

STORIES · GESCHICHTEN

Students from Smith College at the University of Hamburg ·  
Studentinnen und Studenten vom Smith College an der Univer-  
sität Hamburg

aus:

**STORIES FROM 55 YEARS OF  
A TRANSATLANTIC FRIENDSHIP**

**GESCHICHTEN AUS 55 JAHREN  
TRANSATLANTISCHER FREUNDSCHAFT**

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Edited by Jocelyne Kolb & Rainer Nicolaysen

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## KRISHNA WINSTON



b. 1944, B.A. Smith College 1965,  
Ph.D. Yale University 1974 ·  
Marcus L. Taft Professor of German  
Language and Literature,  
Wesleyan University · alumna of  
Smith College Junior Year at the  
University of Hamburg 1963–64.

### COMING FULL CIRCLE: SMITH IN HAMBURG

For two participants in the 1963–64 Smith Junior Year in Hamburg, the experience laid the foundation for future careers as Germanists: Thomas Freeman, an exchange student from Haverford College whom the Smith students referred to affectionately as “Brüderchen,” later returned to the University of Hamburg several times, funded by DAAD, Fulbright, and Humboldt grants. He spent most of his professional life teaching at Beloit College, and writing, among other scholarly subjects, on two Hamburg authors, Hans Henny Jahnn and Hubert Fichte. I likewise came back to Hamburg, spending the 1965–66 academic year there under Smith auspices before going on to graduate school. I have spent the last 45 years at Wesleyan University, becoming a literary translator for works by Peter Handke, Günter Grass, Golo Mann, Siegfried Lenz, Werner Herzog, Christoph Hein, Grete Weil, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and others. My familiarity with Hamburg’s streets and landmarks proved invaluable in 1974 when I translated Heike Douthé’s *Wanke nicht, mein Vaterland* (1970).

The opportunity to attend courses offered by such distinguished professors as the Germanists Adolf Beck, Diedrich Diederichsen (Sr.), Karl Ludwig Schneider, and Hans Wolffheim, the historian Fritz Fischer, and the theologian Helmut Thielicke introduced the participants in the Junior Year to the classic German lecture format. In those days, a feature of this format, hard though it is to believe, consisted of some professors’ dictating pages of bibliographic information during the first few course sessions as their students scribbled as fast as they could to capture the details in their notebooks. A variant involved a bevy of *Assistenten* who would arrive

.....

carrying the professor's briefcase and manuscript and would then begin copying comprehensive lists of sources onto the multi-panel blackboard.

While the lectures exposed the students to a great deal of material and expert interpretation, Smith's intelligently designed system of employing tutors assured active participation by the students: the tutors assigned specific readings and papers, conducted discussion, and helped the students grasp the professors' arguments. The members of the Smith group experienced the university as their German counterparts did, from enrolling (an in-person process back then that involved standing in line for numerous *Stempel*) and receiving a *Studienbuch* to attending lectures, eating in the *Mensa*, and consulting secondary literature in the *Seminarbibliotheken*. At the same time, they benefited from having regular assignments and receiving detailed responses to their written work, complete with corrections of the grammar, usage, and style. The fact that a number of my tutors went on to notable careers reveals the close cooperation between Smith and the University and the respect with which Smith's program directors were regarded when they asked professors to recommend advanced students who could serve as tutors. Heinrich Breloer became an award-winning filmmaker; Ulrich Bubrowski made a name for himself as an expert on Ernst Barlach; Joachim Schöberl and Bernd Jürgen Wendt joined the University faculty. These tutors and some of the younger faculty, such as Max Boeters, who taught Middle High German, were generous and hospitable to their Smith charges.

To me, the Smith model always constituted the ideal combination of direct and mediated exposure to the university. It is gratifying to see that the structure of the program has changed little over the last fifty-plus years, although nowadays far fewer American students spend an entire year studying abroad. A few years ago Wesleyan withdrew from its consortial program in Regensburg. When we decided recently to add Smith in Hamburg to our list of approved programs, I felt a sense of triumph. Our first undergraduate to participate will be going for the entire year. In my mind's eye I see him making his way to Rothenbaumchaussee 34, taking the elevator in the *Philosophenturm*, sitting in the *Audimax* (where a fellow student and I were attending a concert when word came of Kennedy's assassination), taking refuge from winter's bleakness in the conservatories of *Planten un Blumen*, or strolling along the Jungfernstieg. It is not mere nostalgia that inspires this vision; I know my student will be making the acquaintance of one of the world's great universities, in a fascinating city, and with the support of an outstanding program. I look forward to sending more students to Hamburg, thereby allowing my career to come full circle.

## DEANNA GAUNCE NEBERT



b. 1948, B.A. Smith College  
 1969, M.A. Indiana University 1971,  
 Ph.D. Indiana University  
 1996 · English and history teacher  
 at Landerziehungsheim  
 Stiftung Louisenlund  
 1978–2013 · now retired.

### DREAMING IN GERMAN

My Junior Year Abroad began as a possibility when I applied to Smith from high school in North Dakota. My parents thought it was a terrific opportunity, and I was enthusiastic about going. However, I ran into the first snag in the plan when I faced unforeseen difficulties in German at college – it was the only course I almost failed in my first semester. I had been placed in an intermediate level (I had had two years of German in high school), which was way over my head. Second semester I shifted down to “beginners’ German”. I did better, but struggled, nevertheless. By my junior year I would have been glad to simply finish my two-year language requirement and move on, but that would have meant not going on the JYA program.

I looked for other possibilities – I could major in English. I tried to persuade the College authorities to let me take a year abroad in Britain or Scotland. As there was no Smith program there, I was told that my year would have to be approved after I returned and I might have to postpone graduation or take more courses senior year, if my self-scheduled program didn’t meet College standards. These prospects seemed bleak, so I made my way to Willy Schumann’s office and inquired about joining the program in Hamburg. He asked me (in German) why I wanted to go. I couldn’t answer in German, excused my poor language skills, and told him that I might improve if I had a chance to live in the country. He agreed, and off I went.

Months later at the Christmas coffee held at the Schumanns’ apartment in the *Gästehaus der Universität* in Hamburg, Willy asked us all how we were doing in our classes. Many of us were still struggling, but could see improvement of sorts. I



mentioned that I had recently started dreaming in German, a milepost in language acquisition, I had heard. Willy nodded appreciatively. “Of course, I couldn’t understand a thing,” I added.

Nevertheless, I had passed some sort of a marker: I was to make use of this in my life as a teacher later, when I reassured pupils and their parents in my bilingual (i.e., taught in English) history classes at my German school. “It takes time to adjust,” I would say, “I know, because this was my own experience learning German.” This is also the reason that I am skeptical of studying in Hamburg for just one semester. I had only just begun to learn the language in my first semester in Hamburg – I certainly needed two semesters to really get started. When I returned to Hamburg after graduation at Smith, I was confident that my German was superb. How wrong I was; there was still a long path in front of me. But even then I knew that the continuing obstacles were only small hindrances. If I could learn enough German to speak and understand others, I would be able to overcome the difficulties that still remained. Kid stuff!

The JYA was a genuine turning point in my life. I have no German background, no German-speaking relatives, no one in the family who had even visited Germany before I came to Hamburg. I chose my major (history), because it was the only subject I could take and still go on the JYA. (Obviously, English was no longer viable as a major.) Therefore, it is inconceivable that I would become a historian, marry a German, raise German children, and teach at a German school, if I had not been given the chance to do so through the Hamburg program. Of course, there are days when I wonder whether my life would have been easier if I had not made these choices, but these alternatives are moot today.

The question raised in the panel discussions at the Hamburg 50th anniversary celebration, “What will the advantages of the exchange / JYA be?” is unanswerable in this form. No one can predict what advantages will emerge during an exchange. An intelligent person takes the plunge, sees what is available and adaptable to her own studies or career, finds herself interested in something possibly unforeseen, and then pursues a goal. Faculty and students cannot say beforehand what they will find intriguing in a new setting – but they go with open minds and discover new aspects.

The program in Hamburg has developed and been extended since I was a student myself. Now the program includes JYA students from various colleges (not just Smith) at Hamburg, Hamburg exchange students at Smith, and faculty from various departments (not just German language and literature) in a comprehensive package. As far as I can tell, this intensive package is an anomaly among the Smith programs. (I am not aware of student or faculty exchanges connected with the Florence, Paris, or Geneva programs.) The package in Hamburg is a powerful combination; it enables and facilitates intense, productive Smith-Hamburg ties. The College has built a legacy in Hamburg which we must nurture and protect for the future.

## SARAH E. THOMAS



b. 1948, B.A. Smith College 1970, MS. in Library Science Simmons College 1973, Ph.D. Johns Hopkins University 1983 · Vice President for the Harvard Library and Roy. E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1968–69.

### LUISE MÜLLERIN IN HAMBURG: YOU CAN TAKE THE GIRL OUT OF THE COUNTRY, BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THE COUNTRY OUT OF THE GIRL

In 1968–69, a year punctuated by student protests over the war in Vietnam, our country was deeply divided. The Democratic National Convention in Chicago was marked by demonstrations and protests. And in Europe, too, there was unrest. On August 22, 1968, the day of my departure for Germany, thousands gathered in Prague to protest the military invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union, two nations that no longer exist.

Smith sent its students to their Junior Year Abroad by ocean liner, perhaps a practical way to manage the transport of our luggage laden with a year's supply of clothing, or perhaps a vestige of finishing us off as young ladies. This was still the era when we had posture pictures taken and graded, and we took a gym class wearing a tunic and bloomers. In BMS (Basic Motor Skills), we learned how to put our suitcase up smoothly into the overhead compartment of a bus (as we headed off to a boy's school on the weekend) or climb out gracefully from a sports car.

I boarded the SS United States and shared a room with two other women from the program, one who changed her clothes incessantly as appropriate for a roster of activities. The other lay inert and miserable in her bunk, apparently suffering from seasickness. Later that year she confided she had suffered a miscarriage. The transatlantic crossing marked the beginning of dramatic changes in our lives. As I looked forward to adventure and freedom from my small-town world, I was full of anticipation about my cosmopolitan future. Still, the image of my mother on the dock, dissolved in tears, was an ominous sign that the journey might also be perilous.

My experience travelling outside the US consisted of a brief trip to visit Canadian relatives as a child, and a family holiday in Bermuda at 16. I soaked up the novelty of disembarking at Rotterdam and navigating my way to a train that would take us to southern Germany, where we would have a language booster at a Goethe Institute outside Munich. Speaking German aroused the ire of the Dutch conductor. In my ignorance I failed to take into account the animosity of the occupied toward the Huns, with even the language of German tainted by the hostilities of war.

The few weeks in the spa town of Bad Aibling were a gentler introduction to Germany. The local café sold figures modeled in marzipan of ample breasted women seated in mud baths; the pizzeria, frequented by American soldiers posted nearby, had a jukebox with “Hey Jude” which we played incessantly. After a brief immersion, we headed north to Hamburg to begin our university studies.

In Hamburg, when we arrived and settled in our “families,” we took transportation in which there was priority seating for the “Schwerbeschädigte,” of whom, almost a quarter-century after the war’s end, there were many amputees and disabled. Here it was the Germans who seemed outraged by my very presence, in which my American origin was revealed by my dress and casual demeanor. Riding the *S-Bahn* in my jeans to the university, elderly ladies hissed “entsetzlich” at my decadent attire. In October, still a novice in European ways, I was removed from the train by two uniformed men who stood pointing at the side of the carriage. Baffled and frightened, I showed them my ticket. They continued to point at the side of the car, and suddenly I understood. I had transgressed and entered a first-class car with a second-class ticket. Having almost no familiarity with public transit, I learned the hard way about the class system. Living with north Germans with their reputation for reserve, the lingering bitterness and deprivation from the war and its aftermath, and the anger of younger Germans at the American role in Vietnam, I faced conflicts larger than my own personal emotions of a teenager finding her way in life.

Still, there were opportunities to grow and develop. Hamburg was a city with a world-class opera and strong theater, and living there greatly enlarged my horizons, as did trips across the continent, including many where I hitchhiked, once having to leap from a slow moving car on a road leaving San Gimignano when an Italian who had given me a lift was beginning to molest me. Educationally, I surely learned something, although 45 years later, the details are hazy. I remember lectures given by the renowned Fritz Fischer, whose yellow-bound *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, published in 1961, was influential in outlining causes for World War I, and tutorials in the Rothenbaumchaussee, where Smith had seminar rooms in the basement and a flat for the program director on an upper floor. Certainly, my German, already pretty solid, increased in fluency. The bigger gain, however, came in developing self-sufficiency and an ability to live in another culture, to be engaged in the unfamiliar history and politics of Europe and to see the U.S through the lens of an outsider.

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Returning to Smith, I found gaps in my knowledge of contemporary culture. “What’s that music?” I asked, only to be ridiculed for betraying my ignorance of the musical *Hair*. Although I felt burnished with the patina of worldliness, one of my Emerson House classmates quickly deflated that self-confidence, declaring with some amusement that I was no more sophisticated than I had been when I left Northampton.

Yet I did return changed and the pathway I have followed was formed by those experiences in Europe. I returned to Germany twice for extended periods, studying in Freiburg and Frankfurt, and received a Ph.D. in German literature from Johns Hopkins. When, years later, in 2007, I headed to Oxford to lead the Bodleian Libraries, I described the move as a Junior Year Abroad only with a real job. I looked forward enthusiastically to living in another culture and to the challenge of mastering the unknown. My Hamburg experience forty years earlier had laid the foundation for another transformative opportunity. I served as Bodley’s Librarian at the University of Oxford for almost seven years before returning to Harvard to take up my current post as Vice President for the Harvard Library and Roy E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. I’ve had the privilege of heading three of the world’s leading university libraries, and I consider my time at Smith and especially my Junior Year in Hamburg as major factors in preparing me to take on these significant roles.

## FRANK LEHMANN



B.A. Yale College 1972, M.A. Yale University 1973, M. Phil. Yale University 1976, J.D. University of Puget Sound School of Law (now Seattle University School of Law) 1985 · Staff Attorney, Washington State Court of Appeals · alumnus of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1970-71.

### CULTURE SHOCK AT ITS BEST

In the early 1970s, I spent my junior year with the Smith College Program in Hamburg. At the time, Yale had an arrangement with the Smith College program for foreign study. About six of us joined a dozen or so women from Smith for the program that year.

Reflecting on the experience nearly 45 years later (can it really be that long ago?), I can recall numerous discrete events, places, and people from that year. I have also been back to Hamburg many times since then. I suppose that fact reflects a continuing consequence of the experience. But over time, some memories have subtly blended with those from later visits and other experiences. As time passes, I find it more difficult to isolate and identify influences or ascribe a primary “meaning” to any one year in the distant past.

The Smith program was something of a homecoming for me. I was born in a small town a few miles down the Elbe River from Hamburg. But I spent only a few months there before my parents emigrated. I grew up on the West Coast and did not begin learning German until high school. I was then fortunate to benefit from Yale’s decision to admit a higher percentage of students from public high school and expand the availability of financial aid. I continued studying German for two years, and it seemed appropriate to spend my junior year in Hamburg.

Upon arrival in Hamburg, most of us experienced some degree of “culture shock,” but for the most part in the best sense of that term. The benefits of the program and location soon became obvious. Most participants lived in student

residences scattered around the city, a circumstance that fostered contact with both German students and students from other countries. Apparently, the available student housing was limited that year, and I was assigned to live with a German family that had hosted Smith program students for several years. Participation necessarily required daily use of Hamburg's extensive public transportation system. For me and several other members of the group, the feast of public subsidized opera, concerts, and plays created and shaped interests that continue today.

And I do not mean to slight in any way the formal academic and cultural elements of the program itself. The university classes and lectures and the corresponding tutorials were outstanding. The group excursions that year explored Helgoland, Travemünde, Munich (including the city's cultural treasures and a visit to the Löwenbräu tent during *Oktoberfest*), and Berlin. The program director, Hans Vaegt, also insisted, as part of our education, that we participate in pickup *Fußball* matches in the *Stadtpark*.

As I reflect further on the year, I most vividly recall the contributions that the two primary tutors brought to the program. One was serious, soft-spoken, and challenging – Heinrich Breloer. He later became a noted film director and screenwriter. The other, Ulrich Bubrowski, was more jovial and outgoing and is a scholar specializing in the work of the well-known German sculptor and writer Ernst Barlach.

No doubt we were impressionable, given our age, our somewhat insular education to date, and cultural disadvantages. But the tutors continually prodded us to enhance the basic curriculum and our understanding with broader social, historical, and political contexts. The tutors' efforts did much to ensure that our cross-cultural perspectives, which that year encompassed both increasing anti-war sentiment in the US and continued reflection on the Nazi past in Germany, did not remain at a superficial level. Although I had studied for two years at Yale before coming to Hamburg, the first year of my college education began with my junior year on the Smith College program.

## LESLIE A. ADELSON



b. 1951, B.A. Smith College 1974, M.A. Washington University (St. Louis) 1978, Ph.D. Washington University (St. Louis) 1982 · Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies, Cornell University · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1972-73.

### WHAT THE SMITH COLLEGE JUNIOR YEAR ABROAD PROGRAM IN HAMBURG HAS MEANT TO ME

Today I hold an endowed chair as the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of German Studies in Cornell University's distinguished Department of German Studies, which I chaired from 1999 to 2006. I additionally served as Director of Cornell University's interdisciplinary Institute for German Cultural Studies from 2007 to 2013. Over forty years ago I graduated from Smith College summa cum laude with highest honors in German only because of the unique personal and intellectual opportunities afforded me by the visionary educators in Smith's German Department and by their exceptionally well conceived and expertly directed Junior Year Abroad program in Hamburg, Germany. When I was a twenty-year-old sophomore, still living in the town where I had been born (Northampton) to parents of minimal means, I could surely never have envisioned the horizons of learning or the depth of experience that Smith's German program would open up for me. I could not have foreseen the kindness of knowledgeable and skilled teachers who saw something in me that I could not recognize in myself, who encouraged me to study in a foreign country for a full year and then found ways to make it possible for me to go and my life to bloom while there.

This I owe above all to Hans Vaget and Margaret Zelljadt. I first encountered the former in a bewildering landscape of death-defying umlauts and lost verbs, otherwise known as first-semester German, in the fall of 1971. His was an intimidating presence who also knew how to inspire, and it was my great good fortune

to be able to write my senior honors thesis with him after my junior year abroad when I returned to Northampton two years later. This teacher was a stickler for detail in everything, from adjective endings to proper citations from Goethe's *Theatralische Sendung*. All I have learned in the interim has only confirmed what Hans taught me so many years ago: that the devil and god alike are in the details, and only sustained attention to the important ones can teach us how to tell the difference. And it was Hans who gave me the confidence – long before I deserved it – that I too might one day have something worthwhile to contribute to the field of German Studies. This was no small gift for someone of Hans Vaget's scholarly distinction to give a young American girl in 1974, and I will be forever grateful.

Once it became clear that I would be heading for Hamburg with only one year of basic German in my repertoire, arrangements were made to transfer me into Margaret Zelljadt's intensive introductory German course in the spring semester before my departure. I was terrified; she was gracious. The better part of valor clearly belonged to her, for she was courageous in taking me on, and every class session with her was a lesson in alchemy. Arcane rules of German grammar literally sprang to life under her tutelage, and she never doubted that her young charges would do the same. Later I would work for Margaret as a research assistant for a time, which gave me a privileged glimpse into the expertise and care she brought to the scholar's study of historical linguistics. Yet in the classroom all her painstaking labors manifested as sheer, communicable, and infectious joy.

Margaret also brought her magician's craft to directing the Hamburg Junior Year Abroad program in 1972–73, a year that undoubtedly changed the course of my life and my career. I will always be beholden to Smith College for this above all else. That first year I spent in Hamburg – there were many others that followed – was a dramatically transformative experience, which is characteristic of the program more generally. The Junior Year Abroad in Hamburg allowed me and other members of my cohort to become engaged, informed, and multilingual citizens of the world. Supported and encouraged at every turn by the intrepid Margaret, whose pedagogical leadership in international study is legendary, and her disarmingly charming husband Igor, who could turn from urbane to bawdy and back again on a dime, we were fledglings learning to fly on dizzying currents of academic reform in Germany, political conflict in the world, and the shocking expectation among our German interlocutors that we could and should be thinking for ourselves. The Vietnam War had been raging for some time at that point, but oddly enough, no one had ever seriously demanded that of me before. When the Hamburg tutor Ulrich Bubrowski taught me about the German Enlightenment, the 18th century and mine became forever entwined.

Years later, when I was teaching Cornell undergraduates about comparative perspectives on postwar Germany – East and West – one Korean student in the class, who was about to graduate, commented that he had finally understood the second



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half of the 20th century because of this course. Yet whenever I have succeeded in teaching or counseling students well myself, it is only because I have tried to live up to the extraordinarily high standards of rigor, insight, wisdom, and generosity that Hans Vaget and Margaret Zelljadt have upheld and exemplified for the benefit of countless students in Northampton and Hamburg alike. Teachers can never be thanked enough. Those of us who are teachers know this, but we know this above all as students too, for none of us would be who we are were it not for the dedicated mentors who have sparked creativity, passion, and direction in our hearts and minds along the way. Smith did this for me.

Now more than ever, the world needs its brightest minds and open hearts to cultivate the art of cross-cultural communication and deep understanding across many sorts of divides. Living and studying for an extended period of time in a foreign language, a foreign culture, and a foreign land provide the only sure means of achieving this, and this is an objective that a liberal arts college of Smith's stature must never abandon. The world I came to know in the 1970s was still recovering from a world war, fascist dictatorship, and genocide, and still rent with cold war divisions. Today's world poses different international challenges to a much younger generation, but the diverse challenges of the global 21st century will be successfully met only by those who seek cross-cultural exchange and forge cross-cultural alliances in the service of peace, democracy, and justice. In 2009 I organized a public conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a conference at which the German Consul General gave the keynote address. On that occasion I was once again reminded how pivotal German history and culture are for understanding so many facets and futures of modern life. This makes the Junior Year Abroad program in Hamburg all the more crucial now.

The Hamburg program has certainly made a decisive difference in my life, but more than that and over many years, it has done its considerable part to make the world a safer and better place. I applaud and cherish this program, not for sentimentality alone, though I have plenty of that where Hamburg and the Smith College German Department are concerned, but because future generations of students will need this program to know what the world will need of them.

## JANE L. CARROLL



b. 1954, B.A. Smith College 1976, Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 1986 · Assistant Dean and Senior Lecturer in Art History, Dartmouth College · Chair of the German-Harris Professorship Committee, Dartmouth College 2004-present · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1974–75.

### BEYOND BOOKS: HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE GERMANY

As trite as it sounds, the only way to summarize my experience on Smith’s Junior Year Abroad in Hamburg is life-changing. I had never before had that sense of almost complete autonomy and responsibility for my own decisions. I was there in 1974–1975, a period before the advent of Skype, Facebook, texting or cell phones. My parents’ understanding of transatlantic phone calls was that they were to be restricted to times of imminent death. As a result, problem solving was a personal task, and I often had the feeling of walking the high wire without a net.

Smith, of course, was there for us in the background. Our professor, Judith Ryan, and the staff in Hamburg were our initial coaches. They guided us through some of the more difficult transitions, like applying for the *Aufenthaltsurlaubnis* or opening a bank account. They gave us a vocabulary and sent us out to conquer German bureaucracy. Some of my first new words were, “Ich möchte Geld abheben.” The result of that autonomy was that I became more confident. I began to believe that I could do anything – and in a foreign language, no less.

My year in Hamburg brought home to me that daily language is not the same as academic language. When I arrived in Hamburg, I was a whiz at explaining Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekte*, but I was a complete failure in my first attempt to buy fish at the market. In one memorable event, I looked into the refrigerator to discover that someone had eaten my yogurt. Incensed, I asked the room, “Was für ein Diebesgesindel hat mein Joghurt geklaut?” After my German friends wiped the tears of laughter from their eyes, they informed me that no one had used the

word “Diebesgesindel” since Goethe’s death. Who knew? The word was in my eighteenth-century literature.

I also realized that you take on a different personality in a language you are working to master. You learn humility. In the beginning, you have to think like a seven-year-old because that is your vocabulary. I experienced the frustration of initially not being able to convey my sense of humor, which had always been bound up in language. And I remember vividly the first time I managed to tell a long, involved and humorous story in German, and had my new friends rolling on the floor. It was the sweetest victory.

At the end of my stay in Hamburg, I discovered I had acquired a working language, not just an academic one. Suddenly I could converse with folks on the bus or in cafés and *Kneipen*. The country became fascinating. I was living in Germany, not just visiting. I became at ease in this other world, opening up to new ideas and world views.

In fact, the experience of really living in Hamburg for a year made me view the world differently. I learned first-hand that the entire world does not conduct its life as I do – a salutary lesson. You learn to adapt and adopt. On my first morning in the dorm, I needed to shower. Though I am sure they are not still configured in this fashion, in 1974 the shower room at Überseekolleg was one large tiled room that looked like my high school locker room, except it was coed. That first morning, I was lathered and feeling rather vulnerable when the door opened and in walked a naked man who shouted out, “Guten Morgen!” My first thought was that I was not at Smith anymore. My second idea was that tomorrow I was going to put my contacts in BEFORE the shower. It is such experiences that made me more accepting of difference. You learn your tensile strength and how to live like a native. Some new traditions, like *Kaffee und Kuchen*, are easy to embrace. Others, such as giving your first *Referat auf Deutsch*, are more frightening. But all those experiences, added together, mean that you will never see the world the same again. You become less self-focused because you know there are other valid cultures and worlds outside your doorstep. You gain the curiosity to want to explore them as well.

Finally, my Junior Year in Hamburg gave me my career, for which I will be eternally grateful. It is not an overstatement to say that I always knew I wanted to work with art. My time abroad showed me how studying something in person makes the discipline come alive. I took a course on Michelangelo with Alexander Perrig, who took us to Paris to look at the artist’s drawings in the Louvre. I studied German Gothic sculpture with Fritz Jacobs, then travelled to Bamberg and Würzburg. And always there was Hamburg’s *Kunsthalle* and the *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe* to stop by on an afternoon. Studying artworks, not from slides but from the object, ignited my desire to become a professional art historian and provided me with one of the joys of my life.

Since that year in Hamburg, I have spent two sabbaticals in Berlin and lived in Munich for five years at different times. I travel often to Germany and have friends

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scattered around the country. I work at Dartmouth teaching and researching German medieval art, and chair a committee that brings German professors to our campus. Perhaps, most importantly, I married someone who also speaks and researches in German, and this year we bought an apartment in Berlin. So, in a sense, my Junior Year Abroad gave me a second home. The gift I received then was to feel at home in two cultures. I often tell friends that the down side of this state is that you are always missing the country you are not in. But I much prefer to have this problem than to have never lived in Hamburg. I love both the places where I am *zu Hause*, not uncritically, but unconditionally.

## MICHAEL JOSEPH BEISER



b. 1957, B.A. Yale University 1979 ·  
Independent Language Consultant  
(Teacher of German and English  
Writing, Grantwriter, and Editor) ·  
alumnus of Smith College  
Junior Year at the University of  
Hamburg 1977-78.

### HUMMEL HUMMEL, WHO'S HE?

In 1976, at the end of the first semester of my sophomore year at Yale, I became increasingly aware of a desire to abandon the rigors and pressures of New Haven and spend my junior year abroad in Germany. Thanks to Indiana University's Honors Program in Foreign Languages for High School Students, which involved an intensive study program and home stay in Krefeld, Germany, between my junior and senior years in high school, I had gained a good degree of practical fluency in German before college and seemed to have discovered an innate aptitude for the language. I was eager to take my study to the next level and knew that total immersion was the optimal way to achieve this. At Yale, I was also fortunate to have found a position as a bursary student in the German Department, where I spoke German nearly exclusively. Originally, I hoped to find a university in Germany and independently chart my own course. Hence, I was surprised to find out that my options were indeed limited: Yale would accept credits from only two programs – Wayne State's in Munich and Smith's in Hamburg. With the realization that I certainly did not want to learn or speak German with a Bavarian tinge, I easily opted for Smith's. I knew that I would prefer to acquire the rarified *Hochdeutsch* spoken in the north of Germany and its largest metropolis and famed port, Hamburg.

As the spring of 1977 approached, I also decided to look for a summer job in a German hotel so that my German would be up to par upon the start of study in the fall. To my surprise and delight, I landed one in a “spa location” (*Kurort*) in Bad Bergzabern in the Palatinate (Pfalz), where I worked from the end of May until the

end of August as a lifeguard and gardener. At the end of the summer, I was pleased with my progress and gave it little more thought until my arrival for the first day of orientation at Smith's Hamburg Center on the Rothenbaumchaussee. The challenge that became immediately and strikingly apparent was not linguistic in any way that I had anticipated, but rather alarmingly social. My new peers in the program, twenty or so and all but two from Smith, appeared to recoil in horror and disgust at the advanced level of my fluency in comparison to theirs. The question that I was reading on their faces was, "Who is this arrogant, hotshot 'male from Yale'?" I saw that my work was cut out for me.

On the second day, fate blessed me with a radical breakthrough. As I was changing trains in Hamburg's main train station, I saw another Smith participant stumbling through the crowds, apparently confused and completely lost. Thus, I was able to demonstrate knightly behavior, sweep in, and rescue Terry Gilman, Smith Class of 1979. (We are still closest of friends, despite the fact that she works for McKinsey & Co. and resides in Düsseldorf and I across the pond in New York City.) Soon, the other participants realized that, not only could I be patient and helpful with their German language skills, but that I was in fact a gregarious and hopefully likeable person. Besides with Terry, friendships with Nikki Stoia and Nancy Glew also flourished.

As the academic year progressed, however, I did find myself bucking against the limitations imposed by the program; that year, I may have been the bane of director Jochen Hoffman's existence. I was unhappy living in a dorm (*Studentenheim*), populated by non-German students from the Third World, and sought to move into an apartment or house (*Wohngemeinschaft*) with other Germans. This, I was told, would amount to me paying two rents. Prof. Hoffman forbade me from traveling north to be part of a demonstration against atomic power plants. I also resisted academic features of the program itself. As it was set up, to accommodate the usual level of participant fluency – or lack thereof – Smith encouraged students to attend large lectures in conjunction with small group sections set up with a tutor for the Smithies. My goal, both socially and academically, was to surround myself primarily with Germans. Therefore, I pushed against the tide and had to beg allowance to enroll in University of Hamburg seminars with smaller numbers of only German students. Fortunately, this was granted, and I must say that my best course work transpired in these seminars, on topics such as the filming of the works of Thomas Mann to a course in psychology on self-awareness, for which our group's field work consisted of a series of discussions with German factory workers. For each of these seminars, I had to trouble the professor to grant me a grade – which is not the policy there and thus a bit of an embarrassment. This meant that, in addition to an oral presentation (*Referat*), I had to submit a written form of it, essentially doing the final work on behalf of all of my German colleagues. Although I was graded quite well, Prof. Hoffman offered to inflate my grades a point or two considering

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the level of difficulty in comparison to American course work and grades. This I stoically resisted, keeping in mind that Yale would not be recognizing the grades anyway, excluding me from graduating with any honors. Now, as I review my Smith transcripts, I am amazed at the level of academic prowess I did achieve at the time. In one instance, I was able to take advantage of Smith's system. Terry Gilman and I petitioned for a tutor to conduct a course on Nietzsche with just the two of us, which was granted. The direction of and edification by our tutor Jochen Stoesser was superb, and I still look back upon and ponder how much I profited from this experience.

As I look back, the experience with Smith's JYA program was seminal, both for my later career and life trajectory. Ever since, I have continued to use my German, with positions ranging from a development specialist for international education non-profits, a producer of German language educational videos for a major publishing company, the right-hand man of Michel Thomas, an internationally acclaimed language master, and now, to my surprise and delight, as a language trainer for an online agency, [Languagetrainers.com](http://Languagetrainers.com), based in Bristol, England. The latter sets up private lessons for adults and business executives taught by me as humble instructor.

To this day, I wear my Hamburg fisherman's shirt (*Hamburger Fischerkittel*) with pride on the day of the German Von Steuben Parade in Manhattan as a self-proclaimed citizen of Hamburg. And beyond these cherished reminiscences, most fulfilling and life-affirming of all from the 1977–1978 Smith JYA experience are the deep and enduring friendships formed in Germany and lasting for nearly forty years. I count these dear friendships, solidified with others from the program, the university seminars, and even the dorm (!) as precious treasures like none other. And then there is the other charming, ironic twist that I value in these gender-bending times: I am of a rare breed – a Smith alumnus!

## RACHEL GETZOFF THOMA



b. 1970, B.A. Smith College 1992, M.A. (Magister in Pädagogik) Ruhr Universität Bochum 2001 · English Teacher at Weiterbildungskolleg Emscher-Lippe in Gelsenkirchen, Freelance instructor of intercultural communications at Ruhr Universität Bochum · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1990–91.

### HOW THE SMITH JYA INFLUENCED MY LIFE...

From Smith I received a BA in “World Religions” and “International Politics.” However, the truly ‘marketable’ skills from my Smith years I gained during my JYA in Hamburg 1990–91, namely my German language skills and my in-depth cross-cultural experience. (I used these even in my senior year at Smith to do some translation work for the chaplain, Elizabeth Carr, who was researching Simone Weil.)

From the beginning I was greatly impressed with the orientation program and the tutorial system, which enabled students to immerse themselves in local and international student life (our dormitories tended to be very international, because many German students chose to live in private apartments). I know of other study abroad programs in which students have no real need to learn the local language. Their classes are conducted for the most part in English, reducing the program to a more superficial experience.

The orientation program was intense and gave us survival tools both to help settle in our new surroundings and prepare us for the studies ahead. We learned much about various parts of Hamburg and the university library system, as well as useful domestic tips, such as how best to change the bed linens and to order cheese at a crowded grocery counter.

The tutorial system allowed me (as one of the few not studying German) to continue my major and to realize how controversial the study of comparative religions is in some circles. It was eye opening to understand that some theological students found it heretical to consider all religions of equal value. It was also humbling to see



how they were required to learn Latin, Hebrew, and Greek to translate original sources. I took a class on Luther, on the role of the church in the GDR, and a class with a visiting Japanese professor on a Buddhist reformist monk, Shinran. All these topics would in some way influence my focus in my major (reformation within religion) and indirectly one interest thereafter – reform movements in general.

During semester break a fellow student and I received a Blumberg travel stipend to study in the “New States” of the former Eastern Germany and Eastern Europe. 1991, just after reunification, was a fascinating time to tour. We wanted to maintain our German skills and spoke only German with one another (except in Poland, where it seemed rude). This decision led to invitations to cake and coffee in Eastern Germany and to a “German perspective” in Prague. On a German tour of Prague’s City Hall, we were told the history of the building, but when the guide discovered that we were in fact American she included additional history about the Nazi occupation. This independent trip as well as the Smith excursion to Berlin gave us a sense of witnessing history.

After graduating from Smith College, I returned to the Eastern part of Germany, to Mühlhausen in Thüringen, and helped build up exchange programs for youth and adults within a region of Michigan. Among other things I developed a pre-travel orientation program. I also taught English to teenagers and adults, all of whom had grown up in the GDR and learned Russian as their first foreign language.

I considered pursuing an MA degree in the US and found that through the German Studies Department (although I would not be studying German), I could get a teaching-assistant position that would cover fees and provide a stipend. Although I took a different path, I was pleased to discover that my German skills could be put to good use in the US.

Later while studying and teaching at two German universities, I took over a “cross-cultural conversational English” course that allowed international and German students to reflect on their international experience. Of course the JYA lent me many insights into this subject – e.g. questioning what is “normal” and to what extent our values and comfort zones are a product of our culture.

Finally, I married a German with perhaps a bit more knowledge of his language and country than most international relationships can claim. We currently raise our children bilingually, even biculturally. That is quite a legacy!

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### **After Graduating from Smith College**

In August of 1992 I was sent by a philosopher from the University of Michigan, Prof. Frithjof Bergmann, to a town in the former part of Eastern Germany, Mühlhausen in Thüringen. He had developed ideas about how the work-world could change for the better and called it “New Work.” Months before he had moderated

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a *Stadtgespräch*, a public meeting which led to the establishment of a grass-roots organization, *Die Mühlhäuser Initiative e. V.* This new organization arranged for me to rent a room with a family and teach English at the *Volkshochschule* (adult evening school) and later in vocational schools. Parallel to this I helped build up an exchange program that consisted of three elements: a student/internship exchange program for one year, an adult exchange program for two-week delegations of representatives from business and education, and a two-week international creative writing workshop. I also offered workshops on the idea of “New Work.” The “Initiative” also had projects to support the local economy, but I was only indirectly involved in these.

It was a fascinating time to be in Mühlhausen (MHL). The city of 40,000 is located near the border to Hessen (i.e. the border between East and West). About 20 km outside the city limits began the so called “border zone” where people had not been allowed to travel freely. The town center is mostly medieval with a good portion of the city walls intact. Behind the fairytale-like half-timber façades lay neglected courtyards and crumbling foundations. I got to know people who were involved in the local “round table” discussions and people who learned foreign languages, but had never travelled to the countries speaking these languages. I worked with young people who, under the old regime, were not allowed to pursue an *Abitur*, one due to his pacifism (and refusal to perform military duties). Despite being an intellectual, he was forced to work on the railroad lines. Now they returned to school to continue their education. Others returned with new hopes from “exile” in India and Australia after the wall came down.

As an American I gained a sort of local celebrity status, known throughout the city as “Rachel” or even “the American lady.” I was invited on excursions with my host family, adult students, and local schools. I was spontaneously picked up off the street and asked if I wanted to go on the roof of one of the largest and historically most significant churches to research the pollution damage. As an interpreter for an American delegation, I was invited to a dinner with the others in a grand villa. When we were all seated we were told we were the first Americans to be here since the occupation in 1945, when this house was the HQ for US officers. Many people shared their stories with me: stories of creative and often subversive ways of procuring rare building materials; stories of crossing the border for the first time in a Trabi; stories of choosing not to look at one’s *Stasi-Akte*, because the file only told who had informed on you, but not why; stories of living in the shadow of a ruin that one was forbidden to visit, because it was close to the border; stories of the day the American Army pulled out of Mühlhausen in trucks and jeeps throwing bubble gum, and the Soviet Army marched in, some without proper boots.

The social ways were not yet infiltrated with materialism and individualism, many things were still home-made, improvised, and passed on by word-of-mouth. For example, most people did not yet have telephones and cars. This led to more

hitch-hiking and spontaneous visits, or you would arrive home to find a note on your door that someone had tried to visit you. Friday afternoons after 1pm you could meet half the population in the pedestrian zone of the town center. I would often sit on a bench or in a sidewalk café and flag down members of my youth group to tell them to pass on the date of our next irregular meeting. By Monday they would all be informed.

I helped prepare a reception for an American delegation from a region in northern Michigan that was interested in establishing an exchange program with the county of MHL. We organized the event and put on theatrical skits in English. At the end of the reception, after all had packed up, my counterpart from Michigan said that we now needed to organize 17 interviews in the next three days. I groaned – if he had told me this an hour ago, it could have been organized so easily! He couldn't imagine that most of the people on the exchange had no phone and that some lived in remote villages.

In all this excitement I fell head-over-heels in love with a “Wessie” who had also been sent by Bergmann to build up the MHL Initiative. Günter managed all the programs and was integral in the economic development programs. A year after my arrival, my host family moved to another house, and Günter and I moved in together. We lived in MHL another two years, during which time I built up the exchange and supported the writing workshops. However, most of this work was passed on to paid ABM (government-subsidized) workers. I continued to teach English, theater, and about “New Work.” I also took on a number of side-jobs: giving tours in English (complete with local legends), working in a tea-shop, offering moral support to a youth group renovating a house and trying to live “New Work.” At some point Günter and I decided to improve our credentials. Grass-roots is all well and good, but we were not making enough money to even consider starting a family. I also wasn't sure if I wanted to stay in Germany, and Günter could not imagine living in the US. (He had only been to Michigan, not my home state of California. My parents lived at the time in England.) We decided that Günter could do research for a thesis on New Work and I could get a Masters in Social Work in community organizing. But it happened a little differently.

After living three years in MHL, I left to start a Masters program at the University of Michigan. After arriving in Ann Arbor, I was informed that a former Fulbright student would be returning from Zurich and the TA-position was therefore no longer available to me. This was a blow, since that was my hope of funding. I decided to spend a year in Ann Arbor anyway working with Frithjof Bergmann (in his classes) and getting hands-on experience with a faith-based community organizer in a nearby town. My boyfriend came to visit, but there was an unspoken disappointment that I still wanted to stay after he decided against doing research in Ann Arbor. However, I also wanted to use this year to figure out if I needed to live in the US. It was a trying year in many ways. My boyfriend visited at Christmas,

but two weeks later we broke up. Nevertheless, we knew we would spend part of the summer working together in Northern Michigan on an international creative writing workshop.

I made some lasting friends in Ann Arbor and gained new insights into two subjects that interested me: New Work and interviewing. In addition to administrative and moderation work for UNISON (a community organizer), I conducted interviews to gather first-hand information about the problems and needs in the community. This would be the beginning of a love for qualitative research and oral history. With Frithjof Bergmann I solidified my theoretical and practical understanding of New Work and visited projects in Detroit and networked with practitioners around Ann Arbor.

After some heart-to-heart talks Günter and I decided to give it another go together in MHL. In the fall of '95, I returned with an idea of empowering youth with community organizing techniques. After months of surveys and meetings, a handful of young people and I established *JIM – Die Jugendinitiative Mühlhausen e. V.* I continued teaching English and even tried to get a more permanent position in a school, which proved impossible without German credentials or returning to the US and applying for programs from there. I supported a number of projects with *JIM*: an exhibition about the effects of drugs, a project converting trash into objects of art, a summer festival sponsored by *Jusas*, a group that met to discuss New Work, and a monthly *JIM* newspaper – that exists to this day in a much more hip and professional form as *JIM – das Magazine*. Again it proved difficult to make a living from this social work, therefore it was inevitable that *ABM*-positions took over most of the administrative work and I offered mostly moral support. To this day I keep in touch with a few of the then young people involved in these projects, some of whom have gone on in areas that were related to these projects – media, sculpture, politics, teaching, etc.

In the summer of '97 Günter and I married. My decision to marry was simultaneously a decision to stay in Germany. Our wedding was an international three-day affair. We were married in a medieval chapel, the bilingual sermon was held by an American missionary. We celebrated in a hall of a knights' order, the garden of which abutted the city ramparts. Friends played music, members of *JIM* catered and locals volunteered to house my American friends and family. The day after the wedding we invited all the participants of the exchanges and delegations and writing workshops. It was in fact bittersweet, because by then it was clear that the MHL Initiative would be liquidated and some projects passed on to other organizations, while Günter and I were reorienting ourselves and looking into possibilities beyond the walls of MHL.

By that time, I was already studying education in Kassel and independently organizing the exchange in MHL. Sadly, that year the US laws changed, and in effect made it impossible for the small volunteer-run exchange programs. The

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government required a special visa for all members of the exchange that was too expensive for the small organizations, otherwise the students were required to pay horrendous sums to attend public high schools. We had another partner organization, but the close regional ties were lost, it became a private exchange of individuals who paid for their experience. Americans no longer stayed in MHL.

At the *Gesamthochschule* Kassel, I both studied and, after the second semester, taught and worked as a research assistant. In addition I joined a student theater group that would enrich my life for a long time. My MA was originally in education with minors in English literature and psychology. I became close to a number of '68er professors, one of whom introduced me to Playback Theater (in theory and practice), another who encouraged spreading my interest in New Work and urged me to build up a resource library on the subject and co-teach a seminar. In addition, I taught English for economists and a cross-cultural conversational English workshop that brought together exchange students and German students to discuss their experiences abroad.

Theater has been a part of my life since I was seven. In high school and college I focused more on social forms of theater: e.g. co-writing pieces with players on adolescent issues and moderating discussions after the show; co-creating and playing in a piece on environmental issues; reworking a play to integrate disabled players. With this background and my new interest in oral history, I was immediately attracted by "Playback Theater," which is improvisational theater based on real-life stories from the audience. Our best performances rallied around topics that brought people together, e.g. students reflecting on their experience in a strike, parents finding common ground in a kindergarten, and finally my farewell party.

My new husband had meanwhile moved to Bochum in '98 to build up a foundation against youth unemployment. For over a year we had a weekend-marriage. When I completed my so-called *Grundstudium* in Kassel, everyone assured me that it would not be a problem to transfer to the Ruhr-University in Bochum. It was not simple. The systems were different and I had to change my minors to "American Studies" and "Social Psychology," but thanks in particular to two American and a Swedish professor I found circles at this more anonymous university as well. At first I worked on programs funded by my husband on career orientation (with a dose of New Work thrown in). I created my own project, an extracurricular school program with at risk students called "Ideas @ Work" that was geared to help them develop interests and reflect on their applicability to the work world. I learned loads from those kids.

I missed my theater group and after a year decided to try to build one up locally. This succeeded to some extent, though over the years the group dynamic, level of professionalism and membership has fluctuated dramatically. Nevertheless, we exist to this day under my co-direction and go by the name of "Theater Feuerfunken."

I worked at the university with a new Swedish professor, who focused on adult education and analyzing interviews for qualitative research. She published an international journal on adult education research that I edited as a student assistant. Unfortunately none of my credentials could be recognized, so I felt underpaid and/or overqualified and soon left that position to teach English (TOEFL and later my cross-cultural workshop). Nevertheless, that professor became the advisor for my master's thesis, "Adult Learning and 'New Work': Experiential Learning in Pursuit of a Calling." This topic allowed me to reflect on learning in and out of institutions and how New Work as an idea supported learning and life decisions. I interviewed 11 people including Prof. Frithjof Bergmann. I conducted ten of the eleven interviews in German, however I wrote my thesis in English so that my (English-speaking) advisor could better support me. However, this proved very controversial at the Ruhr University, because English was also my native language.

By the time I finished my degree, I was seven months pregnant. My son, Adrian, was born in February 2002. Although I felt a bit anti-social during the first year of his life, I was adamant about speaking only English with him. During pregnancy and when my kids were small I appreciated the midwife system in Germany immensely. Out of two post-natal exercise groups grew play groups and a few lasting friendships. I tried to start a babysitting network, but there was little interest because in the Ruhrgebiet many families have relatives and grandparents who help out with childcare. With one family whose children were the same age we decided to buy a house near the forest together and share a garden and childcare. This has become my extended-ersatz-family – supporting each other through thick and thin, and celebrating milestones together.

Before entering kindergarten at age three, English was Adrian's dominant language, but after two weeks of kindergarten he would answer me only in German. This became my second child's model. Born in 2005, Fiona spoke only German from the beginning, but passively understood everything in English. At age four she realized the advantages of English and made an effort to speak it. I think I can safely say my children at age six and nine are sufficiently bilingual (though German grammar slips into their English occasionally). Nevertheless, I would like them to be literate as well. Speaking and reading come more or less naturally, given the opportunity, but writing is another matter. It is hard to find the line between keeping it fun and getting down to business. In the kindergarten my son attended I taught English to the other children, some of whom were bilingual with other languages. We kept it fun and active, emphasizing what they could understand and do, with Halloween a traditional highlight. In 2010 I started an English Club with other families whose children are bilingual. We started out meeting for brunch once a month, but decided when the children were around 8 that it made sense to do more with English. We've experimented with the lines of holistic learning. Drawing pictures and dictating stories as well as movement games seem the most

popular. The younger kids love to sing with motions. We exchange ideas and books – a number of the other parents teach, too. It’s a lovely learning community that hasn’t forgotten to keep it fun.

When Fiona, at three, started *Kindergarten* it was the dawn of a new age for me. I quickly found work through a friend at a private *Fachhochschule*, a technical college, teaching Business English. I was able to tweak the curriculum a bit more to my liking, with oral presentations and CV’s, but the main theory remains rather unquestioning. However, soon I was able to teach “Business Ethics,” which sparked my interest and outrage at the “corporate system” that puts profit over all other values, including the well-being of employees and consumers, environmental concerns and even crosses legal lines. The students are required to spend a semester abroad, and I am pushing to introduce a cross-cultural workshop after they return so that they maintain their improved English skills and reflect on their experiences and those of exchange students.

That is my last twenty years in a nutshell. Of course there were many more roads dreamed of but not taken, and even now my husband and I are considering a new direction. We maintain our contact to MHL with a yearly pilgrimage and visits with the diaspora of youth from there. We maintain a network with New Work practitioners in Germany and Austria, and of course with its founder and the man who brought us together, Frithjof Bergmann. I network with other Playback Theater groups in the Rhein/Ruhr area and attend the occasional national and international symposium. Finally, I teach and learn, with or without credentials and accreditation, starting up social innovations and learning communities whenever I encounter a need.

## ELIZA GARRISON



b. 1972, B.A. Smith College 1994,  
Ph.D. Northwestern University 2005 ·  
Associate Professor, Department  
of History of Art and Architecture,  
Middlebury College · alumna of Smith  
College Junior Year at the University  
of Hamburg 1992-93.

### COMING HOME: MY FIRST YEAR IN GERMANY

I arrived at Smith in the fall of 1990, having done reasonably well at a small public high school in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Although I majored in Medieval Studies and History and took courses in Art History, Smith's German Department and the year I spent in Hamburg have much to do with why I became an art historian. Already by the end of my first-year orientation, I knew that I would spend all of my junior year in Hamburg (indeed I had to – it was a full year or nothing back in those days).

While I was in Hamburg, I discovered that my own intellectual interest in the Middle Ages lay in the art history of the period, and that I was generally drawn to the broader field of western art history. Of course, I had no idea back then what a privilege it was to take art history courses at the University of Hamburg, where much of the discipline was founded. After completing my year abroad and upon returning to Smith for my senior year, Brigitte Buettner and Lester Little were encouraging me to use my German for seminar papers I wrote under their guidance.

It is difficult for me to focus on one event from that year because I still carry so much of that time with me in my professional and personal life. For instance, like many other Smithies, during that year I met the person who ultimately became my life-partner and spouse. When we met in the waning months of 1992, he had just moved to Hamburg from Jena. Having grown up in the GDR, he knew very little English but he was (and is) deeply connected to his native language, and thus my spoken German began to improve by what felt like leaps and bounds. I think that this made it much easier for me to adhere to Jocelyne Kolb's firm enforcement of



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the Smith language pledge. I would say that to this day I still feel as though I'm getting away with something when I only need to speak English to complete even the most basic tasks. Even though I live in Middlebury, Vermont for most of the year (my partner and I are in Berlin in the summer), I am still very German in nearly all of my daily habits and routines (*Frühstück*, obsessive attention to car maintenance, *Spaziergänge*, *Lüften*, *Tierliebe*, etc.).

I believe that I carry so much of my year in Hamburg with me because I learned to feel entirely at home in the language and in the culture while I was also learning to live on my own. Indeed, had things been otherwise, and had I been unhappy at Smith, I wonder if I would have returned at all after my junior year. Hamburg was an ideal spot for me at that time in my life because it is large enough not to be provincial and dull, but it is also small enough to feel manageable. One of the things I most enjoyed about that year, and that had everything to do with my feeling at home there, was getting to know the city by walking just about everywhere: from my dorm to the university; from the Smith Center to the Alster; from the Smith Center to St. Pauli (where my current spouse then lived); from the Smith Center to the *Wochenmarkt* in Eimsbüttel. Merrilee Mardon was one of my frequent walking companions on these wonderful *Fußmärsche*, and we would spend hours that felt like mere minutes talking away in German about absolutely everything. At times, we would take a break for *Milchkaffee und Kuchen* or even a light dinner at the Café at the *Abaton-Kino*, and this felt very grown up and sophisticated.

My year in Hamburg thus is at the heart of so many aspects of my life, to the extent that one of my sisters has remarked that having me in the family is akin to having a German exchange student who won't go away. In all seriousness, though, it is because of this program that I speak and write German fluently; it is because of this program (and Brigitte Buettner) that I am an art historian; it is because of this program that my research focus is on Germany; it is because of this program that Germany feels like home to me. And for all of this I am inordinately grateful.

## SUSANNAH EWING



b. 1972, B.A. Smith College 1994, M.A. University of Hamburg 1999, Diploma in TEFL University of Cambridge · Lecturer of English Language, University of Hamburg 2010-2016 · Freelance Translator and Proofreader · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1992-93.

## & MICHELLE PUCCI

b. 1972, B.A. Smith College 1994, M.A. University of Hamburg 1999 · Lecturer of English Language, University of Hamburg · alumna of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 1992-93.

### DIALOGUE OVERHEARD BETWEEN TWO SMITHIES IN HAMBURG

**Sus:** When I applied to college, I already knew I wanted to spend a year in Europe. It was the JYA programs that decided me for Smith. The only question at the time was: where? I was studying both French and German, so it could have been one of three locations. The language and above all the literature decided me.

**Michelle:** Like you, one of the major reasons I decided on Smith was its JYA programs. But for that very reason I also began taking Italian at Smith and was almost talked into going to the program in Florence. Thankfully our JYA director, Jocelyne Kolb, spoke to me about going to Hamburg and today I'm really thankful that I chose to come to Hamburg – the most beautiful city in the world!

**Sus:** There's no question of that. When I first got here, I knew nothing about Hamburg, and not much about Germany (besides the usual history class). But I was stunned by the beauty of the city and its cultural offerings. As overwhelmed as I was by living abroad, it drew me in with the lovely parks and plethora of excellent evening entertainments.

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**Michelle:** I know you were a fan of *Fischmarkt* visits at 5am after a night of dancing. For me on my own in my “music” dormitory I was always in on the concerts given at the *Musikhochschule* by my floormates. And of course we both enjoyed the fantastic ballet, opera and theater performances (along with their accompanying meal or coffee & cake) that Jocelyne arranged for us to see.

**Sus:** That was the first year I really had the feeling I knew exactly what tuition fees were paying for. Not that Smith wasn’t doing that already... Jocelyne was great about spending every last cent on educating us... and coffee and cake! Remember how she always said we needed to wear or bring “schicke Schuhe”?

**Michelle:** I was always so impressed by how she managed cobblestone streets in gorgeous high-heeled boots. Yet thinking back on that very special year, all of those new experiences, new friendships (yourself included), and coming into my own as an adult really formed the laid the foundation for the person I am today.

**Sus:** Clearly. After all, we not only met some amazing new Smithies, whom we didn’t yet know from home, but also made remarkable international friendships, not to mention marriages! We did both meet our now-husbands during that year. I always thought that was an advantage of the Hamburg JYA: living in student dormitories, where we may not have had the same kind of social education as in a family, but were able to become more closely acquainted with other students.

**Michelle:** And, coming full circle, had you told me twenty years ago I would be back at the University of Hamburg teaching English, I would have told you, you had drunk a few too many *Alsterwasser*! Yet both you and I are still here and once again at the University. In many ways our similar life paths have forged our friendship to become even stronger and certainly made it so fulfilling to create a home and family abroad.

**Sus:** Yeah, who would have thought it? Most amazing how even here in Germany we’d still find so many sister spirits, not only in each other, or in a few treasured German friends, but in the amazing network of Smith alumnae in and around Hamburg and throughout Europe. Without you, and without Marcia, and Deanna, and even Julia in London, it might be harder to be so far away from Mom and Dad permanently. I can hardly wait for the next Smith in Europe reunion!

**Michelle:** And think of how even more exciting it will be when we can introduce our two returning English diploma students to the Smith in Europe network of interesting and incredible women? Those weekends are always a time to strengthen Smith friendships and ties and forge new ones as well as remember what Smith means, especially for us European alumnae.

**Sus:** Isn't it just great about Tamara and Janine?! I am so psyched for our students, that they made it into the AMS Diploma program. A little jealous, because I'd love to be going back to Smith myself, but really excited for them. Getting to know so many fascinating international women was one of the great things that Smith gave us, not only through the JYA program itself, but also through the alumnae network. I guess I met one or two Diploma students when I was at Smith myself, but I had no idea there were so many cool Smith alumnae spread across Europe.

**Michelle:** I absolutely agree. And you do have to wonder what it is about Smith that unites us in allowing us to become who and what we have become. The AMS diploma students have it, too, even though they're doing the exchange the other way around. Being around strong, smart and determined women is certainly a part of it. But I think the Smith experience, especially when integrated in these extraordinary international programs, allows Smithies to become real citizens of and for the world. You really have the best of both worlds: the safety, intellectual richness, and enjoyment of being with other Smithies, yet at the same time the willingness and desire to learn more about everything around you, even when in a foreign country – and sometimes even being able to call it home, too!

**Sus:** Yes, that curiosity is no doubt one of the things that all Smith women have in common. I guess it was my own curiosity that made me want to go to Europe. While most of my images of Europe were historical, from my interest especially in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and of course from reading books, I wanted to know what it was really like here. The JYA program gave me that. Of course, it was nothing like what I had imagined. But Jocelyne's attention to detail, and education of our sensibilities, was hugely influential. In spite of having seen a lot more of Germany and Europe since then, I still remember the first time we were at Unter den Linden in Berlin, and the sounds of the *Zauberflöte*, as truly magical. I carry with me my very first sight of the North Sea. Do you remember? It was a blustery, gray day, and the drama of the waves gave me the feeling that a Viking ship was going to appear on the horizon any minute, or maybe that the *Schimmelreiter* would come bearing down upon us from the dike.

**Michelle:** My memories from that day were based more in the reality of the typical North Sea landscape with lighthouses and sheep and people with wool caps and coats to protect them from our everyday stormy “northern” weather – perhaps the only negative tradeoff for making Hamburg a permanent home.

**Sus:** Ah, yes, the weather. It doesn't seem to have gotten much better in recent years, though the seasons are shifting. Still, we both fell in love in and with Hamburg in that year, and we will be here for quite a while to come!

## SETH PEABODY



b. 1980, B.A. and B.Mus. Northwestern University 2004, M.A. Harvard University 2011, Ph.D. Harvard University 2015 · Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch, University of Minnesota · alumnus of Smith College Junior Year at the University of Hamburg 2002-03.

### PHOTOS NOT TAKEN

It took some convincing to get me to study abroad for a whole year. I was a music performance major at Northwestern, and a year away from my tuba teacher sounded like a bad idea. Plus, I felt loyalty to my rowing team. How ever would they compete without me? But eventually, I noticed that other music students had benefitted from working with different teachers. (And perhaps I began to acknowledge that I probably wouldn't become a professional musician.) As far as the rowing goes, it was a club sport, taking more of my time than I could justify, so time away might be a good thing. In the end, it came down to exactly that: time away. After being an overcommitted college student for three years, in Hamburg I took the chance to explore academic interests and recreational options away from commitments. The irony, of course, is that the year in Hamburg was pivotal in steering me toward the long-term commitments of a Ph.D. in German Studies and a career in academia.

How to remember the year in Hamburg? We all have a wealth of stories from the program. I will frame my thoughts instead through images – mental images, not photographs. I have some lovely photos from the year, but those that stick with me the most derive from moments when I did not have my camera at the ready.

**Photo 1:** Emily at the door. During the first afternoon following my arrival in Hamburg, a tall dark-haired woman knocked on my dorm room door. It turned out she had a Midwestern American accent – not exactly the first person I was expecting to meet in northern Germany. There were some tense periods during our year as fellow JYA students living on the same floor of *Studentenwohnheim*

Grandweg, but we eventually became great friends. Since 2009, we have also become productive colleagues: Emily helped convince me to attend Harvard for graduate school, and we have become frequent collaborators on conference panels.

**Photo 2:** An unornamented white room on the ground floor of the NDR compound, bright fluorescent lights overhead, playing tuba duets with Markus Hötzel. Before leaving Northwestern, I asked my tuba teacher Rex Martin to recommend an instructor for the year in Hamburg. He suggested Markus, the tubist with the NDR symphony orchestra, and thus began my biweekly treks between the Smith Center and the NDR, a mile apart on the Rothenbaumchaussee, my tuba strapped to my back. The lessons supplemented a handful of other musical activities in the city: In the Harvestehuder student orchestra, I relished the low brass choruses in our performance of Bruckner's seventh symphony. I played with a brass quintet in a small church (*Backsteingotik*, of course) in northern Hamburg. And with the choir in Blankenese, which a number of JYA students joined for weekly rehearsals followed by nights out at the local Greek restaurant, we performed our final concert from the choir loft of Hamburg's beloved Michel.

**Photo 3:** Rowing in the Alsterhaus shop windows. Two ergometers were set up inside the display windows facing the Jungfernstieg. In two teams of eight we rowed continuously, one at a time from each team, for a week. "Das ist aber eine komische Puppe!", remarked one passerby. Exhaustion ensued, but the experience also led to one of my closest friendships from the year. The schedule was supposedly random, but after Andi and I rowed against each other a few times, it was noticed that we were the fastest two and that a bit of rivalry would make the event more interesting. I think Andi beat me every time, but I kept it close, and he was a former national teamer. The gap has widened since then: when he came to my wedding at a summer camp in Maine in 2013, he swam around the peninsula every morning. I slept in. (But it was my wedding weekend, not his, so my laziness was excused. I always have an excuse against Andi.) During our time in Hamburg, in addition to rowing together, Andi and I built our friendship over family recipes. We made his Oma's *Käsespätzle* together, and then I cooked up my grandmother's hot fudge sauce (fittingly called "Smith College Fudge," according to the cookbook) for dessert.

**Photo 4:** Rowing with Wilm on the Trave River in Lübeck. From Hamburg, Lübeck appeared to me as a relaxing escape. Like Andi, Wilm also continues to be a part of my life – he and his partner arrived at the wedding in Maine on bikes, having flown to New York City and cycled north. He is also one of the few people outside of my field who offer strong encouragement for my aspirations as a German Studies scholar. Himself a literature fan and musician, he offers me his old volumes of Theodor Storm and expresses his appreciation that I'm studying and teaching German literature. Although he is the one with a fancy office and big house (as a maritime lawyer in Hamburg), he is quick to point out that I do what is missing

from his work, in that my career is directly concerned with promoting appreciation for art and history (while also, of course, questioning and criticizing it).

**Photo 5:** Jocelyne, whom I then called Frau Kolb, offering *Kaffee und Kuchen* at her apartment in the university guest house. Jocelyne was always serious but supportive. She admonished me for staying an extra day in Barcelona at New Years, and as a result missing the first day of classes after the break. I appreciated her emphasis that academics were the top priority, even while all of us were traipsing about Europe during the plentiful weeks of vacation. Jocelyne was a tremendous source of advice when I began deciding on graduate schools years later, reminding me of the importance of the canon and being able to teach Goethe well, even if I decide to focus on modernity. And she had great tips on cultural events, including the one time I heard Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau perform live, as well as a number of excellent performances by the NDR orchestra and the state opera.

**Photo 6:** The stage of the Hamburgische Staatsoper, beginning of Act 3 of Wagner's *Meistersinger*, in the notorious 2003 production by Peter Konwitschny. During the scuffle at the end of Act 2, the backdrop image of Nuremberg glows red—Wagner's brief tiff is reinterpreted as a conflagration. As Act 3 begins, the backdrop now shows bombed-out Nuremberg after World War 2. Then, five minutes before the end of the opera, the music halts abruptly – singers step out of character to debate the nationalist tendencies of Hans Sachs's final aria, drawing the audience into a heated discussion. Should the offending passages simply be deleted? Can't we just move on now that almost 60 years have passed? "'Deutsch' ist sowieso ein Schimpfwort," shouts one Wagner aficionado in the balcony, annoyed at the interruption to the show. Others view the spectacle with a range of responses from critical approval to amusement. Critics have called this production one of the most talked-about Wagner performances of the decade. It was certainly one of the most memorable for me. My thanks to Jocelyne for organizing the visit.

And something that doesn't fit into an image: the language. It was so crisp and clear the way northerners spoke German. I have since lived in Vienna, rural Salzburg province, Freiburg, and Munich. I have come to appreciate (although not to master) the dialects in each of those places, but there's always a feeling that I've arrived home, at least in the sense of a linguistic *Wahlheimat*, when I return to Hamburg and talk to the locals.

The year in Hamburg was when German became easy, and as a result, the culture became much more familiar and enjoyable. As I teach, this is the goal I set for my students. Language offers a cultural bridge that students can build during a class, but the larger goal is for them to cross the bridge after the class ends. It has been very satisfying to see this happen. After I first taught Beginning German, half of my students went to Germany for an intensive summer program, and several returned to study or work for 6 months or a year. Like I did in Hamburg, these

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students are now getting past the honeymoon phase. They can see life away and at home as complementary experiences and gain greater understanding of both worlds.

I offer my congratulations to the Smith College program in Hamburg, still going strong after half a century. May it continue to offer students a wealth of transformative experiences, memorable stories, and unphotographed images.



## BRYN SAVAGE



b. 1982, B.A. Smith College  
2004, Ph. D. Yale University  
2012 · Curriculum Designer,  
Amazon Publishing · alumna  
of Smith College Junior  
Year at the University of  
Hamburg 2002-03.

### AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

I went to a small, rather old-fashioned primary school in Seattle, Washington, with an emphasis on reading, writing, arithmetic, and Bible study. In one regard, however, it was forward-thinking. Unlike most grade-schoolers in the 1980s, we were also learning German. After all, if it was good enough for Luther, it was good enough for us. Unfortunately, Germany seemed awfully far away to me, and I spent nine years blithely refusing to remember key dates of the Reformation and the genders of German nouns, as I was sure neither of these categories of information would ever be applicable in my life.

At Smith, however, I met Professor Jocelyne Kolb, who was so wonderfully encouraging and so sure, it seemed, that I would have a great adventure in Germany. Despite my own healthy skepticism (after all, I knew what my *Zertifikat Deutsch* score was), I decided to have that adventure she was so sure awaited me – and what a wonderful adventure it was. In Hamburg, Berlin, and Dresden, we went to the ballet, the opera, and more concerts than I can count. We wandered the narrow streets of Lübeck and had our afternoon *Kaffee und Kuchen* in the second-floor Niederegger Café, where they roll the thinnest sheet of marzipan between the cake and the frosting. A Blumberg fellowship allowed me to spend March backpacking alone around Southern Germany to learn about Baroque poetry and the Thirty Years' War. One cloudy September weekend, we bicycled around the little island of Amrum, surrounded by the sound of the wind in the dune grasses, our faces slowly soaked by the mist. Afterward, there was strong black tea and *Rote Grütze*, of course.

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All of these experiences were enchanting, and little by little I became fluent in German and familiar with German culture and history. The secret, of course, was the program's careful balance between supporting us in our academic and personal development and encouraging us to take on the responsibilities and the freedom that were our right as adults. Professor Kolb took the time to teach us German table manners, including the two acceptable ways to break open a soft-boiled egg. But she also made it clear that our success in learning German would come down to one's own individual commitment to speaking the language and choosing to fit into this world. My friends and I took this commitment seriously, which ranks among the best decisions of my life.

After so many years of 'learning' German, it was terribly embarrassing, not to mention tiresome, to constantly use the wrong article. And mistaking  *euch*  for  *ihr*  when you're taking the second-person plural out of the garage for the first time is mortifying, too. Within the first month, I had the pleasure of being openly laughed at by a gas station attendant, a convenience store clerk in the  *U-Bahn* , two grocery store clerks, a baker, my dormitory  *Hausmeister* , and an entire men's eight at the North German Rowing Championships. While I was coxing their boat. They were huge and blonde, and two of them were former Olympians. By the end of that particular conversation, which revolved around a  *Steckdose*  and was accompanied by extravagant hand gestures, I could have sunk into the floor, but instead I got into the boat and held the lines straight as they pulled like the dickens. We went 1000 meters in 2.56 minutes and I was still blushing when we crossed the finish line.

A few months later, I was hanging out with some new German friends at one of their apartments in the  *Schanzenviertel* . We were heading to a special techno party with additional bass that would vibrate the entire space to the music. Although I had long since mastered  *Steckdose* , a lot of those pesky German words still looked and sounded the same, so I said: "Das ist eine besondere Party, oder? Eine Party für Gehirnlose?" If you know German, I am sure you are shouting right now, "Gehörlose," you idiot! And yes, everyone did laugh, but by that time I didn't care. Instead I thought to myself, well, you won't mix those two up again. And the party was great. Our insides got wiggled like you wouldn't believe, and we ordered our drinks in sign language acquired from posters lining the bar.

Hamburg changed my life, and it wasn't because I learned a language, although my German has been a reliably saleable skill on the job market. More importantly, the Smith program gave me the opportunity and the support to feel at home taking risks and to see that the right risks lead to exponential rewards. What I learned in Hamburg was that it's not what you know or what comes easily to you that determines where you can go and how well you'll do once you get there. It's a willingness to put yourself out in the world, along with some resilience and a sense of humor, that make a difference in life.

## CHRISTINA ARRISON



b. 1984, B.A. Smith  
College 2006 · Artist and  
Producer at AB Video  
Solutions · alumna of  
Smith College Junior  
Year at the University of  
Hamburg 2004-05.

### SMALL TALK AND BIG CHANGES

There are the stories as they appear now at cocktail parties. The time I saw a giant protest walking by, and from the size and sound of it I assumed it was about something extremely serious. Then I noticed there were an awful lot of dogs for a march. Turned out that it was a giant, traffic-stopping, slogan-chanting protest about – wait for it – leash laws. Everyone was so upset by the idea that their dogs would have to be on a leash in Hamburg that they took to the streets to demand change. Most of the Iraq War protests I saw in the US weren't so big or so serious.

Or another favorite anecdote – that in summer, crowds of German businessmen walk along together quite seriously, their suit jackets flapping in the wind. Nothing out of the ordinary – except every single one of them will be licking an ice cream cone, pausing between sentences about financial deals to lap at their scoop of strawberry.

The way that on a sidewalk a tenth as crowded as a New York City street, you're going to get bumped into ten times as much, but that you shouldn't look anyone in the eye, or god forbid speak to them or apologize for bumping them. Or the fact that when friends came to visit I had to give them advance instructions to move extremely quickly in the grocery store line, lest we suffer the wrath of the Aldi ladies. And yes, you have to put a Euro into the shopping cart. You'll get it back, I promise.

I also keenly remember the realization that the tactics I usually employ in social situations (a sure-fire mixture of dad-worthy puns, yelling excitedly, and running around a lot) did NOT translate into German. Or the time that some dorm-mates

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didn't speak to me or the other Americans for several weeks after Bush was reelected in 2004. And the even stranger part that that made me feel defensive about America, even though I was as upset about the election as they were.

These stories, let's be honest, are shallow cultural observations at best. And looking back now, it is surprising, and even embarrassing, that these moments had such a big impact on me. But my time abroad offered me something beyond fodder for small talk. My experience in Hamburg was the first time that I really viscerally realized that my own political beliefs, traditions, and social customs weren't neutral – that despite the rather radical politics and interest in subcultures that I saw as my rejection of all things stereotypically American, I had been profoundly shaped by my own nationality and culture.

This realization is one that most people don't have the luxury of waiting until they're in their twenties to learn. The dominance of American culture and our geopolitical power mean that growing up pretty much anywhere else, you come to terms with that a lot sooner. And of course, even within America it still is a marker of a very specific economic, educational, and cultural background that I was able to go so long without having to confront the idea that there is no "neutral" cultural state.

Now that I work in the culture industry myself, I'm so grateful that I was jarred into thinking more deeply about these ideas. It's helped me as a performer to construct characters more rigorously – I now can more deeply question what shapes a person's personality and behavior and use that to make characters more three-dimensional. It has also helped me to question the stories that I choose to tell in my own work so that I don't rehash the same ideas that get recycled in American culture again and again. It helped me immeasurably when I worked as a journalist that I had at least some understanding of what it was like to live in a foreign country and speak a foreign language. And in general, no matter what I've been doing professionally, it has helped to make me far more curious about and open to the experiences of people I meet.

Cultural literacy is an idea that gets tossed around a lot in business and education these days. Businesses see it as a way to stay competitive in a globalizing world, and as far as I can tell, most educational institutions see it as a way to produce people who will be attractive to businesses. The Smith program at the University of Hamburg offered me a deeper view of cultural literacy – one that didn't just mean examining other cultures as an object of curiosity, but which also meant a deep examination of my own.

## DINAH LENSING-SHARP



b. 1994, B.A. Smith College  
2016 · doctoral student, Department  
of Comparative Literature,  
University of California at Berkeley ·  
alumna of Smith College Junior  
Year at the University of Hamburg  
2014-15.

### GATHERING

At the time of writing, there is just over a month left before I fly back to the United States. I will have spent nearly eleven months living in Hamburg, with the exception of a few trips farther afield. Someone asked me recently what I'm going to miss the most about Hamburg after the program has ended. I was caught off guard by the question; I hadn't yet considered what I would miss about living here, as I was more preoccupied with missing family and friends and longing for the comfort foods of home. I answered honestly: I didn't know what I would miss about Hamburg yet because it had become my new normal. Though I was living long-term in a foreign country for the first time in my life, any sense of foreignness – at least in my everyday routine – had long since dissipated. I didn't think I would know what to miss until it was gone.

In the intervening weeks, “the end is near” conversations have increased among me, my friends, and the professors who participate in the Hamburg program. We talk all the time about how little time there is left, how soon we'll be making our separate journeys home, and how difficult it will be to spend the month or so at home without one another until we're back on campus for the fall of our senior year. There is a frightening sense of momentum, stronger than I've ever felt before, building toward a future that, for many of us, remains uncertain. The more we talk about the end of our program, the more surprised I am to feel my stomach twist in anxiety. Not just at the thought of taking a further step toward adulthood, but of the end of the peculiar companionship that comes from learning to navigate a foreign

country and a new culture (or several) together. Most of us haven't seen family members since visits at Christmastime, but some families haven't been able to visit at all. It's certainly more difficult than spending the year away at college, although online communication makes the separation significantly easier than it was for students only a couple of decades ago (as my parents are always reminding me).

I've learned that spending a year in a foreign country requires not only the openness to try new things and welcome unfamiliar experiences, but also common sense and the courage to build a life in a home that you know is temporary. You have to unpack your suitcase, find a place for your books, store up snacks in your cupboard, decorate the walls. In order to make my room feel more like it really belonged to me, I bought posters of movies and TV shows and art that mattered to me and covered the walls with them. They insulated the echoing emptiness of the room that had first greeted me and made me feel surrounded with familiar comforts. At the same time, I taped various ephemera from my new life in Hamburg and my travels on the wall beside a map of Europe bearing marks for each city I visited. I collect museum and transport ticket stubs, brochures, receipts, even drink chips from the places I go as a visceral reminder of what I did there.

Equally important to building a life in a new place are the actions you take outside your room, and not just figuring out where to buy groceries and get your hair cut. Living abroad can produce a greater loneliness than that of moving to a new city in your home country. Some in our group made efforts to befriend the locals, German and otherwise, including people in their dorms. Though I went into the year intending to try this, I found I bonded much better with the friends I made in the Smith group. A few of us made weekly dinner dates at Vapiano, a quick-serve Italian restaurant, as well as more upscale excursions to burger places and crêperies. We traveled together to Copenhagen, Brussels, Barcelona, Dublin, and Edinburgh, usually searching out the best places to eat as we learned that trying the local food was the best way we could learn about a new city.

Over the course of a year, these people became my chosen family. When the stresses of the German university system made us long for the familiarity of Smith, we took care of each other. When people stared at us on public transportation, we tried to figure out what made us stand out as American. And when we couldn't decide what to do on a Saturday night but above all did not want to venture out to the Reeperbahn, we settled on drinking wine and watching Netflix together as the best possible choice.

Although I didn't become close friends with everyone in the group, we made it a priority every month or two to get as many of us together as possible for cooking, eating, and drinking. This tradition began the second week we were here, when we gathered at Hagenbeckstraße to eat pasta and salad and drink lots of wine, though we barely knew where to buy these things yet. I remember having a difficult time adjusting in the first couple of weeks in Hamburg, and I especially remember that

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that night made me feel much less alone. Subsequent events included Canadian Thanksgiving in October (in honor of our one Canadian group member) and Dips & Sips Parts I and II, for which we made several kinds of dips and concocted creative drinks to sip. One time we even steeped Haribo gummy bears in vodka for a truly immersive German experience.

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I'm finishing this essay at home, in August 2015, a few weeks after flying out of Hamburg with a light heart and very heavy luggage. Of all these gatherings, the one that I believe will remain completely blissful in my mind is the very last night that I spent in Hamburg. Four of us were flying to Boston together the next day, so we bought a few bottles of champagne and made our way to the banks of the Alster opposite the city where we could see the light reflected on the water. Several of our friends who were flying out later came to see us off, too. We stayed for hours, terrified of popping the cork with each new bottle we opened and watching the sky darken. On that night we felt the weight of what we had accomplished together, and we knew with certainty that this would not be the end of the family we'd become.