a taxi across town to a "bar" for a "short stop". We departed one hour later, after personally receiving an uncomfortably intimate lap dance that ended with a stripper plucking the water bottle out of my hands and pouring it both into

my mouth as well as over her body. We next arrive at a monthly occurring bonfire and dance party called Le Village. After several hours of dancing, mingling, and chatting with Dou's Rastafarian community, we continued on our way. This time for the congested main bar and club district of Yaoundé, a network of streets overflowing with bar hoppers, fried street food and beer. Just after exiting the taxi, Dou gets into a violent fight over pricing with the driver.

It is now 3am, and after falling asleep at 8:00pm the whole week, I am prying my eyes open while fantasizing about being huddled under my mosquito net. Yet we go from massive bar to packed dance floor at Dou's discretion, meeting new friends and picking up a beer periodically. As we are outside in search of a



BY BEN KALMAN, 2012: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

bathroom (never an easy task when refraining from using the streets), while trailing just behind Dou, I feel a forceful tug around my neck. In my delirious state, I am shoved into a large police van. Immediately, six more males are piled in behind me, one of which is sitting partially on my lap. Someone tries to escape the van and is slapped around before he is pushed back in. Just as Dou notices I am missing, the van zooms off followed by the screams of my fellow “criminals” shouting, “This isn’t just!” and “You don’t have this right!”

I turn to the person closest to me and ask a series of questions while trying to distinguish his face in the darkness and the positioning of our bodies. “What just happened? Where are we going? Were we arrested?” He has few answers for me, and I patiently look out the window as we drive farther and farther away leaving the clogged streets, over bridges, and through small neighborhoods. Once we arrive wherever we’re going, someone will realize they made a mistake. I assure myself that being a privileged White American surely will shield me from these injustices. After fifteen minutes the van comes to a stop beside what appears to be a house, and we clumsily exit the vehicle. Without an explanation we are forced into a single file line inside this small district prison with only a few rooms. A man only a few feet from me, is violently thrown to the ground, stripped of his shoes, and tossed into a windowless stone cell with just a tiny slit in the stone that is immediately occupied with his glaring eyes.

The line in front of me starts to dwindle as the police transcribe our information in a notebook, and then herd those recorded into a large cell overflowing with an uncountable number of people. “What is going on here?” I demand an answer from the nearest police officer after realizing my white skin is no protection. After the third attempt, an officer finally answers my pleas by disdainfully exclaiming that we have “acted like animals”. Upon further

inquiry, I am notified that we all broke an unheard of law that forbids anyone from leaving his home after 8pm. I take out my cell phone to call the director of my program, praying that she picks up because I only have enough phone credit for just one call. At that moment Dou, and his dreadlocked-rapper-best-friend appear on a motorcycle and immediately start to verbally battle the police officers. The police are dismissive of Dou’s orders and are confused as to how I am Dou’s “brother.” “Step brother?” one asks. Meanwhile, the line in front of me is getting smaller and Dou pulls me aside.

“How much money do you have?” he whispers in secrecy. I peek into my wallet and examine the 1,000 CFA bill (2 USD) and disclose this information. Dou snatches the bill out and after some huddled “negotiation” with the police officers, we find ourselves back in the same vehicle I was just transported in, driving away. We are dropped off in another district of town as the 5am runners are starting their habitual pre-sunrise jogs without a word from the officers. Baffled, and stumbling around, we eventually make our way back home. Moments later I am passed out in bed, after having sworn to Dou that I will keep the night a secret from my host parents.

Although the experience was slightly terrifying, it gave me countless insights to Cameroonian life. From the club scene, the importance of ample phone credit, to the injustices of the police force (after a US embassy backed investigation, the police officers admitted to making up the law for crowd control). Ultimately, I also learned firsthand how being a White American mixed with a little bribery can go a long way (during the investigation the officers denied being bribed), while those less privileged, remained in prison for rest of the weekend.



BY JAMIE FLEISHMAN, 2011: Yangshuo, China



Sand

BY ELANA REINHOLTZ

Class of 2011

Business & International and Global Studies Double Major

Cape Town, South Africa

Last March, during my semester abroad in South Africa, I casually agreed to meet a family friend's parents for an outing. As a favor to my mother, I drudgingly went along to the beach with a couple well into their eighties. They picked me up at my flat in Rondebosch, a suburb of Cape Town and brought me to Hout Bay. It is a quaint port town adjacent to a blue beach with rough waters. Howard* got out of the car to greet me because it is hard for Ethel to move around a lot. A foil to Ethel, Howard was in his mid-eighties, tall and strong as a rock, with bright red cheeks. His love for Ethel and patience with her many aches and back problems was so real that I felt the warmth just watching him gaze at her.

The wind on the beach was too powerful for Ethel so we ate the picnic lunch in the car. I sank into the worn back seat of the 1991 Toyota Corolla as I grabbed a sandwich and a handful of grapes from Ethel's pruned and weathered hands. Instantly feeling comfortable, they told me, "We can't afford to eat out. Money is tight these days." Here I was guiltily eating one of their tuna squares taking up their precious resources. They proceeded to tell me about their background and why they are in Cape Town now. "We were the last ones of our family to get here. Our three kids left Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where we are from, to go to university in South Africa."

The couple continued with a synopsis of



BY JAKE LABAND, 2012: Inner Mongolia, China

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011

their life story: They ran a furniture factory that manufactured mass assembled pieces along with special one-of-a-kinds. After thirty years in the business, they accumulated their life savings with plans of retiring under Bulawayo's sun with enough money to visit their children a few times a year. Sadly, they never did see their retirement savings. It had all turned to sand due to Zimbabwe's hyperinflation and the currency crashing under President Mugabe's rule.

Rewind: 6 months ago, I was sitting at Brandeis reading about hyperinflation in the New York Times. I was shocked by what had been happening to Zimbabwe's economy and how fast the infamous tobacco exporter went down in flames. Little did I know, I would be sitting face to face with two people who had escaped the wreckage and stepped out of Mugabe's fire. One was frail with a slight limp while the other held her up, but still, they were alive. They were telling their story and I was listening for all people who had not yet heard it.

They proceeded about their white friends who were farmers and had their land seized by President Mugabe's cronies. This was part of Mugabe's plan; to take land away from the whites and give it to landless blacks that he thought had suffered under white dominance for so many years. "We were lucky," they continued. "Our friends had everything stolen. You couldn't find any metal signs left in the ground or any glass within windowpanes. Mugabe tore this country apart." Their story was raw, discomfoting, and most of all sad. It was not enough to have their lives ruined but to also go through multiple robberies. After leaving Zimbabwe, they told me about the beginning of their life in Cape Town living with the reality of crime in South Africa. One time, Ethel slowly whispered, "I was blindfolded by robbers who came in and stole everything. The worst part was that Howard was sleeping and he couldn't hear me screaming...his deafness didn't help ei-

ther", cautiously smiling. "They took everything and left us with even less than the little we had."

The day I met this lovely couple was the day a lot of things changed for me. I no longer felt like an American reading about African corruption in the newspaper and learning about it in my classes. I was there. Face to face with people's stories and tattered lives. As a listener, I felt I was there to soak in their knowledge. Here were two people who had been through a lot more than was possible. It was a tragic story, much like those who had been through an emotional disaster, losing a loved one, or through war. But they were battered more than all of these combined. They had lost their dignity and most of all, their freedom. Yet, they were still fighting because they were surviving. They defied odds and chose not to listen to hate.

Their ability to remain positive was the biggest lesson I took away from them that day. They also did not cease to share with others. During my semester in South Africa, I was invited back to their home for countless dinners and to their relatives for various holidays. They never stopped giving despite so much being taken from them.

**Names are changed to preserve anonymity*



BY DESTINY D. AQUINO, 2012: Borholm, Denmark

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011



Freedom From Myself

BY DESTINY D. AQUINO

*Class of 2012
American Studies Major
Copenhagen, Denmark*

Patience. I used to tell people that patience “just wasn’t one of my virtues.” It was a thing I was known for, getting things done, having a plan, never stopping for too long. I was an instant gratification sorta gal. Waiting just seemed like a waste. In the 21st century when you can get almost any information within seconds, when you can reach out and text, call, email, instant message and reach anyone you really need to almost instantaneously, it was my strong opinion that patience simply wasn’t one of those virtues that needed to stick around.

I was wrong. During my semester in Copenhagen, Denmark I realized that patience was a necessary tool for truly experiencing life, and I was seriously lacking it.

I also realized there’s a reason Americans get a bad rep when they encounter the outside world -- it’s simply the way we were raised. The mere concept of the American dream leads us to believe that our success is based solely on our hard work; that what you do, how well you do it and how much money you make doing it, is what makes you the best, it’s what makes you happy. Right?

Living in Copenhagen changed all that. I will return without some of the ideals that I arrived with. I will return a lot more Danish and a little less American. The Danes taught me that there’s a lot more joy in life, it’s not all about the outcome and more about the road that leads you to it. My road to Copenhagen was all about landmarks, as a lot of young Americans’ lives are. Graduate from high school. Go to college. Graduate from college. Go to grad school. Get a job. Buy a house, etc, etc, etc... So study abroad was on that long list of landmarks. A right of

passage for a well educated college student. “A life changing experience, a time you will never forget, yada yada.” All those things the brochures and the lectures told me set the expectations high for this semester. I expected it to be a lot more exhilarating, a lot more monumental.

But for me this semester was far more about the quiet times than the party times, a lot more about the unsaid lessons than the ones taught in the classroom.

Between having a severe biking accident, to travelling across Europe, to cooking for myself and fighting with skype signals just to call home I learned there is truly a highlight to any situation. I learned that you will survive getting stitches without someone to hold your hand, you should really do your homework when booking hostels, that salt is a dangerous spice and can ruin meals, that not being able to talk all the time makes your conversations a lot more substantial when you do.

Europe flows at a different pace than the U.S. That pace, in my opinion, is a much more satisfying one. When you walk around Copenhagen or ride the metro, rarely do people talk on their cell phones. This is because they are tools of convenience and not of necessity (as I used to view them). You can tell someone whatever you want to tell them later, just enjoy the walk now. In the classroom I learned that group work is something that is not focused on enough in the states, probably because it goes against our core nature to depend on someone else for your success, but I learned to bear it. I learned it’s a skill I’m proud to have. Group work is the way the rest of the world works, and to be successful in the globalized world we should

probably embrace it sooner rather than later.

I came to Denmark with a plan. I was all about being a journalist, all about the goal, the landmarks, the things I needed to do to get there. This experience was part of it, even though being here has changed it all.

I came here one person and I'm leaving another. The plan's a little blurry now: I still want to write, but how or what is up in the air. While my American nature tells me "That's not ok! I need to figure it out now," the new Danish part of me says "I'm going to embrace the path, the journey, and the ride that gets me to wherever it is I'm going," because if I just focus on where I'm going I'll miss everything on the way there.

I'm coming home with a new philosophy, "I have a roadmap, it'll get me to the place I'm meant to be, but I'm not sure which roads

I'm going to take, and I may stop along the way. I may get lost, make wrong turns and even a few U-turns, but I'll get there and I'll enjoy the trip," because I now know it's about the experience I have, not the outcome. It's really about the things you learn on the way. It may sound a bit strange, but Copenhagen gave me: Acceptance. Freedom. Peace. And these things gave me patience.

So I may not have gotten the best grades in Copenhagen or accomplished the things that were "supposed" to be accomplished, but I learned from the Danes that at this point in my life it's ok not to have everything figured out, if I just have patience it'll figure itself out.



BY DESTINY D. AQUINO, 2012: Versailles, France



BY ARIEL GOLDENTHAL, 2012: Mt. Etna, Catania, Italy

Wander: Brandeis Abroad, Fall 2011



