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Kurt Hahn, the United World Colleges, and the Un-Making of Nation

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Kurt Hahn, the United World Colleges, and the Un-Making of Nation

by

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Dedication

For my father David William Holland, who was never satisfied with easy answers.

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This dissertation is for my family: my sisters Sarah Diestler and Julia Forcier, and my mother Rita Holland, all in the memory of my father, David Holland. I am sure he would have thought some of this was a little fancy. He was an economist. But he would have been glad to see it done and I so wish he were here to do so.

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The United World College of the American West (UWC USA) is part of a larger constellation of schools, administrative structures, and groups of volunteers that, in some way, are connectable to Kurt Hahn. To my own great relief everyone I encountered was happy to help with this project. My questions, research trips, emails, phone calls, and endless interviews were met with enthusiasm, and curiosity. This project gained momentum each time this happened.

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In this vein, I hope that every scholar has the experience at any archive that I did at the Kurt Hahn Archive at the Salem School. Archivists Antje Bemmer and Brigitte Mohn, along with the cheerful assistance of Mona Weinhuber, made an exhausting four-day trip profoundly fruitful. Chapters 1 and especially 2 would be ghosts of their current forms without your help. As the tiny field of Hahn scholarship expands, the Kurt Hahn Archive and its wonderful staff will forever be at its epicenter.

I spent two-and-a-half years at the UWC USA. It is a small school near a small town in one of the least-populous states in the United States. Were it not for the wonderful friendships and fruitful professional relationships that bloomed there among staff, the project would have been much lonelier and more difficult. Thank you therefore to Dan and Jen Willms, Arianne Zwartjes, Gita Eglite, Bianca Sopoci-Belknap, Ben Gillock, Parris Bushong, Naomi Swinton, Travis Day, Anne Farrell, Linda Curtis, Todd French, Aaron Kagan, Elise Manning and so many other

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Kurt Hahn, the United World Colleges, and the Un-Making of Nation

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

Supervisor: Julia Mickenberg

This dissertation has two phases. First I use historical analysis of archival speeches, pamphlets, personal writings, diary entries, school correspondences, administrative letters and business letters of the German educator Kurt Hahn (1886-1974) to reveal the development of Hahn's educational innovations. Hahn was a major force in the genesis and development of what we now refer to as "experiential education." I show how Hahn's contributions to this large educational movement were rooted in utopian progressivism, but also in his observations, struggles, and triumphs in the contexts of the First World War, Second World War, and Cold War. Such nationalistic violence drove Hahn to develop educational techniques that harnessed the camaraderie and moral imperatives found in wartime in order to inspire, motivate, and transform his students. Hahn's approach led to the founding of Outward Bound, but also a host of other initiatives, all of them evolving out of the conflicts of the 20th century. And yet this is not the time in which we now live. For this reason, from 2011-2013 I executed an ethnography of an international high school in New Mexico descended from Hahnian thought: The United World College of the American West (UWC USA). Through participant-observation as a teacher and an outside researcher, as well as through regular ethnographic interviews with 15 subjects, I witnessed identity construction at the UWC USA up close. In response to the wild diversity of

the UWC USA, students first tended to “nationalize,” retreating into a safe national identity. Soon however, students experienced “self-effacement in the common cause” while participating in the altruistic co-curricular program at the UWC USA as well as in its rigorous wilderness program, eventually leaving their nationalization behind. Finally, students experienced the “triumph of the personal” where distant nations took on the contours, affect, and emotional weight of personal connections. In this way, Hahn’s 20th century innovations have found expression in the digital age.

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Prologues

Somewhere near Malta, February 2016:

Volunteers from around the world have been arriving in the area for months to assist with the steadily-worsening refugee crisis. As a result of increasing unrest to the south and east, many thousands of Iraqis, Syrians, Pakistanis, and Afghans continue to pour toward Europe, often crossing the dangerous eastern Mediterranean in makeshift boats driven by inexperienced helmsmen. Death tolls have been high from the beginning as the small crafts, overloaded with desperate people, capsize or in the cold water. In September, international sentiment was mobilized by the heartbreaking image of a three-year-old Kurdish Syrian boy named Aylan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach. Aylan's brother, Galip, was also drowned in the accident.¹

A private rescue vessel, *The Responder*, had been operating in the area following the Kurdi's fatal accident. The organization to which the vessel belongs, the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), reported an increase in donations fifteen times that of normal following the international response to the photo.² In early February, National Public Radio arrived in the area to report on MOAS.

Since arriving in the area late in the fall, *The Responder* has saved around 400 refugees. Some of its crew are employed by MOAS, but many of them are volunteers, including a local

¹ "Volunteer Groups Step in to Rescue Migrants En Route to Greek Islands," Radio Broadcast and Transcript, *All Things Considered* (National Public Radio, February 2, 2016), <http://www.npr.org/2016/02/02/465321644/volunteer-groups-step-in-to-rescue-migrants-en-route-to-greek-islands>.

² Jessica Elgot, "Charity Behind Migrant Rescue Boats Sees 15-Fold Rise in Donations in 24 Hours," *The Guardian*, October 3, 2015, sec. World - Europe, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/charity-behind-migrant-rescue-boats-sees-15-fold-rise-in-donations-in-24-hours>.

man from Malta whose friends called him “Mimmo.” Mimmo drives the smaller, rigid-hulled inflatable rescue boat named “Aylan,” after the drowned Syrian boy. Its companion craft is named “Galip.” For Mimmo, a father of three, the motivation to spend his extra time in the cold waters of the eastern Mediterranean in winter is simple. As he told reporters from National Public Radio: “I cannot stand to see the kids on those boats. It's like - I say why my kids are at home safe and these kids have to risk their lives? What's the difference?”³

Montezuma, New Mexico, August 2011

There is an open area on lower campus between the set of four lower campus dorms to the east and the theater, arts, and music complex to the west. It is a grassy area, and just beyond it is a soft hill leading down to two soccer fields. The Montezuma castle looms above it to the north almost exactly, the grey shingles of its conical turret stark in the blue New Mexican sky. Normally this area is a crossroads for faculty and students, but today it is almost empty. I have been on campus for two days.

Ahead of me, lying on his back and propped up on his elbows is a medium-height, square-shouldered young man with dark brown skin. He and I are the only people around. He is wearing a checkered shirt, a brown canvas Carhartt vest, dark blue wranglers, and worn cowboy boots. A thick black beard with no mustache juts out just far enough from under his cowboy hat to catch the sun. I smile at him. Out of all the students that have filed past me in a blur these last two days, this one I recognize. He grins sideways up at me, squinting. He speaks slowly, with accented English.

³ “Volunteer Groups Step in to Rescue Migrants En Route to Greek Islands.”

“Hello there,” he says. I return his greeting, standing beside his reclining form now, and looking with him down at the empty soccer field and beyond it, the sun lowering towards the piñon pines on the ridge across the river. He’s a second-year student at the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West (UWC USA). I’m an “outside researcher.” I am quite nervous about the project I’m about to undertake.

“Aren’t you the guy who’s coming here to live with us and study our identities or something?” he asks, grinning up sideways at me. His tone is full of meanings. I think I hear a light suspicion for such a project, a gentle teasing, and a note of welcome.

“Yep.” I grin back at him.

“So... how’s it going?” He is now looking directly up at me, his eyes nearly the same color as his beard. The dare in his voice is now almost certainly a joke at my expense. But a warm one. I’ve been here two days. It’s not really “going” yet.

This is just the first of thousands of encounters I’ll have in the next two-and-a-half years with young people who are simply unafraid of adults. I will have this vaguely-confrontational sense over and over. And just like in this case, it will often be threaded with affection.

I remember all at once where he is from.

“Aren’t you the guy from the Maldives I met when I was visiting last spring?” I ask.

“Yep,” he says, turning back to the empty soccer field. We silently watch the sun move a little closer to the piñon pines.

I half turn toward the castle, its red wood siding, gray shingles, and metal roof flashing catching the soft light from the falling sun. I pause. I need to unpack my truck. I need to do a million things. I turn back to the young man.

“So tell me, what happens at this school to a Maldivian who travels thousands of miles from his island home and spends two years of his life in the mountains of New Mexico?”

Falhuveri from the Maldives looks at me steadily from under the brim of his hat, grins again, and says quietly,

“He becomes a cowboy.”

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has two major phases. The first phase is historical, tracing the arc of the life and educational innovations of the German headmaster Kurt Hahn through most of the 20th century. The second phase is ethnographic, analyzing school culture and student life at the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West (UWC USA) from 2011-2013. The UWC USA is part of the United World College movement co-founded in Wales by Hahn in 1962.

Both phases of this dissertation, historical and ethnographic, address two important elements. The first element is exemplified by Mimmo the Maltese boat driver's impulse to patrol the Mediterranean for refugees, strangers to him, and then bring them to safety. Rescue service and its cousin, community service, are a major feature of Kurt Hahn's pedagogies and therefore also this project. The first United World College, then called the Atlantic College, made a name for itself by operating a Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) station out of a 12th-century castle on the Bristol Firth.⁴

The second element consists of the profound changes in their identities that students experience at the UWC USA, as exemplified by Falhuveri's dramatic change from a sea-going islander to a devoted high desert horseman. These two elements, skill-based service to others and identity change, are linked because in the early 1920s Hahn recognized that he could use the former element to inspire and bring about the latter.

⁴ Sutcliffe, David, *The RIB: The Rigid-Hulled Inflatable Lifeboat and Its Place of Birth the Atlantic College* (Cambridge: Granta Editions, 2010), 38. The station operated from 1963 until 2012, when the RNLI decided training students who leave after two years was inefficient. The school still patrols the coast with its corps of canoe lifeguards, a group that has been functioning alongside the RNLI service for the duration. Coincidentally, the rigid-hulled inflatable boat of the kind Mimmo was driving, (a version of which appears in Figure 1) was invented by the headmaster, staff, and students at the Atlantic College in 1962-1963, and there many prototypes were piloted by teenage students on rescue crews for decades.

Hahn felt strongly that the impulse to help and the self-sacrifice, the *self-effacement*, that contributing in such a way elicited in a person could be harnessed to change that person. This realization lies at the center of many educational innovations over the nearly 50 years Hahn was active as an educational thinker and founder of schools. Importantly, all of these innovations (and schools) were conceived with international war as a backdrop and with the concept of national identity very much in mind.⁵

KURT HAHN AND THE EVOLUTION OF *ERLEBNISTHERAPIE*

Almost 100 years before I was gently teased by that Maldivian cowboy on that soccer field in New Mexico, Kurt Hahn, a tall, athletic, 28-year-old German Jew, stole from Scotland to Denmark and from Denmark to Germany. He had to get home. War was about to begin and he was behind what would soon become enemy lines.⁶

He would spend much of the rest of his life crisscrossing the North Sea and the English Channel in response to rampant nationalism and the wars that sprung from it. Hahn would serve first on the German side in the First World War. This would connect him to Prince Max of Baden, Germany's last Imperial Chancellor, with whom he would found the Salem School in the Bodensee region of southern Germany. He would then flee back to the United Kingdom to escape Hitler's wrath on the eve of the Second World War. He would there found another school, Gordonstoun, in the same area of Scotland he had left 15 years earlier. From both Salem

⁵ I address Hahn and national identity in detail below. Here it suffices to say that he believed in national character, in a national body that had discernable traits and personalities. For Hahn, nations could become ill and could also be healed. As we shall see below, he intended for his school projects at Salem in Germany and Gordonstoun in Scotland to do exactly that: heal the nation they were in.

⁶ Sir Neville Butler, "A Glimpse of Kurt Hahn and Family in Berlin, August 1914-September 1915," in *Kurt Hahn: An Appreciation of His Life and Work* (Aberdeen: Gordonstoun School, 1976), 73.

and Gordonstoun, Hahn would contribute mightily to the strong progressive educational impulses and innovations that, at the time of his escape from Britain, had been challenging conventional practices in Europe and the United States for 30 years.

Hahn saw modern society as sick and in need of a cure. In keeping with the aspirations of progressive utopian educators before him, Hahn saw his schools as incubators of this cure, whose graduates would radiate out into the nation, spreading “infectious [spiritual] health.”⁷

Hahn’s contributions took the form of something he called *erlebnistherapie*, or ‘healing through experience.’ At the center of *erlebnistherapie* was that impulse toward helping others, but the ‘healing’ happened because the person doing the helping was forced to better themselves. By building physical skills, habits of self-reliance, and an orientation to the group that would aid them in extending help, they would be changed. This conceptual framework would broaden into the concept we now know as experiential education, exemplified by the teenagers working as sea-rescue personnel at the Atlantic College, and, as we shall see, students at the UWC USA in a variety of pursuits, from wilderness trips in the New Mexican highlands to many forms of student-run service in the local community.

In order to connect the origins of the United World College movement to present-day life at the UWC USA, the first half of this dissertation draws upon both existing scholarship and especially archival sources to trace the precursors, genesis, and development of Hahn’s pedagogy. In doing so this project intervenes in the loose historiography around Hahn, showing that, quite in opposition to the opinions of other scholars, Hahn’s educational innovations do

⁷ Kurt Hahn, “Transcription of Kurt Hahn’s Speech at Plenary Session of the Atlantic Conference at Bruges,” September 13, 1957, KHA SK - 43, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

indeed constitute a fully-conceived educational system. Furthermore, despite his own humble protestations to the contrary, Hahn himself saw them this way, often referring to them as the “system” or the “Salem system.”⁸

This intervention is important because, outside of the circles of what is broadly known as “experiential education,” Kurt Hahn’s name is mostly unknown in the United States. Even within experiential education circles many accounts consist mostly of legend, anecdote, or both. In terms of larger discourses around American culture or education, Hahn is a non-entity. However, the offspring of Hahn’s early educational initiatives in Europe certainly do garner recognition. Outward Bound is the most obvious and well-known of these, both because of Outward Bound’s prominent role in the early Peace Corps and its ensuing association with President John F. Kennedy and Sargent Shriver, yet also because many branches of the Outward Bound program have penetrated “traditional” American schools and, more recently, charter schools.⁹

Yet Outward Bound is only the most well-known star in the constellation of Kurt Hahn’s educational initiatives, and each of these initiatives, from the Round Square Movement to the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award to the United World College Movement to the *global* Outward Bound Movement, found their genesis in Hahn’s fierce anti-fascism and the belief that young people were capable of far more than western society in the early 20th century was asking of them. Indeed, it was *by* asking more of them that Hahn would change them.

⁸ Kurt Hahn, “Untitled Retrospective of 30 Years” (Unknown, October 22, 1950), SER 0009 / 154, Gordonstoun School Archive.

⁹ I show the connection between Hahn, Outward Bound, and John F. Kennedy’s administration in Chapter 2.

By recovering Hahn as an important contributor to 20th-century progressive educational thought as well as using ethnographic tools to show how these contributions play out in a single school in the 21st century, this dissertation finds itself in conversation with a series of disciplines. It is partially a history of progressive education and experiential education, using Kurt Hahn's personal arc to show how experiential education, such a vital and under-recognized aspect of modern educational practice, came to be. It is also a sited study of the interactions between individuals and an ideologically-driven institution. Finally, it is an investigation into the machinery of identity, revealing how identities are constructed and altered at the UWC USA, using the voices of 15 students to illustrate these developments.

Chapter 1, "Progressive Utopian Ferment," grounds Hahn's eventual innovations in the rich tradition of educational progressivism while also detailing the early years of his life. Here I reveal a crucial split in the broad trans-Atlantic progressive education movement. The split occurred between progressives that sought to reform society through systemic change such as Patrick Geddes, Ramsay MacDonald, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and perhaps even Robert Baden Powell; and those that thought it better to create an entire ideal society in miniature in the form of an idealistic boarding school, and from the platform of that tiny platform, initiate change.¹⁰

This smaller-but-wilder strain of what I call "progressive utopianism" included men like the Englishman Cecil Reddie of the Abbotsholme school, and the German Hermann Lietz of Haubinda.¹¹ Chapter 1 also explores Hahn's childhood and family life, his early education, his

¹⁰ Ramsay MacDonald and Kurt Hahn continued to have shared history. It would be MacDonald who eventually rescued Hahn from Hitler!

¹¹ A.S. Neill, Edmund Demolins, Rudolf Steiner, and Francisco Ferrer would also belong on this list, among many others that I discuss in Chapter 1.

infatuation with the educational formulations of Plato, his fascination with the English public school system, and the head injury that so informed his own particular form of utopianism. The chapter concludes with Hahn's service to Germany in the First World War, and the forging of his friendship with Prince Max von Baden, the last Imperial Chancellor of Germany.

Chapter 2, "Three Castles, Three Wars: The Evolution of Progressive Utopianism," completes the arc of Hahn's life. It first focuses on the immediate context, struggles, and triumphs that Hahn and his staff faced at his two schools: Salem in Germany and Gordonstoun in Scotland. It charts Hahn's building of Salem's curriculum upon the foundation of Lietz and Reddie before him, and witnesses Hahn's desperate struggle to expand Salem's influence over a Germany flailing in the interwar years. The chapter also reveals Hahn's advancement and fine-tuning at Salem curricular features that were the hallmarks of progressive educators: a focus on the student, project work, art education, physical training, craftwork, and the cultivation of a healthy spiritual life. Most importantly, it reveals that Hahn sought to build on the tradition of the first inhabitants of Salem, an order of Benedictine monks known as Cistercians, through Salem's service to the surrounding community. Following a showdown with Hitler and Hahn's banishment to Scotland, it was this same service impulse that led to the famous rescue services of the Gordonstoun school. These rescue services became the blueprint for a larger set of training schemes, the Moray Badge and the County Badge, which in turn became the blueprint for Outward Bound.

Finally, Chapter 2 shows that in the twilight of his own life, Hahn became involved in an effort to bring into being what he and his allies thought may be a worthy answer to a looming third world war. He co-founded the Atlantic College in 1962 in Wales, a sixth-form international

school where 16-18 year olds would gather from all over the world to create, as founding headmaster Desmond Hoare called it, a “staff college for international teenagers” With this phrase Hoare directly referenced the then-newly formed NATO Defense College, a site of inspiration and support for the new school. Here students and staff would not only invent the RIB used by Mimmo in the opening vignette, but more importantly create the foundation for a small yet steadily expanding movement of international schools.

This is therefore in that moment in 1962 where Falhuveri’s story begins, along with thousands of others like it. For shortly after the RIB was invented, Atlantic College became the United World College of the Atlantic (UWC AC), the first of many UWCs. The UWC USA where Falhuveri and I stood on that fall day in 2011 was founded in 1982.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN A TOTAL INSTITUTION

Hahn’s schools, but also the UWC USA, successfully created a tiny fully-enclosed community. Cecil Reddie called such a community an “independent kingdom.”¹² Hahn preferred to think of it as a “small state.”¹³ The sociologist Erving Goffman would call it a “total institution.”¹⁴ This seemed to raise a fascinating question: if the “miniature kingdom” or “small state” of a boarding school could, as Johann Friedrich Herbart famously insisted, “control the sense data” of a student,¹⁵ then what ramifications would exist for such a school if it had a

¹² Cecil Reddie, *Abbotsholme* (Nabu Press (originally by George Allen, London), 2013), 34.

¹³ Kurt Hahn, “Letter from Kurt Hahn to Adam Arnold Brown, September 18th, 1965,” Typewritten, (September 16, 1965), Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

¹⁴ Erving Goffman, *Asylums; Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates, with a New Introduction by William B. Helmreich*, 2nd Edition (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 8. I use Goffman later in a discussion about the institution of the UWC USA. Without prompting, a few of my informants, after visiting a juvenile detention facility on a CAS trip, offered the opinion that, in some ways, the UWC USA functioned like a prison.

¹⁵ Peter Searby, “The New School and the New Life: Cecil Reddie (1858-1932) and the Early Years of Abbotsholme School,” *History of Education* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 1989): 14.

strong central ideology? And what if this ideology, instead of being tacitly dictated by large structural fields such as culture and national identity, targeted those very fields instead?

To answer these questions, this dissertation refits itself with ethnographic tools for chapters 3, 4, and 5, and dives into the lived experiences of 15 students at the UWC USA. Falhuveri, the Maldivian cowboy from the above prologues, is one of these. By mingling history and anthropology this project seeks to capitalize on the tensions between the two disciplines, showing how concepts revealed in archival evidence from the early 20th century play out in the lives of people living in the present. I have always preferred knowledge that has traction in the real world. As a result, I looked hard at the present to see if it can identify patterns from the past.

I learned a great many things while doing so, but one of them was certainly that the contemporary United World College movement does have a strong central ideology. Most UWC USA students can repeat the mission statement verbatim upon demand. At an early assembly in 2011 a line of thirty or so students recited it in their home languages as a form of welcome to new students. The statement reads “the United World Colleges make education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.”¹⁶

During my time at the school, when students at the UWC USA were frustrated with the UWC USA’s faculty, administration, or each other during my time there, it was often because they were not “living the mission.” When students expressed confusion or, at other times, desperation, about their own career at the UWC USA or at university beyond it, it was often

¹⁶ “UWC-USA, an International Baccalaureate Boarding School in New Mexico,” accessed January 30, 2016, <http://www.uwc-usa.org/>.

because they were trying to “live the mission,” but felt that the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (the IB) or pressures from home were thwarting their honest engagement with and execution of the UWC ideology. In the 49 years between the founding of the Atlantic College in 1962 and my unpacking of my pickup into faculty housing above the Montezuma Castle in 2011, the original, vaguely NATO-inspired impulse of the UWC movement had settled into a power phrase resonating with young people from a huge diversity of backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and points of origin. This dissertation reveals both the antecedents to this ideology, and, by shifting into ethnography in its second half, the ways in which this ideology works to alter the very identities of the students at the UWC USA.

Chapter 3, “Interlude: From History to Ethnography and from Europe to New Mexico” executes this shift, and introduces the theoretical framework with which I structure the ethnography. Dorothy Holland, William Lachicote, Jr., Debra Skinner and Carole Cain synthesized and developed the ideas of Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin to “articulate a vision of both person and society true to the parts played by cultural forms, the machinery of power and social positioning, and the *continual* process of identification.”¹⁷ Holland, et al.’s framework is so appropriate for a study of the UWC USA because it allows for the agency of a human subject within the shifting constraints of positionality and power. This elegant feature unlocks some of the thorny problems posed by studying young students in the process of self-authoring their identities. This allowance for agency is even more appropriate because these particular young

¹⁷ Dorothy Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5. Italics mine. The concept of identity construction as a ceaseless process is one of the most compelling aspects of this formulation, as are the allowances made for individual agency.

people are doing this self-authoring so far from centers of power that would normally more govern them: the cultural fields of their family, community, town, and nation. Chapter 3 also introduces the three phases of what I call the “engine of change” at the UWC USA: the processes of *nationalization*, *self-effacement in the common cause*, and the *triumph of the personal*.

Chapter 4, “Fall at the UWC USA: Arrival, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday,” focuses on the relationship between students and the institution of the UWC USA. Here I introduce the first phase of the engine of change at the UWC USA, *nationalization*, the process by which UWC USA students are fitted with their national identities, both by themselves and especially by others. Partially in response to the trauma of dislocation and arrival at the USA, students literally and figuratively don the garb of their nation. They perform this identity in pageants and ceremonies, but also in the daily life practice of being “Falhuveri from the Maldives”, “Rahma from Syria”, or “Xolani from Swaziland”, which is how they learn to introduce themselves. As this chapter focuses upon the institution, it reveals the contours of the UWC curriculum, the International Baccalaureate (IB), and also examines the ways in which the institution of the school both disciplines and liberates students’ lives.

Chapter 5, “Spring at the UWC USA: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Graduation, and Epilogue,” focuses on the relationship between students and other students. Here I introduce the last two phases of the engine of change: *self-effacement in a common cause* and the *triumph of the personal*. The major sites of these two phases are the co-curricular program of the UWC USA: Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) and the UWC USA wilderness program. This chapter also introduces a fascinating feature of UWC USA culture: the phenomenon of the “cultural day,” a pageant of regional dances and skits, conceived, planned, practiced and

performed by the students.¹⁸ Finally, this chapter addresses the widespread use of transgressive humor about race, ethnicity, and national identity at the UWC USA. I show how this humor can be both corrosive and healing, with the power both to confirm stereotypes and also open up unexpected spaces for alliances through a shared transgressive joke. This chapter concludes with the difficulties one of my informants faces after leaving the UWC USA, showing that the dislocation caused by arriving at the UWC USA is rivaled only by the dislocation of leaving it.

The UWC USA has devoted alumni, many of whom visited during my study, and many of whom that state their lives were never the same after their UWC USA experience. Often this transformation is viewed wryly, as if life would have been simpler had they never come to New Mexico. In this way, another feature of the second half of this dissertation is to witness and understand the bracing trauma of the UWC USA experience, perhaps not too unlike the bracing trauma of heading out for the first time into the cold, dark waters of the Bristol or Moray Firths in open boats, armed only with one's skill and the trust of one's companions.

As such, from one perspective the second half of this dissertation is a project about a brick-and-mortar school and how a two-year experience there transforms students. However, it is also a project about how grand ideas play out in small places, and about how ideology can become normalized in the day-to-day repetition of life. Finally, it is a project about 20th-century ideas and their momentum, mutation, and appropriation in the opening decades of a new millennium, as large-scale neoliberal economic policies, powerfully disruptive technologies,

¹⁸ By "region" here I use the UWC USA terminology, which I will examine in detail below. "Region" refers to one of the five regions of the world according to the UWC USA: North America (including Canada), Central and Latin America (including the Caribbean), Africa, Europe, and Asia (including the Middle East and Australia).

religious fundamentalism and, perhaps most importantly, climate change rapidly remake the international landscape.

THE VIEW FROM INSIDE A 21ST-CENTURY UNITED WORLD COLLEGE

In August of 2011, I packed up my white pickup and drove from the hot, green lowlands of Austin, Texas to the arid, brown high desert of Las Vegas, New Mexico. I stayed at the UWC USA, living, working, and executing my ethnography, for two and a half years. I left December of 2013.

The Basics of the UWC USA

The UWC USA is a two-year independent school located in the tiny hamlet of Montezuma, a few miles from the historical American western town of Las Vegas, New Mexico. During the time of my ethnography, the UWC USA had 215 students enrolled. This group of students represented 79 and 81 nations in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years respectively.

The UWC USA is simply a wildly-diverse place. This is a reality that is difficult to render without actually experiencing it for oneself. To assist the reader with this, I have installed a gallery of photos between chapters 3 and 4, where 148 students' images are placed without notes as to nationality, ethnicity, or background, and placed in no particular order. Though nothing can replace witnessing most of the student body at once, such as at Tuesday assembly or in the lunch line, hopefully this gallery will reproduce in some faint way the sense that many a newcomer has upon witnessing the UWC USA student body for the first time: any one student could be from literally any place in the world.

Of the 215 students from 2011-2012, 50 were from the United States, with 25 allotted per year.¹⁹ There were approximately 40 teaching faculty, and a commensurate number of maintenance, housekeeping, motor pool, and security staff. The administration consisted first of a President and a Vice-President for Academic Affairs, among others. During my time at the UWC USA, Lisa Darling served as President and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs was Tom Oden. To an outsider, Oden functioned very much like the school's principal, overseeing the day-to-day operations, garden-variety discipline issues, and the function of the curriculum, both academic and co-curricular. Darling functioned in a role similar to a university president, with final executive responsibility, but also a heavy load of long-term planning, development, and managerial duties.

The UWC USA features the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB) as its curriculum, an international sixth form educational standard that was founded in part as a response to the needs of the fledgling Atlantic College in its first five years, but also to the growing need for a standardizing certification that young people from around the world could use to gain entry to university programs in nations that were not their own. The IB is a two-year program, where students select six courses and attend two years' worth of classes in those courses. At the conclusion of the two-year program, students take a series of high-stakes examinations and, presuming they pass, graduate with an IB diploma. The IB diploma is well-

¹⁹ The establishment of a large cohort of students from the host nation is a common practice at UWCs. Most UWCs enroll around 200 students per year. The exceptions to this are the first UWC: UWC AC, which enrolls 350, and the UWC SEA, which enrolls 5500, K-12. I examine admissions policies and practices in Chapter 3. Of the hundreds of applicants that seek entrance to the UWC movement from the United States, the American national committee selects 50. 25 join the 25 American second-years at the UWC USA, and the other 25 are scattered out to the other UWCs around the globe. I explore this in detail below.

regarded by most of the best universities in the world, and many UWC USA graduates make good use of this connection to win acceptance to these schools. The UWC USA matriculation list is impressive, year to year.²⁰ As I explain below, a massive private scholarship program called the UWC Davis Scholars assists in the funding and placement of UWC USA students.

The UWC USA also offers a huge co-curricular program featuring a wide range of “CASes”²¹ that more or less fit three main tracks. The first of these tracks, wilderness, is a direct philosophical descendent of Kurt Hahn’s concept of impelling young people into experience. The UWC USA program sends students on a series of wilderness trips throughout the American southwest.²² The second track, known as the Constructive Engagement of Conflict (CEC), is a constellation of CASes that reflects the diplomatic impulse first generated at Atlantic College in 1962. CEC seeks to build interpersonal, intrapersonal and cultural sensitivity skills in UWC USA students. The third track, Community Service, is self-explanatory. This track is the contemporary manifestation of the Cistercian impulse that so preoccupied Hahn in his Gordonstoun days and beyond.

The UWC USA was one of 12 UWCs at the time of this ethnography,²³ and the international organization was going through a transition where the leaders of the constituent

²⁰ Please see Appendix A for a compilation of matriculation lists, 2005-2012.

²¹ An IB acronym for Creativity, Action, and Service, but also a noun for a single activity. For instance, Community Work Crew is called a “CAS.” I address the CAS program in great detail in Chapter 4. For a complete list of CASes in 2011, please see Appendix C.

²² As I discuss in detail in Chapter 4, the UWC USA featured a Search and Rescue (SAR) service for years, much in the same way as UWC AC featured sea rescue. Unfortunately for this program at the UWC USA, but fortunately for hikers, the advent of cell phones meant that people got lost a great deal less often in the New Mexican wilderness. The SAR program was discontinued in the 1990s.

²³ UWC Pearson (Canada), UWC USA (New Mexico, USA), UWC Waterford Kamhlaba (Swaziland), UWC Li Po Chun (Hong Kong), UWC Mahindra (India), UWC SEA (Singapore), UWC Adriatic (Italy), UWC AC (United Kingdom), UWC Maastricht (the Netherlands), UWC Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina), and UWC Red Cross Nordic (Norway).

schools were increasingly ready to see their schools as a part of a larger movement, including in regards to the sharing of resources, and the execution of student exchanges, and gatherings at conferences and other non-UWC locations that featured students from two or more UWCs. The students, for their part, seemed ahead of the adults in this regard. The heavy use of social media and the ease of communication allows culture to be transmitted and school cultures to be compared. This led to a baseline understanding for UWC USA students that they were one node in a constellation of schools where students were having experiences very much like their own.

THE CHALLENGES OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Something, or more accurately, many somethings, happen to UWC USA students during their time at the school which causes lasting personal change. I went there to see this change for myself and to see if I could tease out its method of function. I also sought to hold contemporary UWC USA life up to Kurt Hahn's arc through the World Wars and into the modern era. I did this both as a way to witness the contemporary manifestation of ideas that bloomed in response to the modernist logics of the 20th century, and also to see how durable those ideas were.

Executing an ethnography is a difficult process under any circumstances, fraught with issues of power, representation, and the veracity of one's data. And yet it is an extremely powerful form of knowledge too, rooted as it is in the lived experiences of real people. In a way, it can be one of the most "honest" kinds of knowledge. As I executed this ethnography, I did my

best to adhere to the ethnographer Howard S. Becker's admonition to other researchers not to replace with speculation or theorization what can be found out simply by asking.²⁴

With that said, the ethnography that appears in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 has been collected, interpreted, and rendered by me. I am therefore compelled to represent to the reader exactly what kind of instrument has been deployed for this data, and what relationship I had to the administration, faculty and students at this remarkable school.

Positionality

As I explain in the following chapters, the UWC USA experience is deeply informed by nationality, ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, distance from home, language proficiency both in English and otherwise, and the power structures that are inherent in any boarding school existence. It is therefore essential that a reader be aware of my own biases and background so that my interpretation of the UWC USA student experience can be properly contextualized.

I am a white, straight, American male with a deep voice and a large personality. I do not, as Joan Didion once famously wrote, convey the impression that "I am so physically small, so temperamentally unobtrusive, and so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests." Quite the opposite. During my time at the UWC USA, I was physically the largest human being on campus. Students and faculty alike would comment on my size and height (I am six-foot-three-inches tall and weigh somewhere between

²⁴ Howard S. Becker, "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research," *Ethnography and Human Development*, n.d., 323. I explain my ethnographic method in detail in Chapter 3, but it suffices to say here that I did a lot of asking in the 300+ recorded and transcribed interviews that form a major portion of my ethnographic data.

240-250 pounds). Only the laconic Chemistry teacher, Travis Day, was taller. In most American contexts, these dimensions mean I am a 'big guy.' At the UWC USA, it meant I was just shy of giant. This was important because it affected how the community reacted to me, both as a member and an outside researcher. I stood out.

I was raised mostly in the small college town of Pullman, Washington, in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. I am the eldest of three and the only son of a professor of Agricultural Economics and a dietician. When I was six, my father had the opportunity to bring our family to Lesotho, the lesser-known of two small nations surrounded by South Africa (the other is Swaziland). We lived there for four years, and my sisters and I had cadres of friends full of expatriates as well as local South African and Basotho boys and girls. I returned to Pullman at age 10 confused by the simple and reductive way American middle school kids talked about racial and ethnic difference, though I did not have those words to describe my discomfort, nor to act against the low-grade systemic racism and sexism common to such communities of adolescents.

We were solidly middle class. I attended a public high school. I grew up in the outdoors and on athletics teams. I was a disinterested student in high school and college, preferring soccer, swimming, rowing, and the outdoors to classwork. I later discovered academics while pursuing a master's degree in literature at Washington State University. It was this awakening that led to my doctoral work at the University of Texas and this dissertation. At the time of the ethnography at the UWC USA I was 35-38 years old.

Given this background, my assumptions and biases are globally western and tend to be U.S. centric and heteronormative, though I'm working on these unconscious biases. I've never

dealt with being poor and so have all of the assumptions that go along with that form of privilege as well. I taught English and Writing at Washington State University and the University of Texas, as well as a little high school English. As a result, my ethnocentric assumptions were most obvious (and at times most embarrassing) as a teacher at the UWC USA.

My Relationship to the UWC USA Community

I had a strong relationship to the UWC USA school community. I formed wonderful friendships with many faculty and staff members, as well as with the students. Teachers, students, alumnae, and members of the school and larger movement expressed nothing but enthusiasm and curiosity for this project. My research benefitted from key friendships with President Lisa Darling and Vice President Tom Oden, as well as from the generous contribution of time and reflection by all 15 of my informants. Beyond this, I simply love working with teenagers, and that orientation served me well during this project.²⁵

As I was preparing to leave Austin for New Mexico, I dealt with a lot of doubt and fear. Chief among my fears was that I would not be able to convince anyone to talk to me, and would be frozen out of my own research as an annoying or potentially dangerous outsider. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Once I made it to the school itself, not once in two years of asking for access, recorded conversations, or permission to look through records, archives, or primary documents did anyone in the entire UWC movement say “no.”²⁶ This included every single student I

²⁵ I have an extensive background working with teenagers. This summer will mark my 25th year of working in summer camps. I was a high school swimming and soccer coach from 2000-2004, and taught high school English and creative writing for a year in 2000.

²⁶ It took a little work to get in the door at first. The UWC USA administration was understandably circumspect about inviting an unknown outside researcher onto campus. I owe a great deal to the open-

encountered, whether they were part of my ethnographic interview group or not. It also included the archivists, administrators, teachers, and staff at the UWC AC (Atlantic College), the founding committee of what is now UWC-RBC (Robert Bosch, in Germany), the staff and administration at the UWC International Office in London, England, and the tangentially-related institutions of the Salem School and Kurt Hahn Archive in Salem, Germany and the Gordonstoun School in Elgin, Scotland. Most of all, and certainly most importantly, the student body at the UWC USA was shockingly welcoming and accommodating for the entirety of the two-and-a-half years I lived and worked there. I continue to be humbled at such trust, access, and generosity of spirit. I truly hope this project does all of them some small justice.

mindedness of Lisa Darling and Tom Oden in this regard. This project, in its current form, obviously would have been completely impossible without such access and the blessing of both administrators.

CHAPTER 1 – UTOPIAN PROGRESSIVE FERMENT, 1889-1920

INTRODUCTION

When asked about whether he was an educational innovator, Kurt Hahn was fond of quoting his patron Max von Baden who gleefully insisted that nothing in the educational system of the Salem school, which Hahn and Baden founded together in 1920, was original. This anecdote, like many that circulate around the persona of Hahn does much to distract one from Hahn's contributions to the world of international education. In fact, the pedagogy that Hahn and Baden welded together for Salem out of a field of influences as diverse as Plato's *Republic*; the progressive educational philosophies of Herbart, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Rousseau; and the utopian progressive examples of the actual schools of Cecil Reddie and Hermann Lietz constituted a very clear and distinct pedagogy by the middle of the 1920s. Though its elements were not original, the synthesis of those elements most certainly was.

Hahn went on to use Salem's system as the theoretical foundation for the creation of two other schools, both of which would have a profound effect on the educational landscape of the 20th century. Hahn founded Gordonstoun in Scotland in 1933 and then co-founded the Atlantic College in 1962. The former would be the birthplace of the international Outward Bound movement and the Duke of Edinburgh's award. The latter would become the prototype of a small movement of schools known as the United World Colleges (UWCs). This movement, in turn, would give rise to the International Baccalaureate (IB), a pedagogy unto itself at this point.

The first two chapters in this dissertation set out to reveal Kurt Hahn's very real and relevant educational system and in doing so reveal that system's historical and philosophical roots. This is important because when Hahn died in Germany in 1974, he left behind an international educational landscape that would forever bear his mark. It is also important

because, though he was an intellectual and a deep thinker, Hahn developed his approach to education not as an exercise of ideas, not as an intervention into the philosophy of education, but as a strategy for social change. Hahn did not develop ideas to change other ideas. He developed schools to change society.

A few years after his death, the phrase “experiential education” became fashionable in all levels of educational circles as well as in the soon-to-be booming fields of professionally-guided leadership expeditions, summer camps, and college outdoor programs. The term came into use in part through the work of John Dewey and the other American progressive educators in the early 1900s, but it also arrived via Hahn’s belief that a new kind of learning could happen when students had formed a moral, righteous link to the subjects they studied and the skills they developed. As Robert Skidelsky has noted, Hahn sparked this feeling by yoking the natural idealism of youth to rescue services.²⁷ This led to the founding of Outward Bound which then led to an international explosion of the same kind of ‘experiential education’ John Dewey had been an exponent of in Chicago half a century earlier. In this way, Hahn and Dewey share ownership of the term.

So much of the loose collection of anecdote, legend, and apocrypha that whirls around the figure of Kurt Hahn concerns itself with his second school in Scotland, Gordonstoun, and the unlikely origin story of Outward Bound. Hahn was such an odd yet powerful figure that stories about him, true or not, quickly gained momentum. Perhaps it was because Hahn was always ferociously advocating for a cause, always working a room with his anachronistic Victorian manners and oddball charm, that so many accounts of his life and work have the unmistakable

²⁷ Robert Jacob Alexander Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools* (Penguin, 1969), 321.

tone being written by the convinced, by a member of the choir, as it were. Books and articles about Hahn have a disconcerting tendency to reference each other in a circular fashion. Any vignette with vitality to it is often repeated verbatim from document to document. When searching for the truth about Hahn and his educational projects, it can sometimes feel like it's turtles all the way down. To combat this trend, this chapter carefully analyzes Hahn's progressive forbears, charting the impulses and trends that they initiated, refined, and willingly or not, eventually passed on.

All this confusion does a disservice to Hahn, but just as much a disservice to the thinkers who preceded him and the administrators, teachers, and staff who took his innovations and, powered by his zeal, executed them. They did so in often shockingly adverse conditions, be they the anarchy of post-World War I Germany, the privation of World War II England, or the prickly opening acts of the Cold War in Wales.

Thankfully, as can happen in cases like Hahn's, it is those closest to such powerful figures that see the clearest, as the magic has long worn off. In Hahn's case, this means the most reliable narratives are, paradoxically, written by the closest insiders. Henry Brereton, Hahn's right hand at Gordonstoun for decades as well as his successor there, delivered a text notable for its clarity and fair assessment of Hahn.²⁸ David Sutcliffe, a lifelong leader in and devotee of the United World College movement, is also an accomplished historian in his own right. His text about the early years of the United World Colleges is the by far the most exhaustive.²⁹

²⁸ Henry L. Brereton, *Gordonstoun: Ancient Estate and Modern School*, Revised Edition edition (Great Britain: Gordonstoun School, 1982. Revised edition., 1982).

²⁹ David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, First edition (David Sutcliffe, 2013).

Hahn would have been surprised by the magnitude of his legacy. For most of his long and productive career he was in the business of starting, running, and expanding idealistic boarding schools. As we shall see below, Hahn shared with a few other school founders the shockingly optimistic view that a small boarding school could form, incubate, and then release graduates with the capacity to change society. This optimism, and the impulse to put it into action, originated with the early Romantic thinkers, gaining momentum in the explosion of progressive thought in the last three decades of the 19th Century in Europe and the United States.

In order to reveal the links between Kurt Hahn and the early romantic thinkers, Chapter 1 focuses on a sub-set of educators and activists in Europe. These educators very much belonged to the massive trans-Atlantic progressive movement in education; which itself belonged to the even larger international progressive movement that affected most aspects of modern industrial society. But there was something strange about this particular sub-set of educators. They were utopians.

Progressive Antecedents to Kurt Hahn

In the ferment that followed Jean Jacques Rousseau's publication of *Émile* in 1762, a small but persistent minority of thinkers began to advocate for a new kind of education on the European continent. This new approach refuted the educational orthodoxy of the day, what W.A.C. Stewart calls "the Classic-Christian" approach to education. This new way of thinking dismissed Classic-Christian assumptions that the child was evil by nature, that childhood was only preparation for an adult life, that education must therefore prep the child for that life, and

that subjects need not have intrinsic value, but rather train the evil child morally and intellectually.³⁰

Perhaps most fundamentally, proponents of this new education began with the assumption that the child was naturally virtuous. Not only was the child inherently good, but there were natural stages to its growth, and a properly child-centered education adhered to these stage. Finally, this new education focused on interesting the child in its own educational pursuits and according to its own character, as opposed to shoe-horning it into the expectations society would have for it as an adult. Coercion was replaced with encouragement and authoritarianism with co-creation.³¹

Rousseau's work inspired a long series of innovations by other thinkers across Europe and the United States. Johann Pestalozzi's *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, published in 1801 in Switzerland, focused even further on the child's experience by insisting that all learning began with sense experience. Configuring instruction to reflect this fact, Pestalozzi suggested, would awake the *Aunschauung*, or the psychic energy necessary to make complex ideas from the sense data.³²

Directly influenced by both Pestalozzi and Rousseau, Robert Owen published *A New View of Society: or, Essays on the Principles of the Formation of Human Character* in 1814 in England, a full repudiation of orthodox education. Perhaps more impactful were the schools Owen founded as part of his administration of his father-in-law's mills in New Lanark. By 1816

³⁰ W. A. C. Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, First Edition (London: Macmillan, 1972), 21.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children: An Attempt to Help Mothers to Teach Their Own Children and an Account of the Method* (Forgotten Books, 2012).

the New Lanark mills held to a minimum working age of 10, revolutionary for the time. At the New Lanark schools, Owen abolished corporal punishment, blended instruction and play, added music and natural exploration, advocated for learning through discussion, and insisted on patient, warm, and kind instruction on the part of his teachers. Owen was one of the first of the new educators to write his ideas in bricks and mortar. By 1824, the financial backers of the mills and the schools were rolling back Owen's radical practices, and he resigned.³³ The mainstream was not yet ready for this kind of innovation.

Indeed, it wasn't for another half-century that the idea of a 'new education' would find purchase on a scale that would go beyond a few books and even fewer actual schools. It was in this next wave of new educationalists where Kurt Hahn's progressive heritage would take shape.

A radical thinker named Thomas Davidson founded the New Life Fellowship in London in 1883, three years before Kurt Hahn was born. Heavily influenced by his recent immersion in the work of Antonio Rosmini, the founder of a utopian Catholic community in Italy, Davidson had recently turned away from a budding career in philosophy at Harvard. He was in search of a "personal philosophy," and a place where his theories might find practice. Davidson attracted many like-minded thinkers to the fellowship including Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, Patrick Geddes, Edith Lees, and a young Ramsay MacDonald. The ranks of the New Life Fellowship also included one Cecil Reddie. It was a time of great intellectual ferment in Britain and on the continent, described thusly by Carpenter: ". . . the socialist and anarchist propaganda, the

³³ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 40.

feminist and suffragist upheaval, the huge trade union growth, the theosophical movement . . . all constituted so many streams . . . converging, as it were, to a great river.”³⁴

Systems Thinkers and Utopians

The goals of the New Life Fellowship were lofty. It sought the replacement of widespread selfishness with regard for others, simple living, the “highest and completest education of the young,” and the mixing of manual labor with the life of the mind. The fellowship sundered almost immediately, with one group advocating social change through systemic political programs, and the other insisting that societal change take place first on the level of the individual and by extension, with the very members of the fellowship themselves.³⁵ The schism happened in 1884, within a year of the fellowship’s founding.

This nearly instantaneous division in the Fellowship of the New Life reflects a fascinating distinction between the varied strains of progressive education that would appear in Britain and on the continent in the next four decades. There are the ‘systems thinkers,’ represented in the New Life Fellowship by figures like Geddes and MacDonald. This strain of progressive educators felt the same moral imperative to reform society as their counterparts in the fellowship, but sought this change by political means. Geddes and MacDonald left the fellowship went on to form the much better-known Fabian Society, for example, a group dedicated to socialism achieved through incremental means. This loose group of ‘systems’ progressives are represented by later figures like John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and perhaps Baden Powell, all who sought to popularize a scale-able idea at the societal level.

³⁴ John Darling, “New Life and New Education: The Philosophies of Davidson, Reddie, and Hahn,” *Scottish Educational Review* 13 (1981): 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The political impulses of the ‘systems’ progressives contrast sharply with those in the second camp, whom I call ‘utopians.’ Represented in the fellowship by Davidson, Carpenter, and Reddie, this group focused on the struggle for improvement through self-betterment, communal living, spiritual love, and a focus on culture, ethics, and religion.³⁶ Some members of this second group gravitated toward Theosophy, which then gave rise to another well-known progressive education association, the New Education Fellowship.

Epitomized by educators like Hermann Lietz, A.S. Neill, Edmund Demolins, Rudolf Steiner, and Francisco Ferrer, these utopian progressives saw educational reform as the best path to social reform, but they saw this happening on a small scale basis at first, all the while harboring impossibly grand hopes of full social reform. Reflecting the individual focus of their antecedents in the Fellowship of the New Life, these utopians would change the world school-by-school and child-by-child. Most of them saw the sealed environment of a boarding school as the perfect opportunity to create a sort of laboratory of society, where they might control all the variables surrounding a student. With this control, they isolated their students from the evils the school was created to combat. For Neill, this was crippling adult authoritarianism. For Reddie it was the “ghastly selfishness” and duty-blind laissez faire attitudes of modern English society.³⁷ For Lietz it was the neurasthenic degradation of a Germany that had forgotten its agrarian roots.³⁸ Once properly inoculated against society’s ills through utopian

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 19.

³⁸ Sterling Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth: The Search for Educational Reform in Imperial Germany* (Revisionist Press, 1976), 48.

institutionalization at their schools, students were released back into society with the assumption they would change it from within.

What links schools as diverse as Neill's Summerhill, Demolins' École des Roches, Steiner's Waldorf School and Ferrer's Modern School is first the unshakable faith in a small boarding school's ability to ideologically shape a child, and that once shaped, the child will then shape society.

Kurt Hahn would take his place amongst these utopian progressives, developing a series of his own anti-fascist utopias he hoped would change the world student-by-student. But first there was Cecil Reddie and Hermann Lietz.

CECIL REDDIE, THE PROTO UTOPIAN

In 1870, at age 11, the boy who would become one of the most important thinkers and school founders in the long line of utopian educational progressives was orphaned. His father James had just died four short years after his mother. Cecil Reddie was suddenly in the care of relatives. Such a traumatic dislocation so early in life was to have profound implications on Reddie's path. In his own words, "of most of our thoughts and actions in our maturity, we should doubtless . . . find the germ present unconsciously in the earliest days of our childhood."³⁹ After five years in two English schools, Godolphin and Birkenhead, Reddie went to Scotland and attended public school at Fettes. The 'germ,' in Reddie's case, was the early trauma of dislocation. He would later pour himself into his school with a fanaticism that would both alienate his staff and start a movement.

³⁹ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 4.

Reddie was an intense and sensitive boy. It is not surprising, then, that the institution of a public boarding school would have increased significance, bereft as he was of family.⁴⁰ This can be seen in Reddie's introduction to his 1900 *Abbotsholme*, the massive book he wrote about the founding and first years of the school. "The situation for [other boys in public school] was . . . different than it was for us. They could look on school from the fixed and secure vantage point of home. . . To us, on the contrary, school was home. . . We were forced to find some new object with which to allay the hunger of the heart."⁴¹ This hunger turned into hero-worship of both the older boys and the masters.

It was at Fettes that the young Reddie displayed his intellectual skill. "He did well. . . particularly in classics, mathematics, and science, with creditable performances in German."⁴² Indeed, he liked life at Fettes, and though he would spend his life building a school far more radical in its content and far-reaching in its aspirations than Fettes, thought of it fondly. "The education was of the best then available. If the program was imperfect, we had plenty of leisure in which to do what we listed and educate ourselves. Best of all we had lovely scenery, bracing air, magnificent buildings and genial masters."⁴³ However, as Reddie matured, the hero status he had conferred to older boys and masters frayed. "One by one they had fallen from the pedestals upon which youthful enthusiasm had placed them, leaving, however, undimmed the memory of moments of earlier heart-whole worship, never to be forgotten."⁴⁴ Though it would

⁴⁰ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 379.

⁴¹ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 5. Reddie uses the royal "we" in all his writings.

⁴² Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 379.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 380.

⁴⁴ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 6.

be years till he had his chance, Reddie would one day make it his own impossible task to remain on the pedestal others would construct for him.

In the short term, Reddie attended the University of Edinburgh and studied first medicine and then chemistry. However, it was the experience of leaving Fettes and encountering university life that affected Reddie most deeply at this time. “The university curriculum was by no means our main concern . . . we devoured books innumerable . . . leaving school, we felt like a child, curious to see the real world, let out of a nursery. Nothing learned in school seemed to give a clue to the actual life of the city and the big world.”⁴⁵ Reddie had experienced little but school up to that point, and it had not prepared him for life.

Reddie graduated in 1882 and went on to study for his doctorate in chemistry at the University of Göttingen, a degree he received in 1884. He continued to excel academically, earning magna cum laude honors with his PhD. Reddie also discovered radical philosophy at that time, experimenting with socialism and Marxism via university lectures at Göttingen.⁴⁶ He also fell completely in love with Germany during his graduate work. The combination of romantic *volk* impulses with the positivism of German culture was a complete match for Reddie. As Skidelsky notes, “the ‘organic’ theory of society, expressed in idealist philosophy and the rhetoric of the *Volk*, seemed superior to liberal notions which appeared to lead straight to class war.”⁴⁷ The world needed leaders, not the seething masses of what Reddie would later call the “idiotic idea of democracy.”⁴⁸ Germany itself would continue to haunt Reddie, eventually

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 382.

⁴⁷ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 86.

⁴⁸ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 392.

threatening his relationship with his home nation. For now, however, Reddie was content to wax poetic. “Wherever one turned there was method, clearness, organization, and withal general contentment and *gemuthlichkeit*, which powerfully contrasted with the squalid disorder and discontented unrest of England.”⁴⁹

Upon his return to Scotland, Reddie was in a reformist mood. He quickly encountered the New Life Fellowship, and with it the powerful personalities Paul Geddes and Edward Carpenter. Geddes was a polymath with a deep interest in synthesizing meaning across disciplinary boundaries. Later in life Geddes would contribute substantively to the fields of geography, sociology, and urban planning. From 1884-1885 Reddie worked for Geddes in his laboratory. Reddie was impressed with him immediately: “a man of most remarkable capacities, whose object appeared to us nothing less than the creation of a Synthesis of universal Thought and Action. . . aimed mainly at a reorganization of Knowledge which would enable the human unit to reorganize society.”⁵⁰

As W.A.C. Stewart notes, it was a time of crystallization for Reddie. “Geddes reinforced Reddie’s growing understanding of the linkages between the physical and biological sciences, geography, sociology, economics, and politics and his increasing dissatisfaction with what was taught in schools.”⁵¹ For someone who was “disconnected and confused” by the arid presentation of discrete subjects as happened at Fettes, Reddie was both inspired and galvanized by Geddes. He was beginning to see how knowledge could be integrated with lived experience in a way that could prepare and empower students.

⁴⁹ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵¹ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 387.

Like Geddes, Reddie met Edward Carpenter through the Fellowship of the New Life. Also like Geddes, Carpenter's interests were diverse and deep. An early advocate for what we would now call queer rights, Carpenter was a devotee of Walt Whitman. He was also a socialist, a poet, and fierce believer in the radical act of living a simple, deliberate life. Reddie would eventually swing far from his early socialist leanings, but he thought Carpenter had "original but very sane and wholesome views on social questions. . . They owed their origin, doubtless, to a profound knowledge of our social chaos, and a powerful sympathy arising from strong affections." ⁵² It is hard not to look warmly on the friendship that formed between the two men. In the year before Abbotsholme opened in 1889, Reddie and Carpenter lived near each other for six months. "In that quiet valley there was wonderful peace . . . we would go to the little brook at the bottom of the garden for a bathe . . . [Carpenter] believed that mere nudity in sun and air and water was a blessed physician for body, soul, and spirit. He was opposed to excessive intellectuality." ⁵³

It was Carpenter that convinced Reddie to forsake a headmastership at an established school, and instead forge ahead with what was by now a fully-conceived dream. He would create a school completely to his specifications, integrating knowledge in a usable way for the student while also tending to the student's physical, moral, artistic, and cultural growth. ⁵⁴

The Fellowship of New Life was also behind Reddie, happily announcing that though it did not have the funds to start its own school, this "New School" would open with its blessing. The fellowship was especially excited about Abbotsholme's goal to create a "transmissible

⁵² Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 14.

⁵³ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 388.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 389.

consecration,” that would “redeem the ethical and economic confusion of society.”⁵⁵ The fact that by forming an incubator for a new kind of English citizen, Reddie’s aim was nothing less than the creation of “a higher type of human being” resonated with many of the fellowship members.⁵⁶ Indeed, it was in spirit of this social reform that Carpenter lent him a small fortune, interest free, for the initial foundation of the school which was to be situated on the River Dove near Staffordshire. And yet there was a twist. By 1888, Reddie had already been moving steadily away from his early socialist interests.

In the months before the New School opened its doors, Reddie published a series of broadsides attacking the English public school system titled “Modern Mis-Education” and focused mainly on what Reddie saw as disingenuous self-promotion on the part of the public schools. The attacks revealed not only Reddie’s goals for the imminent New School, but also the central responsibility he saw schools as having in the development of a society.⁵⁷

When the public schools boasted of their ‘industry,’ Reddie saw a shallow competition for academic or athletic success with no regard for collaboration. When schools spoke of their ‘old boys’ developing ‘restraint,’ Reddie saw a stultifying code of conformity and social control, not the power of discipline nor the satisfaction of public duty. When headmasters spoke of ‘modesty’ in the public schools, Reddie heard them espousing dangerous prudishness full of shame which ignored the decidedly immodest and corrupting lust for power, money, and comfort. Finally, when schools boasted of their boys’ purity, Reddie saw simple evasion of the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁵⁶ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 16.

⁵⁷ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 390.

schools' responsibility for the sexual and moral education of their students.⁵⁸ After all, such education would not be executed by parents or family members.

Reddie insisted that "Public schools are practically independent kingdoms" and as such, had a moral imperative that went beyond conventional schools. He went on to warn that "immense reforms will ultimately have to be made in these schools. . ."⁵⁹ It was exactly the totalizing residential nature of the boarding school that mandated the headmasters and staff take responsibility for the entire boy, not just his studies. It was also exactly this totality that made a boarding school so perfect for Reddie's plans.

Reddie's outrage at the failings of the public schools was stoked by a growing sense that it was exactly the same boys that the public schools were failing that were the key to a "reorganized" England. Reddie saw two groups free from the corrupting influence of liberal industrial society – the aristocracy and the workers. And yet, "the workers were oppressed, the aristocrats, resentful." As a result, Reddie, and many that followed his example, focused on the aristocracy.⁶⁰ Despite the wishes of his friend Carpenter, this would not be a school for everyone.

In response to the Bryce Commission on Secondary Education in 1894, Reddie had this proclamation: "The Tertiary School I am endeavoring to create is not intended to suit the whim of a few faddists, but the normal wants of the Directing Classes of a Reorganized English

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁵⁹ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 24.

⁶⁰ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 79.

Nation.”⁶¹ Abbotsholme opened its doors in 1889 with 60 boys. Reddie’s sincere hope was that these boys would reform England from the top down.

Abbotsholme: A Revolution in Curriculum

It is fascinating to think that so much of what Reddie would introduce into the curriculum at the New School was completely novel in 1889, or at least novel in a school context. Such has been the reach and influence of Reddie and the hundreds of progressives like him in England, on the European continent, and in the United States that what then was considered radical; musical education, kind teachers, the learning of practical skills, physical education, modern language instruction is now commonplace. And yet, as Searby notes, in 1889 Reddie’s approach *was* completely new: “Reddie was an original. Apart from a liking for ‘modern subjects,’ he had little in common with the educational radicals proceeding him.” Furthermore, this Reddie’s approach quickly gained notice and affected others. “A compound of public school authoritarianism, Herbartian psychology, and the Ruskinian ideas of Geddes and the romantic socialists, Reddie’s novel message was seductive to educators.”⁶² Indeed, this ‘seduction’ would both stoke Reddie’s ego and drive him mad with jealousy and suspicion, lest someone steal his ideas.

So that his “directing class” might become masters of the language with which they would reorganize England, Reddie removed the Classics and Greek from their customary central role in the public school curriculum and replaced them with English.⁶³ Agreeing wholeheartedly with Rousseau’s famous distaste for only educating through books, Reddie divided the New

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶² Searby, “The New School and the New Life,” 20.

⁶³ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 146.

School experience into quarters, only one of which was book-centric.⁶⁴ The quarters were “(1) physical and manual, (2) artistic and imaginative, (3) literary and intellectual and (4) moral and religious.” Reddie designed these quarters to reinforce each other in order to address the disconnection between disciplines he so detested at Fettes. He hoped this would lead to “the harmonious development of the whole nature of the boy.”⁶⁵

For Reddie a failing of public school education was the disconnection between the world of ideas and practical, everyday life. Therefore, one of the main ways in which the four quarters of the New School program reinforced each other was by the boy encountering more than one aspect of the curriculum at once in a practical environment. By doing. Reddie compelled the boy to contend with physical objects in addition to ideas, “to pass upward from the concrete to the abstract.” Object lessons and concrete cases were central to each lesson plan. This same dynamic worked for spiritual development, with a lesson moving from concrete example inward to spiritual awakening.⁶⁶

Annoyed with the empty emphasis public schools placed on team sports and organized games, Reddie reduced their prevalence in favor of manual training and outdoor pursuits. “Excursions will be made to places of interest in the country round and the boys will be encouraged to study the Geology, Botany, Zoology of the district and to do practical work in Geography and Surveying.”⁶⁷ Through manual and physical training Reddie sought to develop manipulative dexterity, attention to detail, follow-through, and task-based persistence. He also

⁶⁴ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁶ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 101.

⁶⁷ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 30.

hoped that the immersion in practical pursuits would engender in his boys a degree of self-reliance and pride as they developed real skills. Radically different from sports at Eton or Harrow, at the New School physical and manual training directly benefitted the school itself or addressed the boys' personal needs. Carpentry, boot-making, gardening, and tailoring were examples of common pursuits.⁶⁸ Carpenter, in explaining the importance of manual labor at a school to a newspaper, called it the "Gospel of Potato Digging." He went on to say "At Abbotsholme, they will mark out the year by seedtime and harvest, the county calendar, as much as by the date cricket begins and football ends."⁶⁹

Reddie was obsessed with platonic physicality and healthy manliness. In a manner that recalled his idyllic with Carpenter by the brook, a further goal of this quarter of the New School's was that such a blend of physical training would more completely address the boys' physical development, stimulating the "supple grace and compact symmetry" of their actual bodies. This would then contribute to their "frank, hearty, and instinctive appreciation of [the body's] beauty, which is essential to true education."⁷⁰ It bears mentioning here that over and over accounts of Reddie's own physicality match this ideal. Tall, with piercing eyes and a bushy mustache, Reddie's countenance burned with a righteous zeal. He was simultaneously terrifying and inspirational.⁷¹

To set the beautiful body free Reddie invented completely new school uniforms. He jettisoned the starched shirts and restrictive, multi-layered formal wear in vogue at other public

⁶⁸ Ibid., 25–27.

⁶⁹ "The New School," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, August 26, 1889.

⁷⁰ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 26.

⁷¹ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 115–119.

schools and replaced them with a simple shirt, a thick, loose-fitting open-necked wool sweater and knicker-bocker pants. That is, when the boys wore clothing at all. Reddie felt that boys should be connected to the physicality of their world and therefore insisted that they “wear only as many clothes as is necessary.” They never went completely naked, but stages of half-dress were very common.⁷²

Beauty in general mattered a great deal to Reddie, and this preference informed the New School’s emphasis on the artistic and imaginative training of its boys. Music, art, and handicrafts filled another quarter of the curriculum, along with poetry. This same aesthetic focus applied to the environment of the school: “Too often the school surroundings are bare and uninteresting. . . Their school home will be made beautiful and that, as far as possible, by themselves.”⁷³

In addition to configuring English as the central language of instruction, Reddie introduced the contemporary languages of French and German as “fully equal to Latin and Greek as a mental discipline.” Their utility in diplomacy, politics, and science was too direct to be ignored. The instruction of History was directly linked to Geography, with an emphasis on “the modern, concrete, and particular.” Finally, the natural sciences were taught as facets of the same subject and also focused on the concrete, proceeding from “the observation of external and obvious facts to the more hidden and abstruse generalizations.”⁷⁴

Reddie saw the moral and religious training that would make up the fourth quarter of the New School experience as deriving from the careful administration of the three other

⁷² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷³ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 27.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

quarters, as well as the transformative effect that living at Abbotsholme would have on the boys and the staff. "The moral influence of the school is, moreover, the joint product of its members, and to be life-giving, requires a hearty affection bind them all in one harmonious fraternity."⁷⁵ Vaguely Christian, Reddie saw the doctrine of Christ's love as central to any moral teaching. Beyond that, examples for his moral lessons delivered in chapel ranged from John Ruskin to Thomas Carlyle to the beatitudes.

It was in the full realization of this compound utopian vision that Reddie hoped to effect social change. "Our school-state must reflect, not that horrible creation of commercial greed, the modern overgrown chaotic town, but the serene and ordered loveliness of nature." As Searby has noted, according to Reddie, "Urban commercialism disintegrated personalities, but the ideal school in its Arcadian setting . . . united them."⁷⁶ With all four quarters of the curriculum functioning well and in balance, Reddie's directing class would soon be ready to return to society, equipped to begin reform from the top.

A Reunion with Germany, 1893-1897

In 1893, Cecil Reddie returned to his beloved Germany to visit Wilhelm Rein at the University of Jena. Planning to stay only two nights, he ended up staying 14 days. It was the exposure to Rein's Herbartian book, the *Pedagogik um Gunduriss* as well as his visit to the Herbartian practice school that set Reddie afire anew. In his report on his trip, Reddie gushed about the practice school, "we saw for the first time what teaching was . . . and drank in that which is creating modern Germany." Rein's book had a similar effect. "As if by magic, the fog

⁷⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶ Peter Searby, "The New School and the New Life: Cecil Reddie (1858-1932) and the Early Years of Abbotsholme School," *History of Education* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 1989): 15.

lifted and we saw a new instructional heaven and earth.”⁷⁷ Further, Reddie’s return to German culture was a kind of homecoming. For Reddie, Germany represented systemic societal unity and Volkish warmth that he found so lacking in his native England. “Thanks to the freedom of their [the German’s] intercourse, their easy social customs, and the total absence of reserve, in a few days we had lived years. There was a real communion of spirits which in England would have required a decade of time, and a special miracle from Heaven, to develop.”⁷⁸

In those fateful 14 days at Jena, Reddie also met Dr. Hermann Lietz, then Rein’s headmaster at the practice school. Rein, Lietz and Reddie were an incredibly compatible trio. All three were convinced, like Herbart and Pestalozzi before them, that the primary function of education was the moral education of the student. Through Rein, Lietz and Reddie became infatuated with the Herbartian idea that it was only by carefully choosing the environment and therefore controlling the sense-inputs that a student received that a school could properly shape a student.⁷⁹ After their mutual encounters with Rein, it would be through this institutional control that both Reddie and Lietz would attempt to reform their respective societies. From Reddie’s 1893 trip forward to the turn of the century, Jena and Wilhelm Rein would function as an anchor for both Reddie and Lietz.

Reddie’s return from Germany represented a turning point for Abbotsholme. Perhaps it was Reddie’s renewed exposure to Herbartian theory, or perhaps to Germany itself, but all remaining traces of socialist collaboration fell away. As Peter Searby notes, “Intellectually isolated in his little kingdom, Reddie developed the authoritarian strain in his ideas, and moved

⁷⁷ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 115–116.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁷⁹ Searby, “The New School and the New Life,” 14.

away from the romantic socialism he had professed in the 1880s.” Life at Abbotsholme became more planned, and Reddie more personally in control. Reddie’s motivation for his totalitarianism derived from his existential concerns about the declining state of English society, and his increasing idealization of Germany’s. “He wanted for Britain a national plan like the one he professed to find in her rival . . . where the imperial design was so detailed that instructive diagrams were displayed in railway carriages.” When the famous Bryce Commission of 1896 included Abbotsholme in its broad inquiry into educational reform in Britain, Reddie’s detailed response composed nothing less than the complete overhaul of the entire educational system. He advocated the installation of an Imperial Education Minister who would then create what amounted to a caste system, with the less intelligent “muscle workers” forming one group, the “petty officers” a second, and the “leaders” a third school group. Abbotsholme, obviously, belonged to the third group epitomizing, as it did, an education for “the directing class.”⁸⁰

In 1896, Hermann Lietz left his posts in Germany and to join Reddie at Abbotsholme. Lietz’s year in England would soon spark a boarding school movement in Germany that would change the vector of German progressive education for the entirety of the 20th century. Lietz’s influence would plant ideas in the German collective consciousness that both Hitler and Hahn would eventually co-opt and build upon, sparking a telling rivalry between those men.

Given his Germano-philia, Reddie was delighted to welcome Lietz to England. As Reddie announced in 1900, “the absolute dearth of Englishmen equipped for the Abbotsholme type of school was more and more evident as our curriculum became more definite.”⁸¹ As soon as he

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸¹ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 254.

arrived, Reddie put Lietz in charge of the Herbartian reorganization of Abbotsholme's program, a job for which he was perfectly qualified due to his years at Rein's experimental school. As evidence of Lietz's prodigious energy, while working full time for Reddie, he simultaneously wrote what Reddie called "a charming story" about Abbotsholme. It would eventually be called *Emlohstobba*, and it was part fable and part autobiography. For his part, Lietz was in heaven. "I have never had to regret my decision," he said about his year in England, "Abbotsholme became for me a cure for the pains which I had suffered, a powerful impulse to my own creation."⁸² Not all of Reddie's employees felt so lucky or so at home. Throughout his career, Reddie was haunted by the brutal combination of his own fragile ego and his overpowering need for total control. In short, he was next to impossible to work for. And yet, utopians attract utopians, especially when a project like Abbotsholme had no peer and no precedent.

Two years after the founding of Abbotsholme, Reddie recruited a talented and charismatic master named J. H. Badley. Two years later, wanting to marry and chafing under Reddie's authoritarianism, Badley left Abbotsholme. He founded Bedales in 1893, a co-educational school with Abbotsholme as a basic model. It flourished immediately. Reddie was outraged. He publicly excoriated the 'betrayal' and from then on made incoming masters sign a document indicating they would not steal Reddie's ideas or methods.⁸³

One of the painful ironies about Reddie's groundbreaking school is that, aside from the coverage it received in the media, its ideas spread mainly because teachers would leave Abbotsholme and found a related school nearby. This phenomenon drove Reddie mad, and after

⁸² Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 48.

⁸³ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 410-412.

Bedales, the dominoes kept falling. C.E. Rice worked at Bedales and then left it to found King Alfred's in 1898. At King Alfred's, a young man named A.S. Neill worked for a time and then left to found the famous Summerhill in 1924.⁸⁴ As John Darling has observed, while Reddie "dreamed of spreading his ideas by setting up Abbotsholme 'colonies' under his own control, Reddie feared that lesser minds might deviate from the true interpretation of his educational gospel."⁸⁵ He did not have these fears about Lietz.

Lietz would take Reddie's unique approach to boarding school education and deploy it in a context where it would be even more groundbreaking than Abbotsholme. With no tradition of public schools in the English sense, a boarding school in the German countryside was a completely alien concept to mainstream culture. And yet, the appearance of Ilsenburg in the forests of Thuringia was met with wild success and sparked a small movement. This movement would pave the way for Kurt Hahn's first school in Salem. It would also give shape and power to a current that was already beginning to move in the German countryside: the back-to-the-*volk* phenomenon of the Youth Movement and the *Wandervögel*. Germany, it turns out, was just waiting for Hermann Lietz.

HERMAN LIETZ AND THE PRUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Throughout the 19th century, the Prussian school system was lauded by foreign educators as well-known and diverse as Horace Mann of the United States, Thomas Arnold of England, and Victor Cousin of France.⁸⁶ At first glance, the system's accomplishments were hard

⁸⁴ Darling, "New Life and New Education: The Philosophies of Davidson, Reddie, and Hahn," 15–16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁶ For much of my section on Hermann Lietz I rely on Sterling Fishman's excellent *The Struggle for German Youth: The Search for Educational Reform in Imperial Germany* (Revisionist Press, 1976), 3.

to dispute. Beginning with the systematic changes wrought by Frederick the Great, and continuing to improve decade by decade through the professionalization of generations of teachers and a cogent system of educational levels, the Prussian system compared favorably with its neighbors, as one observer noted in 1880: “By 1880 Germany with a population of 42 millions was educating 6 million scholars in 60,000 schools . . . whilst England with a population of 34 millions was educating 3 million children in 58,000 schools.”⁸⁷

This steady reputation, coupled with the startling military victories Prussia achieved over Austria in 1866, and especially France in 1870-71, led many to apply the logic behind the apocryphal phrase “the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton” as it applied to Germany.⁸⁸ A strong educational system meant a strong culture. A strong culture won wars. Or, as Ernest Renan quipped in 1871 perhaps in answer to the Waterloo truism, “Sedan is the victory of the German schoolmaster.”

As Jennifer Ham has noted, this strong educational system was initially concerned with the “cultivation of the inner self through the mastery of classical subjects.” In other words, through enduring difficult subjects and the stern-but-caring supervision of German schoolmasters, the system sought to make respectable and decent adults out of inherently-evil children through learning. It was a “humanizing” process, and though severe, was aspirational.⁸⁹

By the 1870s, however, Germany’s status as a new empire, its surging economy, and its famous governmental bureaucracy all drew from and supported its educational system. This

⁸⁷ W. H. G. Armytage, *German Influence on English Education* (Routledge, 2014), 56. This data does not distinguish by gender.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁹ Jennifer Ham, “Unlearning the Lesson: Wedekind, Nietzsche, and Educational Reform at the Turn of the Century,” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 40, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 49.

configured the educational system as both the supplier of well-educated citizens to the new empire, but also as the gatekeeper to a better life within Germany. "All paths of preferment led through German schools. . . Each state examination, whether entitling its examinee to enter a trade, to serve one year in the army, or to bear an exalted title was geared to the school system."⁹⁰ As a result, though the nation of Germany underwent ferocious social change through industrialization and urbanization, Germany's educational system ironically became more rigid and conservative.

This dynamic was exacerbated by another trend. The process of 'humanizing' a student had become less aspirational than before the industrial revolution and its accompanying cynicisms. According to Ham, in its second evolution, German educational ideology was shot-through by a fundamental pessimism brought on by a culture struggling with the shock waves of Darwinism, Marxism, and industrialization. What had begun as a project of edification had evolved into a project of containment, punishment, and conformity.⁹¹ *Bildung*, or 'education,' long the gatekeeper to the German good life, symbolized and enforced by the all-important test, the Abitur, was not interested in one's humanity.

Responding to these tensions, Kaiser Wilhelm II convened an Imperial School Conference in 1890 to urge that school reforms be made. This call was received with enthusiasm by a small but fierce cohort of would-be educational reformers.⁹² They felt that the calcified educational system was badly misapprehending the needs of the age, the "pitfalls of modernism

⁹⁰ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 2.

⁹¹ Ham, "Unlearning the Lesson," 49.

⁹² Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 1.

and the industrial revolution.”⁹³ This vein of dissatisfaction surfaced as early as 1870 when a Professor at Göttingen University, Paul Lagarde, published *Deutsche Schriften*, or ‘German Writings.’ The book was a criticism of the educational system, but an affirmation of the strength and spirit of German youth. The problem wasn’t the people, Lagarde wrote, it was the schools. This same line of criticism was echoed by Friedrich Nietzsche two years later in a series of speeches at the University of Basel.⁹⁴

Sterling Fishman notes that the German version of the progressive education movement had a particular angle. Germany, these educators believed, “required a spiritual revolution which only a new generation raised in a spiritually pure environment could achieve.” This was much more than a new “lesson plan.” Though the Kaiser’s goals were no doubt less radical, the answers to it were not. Theirs was not a “revised lesson plan.”⁹⁵ Theirs was a re-boot of German-ness.

The First German Educational Utopian

Hermann Lietz was born in 1868 to a large family that farmed on the Island of Rugen in the Baltic Sea. Quintessential members of the *Volk*, the Lietzes worked hard in the harsh environment of Rugen, instilling resilience, industry, and group cohesion into their children. Hermann began working on the farm very early, beginning what would be a life of physical prowess and famous endurance. This was interrupted when Hermann was sent to the Gymnasium in Grifswald so he might prepare for the Abitur. Long hours of sitting and especially

⁹³ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 138.

the drilling in Latin was difficult for the active young Hermann, but so too was the startlingly-different culture of the city.⁹⁶

From the beginning Hermann Lietz didn't fit in. His contemporaries did not share his rugged upbringing nor his faith-based puritanical tendencies. In his early years at Grifswald, Lietz was offended by his class-mates' tendencies to bully each other and to cheat in school. In his later years this became repulsion at his contemporaries' discussions about and, one assumes, adventures in drinking, smoking, and sex.⁹⁷

In the Prussian education system, punishments were commonplace and severe. From Lietz's perspective, affection for the student was non-existent. "Punishment by beating was generally seen in those circles as a thoroughly necessary and reliable educational tool, but no breath was to be felt of an art of education, a love of youth, or a concern for them."⁹⁸ As Ham notes, this culture of punishment led to a startling increase in student suicides, dramatized famously by the playwright Frank Wedekind in his play *Spring Awakening: A Tragedy of Childhood* (1891).⁹⁹ Lietz was not happy. He was unsuited to the classics, and his own performance in Latin shamed him. Social alienation combined with Lietz's rejection of the neo-classic Prussian education to render him a committed outsider and critic of the educational mainstream. In a remarkable parallel with Cecil Reddie's development, Lietz's rejection of his own educational experience led to his many educational innovations and his self-positioning as a maverick educational pioneer.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 41.

In his first years as a university student at Halle, Hermann Lietz found blessed relief. He was able to insulate himself from the corruptions of his contemporaries by losing himself in his growing Christian faith as well as in his studies. He excelled in theological studies, even though his radical tendencies surprised and sometimes shocked his professors. In what would turn out to be a fateful move for German progressive education, in 1890 Lietz began studying at the University of Jena in Thuringia. There he found a series of mentors that would have a profound effect on his development, beginning with Rudolf Eucken, the neo-idealist. A committed anti-materialist, Eucken went as far as to forego extra layers of warm clothing during winter. Lietz had found a kindred spirit, and he gleefully shivered with Eucken. He completed his PhD in 1891 under Eucken, writing a dissertation on Comte's views on society.¹⁰¹

It was also at Jena that Lietz met Wilhelm Rein, the same professor of pedagogy and administrator of the Herbartian practice school that would so impress Cecil Reddie a few years later. Rein started at Jena in 1885, and after a few years his seminar on Herbartian pedagogy was so popular that ten percent of the student body at Jena had taken it.¹⁰² The classes on teaching moved from theory to practice to conferences, with the practice portion delivered and critiqued by the students themselves. The final stage, the conferences, consisted of Rein discussing the practice phase in open forum with the students. The Herbartian "steps" that Rein espoused engaged both the teachers-in-training and their future pupils, with an instructional session moving from *Vorbereitung* (preparation) to *Darbietung* (presentation) to *Verknüpfung* (association) to *Zusammenfassung* (formulation/generalization) and finally *Anwendung*

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 44–45.

¹⁰² Armytage, *German Influence on English Education*, 68.

(application).¹⁰³ This was a major departure from the rote drilling and frequent punishing that had so repelled Lietz at his own gymnasium in Grifswald.

Encountering Rein permanently changed Lietz's course. He spent the next many years directly under Rein's influence, reading voraciously in Pestalozzi, Fichte, and Arndt, with Pestalozzi's concepts about how education could be a tool for moral purification resonating particularly strongly for him. Lietz also benefitted from Rein's practical assistance. After he was awarded a teaching certificate by the Prussian government, Rein offered him the headmastership of the Herbartian practice school. This new position allowed Lietz to freely add facets to his role as administrator and teacher. "I hoped to help my students as much as possible after hours of instruction . . . in that way, much that was otherwise incomprehensible first became clear."¹⁰⁴ Finding that involvement in students' non-classroom lives lent itself to a deeper understanding of them as people and as learners; Lietz involved himself in extracurricular travel, play, and parental conferences. As his role grew, so did his ideas about what possibilities the future might hold.¹⁰⁵ Lietz began to dream in earnest about a revolutionary new boarding school that might return students to the bosom of Germany's countryside for personal regeneration and cultural rebirth.

It was also at this time that Cecil Reddie traveled to Germany to visit the famous Herbartian at Jena. Rein introduced Reddie to his new headmaster, and Lietz and Reddie struck up a deep friendship based on the obvious growing alignment of their life missions. By now Lietz had decided that trying to save the adults in the cities of Germany was a lost cause. They

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 47.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 48–49.

were far too mired in their selfishness and vice, and Lietz saw German cities functioning as moral quicksand. Rehabilitation of urbanized adults was too difficult. Only through the creation of a school far from the corrupting influences of the cities, focusing on the unspoiled children of Germany, was hope for widespread social reform.¹⁰⁶

The paths of the two men would mirror each other. Both would found wildly idealistic schools in the countryside. Both would dream of affecting their nation's development with their new approach to education. Both would rage at the departure of their disciples and scoff at those disciples' successes as their own ideas were fine-tuned and evolved by men who were better managers of their staffs. Both Reddie and Lietz would suffer the curse of the hero-founder: the same raw audacity and titanic force of personality required to create a mini-utopia out of thin air rendered both men unsuited for sustained, collaborative leadership.¹⁰⁷

For now, however, they had found each other. As we've already seen, Lietz helped Reddie re-fit Abbotsholme with a more precisely Herbartian curriculum. Reddie, in turn, lent Lietz charts, photos, and tables so that the educational fable called *Emlohstobba* might further delight and inspire its German audience.¹⁰⁸

A Strange Keystone Text: *Emlohstobba*

Cecil Reddie wrote *Abbotsholme* in 1900 as retrospective on his school of the same name after ten years of operation. Reddie's text was beaten to publication by Hermann Lietz's *Emlohstobba*, published in German in 1896. *Emlohstobba* is about Abbotsholme the school of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁷ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*; Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*; Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*.

¹⁰⁸ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*, 255.

course, but it also hints heavily at the school Lietz wouldn't found for another two years. What's more, the unusual name of Lietz's text is the word 'Abbotsholme' spelled backwards. What's more, this 'disguise' continues with the names of all the teachers. Reddie becomes Eidder and so on.¹⁰⁹

The strangeness continues when one sees Wilhelm Rein wrote the introduction to the English translation of *Emlohstobba* only months after he and Lietz visited Abbotsholme together. Here we have Rein, the German professor who specializes in a German theory, Herbartianism, based entirely on a Swiss theory, Pestalozzi's method. Rein introduces the English translation of a German book written in German about an English school. In addition to describing the English school in question, the book Rein introduces would, of course, function as a loose blueprint for the German version of the English school it describes.

In early accounts of the development of Kurt Hahn's educational thought much emphasis is given to the national character of many of his influences; his *German* upbringing, his exposure to graduates of *British* public schools while at Oxford, his experiences in WWI. The reality is that his educational context, epitomized by the zany genesis of *Emlohstobba*, was international from the beginning. After the publication of Lietz's book (and the attrition of many teachers from Reddie's school) the utopian progressive educational impulse would soon manifest all across Western Europe. It was from the outset a blended conversation about how best to reform society through the 'miniature kingdom' of a boarding school. In this vein, Rein's introduction to *Emlohstobba*, crows happily about Abbotsholme, "an institution on English soil, which is carrying into practice the high aims long so familiar to us Germans in the works of our

¹⁰⁹ Hermann Lietz, *Emlohstobba: Roman oder Wirklichkeit?* (F. Dümmler, 1897).

great teachers, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, etc. How happy the boy must be who lives in that pedagogic kingdom.”¹¹⁰ *International* pedagogic kingdom might be more accurate.

Symbolic of the differences in approach that would become apparent between Lietz and Reddie, the texts *Abbotsholme* and *Emlohstobba* are quite different. *Emlohstobba*'s fictional narrator invites the reader along for a tour of a day in the idealized school. The tone is friendly and warm, and the register informal. *Emlohstobba* is a celebration of an idealized miniature kingdom, and its very fabric is aspirational. Lietz begins with the line “Let me transport you with me into the midst of a pleasant land.”¹¹¹ Lietz's yearning for his fiction to come true in Germany runs like a vein of ore through the text. Beyond describing, Lietz is clearly hoping to invoke a place where his “noble fellowship, sustained by the common worship of Ideals like these, is allowed to follow its high calling, unvexed by the cramping fussiness and meddling authority of those who do not understand.”¹¹² *Emlohstobba* is more of a song than it is a curricular manifesto.¹¹³

In contrast, *Abbotsholme* takes the form of a report. There is no narrative persona beyond that of Reddie himself, his tone alternating between clinical and strident. The text moves quickly from the cut-and-dried description of the composition of the curriculum to an all-out attack on the British public school system or a rant about the cultural superiority of Germany.¹¹⁴ In a way that would predict the difficulties each man would have administering

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 376.

¹¹³ Lietz, *Emlohstobba*.

¹¹⁴ Reddie, *Abbotsholme*.

their schools, Lietz's narrator seems blissfully lost in an ideal, and Reddie sounds simultaneously pedantic and authoritarian.

Emlohstobba was a qualified success. Its 1000 original copies found sympathetic audiences scattered all over Europe. Media outlets received the book warmly, and it was praised by clergy and politicians alike.¹¹⁵ Lietz began to understand he was not alone in his feelings about conventional German education. Perhaps most powerfully, *Emlohstobba* made it into the hands of like-minded utopian progressives, who used it as a very general model for their own schools, most notably the Swiss educationalist Adolf Ferrière who started the International Bureau of New Schools in Switzerland. The same could be said for the Frenchman Edmond Demolins, who modeled his Ecole de Roches in 1899 on the Abbotsholme idea found in *Emlohstobba*.¹¹⁶

While at Abbotsholme, Lietz famously reported having had a dream in which he was witnessing a giant bonfire of books. Many children danced madly around the fire while throwing countless more books into the blaze. Adults hovered nearby, wailing at the wanton destruction of academic knowledge. Then, "like a Phoenix" a mythical youth clad in golden armor rose from the fire. The youth was "a new Monarch – destined to give to a dying world an Education which shall teach men to live."¹¹⁷ Like Reddie and Rousseau before him, Lietz saw cultural rehabilitation in profound anti-intellectualism. From Lietz's perspective, intellectualism alone had failed utterly to educate Germans so they might resist the juggernauts of industrialism and urbanism. *It had failed to teach men how to live.*

¹¹⁵ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 49.

¹¹⁶ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 208–209.

¹¹⁷ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 99.

The result of this new educational process was to be an aristocracy of men and women who would not “bend their knees” before the Moloch of capitalism and materialism. Instead, they would stand for an ideal which represented in Lietz’s words a “purer religious world of thought and feeling.” For the sake of this ideal, school leaders must take up the fight against the “dark” instincts of the masses.”¹¹⁸ For Lietz, the adventure he was about to embark upon was no exercise in curriculum reform. It was a crusade for the soul of Germany.

And so in 1898, after the galvanizing experience of Abbotsholme and the surge of international support for his hopeful new book, Hermann Lietz returned home to Germany full of encouragement and ideas, the song of *Emlohstobba* and his dream of the golden avatar of a new education accompanying him across the English Channel.

German Variations on Reddie’s Utopian Theme: The *Landerziehungsheim*

Of all the early utopian progressive educators, Lietz’s triumph over the initial challenges he faced may be the most impressive. The *Landerziehungsheim*, or ‘country boarding school’ he founded in Ilsenburg near the Harz Mountains of Saxony had only an abandoned mill as its first building. Lietz found it after a series of scouting expeditions he undertook from Berlin on his bicycle in the middle of the winter.¹¹⁹ It bears mentioning that the town of Ilsenburg is 12 hours from Berlin by bicycle.

In many ways, Lietz’s first school, soon named “Ilsenberg” after the town, was derived directly from Abbotsholme. As Ham has noted, “Lietz proposed that the authoritarian methods, rote memorization, and abstract thinking in the traditional *Unterrichtsschule* [teaching school] be

¹¹⁸ G. L. Mosse, “The Mystical Origins of National Socialism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 1961): 95.

¹¹⁹ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 53.

replaced with a pedagogy like the kind at Abbotsholme, one centered on free movement and group loyalty designed to bring teacher and student closer together and to encourage self-discipline, individual responsibility, and leadership.”¹²⁰

From the outset, however, it was clear Lietz’s schools would be quite different from Reddie’s in important ways. The same tonal differences so apparent in the books *Abbotsholme* and *Emlohstobba* began to manifest in actual pedagogy. Where Abbotsholme was regimented, Ilseburg was unregulated, especially at first. Where Abbotsholme demanded acquiescence from its students, Ilseburg soon became known for the warmth and inclusivity of its community. The same heady, aspirational tone that led so many critics to call *Emlohstobba* “charming” was taking form in bricks, mortar, and school culture.¹²¹

That said, the same manual training that Lietz had witnessed at Abbotsholme became now a prerequisite for Ilseburg’s very existence. Never mind the pedagogical importance of such training for ‘healthy suppleness and balance,’ at Ilseburg, the boys had to build, repair, and garden as a function of survival.¹²² This bootstraps ethic fit perfectly with Lietz’s personality. It also matched the direction he had in mind for his infant school. As a result, the first year consisted mostly of developing Ilseburg’s woeful physical plant so that any schooling at all could take place. Pure academics were therefore started out at even less of a priority than at Abbotsholme.

¹²⁰ Ham, “Unlearning the Lesson,” 58.

¹²¹ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*; Lietz, *Emlohstobba*.

¹²² Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 56. It bears mentioning that Lietz apparently resisted the urge to name his first school “Emlohstobba.” There are limits.

In contrast to the radical but well-organized ‘quarters’ that Reddie had put into action in Britain, classes at Ilseburg were informal, following an investigative, conversational format where curious students asked a series of linked questions of their instructors. This was as much a function of the pure chaos of the founding year as any theoretical decision, but this inquiry-based learning became a feature of the *Landerziehungsheim* program in the years that followed.¹²³ In the curriculum at the younger schools there was “as little formal teaching as possible.” What would now be called project work or “expeditionary learning” was the norm, a kind of “guided experience.”¹²⁴

Another major feature of the *Landerziehungsheim* that set it apart was Lietz’s focus on warm and informal relationships between students and masters. Completely dismissing the authoritarian practices of the contemporary neo-classic German education, Lietz insisted that his teachers and students have genuine, intimate relationships. To this end each master was assigned nine or ten students in units called ‘families.’ This configuration also constituted a departure from Abbotsholme, where Reddie relied on the more senior boys to lead the younger students with himself functioning as the ‘head prefect.’ Reddie was threatened by other adults, whereas Lietz insisted they have a foundational role in school culture.¹²⁵

As with Reddie, aesthetics played a crucial role in the *Landerziehungsheim*. Unlike Reddie, however, for Lietz beauty had profound implications for national identity and a student’s love of Germany. By coming to love beauty, one came to eschew pettiness and

¹²³ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁴ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 203.

¹²⁵ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 60–62. Fishman notes that occasionally this went badly awry, and what Lietz hoped would be a high form of ‘pedagogical eros’ transmuted into garden-variety pedophilia.

ugliness. This brought one close to God. The study of aesthetics became nothing less than a way “to restore Germany to its cultural moorings and thereby rejuvenate German life.”¹²⁶

Perhaps most revolutionary of all was Lietz’s unraveling of the German educational culture of punishment. Lietz relied heavily on the personal relationships students had with masters, as well as the raw appeal his school had for its students. For their freedom, Lietz demanded the students deliver “unconditional obedience in all matters of [communal] necessity while rejecting one’s own . . . personal advantage in favor of the stability, security, and well-being of the community.” This gave rise to what Sterling Fishman calls a “spontaneous sense of inner duty and communal responsibility.”¹²⁷

Local school inspectors regarded Ilseburg with naked suspicion; sure its students would fail the Abitur and doom the school. Something quite different was happening in the experiences of Ilseburg students and the hearts and minds of Ilseburg parents, however. Lietz’s fierce opposition to conventional neo-classical education resonated deeply with his constituents, parent and child alike.¹²⁸ Instead of rebelling against the protracted physical work, cold water baths each morning, and unstructured pedagogy, the students loved it. Ilseburg grew exponentially despite its meager holdings and ad-hoc curriculum. Lietz himself couldn’t quite believe it, happily exclaiming as his school went from 40 boarders in year one to 60, 100, and 200 in years two, three, and four: “ever wider circles recognized the difference between my

¹²⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 62.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 59.

school and the usual boarding schools.”¹²⁹ Despite the growth, the school inspectors waited patiently for the axe of the Abitur to fall.

Faced with his startling success, two years later Lietz located a run-down estate in the Thuringian forest 240 kilometers from Ilseburg and bought it, founding a second school. This one he named “Haubinda” after the estate itself. Lietz installed the boys from Ilseburg aged thirteen to fifteen, leaving the younger boys aged six to twelve back at Ilseburg.

At Haubinda Lietz evolved Reddie’s focus on manual and physical training. Instead of only ‘training’ at projects that would better either the school itself or the students in it, Lietz encouraged craftsmen and local laborers to either come to Haubinda, or the boys to go out into the community and work with them there.¹³⁰ The community responded positively, and Haubinda began to grow as fast as Ilseburg. At the end of Haubinda’s first year, twelve boys sat for the Abitur. Eleven passed. Lietz had proven that he could revolutionize German education and still satisfy its most feared gatekeeper.

Following further explosive growth, Lietz expanded once again in 1904. He purchased yet another estate in the forests near Yulda named Bieberstein. Once more, this would become the name of the school. Bieberstein would be for boys ages sixteen to nineteen. Instead of dormitories, each boy had his own Spartan room with a simple bed and a single chair. Anything else a boy would want he would make himself as a function of his manual training.¹³¹

As his three educational utopias flourished, Lietz began to worry more and more about external corruption. Lietz agonized over the selection his masters. He needed “men of honor,

¹²⁹ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 59.

¹³⁰ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 203.

¹³¹ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 62.

strength, and love” but also capable scholars and teachers. Finally, he needed men willing to dedicate their existence to the schools, functioning, as they did, like the heads of families. He began only hiring committed bachelors so that family duties would not interfere in the mission of the *Landerziehungsheim*. In service of protecting his communities, Lietz also instituted a rule that a boy could only enroll in Bieberstein if he had already attended Ilsenburg or Haubinda. Older boys enrolling off the street, Lietz feared, would bring with them the taint of adult life. Who knows what kind of habits they had already acquired in modern industrial cities?¹³²

In a pattern that harkens to Reddie’s, Lietz’s teachers chafed under Lietz’s impossibly high standards and mounting eccentricities. Just as Badley did at Abbotsholme, they began to leave and found schools themselves. Paul Gaheeb and Gustav Wyneken left Lietz’s employ and founded the Free School Community of Wickersdorf in 1909, following Wyneken’s active interest in the Freideutsche Jugend, or Free German Youth Movement. He jettisoned Lietz’s swelling patriotism, and forged a school that had much in common with A.S. Neill’s Summerhill.¹³³ Gaheeb fell out with Wyneken shortly after that, and founded his own school, Odenwald, in 1910. Odenwald was radically co-educational for the time, with boys and girls learning, eating, and playing together freely. They even slept in the same ‘family homes’ but not in the same rooms.¹³⁴

Only a few years after that, Martin Luserke left Wickersdorf to found Schule Am Meer, or the School by the Sea, on an island in the North Sea, which focused on collaborative theater and a return to the classics which Lietz, Wyneken, and Gaheeb sniffed at.

¹³² Ibid., 63.

¹³³ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 78.

Meanwhile, back in the *Landerziehungsheim*, Lietz was having more problems. Alfred Kramer left in 1909 and, in a similar fashion to Badley's departure from Abbotsholme, founded a school very similar to Haubinda except that it was co-educational. It was called the Colling Country Boarding School. More followed.

It is important to note that, very much unlike Reddie, Lietz got over his disappointment about these many defections quite quickly, going as far as to remain friends and allies with most of the school founders who had started at the *Landerziehungsheim*. No doubt it is this fact that allows scholars to now point to the 'German country boarding school's movement' that flourished at this time, even though much of the *movement* in the 'movement' was teachers moving away from Lietz's unbearable intensity and founding their own versions of his schools.¹³⁵

Post-War Notes of Fascism

Lietz intentionally retreated his *Landerziehungsheim* from day schooling and from towns and cities in order to turn toward nature and a peaceful country life. They shared this impulse with the more-famous *Wandervögel* ("wandering birds") movement that gained notoriety at that time. Also seeking to avoid the corruption of the city, these loose bands of youth, intellectuals, and bohemians sought to connect to the German countryside and the ordinary *Volk* who lived and worked there. However, As Stewart notes, in Germany such "passionate folklore" modulated too easily into "mystique."¹³⁶ Many scholars have observed the ways in which both the *Landerziehungsheim* and the *Wandervögel* contributed to the mysticism of what

¹³⁵ Ibid., 82-86.

¹³⁶ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 206.

would later become national socialism.”¹³⁷ This contribution lay dormant until released by the tumult and violence of World War I.

During the First World War, Lietz’s patriotism went into overdrive. He joined the military himself and insisted on serving in the most difficult and physically demanding unit, the snow-shoe corps, even though he was 40 years old and afflicted with a critical kidney disorder.

After Germany was defeated, Lietz’s behavior became alarming. He began to write about the necessity of freeing Germany from the ‘Jewish spirit’ and from all those who were moved by it.” Slowly but surely, Jews were excluded from his schools. ¹³⁸

Even more troubling, and as a dark foreshadowing of the bloody defense of Berlin members of the Hitler Jugend would stage twenty years later, Lietz personally offered up to General Hindenburg the entire population of Haubinda as a guerrilla force in the case of invasion by the Entente. Lietz’s enthusiasm for his schools had become ever more slavishly yoked to his narrowing vision of a perfect Germany. ¹³⁹ After a period of rapid decline Lietz died in 1919, a year before Prince Max von Baden and Kurt Hahn opened the Salem School.

A UTOPIAN WHO WOULDN’T HIDE FROM THE WORLD

Kurt Hahn saw the same ills in modern industrialized western society that the other progressive educators did, whether they were utopian or not. He was dismayed by what he saw as the vulgarization of the human spirit by the speed, ease, and volume of consumption with which modern life was lived.

¹³⁷ Michael H Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004); Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*; Mosse, “The Mystical Origins of National Socialism.”

¹³⁸ Mosse, “The Mystical Origins of National Socialism,” 95.

¹³⁹ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 138.

Like Reddie and Lietz, Hahn was a fierce moralist. Like both men, Hahn was an ardent progressive. He believed that mainstream Western education was mostly missing the mark, wasting a crucial opportunity to strengthen a child's physique, artistic sense, reasoning ability, knowledge of himself or herself, sense of obligation toward others, and most importantly, 'moral courage', in *addition to* academic ability. Like both men, Hahn sought to effect this change, not through the kind of large-scale political movement that found such purchase in the political free-for-all of the Weimar republic, but through single, intense boarding school projects.¹⁴⁰ Like both men, Hahn saw in a boarding school the potential to sequester the young, for a time, from the world he hoped they would then go and change.

Like Reddie, Hahn was repulsed by the selfishness he saw penetrating modern society. Like Lietz, Hahn was enamored with the curative powers of the countryside. And yet it is here that the men diverge. Hahn appreciated the power of a boarding school to simplify life and allow ideology to take root in young people, but he was no isolationist. The second son of a large and loving family and raised in the center of pre-war Berlin, Hahn was a connected and socially-oriented man. By the time the Salem school had become a reality, he had become a political operator at a national level, deeply invested in the well-being of the *actual* Germany, not a phantom idealized from across the English Channel, nor the avatar from a lurid dream. Following the admonishment of his patron, Prince Max von Baden and the example of the Cistercian monks of Salem, Hahn weaved the mission and fate of his first school directly into its

¹⁴⁰ For the much-larger political progressive education movement at this time, see Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany*, New edition (Berghahn Books, 2004).

surrounding community. He would repeat this pattern with Gordonstoun and with the United World Colleges.

For unlike Reddie or Lietz, Hahn was neither blinded by ego nor imprisoned by heedless patriotism. Where his forebears saw enemies, Hahn saw benefactors. Where Lietz and Reddie alienated, Hahn found common cause.

Kurt Hahn's Early Years: Cosmopolitan Pre-War Europe

Kurt Hahn came of age in a time without war. From his birth in 1886 in Berlin to a wealthy and well-positioned family, to the outbreak of the First World War, Europe fairly glowed with surging markets, increased interconnection between nations, rank after rank of the newly-minted rich. It would be hard to understate the effect of these first 28 years on Hahn in regards to his later educational innovations. Hahn's early years were characterized by a warm and loving household, an intellectual and socially-prominent mother, frequent forays into the German countryside, and, thanks to his family's wealth, the ability to attend some of the best universities in Germany and England.¹⁴¹

Hahn's paternal grandfather, Albert Hahn, began building the Hahn family fortune in a manner that would have made Horatio Alger smile knowingly. Albert was the son of a humble merchant in Breslau, and entered his father's employ at the age of 14 in 1838. After years of apprenticeship, Albert struck out for Berlin in 1851 at the age of 27 and started a small mercantile shop with very little capital. Well known for his industriousness, kindness, and prudence, Albert turned the small shop into a textile-manufacturing business. As the textile

¹⁴¹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 62.

business grew, Albert managed to position himself as a player in the infant industrial piping industry in Germany by becoming the German agent of an English pipe-works firm.¹⁴²

Albert's new business partners developed a factory-based process for rolling pipes instead of manufacturing them by hand, as was the norm. The new method revolutionized the speed at which pipes could be produced, dropping prices and contributing to a crucial aspect of infrastructure for a rapidly-modernizing Germany. Following wild success, the company soon opened its own mill in Upper Silesia, and in 1873, another in Dusseldorf-Oberbilk. Branches followed in Moscow, Russia and Oderberg, Austria.¹⁴³ In this way Albert Hahn was both a kind of harbinger of a new, industrialized Europe, and also the captain of a new type of international industry.

When the branches in Austria and Russia opened, Albert brought his sons, Georg and Oskar, into the fold. The new international business had become a family business. Both sons thrived in their new roles, with Oskar developing a taste for international life. Beyond watching over the businesses in Tsarist Russia, Oskar became very fond of his travels in England. So much so that he built the Hahn family a summer home in precisely the style of an English country cottage, named 'Wannsee' for the lake it was near, replete with tennis and cricket courts, rose gardens, and orchards.¹⁴⁴

Later in Kurt Hahn's life, especially during the Second World War, his critics would place much emphasis on Hahn's German-ness. Interestingly, the architectural choices Oskar and

¹⁴² HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, ed. Hermann Röhrs and Hilary Tunstall-Behrens, 1st Edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 12.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16. Georg Hahn became an industrialist in South America after first running the family businesses for a time when his brother Oskar died suddenly.

Charlotte Hahn made for Wannsee is a fascinating early indication of how much affinity the Hahns already had with England, well before the First World War. This was an affinity that would eventually later manifest in Kurt attending Christ's Church, Oxford. This same affinity would eventually place Kurt squarely between two warring industrial empires for most of his adult life.

In pre-1914 Europe, however, a lasting peace was the prediction of the day. The populations of Great Britain and Germany had swelled impressively between 1880 and 1910, contributing to a strengthened economy that was further bolstered by industrialization and the rewards of empire. Conventional wisdom dictated that the mutual interpenetration of national markets by neighboring nations led to a shared fate via shared financial goals. Peace was prosperous. Any bellicosity would be over quickly or deterred completely.¹⁴⁵ Cities like New York, London, and Paris became international hubs, glittering with wealth and promise.

Situated just miles from one of these hubs, Berlin, the Hahn's Wannsee home was a magnet to German intelligentsia, artists, and social lights of all kinds. At the center of all of this was Kurt's mother, Charlotte. The beneficiary of her mothers' insistence upon excellent education for all her children regardless of gender, Charlotte became one of the people to know in the pre-1914 Berlin social scene. She was well-read, musically talented, and socially skilled. As Oskar's businesses thrived, Charlotte cultivated a salon-like culture on her English-estate-set-in-Germany. In many accounts it is as if Wannsee was itself an extension of Charlotte Hahn's personality, and due to his similarity with his mother, Kurt Hahn its heir.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage, 2000), 10.

¹⁴⁶ Edinburgh, *Kurt Hahn*, 20.

As a result, long before he made it to Göttingen or Oxford, Kurt was exposed to the larger world of culture and ideas. The Wannsee house guests, inspired and attracted by his mother's charm and warmth, made Wannsee into a kind of cosmopolitan utopia. Names that one day would ring out frequented Wannsee. For example, the legendary Polish pianist Arthur Rubinstein fondly remembered Charlotte Hahn introducing him to Johannes Brahms when he was just a boy and new to Berlin. Charlotte played Brahms' "quartets in A major and C minor one afternoon with a good ensemble." After the crowds left following that performance, Charlotte insisted the young Rubinstein stay and treated him to more Brahms. Rubinstein's memories of the Hahn family serve wonderfully to illustrate the warmth and culture of Wannsee.

I did like the lavish food, but always had to pay with a short concert—a kind of exploitation that was very much in vogue at the time, but fortunately rarely occurs today. It was at one of these dinner parties that I met Lotte Hahn, Mr. Landau's sister. She was a beautiful and enchanting lady of about thirty-five and a very fine pianist, well equipped for a brilliant career, if it hadn't been for her wealth, her husband, and children. [She] was well aware of my admiration for her (I was always blushing and shy in her presence) but she treated me in a sweet and motherly way... Her eldest son Kurt, who was thirteen and a tall, handsome boy, blessed with the most honest blue eyes, became, thanks to her, my friend. One day he invited me to join his *Lesekranzchenm*, a sort of reading circle that met every Saturday... I simply loved it.¹⁴⁷

Led by Hahn, the children read Faust, Shakespeare, Kleist, Schiller, Lessing, and "even Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. They became something of an amateur children's theater circle. "We managed quite professionally. We would all vote on who should get what roles... Kurt played, of course, noble heroes to perfection; he couldn't be anything else... to my delight I was always

¹⁴⁷ Arthur Rubinstein, *Arthur Rubinstein: My Young Years*, First Edition, first printing. edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 42.

elected to play the villains. How I loved to murder my way through to the throne as Richard III.”¹⁴⁸

Guests to Wannsee were also treated to the playing of Artur Schnabel and Edwin Fischer, amongst many others.¹⁴⁹ A further reason Wannsee was so utopic was its proximity to the waters of the Wannsee itself and the lush forests and hills nearby. Kurt and his brothers Walter, Franz, and Rudolf spent hours out in the German countryside. Kurt was a strong boy from the beginning, and later descriptions of his physical self routinely noted his broad shoulders, startling ability to jump, and surprising acceleration.¹⁵⁰ The Havel River feeds into the Wannsee, and Kurt often amused himself and surprised his friends by rowing across this broad river in a small rowboat to visit them on the other side.

Such a halcyon time stood in sharp contrast to the destruction, horror, and dislocation that world war would soon bring. It would also function as a homing beacon to Hahn, an early and permanent lesson in the dual wonders of the natural world and the intellectual life. Hahn’s fascination with pastoral countryside would later grow into a strong belief, in line with other progressive educators in western Europe, that the purity of the rural landscape had healing qualities, especially when contrasted with the crowding, mounting social problems, and moral laxity of the city.

Kurt Hahn and Mainstream German Education

Kurt Hahn studied at the Wilhelmsgymnasium in Berlin from 1900-1904. As we have seen, it was a time of challenge and flux for the venerable and ossified Prussian educational

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 62.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 68.

system. Ferment had begun. Would-be reformists in Germany linked up with the larger trans-Atlantic progressive movement which, as William Reese has noted, “sought the alleviation of pain and suffering and the promotion of moral and intellectual advancement. Like all reform movements, it sought both social stability and uplift.”¹⁵¹ Advocates of a “new education” in Germany had begun to agitate for schools that loosened the caste-like social barriers, broadened the fact-based, purely-academic curriculum, and did all of this with the child as the inspiration and primary subject.¹⁵² Just as with the progressive education movement in the United States, this widespread reformist impulse took many forms.

And yet, all this ferment did not reach Hahn. When he first entered the Wilhelmsgymnasium in Berlin, it was still classically-focused and rigidly bureaucratic. Following an entire century of success and admiration, it had reformed very little. This strictly academic experience stood in sharp contrast to Hahn’s experiences at Wannsee and in his family home in Berlin, where the natural world, the social world, and the world of ideas mixed so seamlessly. It would be the beginning of his “lifelong antagonism to education based on academic activity alone.”¹⁵³ Six years later Hahn would publish *Frau Elsie’s Promise*, a novel in which Hahn’s narrator roundly criticizes contemporary German education for its failings, but counters the criticism with the more all-encompassing educational concepts practiced by the protagonist’s mother.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ William J. Reese, “The Origins of Progressive Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 3.

¹⁵² Marjorie Lamberti, “Radical Schoolteachers and the Origins of the Progressive Education Movement in Germany, 1900-1914,” *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (April 1, 2000): 29–36, doi:10.2307/369179.

¹⁵³ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 62.

¹⁵⁴ Rohrs, Hermann, “The Educational Thought of Kurt Hahn,” *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, 1970, 130.

At age 16, after 2 years in the Gymnasium, Kurt and his uncle Martin met up with three English boys for a prolonged hike through the German countryside. Simpson Neuchatel, Alec Marcan, and Arnold Brown regaled Hahn and his uncle with stories of their unusual English boarding school, Abbotsholme. Hahn was mesmerized. Not only did the boys enthusiastically describe a school where academics only played a partial role, but all three of them were prefects, responsible for the well-being of younger students.¹⁵⁵ Compared to the Wilhelmsgymnasium, this sounded like heaven. At the end of the trip, the three boys from Abbotsholme presented Hahn with one of the 1000 copies of Lietz's *Emlohstobba*. He would later admit that vague ideas he had for a new type of school were given a "clearer outline" through his readings of *Emlohstobba*.¹⁵⁶ Hahn now had a template for his dreams, and soon he would need it.

The 1904 Injury: The Beginnings of Erlebnistherapie

Near Berlin, the Havel River slows and widens into a lake-sized body of water called the Wannsee. On July 8th 1904, Kurt Hahn rowed across this lake on what turned out one of the hottest afternoons on record. Upon reaching the other side, Hahn collapsed. He rose a while later with splitting pains in the back of his head. It would be the beginning of a decade of debilitating chronic pain, experimental surgeries, and failed psychological cures.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Adam Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character: The Impact of Gordonstoun*, First Edition edition (Routledge & K. Paul, 1962), 11.

¹⁵⁶ Rohrs, Hermann, "The Educational Thought of Kurt Hahn," 1966, 130.

¹⁵⁷ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 63.



Figure 1: Kurt Hahn as an undergraduate at Oxford, near the time of his injury. D.A. Byatt, ed., *Kurt Hahn: An Appreciation of His Life and Work* (Aberdeen: Gordonstoun School, 1976)

Details of the precise injury that Hahn sustained that day are still obscured. Initial accounts reference a ‘terrible sun-stroke’ or a ‘collapse due to over-exertion.’ This ‘sun stroke’ explanation is repeated in account after account of Hahn’s early life. It is also erroneously reported that such a powerful sun-stroke caused Hahn to remain sensitive to light for the rest of his life. The true account is more complicated. Hahn’s ‘injury’ was actually a narrowing and perhaps blockage of Hahn’s sylvan duct, causing cerebrospinal fluid to build up in his cranium and spinal column causing chronic excruciating pain and debilitating physical weakness.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Chris Noll, Handwritten, (October 24, 1997), Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

Eventually, the fields of neurology and cerebrospinal anatomy would progress to the point where Hahn would find relief through a series of brain surgeries.¹⁵⁹ In 1904, however, these fields were infant disciplines.

As a result, Hahn's family arrived at a different diagnosis, one that would eventually have a profound effect on the development of experiential education around the world. When Hahn's initial symptoms did not subside, he was diagnosed by doctors, including two of his uncles, with 'neurasthenia.' Neurasthenia had only recently been 'discovered' in 1881 by Charles M Beard. A new disease brought on by the modern age, it was thought that neurasthenia affected middle and upper-class men almost exclusively. Neurasthenia, the theory went, was caused by perpetual overstimulation and overtaxing of the intellectual and emotional 'battery' of the modern man.¹⁶⁰ Hahn was a classic case: an emotionally, physically, and intellectually gifted young man with great enthusiasms in all categories. He had burnt himself out. He was now a neurasthenic.

As a result of Hahn's new condition, doctors subjected Hahn to a series of rest cures. One of these doctors, Dr. Oskar Kohnstamm, confined Hahn to a dark room in isolation. The cures did not help, and the 'attacks' continued unabated. Soon, Hahn's family began to suspect that Hahn himself was contributing to his mysterious disease, referring to his "stubborn infatuation with his [own] illness."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures.*, 63

¹⁶⁰ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 84.

¹⁶¹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures.*

It wasn't until right before World War I that Hahn was connected with one of Europe's first brain surgeons, Dr. Victor Horsley. Confident that he knew the cause of Hahn's distress, in 1912 Horsley grafted a piece of the Saphenous vein from Hahn's ankle into the affected area of Hahn's brain to widen the affected area, releasing the pressure. Horsley also installed a silver plate at the back of Hahn's head and warned him to protect the area from light and heat lest the graft dry out. It was these doctor's orders that led to Hahn's unusual relationship with light, not a persistent 'sun stroke.'¹⁶² Horsley would have to operate twice more to fine-tune Hahn's cure, but by the First World War, Hahn was able to "work 14-18 hours a day."¹⁶³

Before these successes, however, Hahn's mother Charlotte dismissed the idea that her son might be anything but the powerful, promising boy she knew. She insisted he continue his normal practices of long excursions out-of-doors, leading to increased pain and a series of collapses. The disparity between his beloved mother's expectations and his capacity permanently affected Hahn. He was haunted for the rest of his life by the uncertainty of whether his injury was completely physical or not. Coupled with the very real risk that the site of his brain surgery might heat up and dry out, this led to a handful of behaviors that contributed mightily to Hahn's eccentric reputation.

For his entire life, Hahn compulsively wore enormous sun hats or pith helmets during the day even while playing sports. He exercised only at night or at dusk, jogging or rowing after the sun had set. He worked full days in darkened rooms.¹⁶⁴ There are not many photographs of

¹⁶² Noll, October 24, 1997.

¹⁶³ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 71.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

Hahn, but most of them show either his outlandish get-up he wore outdoors to mitigate his 'injury', or him looming, Nosferatu-like, in a darkened room.

Indeed, it was in that first darkened room of Dr. Konstamm's where the three English boys' gift of *Emlohstobba* had its impact. Isolated, bored, and in pain, Hahn used the prolonged quiet to imagine a new type of school based on the outline provided by his German forbear. Upon emerging from his convalescence, Hahn proclaimed to a friend in a letter, "I have given up the idea of becoming an art historian and want to be a schoolmaster, not a Royal Prussian teacher, but an educator and teacher under Lietz and later on my own."¹⁶⁵

It is telling that the original conception of Hahn's particular strain of pedagogy was crystallized while he was himself healing, and only months after he passed the Abitur. Though Hahn's contributions have long been re-cast as 'experiential education,' something is lost in translation by using that phrase.¹⁶⁶ Hahn's metaphor was centered on the continuum of sickness and healing far more than it was around pure experience and related learning. In other words, learning was not the result, it was a milepost on the way to spiritual *health*. Later, at the

¹⁶⁵ Martin Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy: To Discover You Can Be More and Do More Than You Believed - the Story of One of the 20th Century's Most Innovative Educators*, 1st ed. (Wilmington, Delaware: The Middle Atlantic Press, 1996), 7.

¹⁶⁶ Rohrs, Hermann, "The Educational Thought of Kurt Hahn," 126. A distillation of Hahn's term is offered by Rohrs: "Experience therapy' is one of the basic tenets of Hahn's conception of education. In modern society, in view of the complicated requirements of modern life, young people are kept in the dependent position of learners well into the age of adulthood; yet they need to test and prove themselves if they are to discover and realize themselves. Youth is socially sick because in the framework of modern society it is not led by natural challenge to its powers to develop the basic human capacities. In this situation a corrective is required, and it is provided in Hahn's scheme by an elastic system of training devices: the break for athletics, the expedition, the project and the rescue service... For this a strong mutual respect between pupil and teacher is necessary and an acceptance of sensible limits to freedom—such as Pestalozzi called for in opposition to Rousseau's supposedly unlimited concept of freedom. Spiritually akin to him [Pestalozzi] Kurt Hahn asserts even more emphatically that a personal renewal in the young can take place only if 'voluntariness is supported by compulsion.;" 126. I think Hahn's vision of *erlebnistherapie* was grander, part a pedagogic choice, as Rohrs indicates, but also part spiritual cleansing, repair, and preparation.

Salem school, a student would learn how to garden, but it would be the providing of good food to the community while also doing their part for the school, while also receiving positive response for being dutiful and steadfast that would lead to the increased health of this student gardener.

This can be read a few ways. It is possible that Hahn was channeling his mother's concerns about his 'neurasthenia' into his educational theory. Given the purported causes of neurasthenia, and the fact that it was linked to, or seen as symptomatic of, the decline of western industrial societies by many progressives, it would be a ready frame for Hahn. This is especially true since medical science had yet to release Hahn from the crippling doubts about the medical basis of his own illness.

The direct translation of *Erlebnistherapie* is "experience therapy," implying a need to heal. There is ample evidence in the avalanche of pamphlets and speeches that Hahn produced that this is exactly how he felt. Like the utopian progressive educators before him, Hahn saw western society as sick. By extension so were its individual youth. Imprisoned in a prolonged childhood, children and especially adolescents were disconnected from the rigorous and bracing process of discovering their own agency and passions. Modern life further exacerbated the negative effects of this prolonged childhood through the causes behind Hahn's litany of "declines":

The decline in fitness due to the modern methods of locomotion; the decline in initiative and enterprise due to the widespread disease of 'spectatoritis'; the decline of memory and imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life; the decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship; the decline of self-discipline due

to the ever present availability of stimulants and tranquilizers; and the decline of compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life is conducted.¹⁶⁷ Not only was the modern method of child-rearing sickening children by distorting their childhood through stretching it, but this was happening in an unhealthy context, with tranquilizers, motorized vehicles, and emotional disconnection further weakening the youth. Isolated as he was in a dark sanatorium, alone with the dismissive comments of his mother for company, it is no stretch to see how Hahn arrived at a medical metaphor for his educational utopia.

Hahn and University Life

Hahn started at Christ's Church, Oxford in 1904, but before it was fixed by Horsley in 1912, his injury contributed to long absences from university as his symptoms flared and subsided. He attended intermittently from 1904 till 1914: five terms between 1904 and 1906, and three more from 1911 to 1912. He never made it all the way to examinations in any one term, leaving university life at 28 when the First World War began. He did not receive a degree from Oxford until his honorary doctorate decades later. In between and amongst these terms, Hahn attended the universities at Göttingen, Freiburg, Berlin, and Heidelberg. At all of these Hahn maintained his courses of study. Despite his strong feelings that German mainstream education must be reformed, Hahn did not personally object to its emphasis on the classics. He loved classical languages, and leavened this pursuit with philosophy and art history.¹⁶⁸ He especially loved Plato, referring to him as "my old master" for the rest of his life.

¹⁶⁷ Anthony Richards, "The Genesis of Outward Bound," *Kurthahn.org*, n.d., online archive -- Kurt Hahn Archive, www.kurthahn.org.

¹⁶⁸ For my sections on Hahn's university and military career I rely heavily and gratefully on David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, First edition (David Sutcliffe, 2013)

It didn't take Hahn long to develop the same affinity for Britain that his father and grandfather had cultivated. He loved Oxford and, as David Sutcliffe notes, "he had entered the more extrovert English world. . . collegiate life at the university was a revelation for him: the tutorials, the sport, the social relationships."¹⁶⁹ The natural environment of Britain was also bracing for Hahn. He delighted in the countryside surrounding Oxford, as well as the large fields of play at the college itself. The English students found Hahn to be a magnetic curiosity. He was wildly idiosyncratic, given to long rants on philosophers, but also sudden and impressive feats of athleticism.¹⁷⁰ He made many friends. On summer holidays and when he could get away during the semesters, he would travel to Scotland. The cooler weather and less intense sunshine did not trigger his injury. In 1909 he managed to ride a horse from Glasgow to Morayshire, directly over the highlands.

The Legacy of the British Public School System

David Sutcliffe notes that "Christ Church has always had a good opinion of itself" and retells a wry observation made by John Betjeman that students there often can convey the sense that they are just stopping by Christ Church en route to the House of Lords. At the time of Hahn's attendance, the elitism that the English public school system protected and perpetuated was yet-unchallenged by the societal upheaval that the two world wars would soon bring. At Christ Church Hahn therefore witnessed the development of the rising generation of British elite firsthand, the first phase being the public schools themselves.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 67.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Indeed, one of the most powerful lessons Hahn learned at Christ Church, Oxford was the full scope of the political might, influence, and tradition of the English public school system. As recent graduates of Eton or Harrow, many of Hahn's classmates had achieved the status of "old boys", and had been welcomed into a ready-made old boy's network at university.

With their emphasis on the classics, Latin, proper manners, and other signifiers of the upper class, the public school system influenced and inspired similar cultures at places like Oxford. It was into this environment that Hahn stepped in 1904, only a year after reading *Emlohstobba* for the first time which, of course, was all about Abbotsholme, an intervention *against* English public schools.

The separateness public school boys felt from the rest of society bothered Hahn. It went directly against the impulse he was already feeling that schools should be deeply connected to their local communities. Hahn, like Reddie and Lietz before him, was annoyed by spiritual laziness and entitlement. These often went hand-in-hand with a public school education. And yet Hahn also noticed a powerful positive aspect of the old boys' identification with their public schools. He was taken with the "deep, active sense of responsibility for their school's reputation and welfare" that the public schools inspired in their students.

Hahn's experiences at Oxford was a chapter in the complicated lifelong relationship Hahn had with elitism, powerful individual figures, and national power structures. Beginning with Salem, Hahn insisted on two fundamental philosophies in his schools that differed sharply from the elitism and separateness of his public school friends at Oxford. First, all his schools followed the example of the first inhabitants of the Salem site, the Cistercian monks, and worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the members of the community in which they were

situated.¹⁷² Second, access to Hahn's schools was never fully limited to those who could pay. Indeed, it was a prerequisite of Prince Max von Baden's donation of a portion of his estate that Hahn would "make the school independent from wealth by grading the fees according to the income of the parents."¹⁷³ But it would be Hahn's interpretation of Plato's thoughts on the relationship between education and society that would form the lowest foundation of his educational theories and practices.

The Implications of Plato's *Republic*

It was at Oxford that Hahn discovered Plato. *The Republic* would remain a beacon for Hahn through his life and directly influenced his educational innovations. *The Republic*, in particular the first three chapters, is chiefly concerned with the ways in which individual subjects might sublimate themselves to the operations and needs of Plato's *Polis*, or city-state. According to Plato, at its 'original' level a city-state is the vulgar conglomeration of the needs of its people: it is an aggregation and organization of need. Threatening the organizational fabric, the *politeia*, of this original city-state *at all times*, according to Plato, is individual self-interest. In its original form, the *Polis* can only regulate self-interest through the organization of punishments from a justice system. And yet this fails as well, as the selfish man will only participate in the social contract of the *Polis* to the extent that he feels he will or will not be caught by the justice system and punished for any crimes. Further, because of systemic selfishness, the *Polis* has the need for a warrior class in order to advance its own city-wide imperialistic impulses and to defend against

¹⁷² Mette Birkedal Bruun, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10.

¹⁷³ Kurt Hahn, "An Experiment in Education," *The Listener*, November 16, 1950.

the same impulses in other city-states. A standing warrior class, of course, threatens the social fabric in its own way.¹⁷⁴

How then is naturally-selfish man to be elevated so that a justice system is not purely punitive, the warrior class not a dire internal threat, and the *politea* able to evolve beyond simply organizing human need? For Plato, the answer is a totalizing educational system. Central to this educational system is the moral transformation of its subjects. This is best exemplified through the threat of the warrior class and the advent of the guardians. Without a moral education, a warrior class is only a little better than an external military threat. Warriors have combat training and are physically stronger than the general populace. Inevitably they would be tempted to simply install their own dictatorship which would then be doomed to a cycle of coup after coup. Only through moral education could these warriors be converted into what Plato calls “guardians.”¹⁷⁵

Focusing on their whole selves, this education would take place in the “gymnastic” and “musical” spheres. Gymnastics would develop the physical training of the subject, and musical training would concern itself with literature, poetry, and art, and would be the carefully considered training of the warrior’s soul. The warrior would emerge a guardian, happy to live in common barracks, never take a wife, own no property, and pursue the highest honor of dying in battle for the *Polis*. He would be gentle to his own and cruel to his enemies.¹⁷⁶ These guardians, free from the vulgarization of self-interest, were ideal leaders. It was they alone who acquired the traits required to lead the *Polis*. Plato had no compunctions about what we might call

¹⁷⁴ Plato, *The Republic* (Some Good Press, 2014).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Books 2 and 3.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 375c and 375e.

ensorship, seeing the moral shaping of the guardians, and by extension everybody else, as a question of survival for the *Polis*.

The English public school system took the obvious lessons from the *Republic*, and depending on the school, to some extent mimicked the moral-student-as-leader model. This student leader was often called a 'prefect' and the head of the prefects called 'head boys or head girls.' Lietz and Reddie followed this example, though as we've seen, Reddie installed himself as the 'head boy' and Lietz installed grown men as 'prefects.' Hahn would take this pattern even further, directly sampling Plato by installing actual 'guardians' leading ranks of 'color-bearers.'¹⁷⁷ Hahn was in good company for seeing in the *Republic's* discussions of the ideal *Polis* as an entry point into designing the structure of a boarding school. Indeed, it was likely in Lietz's *Emlohstobba* that Hahn first encountered Plato's ideas deployed in a modern educational context.¹⁷⁸

The boarding school model was so attractive to the utopian progressive educators. They were immediately tempted to go further, excited about the public school's potential to become, in Reddie's words, 'miniature kingdoms.' As such, boarding schools afforded their denizens, especially their headmasters, the opportunity to play out Plato's thought experiments in real life. Why talk about ideal life when you can construct it and live it? And in doing so, generate the seeds of social reform?

¹⁷⁷ Rohrs, Hermann, "The Educational Thought of Kurt Hahn."

¹⁷⁸ Lietz, *Emlohstobba*.

Hahn and the Aims of Education

In 1908, while in school at Göttingen, Hahn delivered a speech on the aims of education to Leonard Nelson's philosophical seminar. It is a remarkable document in that it reveals how much of Hahn's educational philosophy was intact at the young age of 22.

Hahn revealed a view of education that was simultaneously practical and idealistic. He follows Plato in his opening, insisting that "creating moral beings" was not a goal of education, it was the only goal.¹⁷⁹ Beyond its instructional goals, Hahn saw education's chief job as the "rendering of moral obstacles so that they might be overcome"¹⁸⁰ These moral obstacles were formidable, and it was only through a complete educational system that they could be reduced to the point they were surmountable. In this idea of Hahn's lies the nascent framework for both the 'education of the entire boy' seen in Reddie and Lietz, but also the beginnings of the argument for a boarding school, where, in a Herbartian sense, the inputs surrounding a boy can be controlled.

The most dangerous moral obstacle was the same fundamental selfishness that Plato wrestled with in his *Republic*. From Hahn's perspective, one of the most insidious aspects of this raw selfishness was that little could be done to reduce it and it could be exacerbated without limits.¹⁸¹ Hahn develops Plato's idea further by suggesting there are ways in which human selfishness might cause an individual to lie to themselves, to execute a "self-bewitchment" such as in the case of addiction, but also in situations where one is swept away by their passions.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Kurt Hahn, "Das Ziel Der Erziehung or 'The Goal of Education,'" (Presentation to Leonard Nelson's Seminar in Philosophy at the University of Gottingen, Winter -1909 1908) Translated by Axel Gerdau, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸² Ibid., 2.

For Hahn, the answer to this double-layered threat to morality was the intentional development of a person's wellspring "energetic compassion."¹⁸³ With a powerfully developed habit of energetic compassion, a person would be able to negotiate their own and others' selfishness successfully, as well as recognize and resist the siren's call of self-bewitchment. This was far preferable to relying on society's laws or *Sittengesetz*, which, as we saw in Plato, only have utility insofar as they can insure a citizen's compliance by the threat of punishment.

Even then, this was not enough. A static energetic compassion would not be able to adapt to the changing context within which moral challenges arise, especially in modern times. Instead of only filling a person's well of energetic compassion, education must "make the soul of the child beautiful, lively, and capable, because only that way the growing human being becomes capable of *turning himself* into a moral being."¹⁸⁴

In other words, if education is to create moral beings, it must do so in a way that their moral education includes a powerful critical lens. Ideally, a 'graduate' of this style of education would be able to assess their own moral fabric and, drawing upon the inspiration around them and their own energetic compassion for others, develop the ability to self-create, preparing them for the moral challenge of the moment.

At first, much of Hahn's speech seems to mimic the shape of Plato's arguments about education. This last move changes everything. Hahn suggests that if education were successful in delivering on its duty to create moral citizens, it would result in each person developing a

¹⁸³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 14.

fiercely-independent moral compass. Whereas Plato's schema was top-down, Hahn's system is bottom-up.

Hahn finishes with a hope that, as a result of this moral compass, each subject of his moral education would develop what he called "physical courage" defined as the ability for a moral person to stand up to his friends when they powerfully oppose his opinions, as well as the willingness to "be beaten to death for his ideas rather than renounce them."¹⁸⁵ This trait would become an obsession for Hahn, and would have powerful ramifications for his role conflict that was about to grip the entire world.

On the 27th of June, 1914, assassins murdered the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in their convertible car. The news rippled out from Sarajevo and found Hahn in Scotland. He had developed the habit of frequently escaping the warmer climates of southern England by going north. Visiting the families of some of his classmates from Oxford, he had cultivated an entire network of friends in Scotland. He had also fallen in love with the austere countryside. It was during his trips to Scotland that Hahn developed a close relationship with the Cummings family, whose son Alistair he'd befriended in his first years at university.

By the end of July, Russia had mobilized. Days later, Germany's ultimatum to Russia expired. Treaty after treaty was invoked and by the end of the night on the fourth of August, Britain, France and Russia were at war with Germany. By August 12th, Austria-Hungary and Italy had joined Germany.¹⁸⁶ Hahn was all at once behind enemy lines. Helped by the Cummings

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁶ Keegan, *The First World War*, 69.

family, Hahn quietly left Scotland for Scandinavia.¹⁸⁷ Days later, he arrived in Berlin to find his home nation breathless with the prospect of another glorious victory.¹⁸⁸

Kurt Hahn's Relationship to War

Hahn was not a pacifist, at least not in 1914. He believed war was something to be pursued with zeal but also a deep morality.¹⁸⁹ As Golo Mann observes, Hahn “thought the German cause was good . . . or could be made good. Chivalrous warfare, Christian warfare, warfare that spared as far as possible civilians, women and children . . . was not merely an unconditional duty. . . it was a possible way of unsettling enemy public opinion.”¹⁹⁰ At this point in his life, Hahn viewed war as one viable method of achieving a national agenda, though a savvy mixture of statesmanship and propaganda was preferable.¹⁹¹

For the duration of the First World War Hahn was an active and sometimes central participant in the military machinery of a combatant nation. He did not fight himself as his injury rendered him ineligible.¹⁹² Hahn instead rose quickly as a military advisor and penetrated the most inner of circles. This proximity to the levers of power of an entire nation permanently affected Hahn, leaving him with opinions and habits that would have implications for his educational innovations.

As Hahn's skills and reputation as a war-time media analyst and translator grew, so too did the stakes of the meetings he was allowed to attend. As we shall see, Hahn became

¹⁸⁷ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 71.

¹⁸⁸ Keegan, *The First World War*, 71.

¹⁸⁹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 77.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁹¹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 74–75.

¹⁹² Butler, “A Glimpse of Kurt Hahn and Family in Berlin, August 1914-September 1915,” 64.

something of an informal private diplomat, helping to represent Germany at a series of international summits, including Versailles. By war's end he had served as the aide to a chief propagandist, Paul Rohrbach, an aide to Colonel von Haeften, and had become personal secretary to Prince Max of Baden, destined to become the last Imperial Chancellor of Germany.¹⁹³ At different moments during the war, Hahn found himself briefing General Ludendorff, shaping official missives to the British and American governments, and witnessing threshold conversations at high levels. Hahn would never forget how tantalizing it was to be so close to the seat of power. He would cultivate similar relationships for the rest of his life to the great benefit of his educational projects.

Another lesson Hahn learned was directly related to his growing affinity influential people. He developed a profound distaste for what he called a 'lack of moral courage' during moments of truth. As we shall see, there were three threshold moments in the course of the war where Hahn saw a path to peaceful resolution, if only the right operator were to speak up. All this in the context of a conflict in which thousands were dying daily in the most brutal ways imaginable and in indescribable filth and misery. There were times where men far more powerful than Hahn would not speak up. It galled him.

A final lesson, and perhaps the most telling for his nascent concept of *erlebnistherapie* was the full-scale mobilization and selflessness Hahn witnessed first-hand during the First World War. It was Hahn's first *cause*, and one into which he threw himself completely. This sublimation of the self in service to others became a major feature of his educational thought. Yoked to his

¹⁹³ Golo Mann, "Kurt Hahn's Political Activities," *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, 1966., 150–152.

concept of 'healing through experience,' it would later give rise to rescue services at Salem and Gordonstoun, and finally to Outward Bound and the United World Colleges.

Hahn Returns to Germany

Upon his return to his homeland, Hahn moved back in with his family in Berlin. His ailment was still serious despite the recent surgeries, and he was declared unfit for military service. Hahn had other skills to offer, however, and soon went to work at the *Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst*, or Ministry of Foreign Affairs, putting his fluent English and cultural literacy to work for the war effort by reading and synthesizing British media.¹⁹⁴

It was a time of raging nationalism. A few weeks before Hahn made it back to Berlin, the Kaiser appeared on his balcony in his dress grey uniform to address a massive and adulatory crowd. He announced the outbreak of war, saying "Envious people on all sides are compelling us to resort to a just defence. The sword is being forced into our hand . . . and now I command you all to go to church, kneel before God and pray to him to help our gallant army."¹⁹⁵ A few weeks after Hahn's arrival, German armies advanced on Belgium.

It became immediately apparent that this would be a war different from all others before it. Men poured in and out of trains as they mustered, hundreds of thousands deployed quickly to what would become the front. New weaponry such as machine guns, military airplanes and vastly-improved artillery soon made it clear that there was a sickening discrepancy between conventional military tactics and the new generation of war technology. This came into sharp focus on August 12th, 1914 as a handful of Germany's Krupp 410 mm and Austria's Skoda

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 146-152

¹⁹⁵ Laurence V. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War 1914-1918* (Pen and Sword, 2014), 72-73.

305 mm howitzers began to systematically destroy the 'impenetrable' line of Belgian fortresses, pounding quickly through 30 meters of concrete at Fort Pontisse. In four days, the entire series of fortresses was reduced to rubble or had preemptively surrendered.¹⁹⁶

Worse still, days before the shocking opening barrages from German guns in Belgium, the German army had gone on a murderous spree of sacking Belgian towns and villages. This spasm of violence, later called the "rape of Belgium" gained international notice when the German army destroyed the university town of Louvain. Mistaking their own troops for moving enemy combatants, German soldiers torched the town, including its library of 230,000 books, many of them ancient and irreplaceable.¹⁹⁷ Germany's honor was badly stained.

Hahn was not immune to the furor sweeping Germany despite his well-developed connections to England and his family's network throughout Europe. David Sutcliffe observes that Hahn was connected to a coterie of intellectuals that enthusiastically signed the October 15 "Manifest of the 97," which denied Germany's culpability in war crimes in Belgium and affirmed Germany's "sacred cultural destiny."¹⁹⁸ Only a year later, Hahn himself wrote an open letter to a friend from Oxford, Lord Sandon, defending the sacking of Belgian towns and insisting the occupying German forces were provoked by the Belgians. Hahn implores Sandon, "do not believe and allow others to believe lies about the behavior of our German soldiers." He went on to describe the "whole civilian population" firing upon the German army.¹⁹⁹ The tone of the letter is comparable to a team captain addressing the leader of an opposing sports team about

¹⁹⁶ Keegan, *The First World War*, 86.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁹⁸ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Kurt Hahn, "Through German Eyes," Open Letter, (December 1914), Gordonstoun School Archive.

an unfair referee. It is hard to say which perspective of Hahn's is more remarkable, his optimism that Lord Sandon would be swayed by his gentlemanly letter as their nations were locked in the bloodiest war in human history to date, or Hahn's own uncritical reception of wildly inaccurate reports from the German front. Either way, the episode is telling both as an indication of Hahn's dedication to Germany as well as his startling guilelessness.

Yet accompanying this guilelessness was a profound idealism. Once he had made it back to Berlin, Hahn checked in with the British chaplain in that city to see if any students from Oxford had been stranded there. A young man named Neville Butler was one of these and Hahn befriended him. When Butler was interned by the German authorities in the Ruhleben Civilian Camp in November of 1914, Hahn immediately began agitating to see him released. By May, Hahn and two American allies had succeeded in doing exactly that, under the condition that Butler be released to Hahn's family to live with them in Berlin. In this process Butler met Rudo, Hahn's younger brother, who would himself soon volunteer for the army at 17 years of age, joining the middle brother Franz who was already there.²⁰⁰

Butler was the guest of the Hahns and two other families from March to September of 1915, often breakfasting with Kurt himself. "He was an ardent believer in the Public School system and loved to hear stories of how the bully was thrashed and how the little hero triumphed. Accordingly, he gave me carte blanche to invent as much as I liked provided the tale was palatable."²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Butler, "A Glimpse of Kurt Hahn and Family in Berlin, August 1914-September 1915," 78. Butler's account is a marvelous window into aristocratic German life at that time. It also reveals how internationalist the Hahns were, discussing war politics with a young Englishman while two of the three sons were fighting in the war against England.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

When Butler's release was secured in a larger civilian-to-civilian exchange, Hahn met him for one last lunch.

We sat in the Kaiserhoff after lunch on that 6 September. Plato and Oxford had made him a great believer in true aristocracy, and the horror that was always haunting him was that Germany and England, the two countries which he loved, should fight one another to exhaustion, both countries losing the fairest fruits of their civilization.²⁰²

According to Neville's diary account of that time, In the early months of the war, Hahn still had hope that such a cataclysm might not actually happen. "In September of 1915, he felt that Germany and England had not yet properly come to grips and he yearned that the parties in both countries who had been working for peace in August 1914 should join hands in September 1915," averting full-scale war.²⁰³ This reflexive internationalism and often-heedless optimism larded Hahn's projects for his whole life. The depth of these impulses is symbolized by Butler's tenure in his family home whilst his brothers fought against boys just like Butler. The same year Butler was released, Rudo pulled strings and got himself redeployed from Potsdam to the French front.²⁰⁴

With a penchant for nuanced political schemes, a belief in 'moral' propaganda, and an unstoppable work ethic, Hahn gained notice quickly in the German Foreign Office. He rose quickly, becoming indispensable to a Dr. Paul Rohrbach, a German expert on the east and on Russia. As a result of his success and position, Hahn had the political capital to develop networks in neutral contexts such as Denmark and Holland but also on the British side.

²⁰² Ibid., 80.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 78. As we shall see in Chapter 2, Butler would play a critical role in securing Hahn's release from Hitler.

In April of 1915 Hahn attended a peace conference as a civilian at The Hague that he later insisted had the secret blessing of both Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and Sir Edmund Grey. It led nowhere, according to Hahn because neither statesman had “the courage of their convictions upon reading our reports.”²⁰⁵ Part of Hahn’s report was that he wagered an offer by Germany to restore Belgium’s sovereignty might lead to peace. Not because the British decision-makers honestly cared that much about Belgium, but because it would send a wedge into the political environment of Britain, where many regular British citizens cared deeply about Belgium’s fate.²⁰⁶ Following this proxy peace conference and a series of German victories, Bethmann-Hollweg made overtures of peace in December of 1916. To Hahn’s dismay, even though he had helped prepare the speech Bethmann-Hollweg gave, the Chancellor completely excluded language about Belgium. The overtures were dismissed.²⁰⁷ It was another wasted opportunity that could have been converted into a peace agreement.

From Hahn’s perspective, by far the most lamentable of these wasted opportunities was the threshold of the decision by Ludendorff in January of 1917 to expand Germany’s submarine warfare to non-military targets. As John Keegan notes, Ludendorff and Hindenburg had been watching Germany’s war chest deplete steadily while simultaneously eyeing the United States’ growing support of the Entente.²⁰⁸ In this war of attrition, Germany had no developing partnership with a country like the United States. But Hahn had developed contacts there. In

²⁰⁵ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 75.

²⁰⁶ Mann, “Kurt Hahn’s Political Activities,” 150.

²⁰⁷ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 75.

²⁰⁸ Keegan, *The First World War*, 351.

discussions with U.S. diplomats Bill Bullitt and Christian Herter, Hahn learned that a change in submarine policy would mean the U.S. would enter the war with a vengeance.

The moment had come for Hahn. Despite his non-rank and his private standing, he wrote and submitted a sharp memorandum indicating that a decision to target non-military vessels would instantly mean American involvement. This would doom Germany and save Britain in one catastrophic event. Hahn went on to say that such a course of action was exactly what Britain wanted from Germany and “not only prayed that the German decision might be what it was, but has worked for it with all their resources of publicity and diplomacy.”²⁰⁹ For his impudence Hahn was immediately removed from the Foreign Office.²¹⁰

Swayed by Admiral Holtzendorff’s promises that he could sink “600,000 tons” of cargo a month and therefore “bring the Britain to starvation,” the Generals enthusiastically approved the proposal over the loud protestations of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. Though sinkings of materiel rose sharply in the initial stages of the expanded submarine campaigns, naval tactics such as convoying mitigated these losses quickly.²¹¹ Worse for the Germans, the political ramifications were massive. After the sinkings of three American ocean liners, Wilson had all the political will he needed. In just over a year, 1.3 million American fighting men were in France. Not one had been lost to torpedoing en route.²¹² It was total disaster for Germany.

Hahn found his way into the Military High Command Foreign Affairs Department, assigned to Colonel von Haeften, Ludendorff’s political advisor. Von Haeften was allied with

²⁰⁹ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 77.

²¹⁰ Mann, “Kurt Hahn’s Political Activities,” 154.

²¹¹ Keegan, *The First World War*, 353–354.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 373.

Prince Max von Baden in the murky world of Imperial German politics at this time, and both men used Hahn to ferry messages and plans back and forth. Hahn and Von Baden struck up a friendship. It was through Hahn's encouragement that Von Baden offered himself up for the Chancellorship. Historian David Sutcliffe submits there was at least one lost opportunity in 1917 for Von Baden to assume the Imperial Chancellorship well before he finally did, a prospect that Hahn aggressively pursued, hoping that a statesman like Von Baden would be able to capitalize on what Hahn saw as a military position that was simultaneously "magnificent" and "fragile," concluding that "Germany is in the greatest danger it has been in since the war began."²¹³

He was passed over in favor of Michaelis, and then Hertling. It wasn't until 1918 that Von Baden's popularity, surging after the delivery of a speech which Hahn mostly wrote, made him relevant enough to win the Chancellorship.²¹⁴

Von Baden and his new personal secretary, Kurt Hahn, inherited a rolling disaster. Influenza was moving from the trenches into the regular German populace. The Entente blockade had brought Germany to the brink of starvation. The western front was about to collapse. The armies were evaporating. Perhaps most damningly in the long run, Germany was now confronted with Wilson's Fourteen Points at the tip of a bayonet. By the end of the Treaty of Versailles, Von Baden and, by extension Hahn, had been tarred with the brush of national betrayal.²¹⁵

The narrative of this betrayal was simple: a cadre of powerful communists, liberal revolutionaries, bohemians, and other leftists had engineered Germany's surrender even

²¹³ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 76.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79–83.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91–95.

though the military remained undefeated on the field of battle. The scapegoat for this betrayal was Prince Max von Baden. Despite being completely specious, the “knife in the back” thesis had immense power as propaganda. Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff were more than happy to let Von Baden take the fall for what had been a total military defeat, precipitated by the pair’s cataclysmic decision to expand submarine warfare in 1917.²¹⁶

It is well known that the poisonous “knife in the back” myth that German nationalists, fascists, and conservatives deployed to mobilize their political bases and recruit legions of disaffected Germans to their ranks quickly became racialized. It wasn’t just communists and leftists, the myth said. It was *Jewish* communists and leftists that had betrayed the fighting men and the fatherland. It is less well-known that Hahn’s presence at the side of Von Baden as the Prince valiantly tried to hold together a doomed Imperial system actually fed this incendiary racialization of this mythical betrayal. Coverage of Von Baden’s struggles referred to Von Baden’s “pet liberal and Arch-Jew.”²¹⁷ Inadvertently, Hahn’s attempts to stabilize post-war Germany’s disintegrating culture led in part to the completion of its disintegration breaking along anti-Semitic fault lines. Von Baden soon relinquished command of Germany to the Weimar Republic.

TRANSITION TO THE ANARCHY OF PEACE TIME

From the chaos, violence, depression and anarchy that followed Germany’s defeat in the First World War, Von Baden and Hahn heard a clarion call for a new kind of school. It could not happen fast enough. The two men were deeply concerned that the nation, reeling as it was

²¹⁶ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Reprint edition (Penguin Books, 2005).

²¹⁷ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn’s Schools and Legacy*, 21.

from its failure in war and knee-capped by the dangerously-lopsided Treaty of Versailles, would careen into moral ruin. It was a dark time, but, from the perspective of these two utopian progressive educators, it was exactly the right time for what they had in mind. As Hahn later explained about Prince Max, “His ambition was no less than to heal the diseased state – the inflamed city –and to heal it through education.”²¹⁸ In this way, the two men recapitulated the patterns laid down by Reddie and Lietz. Confronted with an entire society in need of healing, their response was to create a boarding school. With hundreds of thousands of Germans out of work, violence a regular feature of life, and the German national pride in tatters, such a small measure seems like shouting into the void.²¹⁹

Yet in the fall of 1920, open a school they did. Von Baden donated a wing of his massive Castle near Salem and Überlingen, as well as his name. The first rolls showed a cadre of 60 boys and girls. In a moment that remembers Lietz’s initial struggles at Ilsenburg, one of the first tasks was to build a large garden. The Entente blockade had long been starving Germany and there was simply not enough food for the students. It was Hahn’s first foray into teaching, let alone school administration. Hahn did not come to Salem empty-handed, however.

Hahn entered the first term with the moral imperative of having witnessed crucial opportunities in the First World War pass by powerful men who were lacking in the ‘physical courage’ he now prized. He would create students who would never allow such moments to expire. Hahn also brought with him the knowledge that school founders before him had been successful. Not far from where he stood in Salem Hermann Lietz’s schools and other examples

²¹⁸ Hahn, “An Experiment in Education.”

²¹⁹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*.

of the *Landerziehungsheim* were functioning quite well. Hadn't Lietz brought them into being with nothing more than an abandoned mill and an indomitable will? At Salem Hahn would follow the example of the English public schools as well as Abbotsholme and the *Landerziehungsheim* and create a platonic miniature society, except he would go further. Here there would be Guardians with the level of responsibility, Hahn would delight in saying, that could bring down the school itself. Hahn also brought with him his pet concept of *Erlebnistherapie*, and was eager to help the youth of a shattered Germany begin to heal through the power of experience.

In short, though Hahn was only 34, he began the Salem chapter of his arc armed with a maturing set of interpersonal techniques, attitudes, and philosophies. For the rest of his life, Hahn would seek out and then seek to influence powerful men and women; he would strive to train his students to have the moral courage necessary to speak out when the moment demands it; and he would search endlessly for viable causes that might inspire his students to sublimate themselves. As Golo Mann has noted, from the First World War onward, it became part of Hahn's "educational doctrine to replace the opportunities provided by war with comparable tasks in peacetime, without the killing."²²⁰ From now on, Hahn would search for, in the words of William James, "the moral equivalent of war."

As for the immediate 'opportunities provided by war' confronting both Von Baden and Hahn following the Treaty of Versailles, of these there was no shortage, for Germany was in ruins.

²²⁰ Mann, "Kurt Hahn's Political Activities," 151.

CHAPTER 2 - THREE CASTLES, THREE WARS: THE EVOLUTION OF UTOPIAN PROGRESSIVISM

INTRODUCTION: THE MOVING TARGET OF KURT HAHN'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Kurt Hahn never considered educational thought as a category unto itself. Though he was certainly a man of ideas, enamored of Plato, Fichte, Arnold, and Lietz, these ideas were always thrust into the messy contingencies of everyday life to see if they held up. Those that did not were discarded, those that did Hahn carried with him into his projects.

As a result, Hahn's educational innovations were always contingent. They were worked out in actual schools, often informed by his simultaneous participation in high politics. This is not to say that Hahn's innovations were not conceived first and then tested, for Hahn was quick to abandon an idea that he saw as outmoded. As we shall see, this happened with his original preoccupation with William James' concept that rehabilitation of society might happen by finding a "moral equivalent to war." At a crucial moment in the progress of Hahn's second school, Gordonstoun, Hahn moved away from this concept and toward a full embrace of programs inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan. This move set up a radical embrace of internationalism, the logic of which is most obvious in the now 15 schools of the United World College System.

It is a familiar refrain in the small body of scholarship surrounding Hahn that he was 'not a thinker, but a doer,' with no fully-conceived and recognizable body of theory to point to.²²¹

²²¹ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*; Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*; Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*.

This chapter pushes back against this idea, insisting that Hahn certainly was the latter, but it is an oversimplification to say he was not the former. Hahn was an educational philosopher, though he himself would hate the term, in the same way culinary chefs are considered artists: through a process of combination and synthesis, with a practical goal in mind. Were Hahn only a 'doer,' we would not have the breadth and depth of school movements and programs that he left us: the international Outward Bound movement, the Round Square association of schools, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and of course, the United World College movement. All of these share distinctive Hahnian DNA. This is because Hahn maintained a steady emphasis on similar techniques, and that meant his many initiatives had similar contours. They also share this commonality because Hahn's ideas, his synthesis of a wide field of influences, *inspired* people. Hahn created something new. In doing so, he may have accidentally fathered the field of experiential education.

Hahn innovated directly in response to his contexts. We must therefore place those innovations in their moments of conception and execution, with all the inconvenient bumpiness and historical specificity that such placement requires. This chapter therefore occasionally zooms out to reveal a larger context, and then zooms back in to address the micro developments at the level of a school activity or a daily schedule.

This chapter begins with the Salem School in 1920s Germany. It reveals how Hahn and his co-founder Prince Max von Baden, taking notes from Hermann Lietz and Cecil Reddie, sought to create an institution that would save Germany from the forces of disarray and entropy engulfing it following the First World War. The school itself was meant to be an intervention into the cultural fabric of Germany. To read it as some sort of academic 'experiment in education' is

to miss the point. The chapter continues with Hahn's founding of the Gordonstoun ('Gordon-Stun') School in Scotland in 1934, following his banishment from Germany on the eve of the Second World War. It was at Gordonstoun that so many of Hahn's innovations, tempered by their tests at Salem, reached a wider audience. Hahn too reached a wider audience as Gordonstoun gave birth to rescue services which, in turn, gave birth to Outward Bound.

The chapter concludes just after Hahn's co-founding of a third school in Wales in in 1962: the Atlantic College. Like the others, this school sprang into being as a response to a historical context: in this case the troubled internationalism of NATO and the looming specter of a third world war. The Atlantic College was the prototype for the United World Colleges, of which one version in the present day is the subject of the second half of this dissertation.

Salem was the crucible for all of this. Hahn referenced Salem or the 'Salem system' or the 'Laws of Salem' throughout his long career. Because of its primacy as the first site of innovation and also a lifelong referent for Hahn, Salem's context and the particulars of the school itself constitute the first two parts of this chapter, followed by inquiries into Gordonstoun and the Atlantic College project.

PART I: Born from Chaos and War – Salem’s Context

A Turbulent Backdrop: Germany in Defeat

In 1919 into early 1920, Kurt Hahn and Prince Max von Baden prepared to found Salem. It was a difficult time. Only a little over fifteen years had passed since Kurt Hahn first left behind a booming industrial Germany and headed to England for his first university classes, full of curiosity and internationalist spirit. It was, as we have seen, a time of great optimism for the continent. Any suggestion that a catastrophic armed conflict was on the horizon would have been laughed away. Yet come it did, with cataclysmic effects for Germany.

The architecture of the Treaty of Versailles gave rise to the dangerous preconditions of the Second World War.²²² As Hahn and Von Baden began to recruit teachers and prepare budgets, Germany was slowly responding to its complete defeat in the worst war the world had ever seen. The nation was still flat on its back in 1920, struggling to regain its footing due to a troubled economy, a gutted military, and sole blame for the First World War. This status resulted in crippling reparations payments to the victors. It would only take 15 more years for Hitler to rise to power. As Richard Evans observes, “Nazism was forged” in the “cauldron of war and revolution” that surrounded the German defeat.²²³ Von Baden and Hahn, each directly involved in negotiations leading to both the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles, were haunted by the iniquities of the latter. Hahn would long refer to Versailles as “peace with a broken wing,” containing the seeds of its own destruction.

²²² Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*; Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2006); Keegan, *The First World War*.

²²³ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 58.

Indeed, Germany's transition to peacetime was sabotaged internally well before the guns fell silent. Though the armistice was signed in November of 1918, Generals Ludendorff and Hindenburg knew the end was unavoidable nearly two months earlier.²²⁴ A toxic mix of political maneuvering and egotistical self-delusion followed. Ludendorff himself advocated for a quick transfer of power to a parliamentary democracy, hoping that the stain of the now-poisoned treaty negotiations would land squarely on the transitional leader of Germany, Prince Max von Baden, assisted by Hahn, as well as into the laps of whatever beleaguered democratic leaders would follow Von Baden.²²⁵ Furthermore, word of Germany's actual defeat had been kept out of the newspapers until the very last moment, making the transition for the average German from hoping for a final victory to coping with complete defeat all the more jarring.²²⁶

To make matters worse, upon hearing of the pending defeat, Navy commanders attempted to set sail in a suicidal bid for a final glorious battle with allied forces. The rank-and-file, exhausted by war, wouldn't have it. The full-scale mutiny that followed spilled from the ships to the docks to the German mainland, where it mixed with semi-dormant leftist and communist sentiments setting off the German revolution.²²⁷

As Von Baden began the complicated and distasteful process of negotiating a peace from a position of weakness with a host of victors, each with their own agenda, Ludendorff went back on his word and suddenly advocated for organized resistance. When the Kaiser summarily dismissed him for his insubordination, Ludendorff began amplifying the 'stab in the back' myth:

²²⁴ Keegan, *The First World War*, 413.

²²⁵ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 72.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68–73.

that the German army had never been defeated, but instead was betrayed by ‘revolutionists’ with a ‘secret, planned, demagogic campaign.’²²⁸ In a way that would eventually have powerfully negative consequences for Hahn and hundreds of thousands of other German Jews, this persistent myth always carried with it the stain of anti-Semitism.

As the ink was drying on the acrimonious Treaty of Versailles, a witch’s brew of forces had begun warping Germany’s social fabric. Widespread hunger, violence, desperation, and outright paramilitary mobilization spread across Germany. At the same time “the commercialization of leisure, the cinema, the tabloid press, the dance-hall and the radio was alienating many young people from the stern, more traditional values of labour movement culture.”²²⁹ This environment was the cause for Salem. The miseries of economic degradation, raw desperation stemming from the presence of hunger and violence, and the erosion of the already weak public perception of Weimar democracy, all were calls to action for Hahn and Von Baden, and therefore deserve exploration here.

To Hahn, raised in the last decade of the previous century and having been near enough to the halls of power to feel some proprietorship over his homeland, an intervention was called for. As he would later trumpet with confidence, his answer was the boarding school: “The Country School is capable of creating a public conscience which takes the individual pupil under its protection and arms him against the character-fashions which the ethical anarchy of our time

²²⁸ Ibid., 61.

²²⁹ Ibid., 127.

is constantly throwing up in continued and bewildering succession.”²³⁰ It was time for Hahn’s concept of *erlebnistherapie* to leave the realm of the theoretical.

Economic Cataclysm

By 1918, an economic slide had begun, pitching what had been the stable, booming economy of pre-war Germany into a sickening dive. The war effort had cut industrial production by half by 1919, and Germany was further hampered by the massive systemic adjustments the return to peacetime required. The now-infamous reparations payments that the Allies levied against Germany compounded the problem. The defeated nation simply could not carry the burden of reparations as well as recovery. The German mark began to lose value at a sickening rate. In November of 1921, it took 263 marks to purchase an American dollar. By August of 1922, that number was 1000. Four months later, it was 7000. By January, 17000. A year after that, it took 4,200,000,000,000 marks to buy one dollar.²³¹ At the height of this phenomenon of hyperinflation, Germany stumbled forward without a viable system of monetary exchange.

Another way of visualizing the economic collapse is to view Salem’s fortunes in this context. One of the gifts Von Baden bestowed upon Salem at its founding was an endowment set aside for the stability of the school of 800,000 marks. This sum was procured mostly through the sale of most of Von Baden’s personal jewels and treasure. A few short years after its founding, Salem’s financial security had completely evaporated. Salem and its staff would face the future the same as so many other Germans: penniless and anxious.²³²

²³⁰ Hahn, Kurt, “The Problem of Citizenship in German Education” (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt - Stuttgart, 1928), 14, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

²³¹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 104.

²³² Flavin, *Kurt Hahn’s Schools and Legacy*, 8.

The evaporation of a reliable currency shifted the focus from money to life necessities such as food, medicine, and basic supplies. Hunger was common. Bartering, but also violence, began to emerge as viable methods to acquire these essentials. Crime skyrocketed as ordinary Germans began to simply forcibly take what they needed from each other.²³³ All of this was recorded and amplified to lurid proportions by a newly-resurgent sensationalist press.²³⁴ To the average German reading ever more frequent reports of murder and thievery, all while experiencing untold levels of hunger, stress and anxiety, it must have seemed that Germany was indeed on its knees, with things getting steadily worse.

Crisis of Confidence in Weimar

A widespread weakening of bourgeois middle class values caused by the twin forces of economic depression and widespread cultural anxiety, and following on the heels of both the defeat in WWI and the revolution of 1918, led to a systemic degradation of the credibility of the Weimar government.²³⁵ Historically, Prussian efficiency and stability were ascribed to Germany's state and cultural institutions. No longer: The Weimar democracy was already teetering dangerously both in real and perceived terms.

Searching for answers, Germans tended to reduce this complex tangle of economic, cultural and political woe born from numerous failures of international diplomacy at home and abroad, dangerous fiscal policy, and the national psychological wounds of total defeat in war to something more understandable: the 'Stab-in-the-Back' myth of betrayal of the loyal German

²³³ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 110–112.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

troops and their Generals by effete Bolshevik Jews.²³⁶ It was easier for the average German to cope if they felt this was all something that had been done *to* them.

Perhaps more importantly in the long run, the widespread instability created imaginative space where the desperate could envision large-scale solutions that were extra-governmental, having nothing to do with Weimar democracy or democracy at all. George Mosse notes that “with the failure of so many German hopes and dreams, the political thinking of those opposed to the Republic became increasingly utopian and unrealistic. . . . Volkish strength continued to increase even during the ‘good years’ of the Republic. . . . The German right was rapidly becoming a volkish right.”²³⁷ Germany was wounded, poor, and hungry with little indication things would get better. Its own government, for decades a bastion of stability, was proving to be weak and ineffective. People began to get their own ideas for the future of Germany.

As Richard Evans has noted, a few victors did emerge from the chaos of the years immediately following the end of WWI and the revolution. Big business and the financial sector both were able to secure large loans for expansion purposes, knowing that the runaway inflation would render their loans toothless in a matter of years or months. Though these maneuvers eventually backfired when Weimar’s currency stabilization programs finally took hold, the cultural damage had been done. The stereotype of the well-heeled Jewish financier relaxing in luxury while ‘regular’ Germans endured near-starvation and the constant threat of violence had been burned into the cultural imagination. A convenient scapegoat was at hand for

²³⁶ Ibid., 112. Hahn himself may have played some role in the pernicious energy of this myth, seen as he was by some as a shadowy civilian advisor to Prince Max von Baden.

²³⁷ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 2nd ed. (New York: Howard Fertig, Inc, 1998), 238.

those furious at their conditions: “the financially manipulative Jew.”²³⁸ Mixed with the “stab in the back” myth and its racial overtones, this was an anti-Semitic powder keg.

That said, as Skidelsky has observed, though he might have been helpful in his own small way, especially as the reach and influence of Salem grew, Hahn could never bring himself to invest fully in the Weimar democracy.²³⁹ According to Skidelsky for Hahn, Weimar “represented the apotheosis of parliamentarism. It was the product of a ‘slaves revolt’ [the Navy mutiny and ensuing revolution by the left] and this in itself was enough to condemn it in his eyes.”²⁴⁰ In this way, Hahn and Von Baden belonged to the large and diffuse cohort of extra-governmental thinkers. It seemed no one had faith in Weimar.

A Retreat of the Rule of Law

As the economic slide began in 1918 and 1919, defeated German soldiers flooded home from the trenches of World War I, their confidence in their once-invincible nation shattered. Their reception upon reaching home was as mixed as the social milieu was chaotic.²⁴¹

From this quagmire rose a litany of ferocious political groups, all convinced they held a plausible blueprint for a reborn fatherland. The conservative nationalists, the Communists, the Social Democrats, and others all wooed the returning soldiers for their support and, even more importantly, for their fists and willingness to put themselves once more in harm’s way.

Though this sometimes worked, it was also common for the returning soldiers to form autonomous former-soldier’s groups such as the infamous “Steel Helmets.” These groups

²³⁸ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 112.

²³⁹ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 196.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

²⁴¹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 70.

operated with the backing of certain politicians when convenient but were their own masters, doling out support or violent punishment as their own agenda dictated.²⁴² The Steel Helmets, for instance, were dedicated to mutual aid for veterans of the war as well as the “complete abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles.” Almost as soon as they were founded they began policing their erstwhile sponsors, the Social Democrats.²⁴³

Communists among the large worker population, emboldened by the successes of the German revolution, solidified into many groups, the most violent of which was the Communist Red Front Fighters League. Their goal was nothing less than to install a full-blown socialist state in the confusion following the revolution. This included a failed attempted coup in Hamburg in 1923.²⁴⁴

Responding to the surge of membership and momentum from the far left, and scared stiff at the thought of a full Bolshevik revolution in Germany, members of the mainstream Social Democrat party developed its own violent arm composed of ex-soldiers and new recruits. It was known as the “Free Corps.” Just as violent as the fighters from other political camps, the free corps sported a swastika as their sigil, took part in targeted assassinations, and, while responding to the Communist uprising in Hamburg in 1923, were at least partially responsible for the murder of hundreds of unarmed Communists.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Ibid., 71.

²⁴³ Ibid., 70.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 238.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 74–76.

The German Youth Movement in the Inter-War Years: Rise of the *Bundes*

The years leading up to the First World War gave rise to the well-known German Youth Movement and their famous Wandervögel (“Wandering birds”). Young people sought each other’s company and began forays into the woods and fields of Germany, seeking connection to the land, an increased sense of community, and challenging adventure.²⁴⁶ They were anti-materialist, anti-modernist, and elitist, with a manifesto penned in 1904 that stressed “a deep love of fatherland that rises above social classes and politics.”²⁴⁷ As such, the Wandervögel movement was powered by a strong Volkish impulse, represented most famously by the Wandervögel’s long expeditions, the singing of German folk songs and the performance of plays featuring German gods and goddesses.²⁴⁸

The Youth Movement also advanced the concept of the *bund*. With no direct translation in English, *Bund*’s closest cognates are ‘league’, ‘band’ or ‘association.’ A *bund* is composed of people sharing a common ideology, and organized under an organically-selected set of self-leaders.²⁴⁹ Mosse observes that the *bund* structure appealed to the Wandervögel movement as an “alternative to both Marxism and capitalist class society” by transcending the “dichotomy between individualistically oriented capitalist society and the collective emphasis on socialism. . . basing itself on leadership, Volk, and community.”²⁵⁰ This impulse had ominous implications for the future. This is because the concept of the *bund* offered a prototype of a third option, an

²⁴⁶ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 178; Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, New Ed edition (Harvard University Press, 2006), 8.

²⁴⁷ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 173.

²⁴⁸ Fishman, *The Struggle for German Youth*, 123–132.

²⁴⁹ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 177.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

organizing principle almost as ominous as the antisemitism that began to permeate the Wandervögel in the months before the outbreak of war. This third option was proto-fascist in nature, simultaneously celebrating the charismatic leader while also emphasizing sublimation of the self to the collective.²⁵¹

Michael Kater points out that after the First World War, the broad youth movement impulse continued unabated in Germany. The difference now was that each of the larger and loosely-associated political groups responsible for so much post-war violence had a corresponding youth component that ascribed to the *bunde* concept, whether official or not.²⁵² These new *bundes* were as overtly political as their sponsoring entity, with the *Bismarckbund* of the German National People's Party potentially squaring off with the *Antifa*, a youth extension of the Communist party. The one aspect each *bunde* shared was a strident anti-democratic stance, and a rejection of Weimar and its modernisms.²⁵³ Quietly, at the far right of the spectrum, a *bunde* formed named after the leader of the party to which it was attached: The *Hitler Jugend*, or Hitler Youth.

Fraught as they were by the ideological chaos and social upheaval, the early 1920s were also a time of resurgent utopian educational thinking. Part of this resurgence consisted of the amplification of the existing pastoral reformism of Hermann Lietz, or the escapism of the Wandervögel, both decidedly Volkish impulses. But there was something new afoot as well. This new thinking concerned itself not with either generally escaping or transforming the general

²⁵¹ Ibid., 177–178.

²⁵² Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 2006, 8. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 177.

²⁵³ Ibid., 9.

malaise of western industrialized life, but with the specific, gritty project of the resurrection of Germany itself. But resurrection into what new form?

Interlude: The Cistercian Monks and the Importance of Salem Castle

Kurt Hahn wrote and gave speeches prolifically. Archives are full of pamphlets, transcribed speeches, and lengthy letters. Though these documents of course vary depending on the point Hahn is making at the time, they never vary on the subject of Salem and the Cistercians, and on the moral imperative Prince Max von Baden laid on Hahn's shoulders on the eve of Salem's founding: "You want to start a public school here. Please remember that you are on sacred Cistercian ground. . . your public school is only justified if it gives health to the district. To do this you must receive health from the district."²⁵⁴

Hahn referenced the Cistercians throughout his career. Given the nature of this particular sect of Benedictine Catholicism, being 'Cistercian' or not became shorthand for Hahn for whether or not a particular educational approach was connected enough to its community and context. The fact that Salem was a Cistercian compound for centuries added to the order's importance for Hahn. As such, a short exploration of the order is appropriate here.

The Cistercians, or 'white monks,' are an order of Benedictines founded in 1098 by a small splinter group of Benedictines who moved into the woods near Cîteaux, France away from their original home at Molesme. Named Cistercians after the town of Cîteaux itself, the white monks sought to embody a new interpretation of the Rule of Benedict. This interpretation insisted on the division of monastic life into three aspects: prayer, study, and work. To make

²⁵⁴ Kurt Hahn, "Radio Address in English," 51 1950, KHA-SK-50, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

room for the latter two aspects, the white monks scaled back slightly on the Divine Office, or the hourly liturgy of prayer and recitation that sanctified each hour of the day.²⁵⁵

The Cistercian evolution of the Benedictine practice that began at Cîteaux consisted of a new humble egalitarianism amongst the ranks of the monks, a stepping down of the physical opulence of the abbey, the moving away from allowing parents to submit their children as future monks, and the rapid expansion and development of a system of ‘lay-brothers’ and ‘lay-sisters.’²⁵⁶ The Cistercian improvement of the lay-person system was a boon to the order by both vastly expanding the labor force available to the Cistercians, as well as providing access to deep spiritual life to many non-monks.²⁵⁷ The traits for which the Cistercians are now well known, such as their hospitality toward outsiders and their engagement with their immediate community, were extensions of these policies.

The Cistercians soon spread across many parts of Europe. Cistercians operated for centuries within the constant tension between ecclesiastical withdrawal from the world and a loving and thoughtful engagement with it. In this way, Cistercians developed patterns of interdependence and good feeling with their immediate communities that lasted centuries.²⁵⁸ This phenomenon was certainly the case at Salem. As Prince Max von Baden would remind Hahn, the white monks were deeply connected to the Bodensee district “the Cistercians owned

²⁵⁵ James France, “The Cistercian Community,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 85–86.

²⁵⁸ Mette Birkedal Bruun and Emilia Jamrozia, “Withdrawal and Engagement,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17.

this castle from 1134 to 1803. They were the road-builders, the farmers, the foresters, the doctors, the consolers, and the teachers.”²⁵⁹

The Cistercians developed a pattern of deliberately acquiring and developing farmlands that peasants abandoned as they moved closer to their liege lords. This pattern was followed by the then-large Benedictine sect itself, opening up abbeys and other holdings. This policy, as well as advances in grange technology contributed to a long-term surge in the fortunes of the white monks. It also contributed nicely to the already-existing connections to rural communities, where Cistercian holdings became a major source of local economic weal.²⁶⁰ When describing the location and aura of Salem and its relationship to the surrounding countryside, Henry Brereton, long Kurt Hahn’s right-hand man at the Gordonstoun School, had this to say: “Salem is the home of a community and the mother of the valley in which it lies.”²⁶¹ Throughout their history, Cistercians helped to pastoralize and enrich fringe communities disadvantaged by being located far from major cities. At the close of the First World War, such a resurgence in the fortunes of the region surrounding Salem was crucial.

Salem, the Place

The Salem castle estate, which is often referred to as “Salem castle,” “Schloss Salem,” or just “Salem,” is actually a blend of magnificent buildings from different centuries. At the center of the massive compound sits the heavy beauty of the gothic minster in light and dark greys.

Arrayed around it is the rest of the Salem castle compound, a system of cheerful white, yellow

²⁵⁹ Kurt Hahn, “Education for Leisure - A Transcript of a Speech Read to the Conference of Schoolmasters and College Tutors at Madalen College, Oxford, 6 January 1938” (The University Press, Oxford, 1938), 15, SER0009/138, Gordonstoun School Archive.

²⁶⁰ Constance Hoffman Berman, “Agriculture and Economies,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112–121.

²⁶¹ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 139.

or even pink four-or-five story manor style buildings that wrap nearly all the way around the abbey. These are unequivocally baroque with ornate window trimmings, gabled rooftops, and grand entrances. Despite their flair these buildings give off the feeling of a well-heeled functionality. They are arrayed in such a way that each of their original purposes is clear. There is the main, three-winged, manor-like complex that was originally the home of the abbot with its baroque library, living suites, internal church, and receiving hall. This is now where the Kurt Hahn Archive is located. Across from the entrance to the archive is the massive “Langbau,” which used to store grain. The offices of the school are now housed here.

The difference between the abbey and the rest of Salem castle is stark, with the abbey rising over the shorter, wider buildings, somber against their cheer. This contrast implies the many different purposes this particular physical plant has been bent to over the centuries. It must have provided a fitting architectural metaphor for Hahn’s educational vision: a sacrosanct center of emotion and inspiration surrounded by all things practical.

Even though Prince Max von Baden’s endowment evaporated in the hyperinflation that immediately followed the school’s founding, it would be hard to imagine a more ideal location for a school. The buildings are simply inspirational by design, and seem to challenge the viewer to apply romantic morality to a subject. One imagines Kurt Hahn being very at home at Salem. In 1934 he wrote “Salem was, from the first, never isolated. It soon became the centre of the district, reviving the dignity of the past.

PART II – The Salem System

Despite some scholars' feelings to the contrary, the particulars of Salem's curricular innovations and the contours of school life were directly informed by Hahn's coherent intellectual vision. It is instructive, therefore, to first examine these concepts and then delve into their execution by examining the details of Salem's schedule, curriculum, and initiatives.

Curricular Innovations: the 'Platonic' School

Always ready to refer to his background in the classics, Hahn often used a comparison of three common "unconscious" approaches to schooling, which he named the Ionian, the Spartan, and the Platonic, to illustrate the appropriate mix of challenge, conformity, and reinforcement in a school.

First, Hahn disparagingly described the "Ionian" approach, which would give rise to a school where an "individual ought to be nurtured and humored regardless of the needs of the community." A stand-in for what he saw as a trend toward overly-permissive modern parenting, Hahn accused 'Ionians' of "besmearing of the young with the ointment of flattery" and therefore "crippling" them well-before the real battles of life were encountered.²⁶²

Hahn then went on to warn of the "Spartan" approach to schooling, where only the "victorious and radiant" students, most commonly the scholars and athletes, were noticed and cultivated. This approach risks missing out on the innovations and contributions that might be made by a less conventional student.²⁶³ Finally, and most dangerously, the Spartan approach

²⁶² Kurt Hahn, "The Practical Child and the Bookworm," An aired "talk", transcribed (BBC, October 22, 1934), Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

²⁶³ Ibid.

gives rise to a ruthless framework where “an individual can and should be neglected for the benefit of the state.”²⁶⁴

Finally, Hahn approvingly describes the ‘Platonic’ approach to schooling. Here students are neither coddled into helplessness nor ruthlessly processed in fascist machinery until they are uniformly useful to the state. Instead, each young person is confronted by enough adversity to forge true resilience while at the same time encouraged to find their own passions. In his advocacy of this approach, Hahn implies that though this approach certainly benefits the parent state, it does so while also benefitting the individual. “Any nation is a slovenly guardian of its own interests if it does not do all it can to make the individual citizen discover his own powers.”²⁶⁵ Salem would be Hahn’s chance to make the Platonic school a reality.

The Salem School opened on April 21, 1920 with 8 boarders and 20 day students, both boys and girls.²⁶⁶ Times were stark. Given the widespread lack of resources, the entire school would study at night by the light of one lamp, gathered in the former apartment of the Cistercian Abbot, the lamplight reflecting off the baroque decorations of a former era.²⁶⁷

Unlike Cecil Reddie and Hermann Lietz, Kurt Hahn had never taught any kind of formal school before those first classes in the fall of 1920. He had no experience in educational administration of any kind. Bereft of such experience, he lured a handful of veteran teachers to Salem, the prize catch of the lot being a tie between the steadfast Frau Marina Ewald, who would prove one of Hahn’s most loyal and steady comrades, and, somewhat ironically, the

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Marina Ewald, “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion,” in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, 2nd Edition (English) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 23.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

former Privy Councillor in the Prussian Ministry of Education, Karl Reinhardt. Reinhardt came out of retirement to help Hahn with the curriculum.²⁶⁸ Hahn himself taught History and English in the early years, discovering not only that he loved the act of teaching, but that the students loved him as a teacher.²⁶⁹

Golo Mann, historian and son of the author Thomas Mann, was an early student. “Kurt Hahn taught my Latin class in his own apartment, and I have never had a better teacher. . . If he wanted us to translate into Latin, he made up texts that dealt with life at the school and contained quotations from members of the class.”²⁷⁰

In a way, Hahn’s shocking lack of experience was not a hindrance once Reinhardt was in place to administer the purely academic aspects of the school. Like Lietz and Reddie, Hahn was much more interested in what would be happening outside the academic classroom. From the first class days of 1920, Hahn’s eye was ever on the training of the moral acuity and resilience of his charges. Threatening these crucial virtues was a litany of what Hahn saw as ‘the declines of modern civilisation.’

Hahn’s speeches feature a series of subjects that reappeared enough to become motifs. The declines are one of these motifs, as such, they vary slightly in content depending on the rhetorical purpose of the speech Hahn happened to be giving. A compiled complete list of the declines reads like this:

The decline of fitness and physical health due to modern methods of locomotion; the decline of enterprise and the spirit of adventure due to the widespread disease of *spectatoritis*, an ‘illness’ brought on by the new media of radio and film; the decline of

²⁶⁸ Ibid. Before the First World War, Reinhardt had promised a young Kurt Hahn that he would help him with a school if and when he ever started one.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Golo Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections: A Youth in Germany*, 1 edition (New York: W W Norton & Co Inc, 1990), 75.

self-discipline and renunciation brought on by ready access to stimulants and tranquilizers, the decline of imagination and recollection due to the 'restlessness of modern people' and their fear of loneliness; the decline of skill and care due to the dwindling importance of craftsmanship and access to easy solutions; and most importantly, the decline of compassion and mercy due to dwindling senses of community, 'expanding subjectivism, individualism, and egoism.'²⁷¹

Hahn's anxieties about modernity combine here with his deep concern for the moral fortitude of society in which Salem was embedded. Remembering the moment of Salem's founding, Hahn wrote in 1934 ". . . doctors were helpless in the face of curable diseases, thousands of mothers could not get adequate nourishment for their convalescent children, the vitality of the growing generation seemed sapped at the root. All the sores of our history, so rich in discord, seemed to open up again."²⁷²

Indeed, the future that the 'declines' imply for 1920s Germany is not a bright one. Without intervention, Hahn imagined Germany's future leaders and citizens physically degraded, plagued by apathy and loneliness, isolated from one another, beset with restless fear and thwarted longing for connection, and medicating these ills with self-distraction and substance abuse. Worse, weakened by these declines, society would be prone to helpless bystander-hood, as in the case of the recent case of the unrestricted submarine warfare decision in the First World War, or easy manipulation and then domination, a phenomenon with

²⁷¹ Michael Knoll, "Schulreform Through 'Experiential Therapy': Kurt Hahn - An Efficacious Educator" (NA, 2011), <http://www.jugendprogramm.de/bibliothek/literature/kurt-hahn/ED515256.pdf>; Kurt Hahn, "Address at the Forty-Eighth Annual Dinner of the Old Centralians - Reprinted from The Central, the Journal of Old Centralians, the Old Student Association of the City and Guilds College and of Finsbury Technical College," accessed September 15, 2011, [Kurthahn.org](http://www.kurthahn.org). The set of declines went through a series of revisions as Hahn's career evolved. Michael Knoll lists six in his excellent article, whereas Hahn regularly listed five as late as the 1960s. Knoll adds "the decline of imagination and recollection," which I am forced to assume comes from an earlier German text. I have therefore included it here. Whether or not it is an official 'decline,' the preoccupation with imagination appears in many Hahn constructs, including the Seven Laws of Salem.

²⁷² Kurt Hahn, "A German Public School," *The Listener*, January 17, 1934, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

which the world would soon be all too familiar. As Hahn put it in 1928, “in our times we have had an abundance of wise men, ready to point out the way the Nation ought to go, but too feeble to lead the way they had shown. In Germany in particular, the worlds of thought and action were often two divided camps.”²⁷³

Hahn’s dystopic warning via his declines is a vision both forward-thinking and yet obviously nostalgic. A reader is reminded of Hahn’s idyllic childhood in the pastoral environs of Wannsee, but also cannot help but compare the declines to the ills that have plagued modern society since the industrial revolution and, at what seems to be an accelerating rate, plague it still.

Hahn’s Concept of the Learning Child

Kurt Hahn himself had an idyllic childhood, full of positive and energetic adult role models. His industrious grandfather, uncles, and father supplied him with privilege, but also a fierce work ethic. His mother’s emotional acuity and charm filled his childhood home with intellectuals and artists. His childhood was a good one, full of human connection, imagination, and physical prowess on the shores of the Havel as well as the speed, inspiration and culture of Berlin. But the world had changed since his childhood. It had grown darker, more corrupting, faster. Simply surrounding a young person with love and affection was no longer enough.

That said, Hahn dismissed Freudian psychology out of hand, seeing it as invasive and possibly destructive. He surmised there were some ‘mysteries’ inside a young person that may be better-understood when “exposed to sunlight” but that doing so would also likely alter them,

²⁷³ Kurt Hahn, “The Seven Laws of Salem,” 1928, 7, KHA SK-29, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

and therefore the child, permanently.²⁷⁴ So delve he did not, but Hahn was famously observant, carefully watching the behavior of his students and seeking to address their emotional selves.

Hahn, in keeping with Reddie and Lietz, viewed the child as a proto-adult. As such, each young person was a microcosm of the ideological battle he sought to wage with the forces contributing to Germany's decline into chaos. In doing so at Salem, Hahn was acting out a very similar utopian progressive impulse to those of his forbears: if the child represented a future adult, then the school represented the future society. Change the small unit, and one can revolutionize the larger one.

Of course, this logic goes the other way as well: left untended, or to the well-meaning but insufficient ministrations of its parents, a child would go into the world unprepared, and then, it was implied, fall prey to self-medication, moral relativism, mutinous biology, or worst of all, apathy. Any given child had both inner poisons and inner reserves. The job of the educator was to reveal both and excise one while strengthening the other.

For Hahn, then, the seeds of societal degradation resided inside the biological child as well as in the spiritual toxins and threats approaching from the outside world. Protection against both vectors of spiritual disease required tending and molding by a skilled adult and the influence of that child's already-molded older peers. Further, the fastest route to healing was through *erlebnistherapie*, or healing through experience.

²⁷⁴ Hahn, "A German Public School."

LIFE AT SALEM

So much of Hahn's approach to schooling was cultural that any investigation into his pedagogical innovations would be incomplete without an assessment of not only his role as a culture-setter, but the other social and pedagogical structures he intentionally installed.

The Seven Laws of Salem

For his part in 1920, Hahn would intervene in the entropic work of the declines by attempting to unite the 'camps' of thought and action. In response to the declines, Hahn and Von Baden created a pedagogical framework that would drive the day-to-day operations in the fledgling school. This framework was called the Seven Laws of Salem, and it formed the centerpiece of Hahn's educational innovations from Salem onward. As such, it is worth seeing them listed here, and then addressing the individual laws that led to such innovation.

The Seven Laws of Salem

First Law. Give the children opportunities for self-discovery

Second Law. Make the children meet with triumph and defeat

Third Law. Give the children the opportunity for self-effacement in the common cause.

Fourth Law. Provide periods of silence.

Fifth Law. Train the imagination.

Sixth Law. Make games important but not predominant.

Seventh Law. Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege.²⁷⁵

The First Law: Passion, Puberty and Erlebnistherapie

Give the children opportunities for self-discovery. Every girl and boy has a "grande passion" . . . often hidden and unrealised to the end of life . . . It can and will be revealed by the child coming into close touch with a member of different activities. . . these activities must not be added as a superstructure to an exhausting program of lessons. They will have no chance of absorbing and bringing out the child unless they form a vital part of the day's work . . .²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem."

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 1.

This premise undergirds all of the innovations Hahn introduced to Salem. As we shall see, he shortened the academic day so that students didn't spend more than five hours in class on any one day. This opened time during the 'vital part of the day's work' for the student to come 'into close touch' with local artisans, workmen, and informal instructors. This inherently boosted the breadth of students' experiences while also becoming a philosophical jumping-off point for the next level of innovations. For Hahn, the most important kind of learning in terms of one's moral development was not academic.

A central concern that Hahn hoped to mitigate with a child's discovery of his or her own *grande passion* was the negative, warping influence of puberty. Hahn referred to this necessary biological stage as the "loutish years" of a child's development, "a dim and irritable period when even movements become sluggish and awkward" and when a young person is tempted to give into their sexual impulses and find "insidious satisfaction."²⁷⁷ Other scholars have glossed over this odd preoccupation. Hahn repeated often enough across speeches and publications that spanned four decades, that it must be recognized for what it is: a central aspect of his world view, especially in regards to the development of children. Contagion and healing are linked concepts that are central to Hahn's fundamental framework, regarding both the proper instruction of and development of a healthy individual child, as well as the care for and membership in larger society. Indeed, the former was a crucial prerequisite to the latter.

Therefore, Hahn's obsession with the ability of a *grande passion* to become a "guardian angel" of a child approaching puberty, and therefore to "forestall the sexual impulses from

²⁷⁷ Kurt Hahn, "Outward Bound," July 20, 1960, 436.

monopolizing a child's emotional life" was actually his theory of *erlebnistherapie* deployed at the finest-grained level. Experience, Hahn submitted, could be deployed intentionally as a prophylactic against the moral corruption biologically interred in each child.

The Second Law: "An Upbringing Which Hardens and Spares Them at the Same Time."

Make the children meet with triumph and defeat. Let them learn to 'treat these two imposters just the same.' Salem believes you ought to discover the child's weakness as well as his strength. Allow him to engage in enterprises in which he is likely to fail, and do not hush up his failure.²⁷⁸

Hahn wanted Salem's children to fail in the course of their time at the school. Not as a byproduct of attempting challenging tasks, or as a happenstance of the academic process, but as a central feature of the Salem system. Indeed, he saw the installment of 'grande passion' as a prerequisite for this crucial encounter with failure. Students, protected by their 'guardian angel' from betrayal from their own biological selves, were, according to Hahn, "sufficiently tough to try and overcome defeat." The adversity was intentional. "We deliberately plunge him into activities where he fears to fail. We find that the spirit, once triumphant, makes the child in defeat fall back on reserves hitherto untapped."²⁷⁹ Properly bolstered, a child could heal themselves.

It is not only the untapped reserves that Hahn was after, but the pathway to those reserves. If, through the Salem system, the child learned that they always have access to their internal reserves, they might become permanently resilient, empowered to steer themselves instead of being steered by either external forces or their own biology. As Hahn explained it in a

²⁷⁸ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem," 1–2.

²⁷⁹ Hahn, "A German Public School." Emphasis via commas mine.

1934 address to other educators, “to give the children this feeling of faith in their own destiny is our business, and above all to give it to the easily wounded boys, many of whom can be made into fine citizens by an upbringing which hardens and spares them at the same time.”²⁸⁰ This deliberate introduction of adversity took many forms, most obviously physical training, but also farm work, long trips into the countryside, and, as we shall see, weighty responsibilities within and to the school community.

The Third Law: A Blueprint for Experiential Education

Give the children the opportunity of self-effacement in the common cause. Tell them from the start: “you want a crew, not passengers on the thrilling voyage through the New Country School.” Let the responsible boys and girls shoulder duties big enough, when negligently performed, to wreck a state.²⁸¹

The third law of Salem would evolve and become a major intervention in modern westernized schooling. The phrase ‘crew, not passengers’ would become a call to arms for the Outward Bound movement. Later in the 20th century the phrase would be splashed all over Outward Bound websites, brochures, and training manuals. In the 1920s, however, Hahn was chiefly concerned with the fraying of the fabric of German culture he saw all around him. In a 1928 appeal to administrators of German public schools, Hahn aired his concerns about the state of German society: “Organized religion is losing its hold over society. The National claim seems to be losing its appeal . . . the wave of national exaltation in Germany at the beginning of

²⁸⁰ Hahn, “The Practical Child and the Bookworm.”

²⁸¹ Hahn, “The Seven Laws of Salem,” 2.

the [First World] war was a big flare up which in the end died down again.”²⁸² Germans needed to be welded back together as a people. For Hahn this would start at Salem. ²⁸³

Following his own ideal of the ‘Platonic school,’ Hahn insisted the students see their triumphs and development in the larger context of the school itself, emphasized by membership in the ‘Colour-Bearers.’ As they aged, students were laden with responsibilities crucial to the operation of the school. Golo Mann remembered aspiring to such a role: “After about a year [at Salem] it became my steadily growing ambition to belong, but I had to wait quite a while.” ²⁸⁴ Hahn’s intentional school hierarchies led to longing and a lust for achievement.

This configuration of the school experience as a journey shared by developing individuals was a powerful repudiation of the classic Prussian system, where students were faceless individual numbers constituting a homogenized mass. The crucial element was that at Salem, effort was made to ensure each individual felt their contribution to the whole. As Golo Mann remembers it, “the group adventure had a beneficial effect on my psyche. . . . When I returned to Salem, I no longer assumed the critical and mocking air toward the school with which I had previously tried to make myself important.” ²⁸⁵ It was also deliberately an attempt to engender a strong sense of membership and community that Hahn hoped would transmit to the ailing nation outside Salem’s baroque walls.

²⁸² Hahn, Kurt, “The Problem of Citizenship in German Education,” 5.

²⁸³ It bears mentioning here that for Hahn at this stage, Germany was in such turmoil that at first anything that smacked of self-respect seemed like a step in the right direction.

²⁸⁴ Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 78.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

The Fourth Law: Reflection

Provide periods of silence. Following the great precedent of the Quakers. Unless the present day generation acquires early habits of quiet and reflection, it will be speedily and prematurely used up by the nerve exhausting and distracting civilisation of to-day.²⁸⁶

Kurt Hahn's original revelatory experience occurred when he was an admitted medical patient, consigned to silence, darkness, and solitude as the medical field slowly advanced far enough to properly diagnose and treat his blocked sylvan duct. Despite this eventual victory, Hahn never quite transcended his mother's idea that instead of a biological malfunction he had been the victim of an especially severe case of 'neurasthenia,' or nervous exhaustion. As such, Hahn's injury and ensuing chronic illnesses gave rise to both a lasting fear of what 'the confused pace at which modern society is lived' might wreck upon a student, but also respect for the palliative and creative effects of sustained silence. As Hahn insisted in a radio broadcast for the BBC in 1934, it was through silence and reflection that "a child can be enabled to glean the harvest of from his manifold experiences."²⁸⁷

As a result, the students of Salem were subject to compulsory resting and contemplation. Each afternoon most students lay on their backs while an older student read to them from approved texts.²⁸⁸ As the children aged, this time was expanded. Most older students engaged in a two-hour solitary walk on Sundays.²⁸⁹

Positioning reflection as a central aspect to his pedagogy had a long-term effect. Two later offshoots of Hahnian thought, Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership

²⁸⁶ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem," 2.

²⁸⁷ Hahn, "The Practical Child and the Bookworm."

²⁸⁸ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem," 8.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

School (NOLS) have long institutionalized this idea, insisting their participants reflect regularly on the activities of a given day, but also frequently send them on solitary reflective journeys.

Outward Bound calls these “solos.”²⁹⁰

The Seventh Law: Tactical Elitism?

*Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege. Decadence is not always an inexorable decree of nature, more often it is a willful waste of splendid heritage.*²⁹¹

Hahn’s relationship to the rich and powerful was a complicated one. At first blush, it appears that in the seventh law Hahn advocates paying special attention to the wealthy and powerful beyond what Salem would already do for any student. It also appears that Hahn implies that the wealthy are susceptible to an additional, ‘seventh decline,’ that of over-softness due to privilege. But why do the wealthy get their own specific law? Does this imply the wealthy and powerful are the *raison d’être* of Salem? A cynic would insist that Hahn’s whole project was always truly meant for the wealthy, boys and girls who would likely be in the position to make similar crucial decisions as those that Hahn watched in horror being made poorly in the First World War and directly after. If he was to unite the two ‘camps’ of thought and action, was it not best to do so in the echelon of society where such a unity would do the most good?

Yet Hahn often half-bemoaned the wild successes of Salem and then Gordonstoun, insisting that, despite the relief a surge of ‘sons of the wealthy and powerful’ might offer the

²⁹⁰ Outward Bound, “The OB Approach,” December 15, 2015, <http://www.outwardbound.org/classic/outdoor-trips/the-ob/>.

²⁹¹ Hahn, “The Seven Laws of Salem,” 3.

strained coffers of either school, neither should become a school only for the privileged.²⁹² Indeed, Hahn's later efforts for so many young people of meager means in Britain indicate a strong altruism. That said, as the hyper-inflation of 1923 and 1924 wiped out the endowment Prince Max von Baden had established, Salem had become nearly completely reliant on the yearly income of fee paying students.²⁹³

Taken in the context of his many other works, one reads this final 'Law of Salem' in the incredibly contentious context in which it was written, what Hahn described as a "class war of unheard-of bitterness."²⁹⁴ In such a context, liberating the sons of the wealthy and powerful from their privilege was not only good tactics for changing society, but also a public service. For in 1920s Germany, ostentatious privilege was not merely social rank, it was a social powder keg.

With the declines identified and the Laws of Salem arrayed to the defeat them, Hahn and Von Baden set their minds to the creation of Salem's unusual daily and weekly schedule.

A Day at Salem

The school uniform

Salem students benefitted from Hahn's appreciation of the changes both Reddie and Lietz had already introduced. Salem students wore a thick, loose, open-necked sweater over the same functional, non-restrictive clothing that Lietz and Reddie espoused.²⁹⁵ Hahn saw this as a direct intervention: "Put them into sensible dress which does not hide their limbs. I consider the

²⁹² Hahn, "A German Public School."

²⁹³ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 31.

²⁹⁴ Hahn, "A German Public School."

²⁹⁵ Hahn, "The Practical Child and the Bookworm."

early-Victorian school garb not only ugly but positively deforming, because it does not engender that pride in physical fitness which is necessary for the preservation of physical fitness.”²⁹⁶ More interestingly, and in strange contrast to his concerns about puberty, Hahn was an advocate of a healthy physicality, just like Reddie and Lietz. He wanted his students to like and respect their bodies.

6:30 to 8:00 am: the Morning Run, Cold Shower, and Breakfast

Hahn’s first and basic intervention in reversing the effects of the declines would be a “hardening” “greatly helped by our physical training.”²⁹⁷ Cribbing from Hermann Lietz’s focus on physicality, Hahn’s students rose before breakfast for a brisk run. In Hahn’s typical parlance, “We make every boy and girl run around the garden before breakfast.”²⁹⁸ He brooked little discussion on this issue. When asked by a visitor if the children actually wanted to run, he responded, “I should think as little as asking them whether they want to train, as I should think of asking them whether they are in the mood to brush their teeth.”²⁹⁹ In the very first days of Salem, Hahn was obliged to scale down the physical training, as many of his students were too malnourished to execute the full routine.³⁰⁰

Following the run, Hahn famously insisted on a cold shower, no doubt to bolster the guarding effects of each child’s ‘guardian angel.’ One imagines Salem’s students finally sitting

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Hahn, “A German Public School.”

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Hahn, “The Practical Child and the Bookworm.”

³⁰⁰ Ewald, “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion,” 1970, 14.

down for a warm breakfast at 7:45 am, eyes alert from the run and the shower, skin tingling under their wool clothes. Breakfast was quick but plentiful; often porridge with milk.³⁰¹

8:00 to 1:00 pm: Academic Classes

Classes began at 8:30 and concluded sharply at 1 pm. Teachers at Salem were recruited from the area, often after allowances had been made to lure them to this unusual fledgling school. A letter from Hahn to Marina Ewald in 1925 reveals an expanding school with only ad-hoc plans for the accommodations of instructors. Teachers were asked “to endure the martyrdom” of shared rooms due to lack of space. If teachers had spouses with skills that Salem could use, they were hired as well.³⁰² Hahn concludes the letter gently admonishing Ewald to pass on her duties to those less capable as she, as without Ewald’s full attention, “Salem would collapse.”³⁰³

To the students, the teachers were a welcome relief from the schools they had left. Golo Mann reported that “the teachers were young and did not stand much on ceremony. There was none of that knuckling under to the energetic teachers, and tormenting the helpless old senior schoolmasters.”³⁰⁴ A visitor to Salem from Britain remarked that the teachers and students “spent very much time in oral work than in writing. They discussed matters so much. It certainly makes classes more alive. At the same time, I think it wastes more time.”³⁰⁵ Following the example of Lietz and Reddie, there was little formal separation between the teachers and the

³⁰¹ Wilhelm Jensen, “[Classroom and School],” August 13, 1920, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

³⁰² Kurt Hahn, “Letter from Kurt Hahn to Marina Ewald, April 20th, 1925,” Typed and Handwritten, (April 20, 1925), 1–2, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

³⁰³ Ibid., 3.

³⁰⁴ Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 75.

³⁰⁵ Basil A. Fletcher, *Youth Looks at the World*, First Ed. edition (Fredereick A. Stokes, 1933), 19.

students: they composed an integrated community. Marina Ewald remembers “the day’s programme did not separate children and adults. They lived, worked, and spent their free time together.” The academic system, if unconventional, was still successful in contemporary German terms. In 1924 all eight of Salem’s candidates for the Abitur passed successfully.³⁰⁶

10:00 am: The Morning Break

To a contemporary reader accustomed to recess periods in primary school and physical education throughout their education, such a break might not seem unusual. In Hahn’s context, such a choice was radical. During the break students were compelled to compete with themselves in exercises that mimicked the Olympic track and field offerings. Running of various distances, throwing the javelin, the long jump and especially the high jump held prominence. Girls exercised by doing ‘eurhythmics.’³⁰⁷ It must be said here that Hahn had a complicated relationship with the co-educational nature of Salem. Marina Ewald, writing in 1966, remembered that

Hahn’s attitude to girls was particular to him. On the one hand he held them responsible for the tone of the school and even for callousness by other pupils of which they had been in complete ignorance. On the other hand, he was capable of ignoring them completely. But he was readily forgiven and girls felt like they represented Salem in the front line.³⁰⁸

Be that as it may, most of Hahn’s references to students mention males, even though Salem had both boys and girls.

³⁰⁶ Ewald, “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion,” 1970, 26.

³⁰⁷ Fletcher, *Youth Looks at the World*, 19.

³⁰⁸ Ewald, “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion,” 1970, 31.

Hahn lay great stock in the intangible effects of regular participation in athletics for all regardless of athleticism or affinity. He especially loved the high jump, insisting that it improved decision-making ability and could even cure a stutterer. Hahn would happily point to the obvious health effects of physical training, “bracing the nerves and broadening the chest of the delicate boy.”³⁰⁹ An essential feature of this program was that it was absolutely compulsory. Hahn boasted that 80 percent of the male graduates of Salem could clear 5 foot in the high jump.³¹⁰

1:00 pm: Lunch

Thanks to Salem’s strategic focus on developing a farm, as well as on the excellent relationships it developed with the farmers of the region, Salem’s students benefitted from healthy and plentiful food. As Wilhelm Jensen remembered, “there was real butter and bread. And heated milk from the stable.”³¹¹

2:00 pm: Afternoon activities

By early afternoon, academic classes were finished for the day. A six-day afternoon schedule of community service, organized sports, practical skill training, and prolonged study followed classes. A schedule from 1928 looked like this:

Monday: 3-hour silent study session

Tuesday: organized sports

Wednesday: 3-hour practical work session

³⁰⁹ Hahn, “A German Public School.”

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Wilhelm Jensen, “[Helping on the land],” September 23, 1920, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

Thursday: 3-hour 'interests' session

Friday: organized sports

Saturday: 'guild time': the naturalists, the engineers, the agriculturalists, and the herald³¹²

Some of the afternoon's activities were clearly student-centered, such as the study session or the organized sports. Others were community-focused. Marina Ewald remembered much of the afternoon time being dedicated to keeping Salem afloat, especially in the lean early years. "As the provision of food was essential in those difficult times directly after the war and as there were few employees, two afternoons a week were spent working on the farm and performing other tasks necessary to the running of the school."³¹³ It was not just curricular innovation, then, that drove the weekly activities in those early years. It was the duties to the school and its surrounding community. Hahn wanted the duties to be weighty and in many cases, they were: the 'state' they could 'sink' could be Salem itself.

One of Hahn's important moves was to simply expand the school week through the weekend, thereby purchasing extra time on a 'regular' school day for the heavy load of non-academic pursuits. Not only did he see no issue with this expansion, but he advocated that the main body of German schools do the same.³¹⁴

Though this seems at first to be a purely logistical choice, the curricular effects were profound. Each day a given student only spent four or five hours in class. On each one of the six 'regular' days, each student had a morning run and a morning break which meant that they

³¹² Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem."

³¹³ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 25.

³¹⁴ Hahn, Kurt, "The Problem of Citizenship in German Education."

exercised twice by lunchtime. Students' afternoons were filled with physical movement and intellectual engagement and often via trips to the nearby towns of Salem or Uberlingen. In short, the 'Salem System' was a profound departure from the Prussian system of education in Germany, still mired as it was in traditional rote and relentless discipline.

William James' 'Moral Equivalent to War' and Salem

With local resources much reduced by the recent war and continuous strife, the region in which Salem rested wanted badly for basic social services. Though it would be a small contribution at first, Salem students began to respond to fire emergencies in the area. Marina Ewald remembered Salem students running fire hoses miles away from the school and extinguishing a fire. Soon, Salem itself hosted a fire service run by the students.³¹⁵ This service-based outreach into the local community was both an intentional manifestation of the Cistercian approach of serving the local community in substantive ways, as well as the first step in what would become a primary focus of Hahn's second school, Gordonstoun. Hahn was beginning to see an answer to William James challenge to find a 'moral equivalent to war.'

James' essay begins by laying the bloody nationalisms of the past: Alexander the Great, the Greek wars, and so on, at the feet of millennia of training-in-violence in which "pugnacity" was "bred into our bone and marrow" by our ancestors. In the 'present day' of 1906, James identified a dichotomy in civilized man where the bestial lover of war glory is counterbalanced by the ethical restraint of pacifists. As much as he identified with pacifists, James did not see simple abstinence from war a viable possibility. Too strong were the impulses from our biology

³¹⁵ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 33.

and history, he suggested, and too easily were nation and violence linked. Moreover, half of the population was all too willing to re-enter the fray in the first place. To alchemically mix the three: peace, nationalism, and at least the emotional imperative of war, was the trick. The world needed war's moral equivalent.³¹⁶

James therefore suggested a system where "martial values" continue to be the "enduring cement . . . the rock from which states are built," but that these values are directed back onto the state in a creative, productive fashion. Man is still "owned" by the state in the same manner as he is during war, welded to his comrades in common identification with the nation, but the product is public works and honor instead of gore and horror.³¹⁷ This perspective sustained Hahn for decades, and directly informed the nation-healing work he saw himself doing in Salem.

Evenings at Salem

Though Golo Mann reports that many evenings were blessedly quiet, "free, finally," Hahn did use his high connections in the German government and military to supply his students with bracing lectures. Presentations on the Treaty of Versailles were delivered by the former President of the German Supreme Court; General von Lettow-Vorbeck presented on campaigns in East Africa; and Albert Schweitzer, who would later win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, delivered speeches on the Congo region.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ William James, *The Moral Equivalent of War, and Other Essays; and Selections from Some Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem," 10.

An Unusual Report Card

Of the 15 categories listed on the Salem Certificate of Maturity, the report that students brought home from Salem, only one concerns itself purely with academics: Standards Reached in School Subjects. There are a handful of other categories that certainly relate to the development of the intellect: Ability to State Facts Precisely, Ability to Plan, Ability to Organize, Degree of Mental Concentration. At least two more categories, Physical Exercises and Manual Dexterity, could, when combined, certainly be counted as predecessor to contemporary Physical Education. Two more categories, Art Work and Practical Work, are obviously early relatives to contemporary art and shop.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Ibid., 8.

Salem Certificate of Maturity.

Esprit de Corps

Sense of Justice

Ability to state facts precisely

Ability to follow out what he believes to be the right
course in the face of discomforts:

hardships

dangers

hostile public opinion

boredom

scepticism

impulses of the moment

Ability to plan

Ability to organise

shown in the disposition of work

in the direction of younger boys

Ability to deal with the unexpected

Degree of mental concentration

where the task in question interests him

where it does not

Conscientiousness

in everyday affairs

in tasks with which he is specially entrusted

Manual dexterity

Manners

Standard reached in school subjects:

German

Ancient languages

Modern languages

History

Natural Science

Mathematics

Practical Work (Handicraft etc.)

Art Work:

Physical Exercises:

Pugnacity

Endurance

Reaction time

Figure 2: A copy of the Salem Certificate of Maturity from the 'Seven Laws of Salem' Brochure, 1928. Image edited for clarity by author.

The remaining five categories are concerned with the status and improvement of a student's resilience, morality, and orientation toward others. These include Esprit de Corps, Sense of Justice, Ability to Deal with the Unexpected, Conscientiousness, Manners, and Ability to Follow Out What He Believes to be the Right Course in the Face of Discomforts.³²⁰ As we shall soon see, this formalization of the expectations of a Salem student was also rendered in the social structure of Salem, in the structure, function, and internal culture of the Colour Bearers, Helpers, and the Guardian.

Hahn the Headmaster

Throughout the litany of writings from and about the three main Hahn schools, Salem, Gordonstoun, and the Atlantic College, there exists a steady concern about the role of their hero-founder, Kurt Hahn himself. More precisely, there exists concern about what will happen to the school once the hero-founder is gone.³²¹ It is well-documented that from his stint in the German foreign services office during the First World War until his death after the founding of the Atlantic College, Hahn was a tireless operator, often accomplishing the improbable in less time than expected. Yet it may have been Hahn's role as a headmaster that his schools would find most central to the school culture and hardest to replace.

³²⁰ Ibid., 4.

³²¹ Hellmut Becker, "Kurt Hahn Amongst Children and Adults," in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, English Edition with Additional Material (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 140. This same concern was raised by Marina Ewald at Salem and Henry Brereton at Gordonstoun. Both indicated that their respective schools, Hahn did his best to create a system that could maintain its integrity without his influence. This was not as easy in practice, as we shall see when Hahn was forced to leave Gordonstoun by Brereton himself.

Hahn was deeply connected to Salem, a constant presence. In addition to teaching regularly in the early years, Hahn made his presence known as a spiritual leader and moral authority at Salem through his fierce moral compass, as well as his raw magnetism. “. . . The word fascinating, overused as it is, cannot be avoided. He had no intention to fascinate. That was simply how he was. Whether speaking to an individual pupil, a group, or a large gathering, he left everyone silent, full of admiration, deeply moved, convinced.”³²²

Violations of the Salem laws and the moral center of the school caused Hahn a great deal of agitation, and he acted as if the “child’s future and the well-being of the school community was at stake.” He would assemble the whole school and mete out judgment, often expounding on the values that had been violated. However, after punishment had been decided and met, Hahn strictly forbid either faculty or students punishing the student further, overtly or socially.³²³

Hahn the Man: “You are Playing like a Jellyfish on a Holiday!”

Hahn’s tone in his speeches and writings is authoritative, insistent, and Victorian. Almost without fail, each of the documents, whether it be a speech, pamphlet, or letter, is a call to action. In stark contrast to this persona and ‘his’ tone, his actual students and co-workers paint the picture of a warm and funny man, full of eccentricities and mischief. Hahn was a large man, with a tendency toward formality, often clasping his hands behind his back. A student once described Hahn’s German as sounding as if he were “translating it from English as he spoke”³²⁴

³²² Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 80.

³²³ Marina Ewald, “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion,” in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 28.

³²⁴ Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 72.

perhaps implying that Hahn's international background had tagged him with an accent even in his home language.

He frequently wore suits, even when playing sports. His early injury meant that he also frequently wore a large-brimmed hat, only adding to his mystique. Wilhelm Jensen, grandson of Karl Reinhardt, Salem's first Director of Studies, wrote regular letters home to his parents during the first six years of Salem's existence. He remembered Hahn greeting his mother for the first time with a deep bow.³²⁵ The tension between the formal dress and manners and Hahn's impish humor only added to the magnetism and legend.

When Basil Fletcher visited Salem his impression of Hahn was quite the opposite of the stentorian headmaster one encounters in archival documents. "I soon found that everyone at Salem really loved the man. You can quickly tell. They all wanted to stop him doing things for them and were full of schemes to protect him from the results of his own good nature." Fletcher went on to report that Hahn's reputation was similar amongst his own teachers. The English Master told him "He's ridiculously unselfish. If you happen to say 'I can't find my hockey stick'; he says: 'Here, take mine.'" He gives everything away."³²⁶ Another example told of Hahn bicycling side by side with a son of the local innkeeper all the way to the boy's first external examination in order to practice his English words and phrases up till the moment of the test.³²⁷

Hahn had a penchant for minting a phrase. In particular, one-liners that Hahn would sling about and spoof sports nicknames that Hahn would dispense, especially if a student was

³²⁵ Wilhelm Jensen, "Briefe Aus Salem 1920-1926 (Letters from Salem 1920-1926)" (Collection of letters, curated and retyped by author, 1970), Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

³²⁶ Fletcher, *Youth Looks at the World*, 15.

³²⁷ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 29.

not exerting what Hahn thought was the appropriate level of effort on the sports field, became the stuff of legend. In 1921, young Wilhelm Jensen was one of these unlucky ones, and Hahn designated him as being born from “a sad tulip and a cheerful onion.” The name stuck, as Jensen remembered, and his dorm room was called the “tulipia.”³²⁸ Sometimes the good-natured ribbing was poorly received. When Hahn dubbed Jensen a “stupid pike” for a mistake of some kind, Jensen told Hahn that he found the nickname harmful. Hahn’s response was that what Jensen had done was “undoubtedly stupid” and that “pike is not a curse word.” However, Jensen felt about his status as a pike, he reported that most of the time “hardly anyone felt offended” about Hahn’s nicknames.³²⁹ It was therefore with a potent mix of iron will, caring, and mischief that Hahn administered but also abided at Salem.

Daily Life

To say daily life at Salem was idyllic would be to overstate. There was simply too much challenge, too many children operating at the edge of their comfort zones or beyond them, for that. However, the truly beautiful setting, the regular, plentiful food, surmounting of obstacles and the self-respect that accompanied regular physical exercise must have had a profoundly positive effect. Wilhelm Jensen’s letters suggest a young man who is aglow with the adventure of Salem. He especially loved the company of the boys at the school: “the conversations at the table are very interesting, you can learn fast.”³³⁰ He and his friends worked in the farm: “we were always efficient by helping on the land, we have a built a tomato box . . .” They also got

³²⁸ Wilhelm Jensen, “[Hockey Team and ‘Tulip’],” February 16, 1921, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Jensen, “[Classroom and School].”

into plenty of mischief: “we were often fooling around, using the bean rods to skip over the ditches, and it was a stroke of luck to find rotten tomatoes to throw.”³³¹ Jensen was also taken with the beauty of the surroundings, and he and his new friends frequently explored what he called ‘the wilderness.’³³² After a year or so, Jensen found his way into one of the Guilds, the Heralds, and became what he called a ‘Chronicler,’ a position he shared with another boy.³³³

Golo Mann remembered that “a nice tone prevailed at the school; quarrels seldom occurred.” However, when the occasional argument did happen, the boys in particular were permitted to challenge each other to a boxing match, with gloves, fought in Hahn’s personal chambers.³³⁴ Mann also noted that Hahn’s influence was constant and caring. “Hahn constantly kept his eye on how well this system of his crating was working. If one of the components of his master plan seemed to be getting the upper hand, he would quickly intervene.” This included scaling back his own personal influence if he sensed he was being too heavy-handed.³³⁵ Yet Hahn was a juggernaut. The entire project had sprung forth from his larger goals and his innovative mind. When present, the system stabilized around him, like moons around a larger planet. In the later years of Gordonstoun when this gravitational field became unreliable, massive turbulence was the result.

³³¹ Jensen, “[Helping on the land].”

³³² Jensen, “[Classroom and School].”

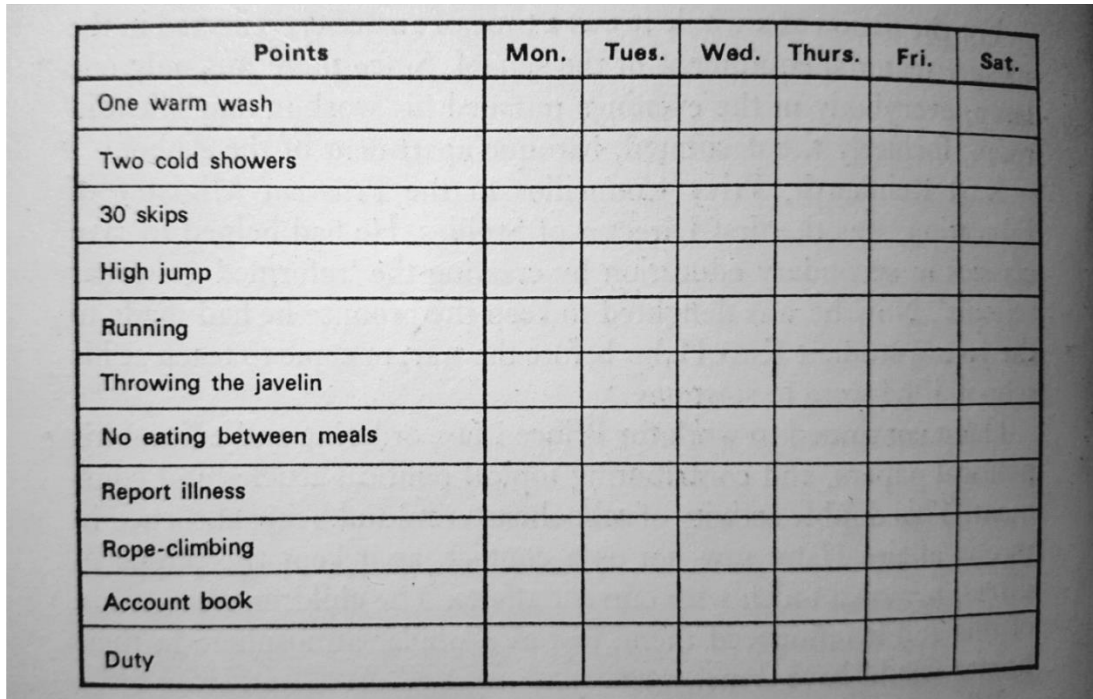
³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 77.

³³⁵ Mann, *Reminiscences and Reflections*; Jensen, “[Helping on the land],” 83.

Self-Government, Phase I: The Training Plan

There were two mechanisms of discipline and self-improvement that Hahn and Ewald referred to as “self-government.” The first of these, the famous training plan, was an innovation in that it relied on the students to surveil themselves.



Points	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
One warm wash						
Two cold showers						
30 skips						
High jump						
Running						
Throwing the javelin						
No eating between meals						
Report illness						
Rope-climbing						
Account book						
Duty						

Figure 3: Training Plan at Salem. From “Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion” by Marina Ewald in Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics, English Edition. H. Rohrs and H Tunstall-Behrens, eds. London, 1970.

Essentially a checklist of daily accomplishments and chores, the Training Plan was the codification of the physical training that contributed to Salem’s unusual reputation. Hahn followed Thomas Arnold’s strong feeling that young people were far more likely to execute a challenging task if they were trusted to do it instead of forced by the distrust of adults. ³³⁶

³³⁶ Hahn, “A German Public School.”

Hahn's innovation on this concept was what he called a "self-incentive": the list of check boxes that a student could fill daily. The maintenance of the Training Plan's checks was entirely up to the student.³³⁷

Hahn laid great stock in this foundational building block of the Salem system. He felt it established not only the physical strength and speed required for the rest of Salem's regimen of work, sports, and expeditions, but also the mental and emotional infrastructure for improvement in many other areas. In Hahn's words, the Training Plan helped students 'defeat their own defeatism' through internalizing tiny successes.

In keeping with the conception of education as a form of inoculation against contagion, Hahn also felt that, once established, the Training Plan would function as a deflective field, keeping the student uninterested in smoking, drinking, too much cinema, reading corrupt books, or "indiscriminate listening to the wireless." Indeed, it would function as a diver's tank and mask, keeping the children safely in the "atmosphere" of the school while at home.³³⁸ The implications of this extended metaphor are important. For Hahn during the Salem era the outside world was something that needed to be guarded against. Even the atmosphere was full of contagion.

Self-Government, Phase II: The Uniform, the Colour-Bearers, the Helpers, and the Guardian

One of the most vibrant examples of Hahn's blending of British public school and German *Landerziehungsheim* practices appears in how he apportioned authority at Salem.

³³⁷ New students would have their books checked by adults or student-leaders until they had established a good habit and could be trusted.

³³⁸ Hahn, "The Practical Child and the Bookworm," 911.

Directly below himself as the headmaster, Hahn installed a Director of Studies and a Director of Activities. These two positions were almost equal in power, and Hahn's mandate was that each advocate fiercely for their own camp in the event of a conflict – including conflicts with Hahn himself. Then followed each of the teachers, or Masters. It is this particular element of Hahn's leadership style that directly contradicts criticisms that Hahn was an autocrat, comparable, perhaps, to another famous German autocrat.³³⁹ In fact, as Helmutt Becker has observed, Hahn intentionally staffed his highest ranks with strong-willed leaders who were sure to do battle with him.³⁴⁰ This technique, first deployed with Marina Ewald and Director of Studies Wilhelm Schmidle, worked well at Salem. It worked well at Gordonstoun too, until Hahn himself began to destabilize the system.

Directly below the teachers was a hybrid model of student leadership. Hahn cultivated three levels of student rank. In his configuration of this leadership, Hahn followed what he thought was a significant contribution by one of his forbears: "Lietz proved that it is possible to entrust boys with a responsibility to an extent hitherto undreamed of."³⁴¹ And so Hahn installed tiers, at the top of which were boys with massive responsibility.

At the bottom were new students who had not yet earned their uniforms. These were new initiates to the Salem universe, and wore their regular street clothes to classes and to school events. After a time of proving themselves and adhering to Salem's unusual and rigorous

³³⁹ Leo Abse, *Wotan, My Enemy* (London: Robson Books, Ltd., 1994), 48. Abse's overtly anti-German book chooses Hahn as one of its main villains, calling him the 'apostate Jew' and insisting Hahn was merely exercising Freudian impulses with his devotion to his schools. Abse also takes it upon himself to out Hahn as a latent homosexual. This accusation occasionally accompanies critiques of Hahn's nervousness about puberty. The author of this dissertation finds the practice of scholars outing historical figures particularly objectionable.

³⁴⁰ Becker, "Kurt Hahn Amongst Children and Adults," 139.

³⁴¹ Hahn, Kurt, "The Problem of Citizenship in German Education," 14.

regimens, especially the Training Plan, they were presented with a Salem uniform, thick wool pull-over and all, as a symbol of true belonging.³⁴²

Because it was the symbol of belonging, the uniform was also a mechanism of correction. Violation of the boundaries of the school community in some way could mean temporary confiscation of the uniform and a public return to 'civilian' status.

Above the uniformed initiates were the 'Colour Bearers.' These students were Salem's version of the Senate, and they were charged with the support and maintenance of the institution's principles and laws, written or unwritten. Signified by the purple ribbon or sash worn with their uniform, the Colour Bearers were the only members of the student body eligible to serve as officers and petty ministers of daily life at Salem. As we have seen, Hahn was enamored of the British public school, and the Colour-Bearer institution owed much to a similar structure in place at the famous Eton school. In particular, Colour-Bearers were not elected by the general student body, but rather 'brought up' by an election within the Colour-Bearer. This is identical to Eton's well-known society, Pop. No Colour Bearer held such rank without an accompanying duty. These duties ranged widely, each associated with the administration of daily life at Salem.

Once a Colour-Bearer had achieved such a position, they were considered a Helper. These offices were crucial to the functioning of Salem. On the suggestion of an 'old boy' of Eton who worked at Salem, Hahn ratcheted up the responsibilities of these Helpers. Soon these young men and women had a series of posts central to the functioning of the school: the *Juniors* Helper advocated for the youngest students against older students and administration; *Health* supervised convalescing students and those with disabilities; *Outposts* watched out for day

³⁴² Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 26.

students and to visit them at home if needed; *Practical Work* supervised the interconnection with the artisans and laypeople nearby Salem, other helper positions covered *North* and *South* wings of the castle, *Waste Management, Heating, Buildings, and Grounds*.³⁴³ Helpers met each day to report to and counsel each other.³⁴⁴

Above this cadre of Helpers was the Guardian himself. This was a direct crib from Plato's *Republic*, and was the highest ranking non-adult at Salem. The guardian was only second to the headmaster in the Colour-Bearers group, serving as vice president of that organization. He had vast responsibility, often conferencing with Hahn and Directors of Study and Activities.

Much later, when Hahn was asked by an author of a book about Gordonstoun whether he had gotten some crucial details correct, Hahn responded in a letter. In this letter, Hahn distinguishes himself from members of the New Education Fellowship in this way: "A boarding school, to my mind, should not be a big family but a small state. I strongly believed in a partnership between masters and boys not linked by bogus family ties but by absorbing tasks which commanded the willing service of the partners."³⁴⁵

With Salem configured as a small, collaborative state, and the Colour-Bearers as its Senate, the Helpers and the Guardian most certainly fit the role of *Plato's* guardians, the warrior class that had been rendered ultra-moral through the rejuvenating force of education. The difference here, of course, is that these particular warriors were tasked not only with the protection and advancement of their 'mini state,' but also partially the creation of change agents that initiate healing in Germany itself.

³⁴³ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy*, 14.

³⁴⁴ Hahn, "The Seven Laws of Salem."

³⁴⁵ Hahn, "Letter from Kurt Hahn to Adam Arnold Brown, September 18th, 1965."

Again, the material reality of 1920s southern Germany drove much of this innovation. Quite simply, Salem needed the additional workforce that such a governance structure afforded. With young people occupying so much of the school administrative and leadership functions, Hahn and Von Baden were able to turn their focus to the growth of the Salem system.

SUCCESS AND EXPANSION: NEW SCHOOLS, NEW OFFERINGS

As the hyper-inflation subsided, Hahn and his team began to turn their eyes toward new locations for both pedagogical and strategic reasons. In 1921, Salem expanded into a junior school in a former convent near Hermannsburg, up the valley from Salem Castle. This younger school followed the Salem system and began to supply Salem itself with a steady stream of enrollments.³⁴⁶

In 1929, Salem again expanded, this time toward Lake Constance, into yet another castle on the outskirts of the town of Überlingen. The new school served the same age group as Salem proper, and was called Spetzgart. It allowed the Salem system to expand into the lake on a daily basis, adding rowing, sailing, and more frequent expeditions to Salem's repertoire. When Hahn eventually landed in Scotland years later, it would be his fond feelings toward sailing developed at Spetzgart that would lead to a full-blown program in seamanship. The Spetzgart expansion raised Salem's numbers to 360.

In 1931, Salem added yet another junior school, this time at Hohenfels, also in the picturesque region near Lake Constance in a castle formerly belonging to Teutonic knights. Salem was now far more than a high school. It had become a physical system of buildings and

³⁴⁶ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970.

locations in addition to a theoretical system. By 1933, Hahn could happily announce that, though Salem started with eight boarders, it now had 420.³⁴⁷ Ewald's later estimates put that number closer to 500.³⁴⁸

THE GATHERING STORM

During this time, another youth movement had started small and begun to surge upwards in numbers. Once just another *bunde* in a large and loud field, in September of 1930, Hitler Youth numbers had reached 18,000. By 1931, the same year that Salem added Hohenfels, that number had risen to nearly 31,000.³⁴⁹ In 1931, Baldur Schirach had been tapped by Hitler to lead the Hitler Youth. Schirach's first official rally drew a crowd of 70,000 to Potsdam on October 1st and 2nd of 1932. When Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich in January of 1933, the number of official members had risen to 100,000. It had climbed to 2.2 million by the end of that same year.³⁵⁰

The surge in membership in the Hitler Youth was a byproduct of the steady growth in power of the Nazi party at the beginning of the 1930s. As the Great Depression's effects took hold on a global scale, the Weimar government's already tenuous grip on the nation began to slip further. Street violence, having reached a bad-but-stable level in the mid-to-late 1920s, began to surge again. The violence was political, with factions competing for supremacy in the twilight of the Weimar democracy. Aggressors on both sides systematically attacked each other's rallies, headquarters, and leadership. The conflagrations were especially bad between

³⁴⁷ Hahn, "The Practical Child and the Bookworm."

³⁴⁸ Ewald, "Salem School 1919-33: Foundation and Expansion," 1970, 37.

³⁴⁹ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 2006, 17.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

the communists and the Nazis.³⁵¹ This same pattern played itself out in the politics German parliament, the Reichstag, where hateful partisan activity between the same two groups all but stopped any political process. The parliamentary process was rapidly losing credibility. By mid-1932, only a year after Salem opened the campus at Hohenfels, Weimar democracy was dying.³⁵²

For his part, Hahn was nearly as disappointed in the failing parliamentary system as he was dismayed by what he called the “fascist upsurge” of the Nazis. As he put it, “what is the real source of the powerful attraction of the Nazis? Apart from the economic privation it is disgust over the corruption of the German Parliamentary system. This system can no longer be retained.”³⁵³ Hahn, in his own quiet way, remained in the camp of extra-governmental idealists.

The Potempa Murder and the Beuthen Telegram

As violence surged on the streets throughout Germany, then Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen issued a series of desperate Presidential decrees to quiet the unrest. The last of these, on August 9th of 1932, promised the death penalty for any killer of a rival in an act of political violence. The decree was mainly aimed at the Communists.³⁵⁴

However, on August 10th, drunk and enraged Nazi brown shirts stormed a farm near the village of Potempa, in the then-German region of Upper Silesia, where a known communist sympathizer, Konrad Pietzuch lived. They found him asleep. The Nazis beat Pietzuch senseless

³⁵¹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 270.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 275.

³⁵³ Kurt Hahn, “Open Letter by Kurt Hahn, 1930,” in *Erziehung und die Krise der Demokratie [Education and the Crisis of Democracy]* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986).

³⁵⁴ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 270.

with blunt weapons, began stomping him, and finally killed him with a revolver. The Nazis were quickly tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death in the nearby town of Beuthen. As soon as the sentence was handed down, a much larger group of Nazis stormed the town itself, destroying the shops and property of anyone with left-leaning views or who happened to be Jewish.³⁵⁵ Due to the national decree issued by Papen just a day before the murder, the courtroom drama and ensuing madness became a kind of referendum on Nazi audacity and power. Neither Hitler nor Hahn would be able to resist such rich ideological turf.

Hitler, outraged at the imprisonment of the brown shirts, issued what has become known as the Beuthen Telegram, publicly praising the murder of Pietzuch as the work of “comrades,” and announcing that the winning of the brown shirts’ freedom “is our honor.”³⁵⁶ Later, in a larger appeal to his ‘German racial comrades’ Hitler announced that he would never think of serving in a government that would force him to become the “hangman of the nationalist freedom fighters of the German people!”³⁵⁷

Hahn’s Response: ‘Salem Cannot Remain Neutral’

In an internal document titled only “Historical Document: Private and Confidential,” Hahn recorded many of his positions on the ascendant Nazi movement. He recognized the moral crossroads that Germany faced after Hitler’s Beuthen Telegram: “the intensity of the moral crisis in Germany was indescribable.”³⁵⁸ On the 9th of September, 1932, after some deliberation, Kurt

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 296.

³⁵⁶ Charles P Stetson, “An Essay on Kurt Hahn, Founder of Outward Bound (1941)” (Genius of Experimental Education in the 20th Century, 2000), www.Kurthahn.org.

³⁵⁷ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 297.

³⁵⁸ Kurt Hahn, “Historical Document: Private and Confidential,” 1933-34?, KHA SK-17, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

Hahn circulated a short letter to the large Salem Bunde (Salem Association) regarding Hitler's telegram. He did not mince words. "Germany is at stake: its Christian ethos, its reputation and the honour of its soldiers." Hahn went on to directly challenge Hitler. "I call upon the members of the Salem Association who are active in SA or SS to sever either their allegiance to Hitler or to Salem."³⁵⁹

Erich Meissner, long a colleague of Hahn's at both Salem and then Gordonstoun, recalled how many of Salem's friends and advocates at the time tried to keep Hahn from releasing such an explosive letter. Hitler had not risen to full power yet, though such an outcome seemed likely. Hahn's counselors begged him to consider what was at stake. Surely Hitler would seek revenge.³⁶⁰

It is hard to imagine a situation where Hahn would have changed his mind, no matter how eloquent the appeal. The moment had come for him to exhibit the same moral fortitude he saw so lacking in other leaders in earlier controversies of a national and international scale. Instead of a frustrated bystander, as he had been during the unrestricted submarine warfare controversy of the First World War, Hahn now saw himself as a central player. Children of the wealthy and the powerful had grown up in Salem's halls, and its name was well-known. At the center of the Salem system, famous for its emphasis on moral rectitude and training, was the moral authority of its founder and headmaster. For Hahn, this was an ethical choice of the

³⁵⁹ Kurt Hahn, "Letter from Hahn to the Salem Bunde Regarding the Beuthen Telegram," Typed, (September 9, 1932), SER0009/I2, Gordonstoun School Archive.

³⁶⁰ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy*, 21.

highest intangible stakes. The letter went out. Meissner later called the event the ‘bravest act done in cold blood I have ever witnessed.’³⁶¹

A Dangerous Enemy

Hitler was made Reich Chancellor in January 30th of 1933, celebrated by a massive torch-lit parade of 60,000 uniformed Nazis and Nazi supporters.³⁶² Hindenburg inspected the troops from the balcony of the presidential residence. It was a telling event, with a nationalist fervor that rivaled only the announcement of war fourteen short years earlier. As Richard Evans notes, one of Hitler’s main techniques going forward would be to maximize this nationalist sentiment by keeping Germany on a “permanent war footing.” Hitler needed no ‘moral equivalent to war.’ He would simply have the war itself. Hitler wasted no time in consolidating his power. In less than a year, he and his lieutenants would have executed a de-facto coup, neutralizing or cannibalizing most of the Third Reich’s political rivals.

Using the now-infamous communist arson attack in February of 1933 on the Reichstag, the German parliamentary building, as a premise, Hitler convinced Von Hindenburg to suspend most civil liberties in order to deal with what he identified as the looming communist threat. A nationwide wave of arrests, detainments, beatings, torture, and killings followed Hindenburg’s act. Hitler and his newly-deputized auxiliary police forces: the brown shirts and the steel helmets, used the Reichstag fire to stoke the widespread and smoldering fears of bolshevism in

³⁶¹ Stetson, “An Essay on Kurt Hahn, Founder of Outward Bound (1941).”

³⁶² Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 310.

Germany. In a short amount of time, the German communist party was disintegrated, its leaders having fled, been imprisoned, killed, or terrified into silence.³⁶³

The violent purge following the Reichstag fire did not solely target communists. Social democrats, Jews, and many other political rivals and potential threats to the infant Reich were also swept up into 'protective custody,' filling the prisons. Once the prisons filled up, the Nazis often moved these detainees to institutions that would soon become terribly familiar: concentration camps.³⁶⁴

Kurt Hahn was one of these threats, and, just as his friends and advisers had feared, he was arrested and jailed in the Überlingen gaol on the 8th of March, 1933.³⁶⁵

Powerful Friends

A series of remarkable letters exist indicating Hahn's powerful network at that time. None other than Neville Butler, the same young man Hahn had rescued from a civilian camp in the First World War, had become the personal secretary to the then-Prime Minister of England, Ramsay MacDonald. As soon as word reached Butler of Hahn's imprisonment, he took it upon himself to draft a letter from Ramsay to the German Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, on

³⁶³ Ibid., 331–335.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 348–349.

³⁶⁵ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950*, 321. In a rare bit of vindictive humor, Hahn noted with satisfaction that the man who jailed him, Gauleiter Wagner, tried to escape the region at the end of WWII by rowing across Lake Constance in a small boat. When he reached the Swiss side of the lake, and therefore freedom, the Swiss turned him back. This detail from Kurt Hahn, *Diary from 5th May to 16th May, 1945*, A.W. Duncan & Co. Ltd. Liverpool, 1945.

Hahn's behalf. In the handwritten note that accompanied the letter he asked Ramsay to sign, Neville wrote "In 1914-15 I owed Hahn everything – except money."³⁶⁶

The ensuing letter from MacDonald to Baron Neurath pretended to know nothing of the 'particulars' of the case, lest it be seen as meddling in international affairs. However, Ramsay asked Neurath to take a "friendly interest" in Hahn's case as a personal favor to him, citing Hahn's time at Oxford and Morayshire, and his contributions to international education.³⁶⁷

Neurath's return letter, dated only eight days later, suggested that Neurath had "already made inquiries" about Hahn's case, and implies that because of these inquiries, not MacDonald's letter, Hahn had been "released in the meantime."³⁶⁸ Neurath made no promises about whether Hahn would be able to return to Salem. Far from it, in fact. Hahn was banished from the Bodensee region, and moved in with his brother Rudolf in Berlin for a short time. During this time, Prince Max von Baden's son, the Margrave of Baden, plied Hitler with letters seeking first to free Hahn and then, once he was freed, to get him reinstated at Salem. His letters ignored, the Margrave approached Hitler publicly and in person. Hitler's screaming response was "Why don't you aristocrats get rid of your Hoffjuden [Court Jews]?"³⁶⁹ If there was any doubt that Hitler knew of Hahn and had already decided his influence was dangerous to the Reich, it had evaporated. Hahn was marked.

³⁶⁶ Neville Butler, "Note from Neville Butler to Ramsay MacDonald," Handwritten, (March 7, 1933), Gordonstoun School Archive.

³⁶⁷ Ramsay MacDonald, "Letter from Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to Ambassador Baron Von Neurath Regarding the Imprisonment of Kurt Hahn," Typed, (March 17, 1933), Gordonstoun School Archive.

³⁶⁸ Konstantin Von Neurath, "Letter from Baron Von Neurath to Ramsay MacDonald Regarding Kurt Hahn," Typed, (March 25, 1933), Gordonstoun School Archive.

³⁶⁹ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy*, 85.

Despite this, Hahn stayed in Berlin for a series of months, unbelievably, never completely giving up on a rehabilitation of Hitler as a possible savior of Germany, yet unable to return to Salem, where the Margrave of Baden, Erich Meissner, and Marina Ewald steadfastly maintained order and progress. Hahn's blindness to Hitler, like that of so many others at that time, is most poignantly revealed in the 'Historical Document' that Hahn allowed A.A. Arnold to release only well after the conclusion of the Second World War. In it, Hahn presses for someone to make the transgressions of Nazi street violence and the already-growing atrocities in the concentration camps more apparent to Hitler, so that he might take action to stop them.³⁷⁰ While in Berlin, Hahn had strategic meetings with high-level German military men, such as Generals Schleicher and Hammerstein, searching in vain for a non-fascist resolution to the accelerating tide of violence and repression.³⁷¹ This resilient hope for the retribution of Germany finally gave way a year later during the murders of the Roehm Purge. In this infamous 'night of the long knives,' Schleicher and his wife were summarily executed on Hitler's orders along with 85 others, while more than a thousand were imprisoned.³⁷² It was becoming abundantly clear that a true nightmare was taking hold in Germany.

In June of 1933, the Margrave of Baden wrote a devoted ally of Hahn's that "it has become absolutely necessary to convince him [Hahn] that he must leave his home country for a while," implying darkly that a fate far worse than prison awaited Hahn if he persisted in remaining in Germany.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Hahn, "Historical Document: Private and Confidential."

³⁷¹ Sir Leyton, Walter, "Situation in Germany - Extracts from Sir Walter Leyton's Diary of a Visit to Berlin Regarding Attitude of Dr. Hahn of the Salem School," April 2, 1933, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

³⁷² Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 31-41.

³⁷³ Jocelin Winthrop-Young and Paul Bedelow, *Life and Work of Kurt Hahn*, Transcribed, May 29, 1986, KHA SK - 159, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany; Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy*.

BANISHMENT TO SCOTLAND

Kurt Hahn left his beloved Germany for London in July of 1933. A short time later he was back in northern Scotland, a land he'd always considered his second home. A place he'd once fled *from*, on the eve of a different war, seventeen years ago.

Once rich, Hahn was now penniless. Once at the center of a powerful network of schools and political contacts, he was now ashore in a nation tilting toward war with his own. Far south and across the channel, Hitler's chess moves were becoming bolder. Salem, despite the stalwart efforts of Erich Meissner, Marina Ewald and others, soon fell under the control of a Nazi Komissar. Hahn was not exactly alone. But as the summer days grew incrementally shorter, and the north Atlantic colder by degrees, one can only guess at the depths of homesickness and heartbreak the German headmaster felt. After decades battling the 'inflamed city' of German society and the 'sour fields' of education, his family, his friends, his Salem schools, all lay behind him in a Germany once more descending into war.

PART III: Gordonstoun

TO 'DEMONSTRATE SALEM'

By his own admission, Kurt Hahn was defeated when he finally made it to England in 1933. "Doubts were assailing me. Before I left Germany, friends told me: "the devil is invincible. You will never see Salem again."³⁷⁴ When Geoffrey Winthrop Young and Ka Arnold Forster approached Hahn about "demonstrating the Salem system" in Britain, Hahn refused outright.³⁷⁵ Hahn's fundamental understandings about his causes and the contexts into which he had deployed them were shaken. "Was my faith in nature built on quicksand?" he mused.³⁷⁶ It took a visit back to northern Scotland, and a confrontation with the majesty-that-could-be of the physical plant of the Gordonstoun estate to re-ignite Hahn's customary zeal.

Yet Hahn was not the same green political-operator-turned-headmaster he had been in 1919, completely inexperienced in school administration and teaching. For 13 years Salem had steadily grown under his care, blooming from 20 students to 500, and from one location to five. Hahn had amassed experience, but more importantly he had developed a functional pedagogy. He knew what he was going to do.

In the lull and emotional turmoil following his escape to Britain, Hahn reflected carefully on Salem and its implications for what could follow. Hahn was delighted with the success of physical training in revitalizing students' health. He was also as convinced as ever that his

³⁷⁴ Hahn, "Untitled Retrospective of 30 Years," 4.

³⁷⁵ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 149.

³⁷⁶ Hahn, "Untitled Retrospective of 30 Years," 5.

'discovery' of a *grande passion* to defray the poisons of puberty had wide applications and implications.³⁷⁷

However, Hahn felt he had not fulfilled his promise to Prince Max von Baden regarding Salem's community. "There was no doubt that we had failed in the Cistercian purpose; dramatic opportunities had been seized by the school [Salem] to be of use to the district but there was never that epic continuity of service which the Cistercians had practiced and preached."³⁷⁸ This realization would represent not only a different character for Gordonstoun, but also an evolution of Hahn's educational thought, though this transition was only beginning to take place in 1934.

Hahn's first school in Scotland was not Gordonstoun, but rather a small boy's school in Rothiemarcus that lasted less than a year. It wasn't until Lady Smith-Cumming, his long-time friend from the Oxford days, secured a lease for the Duffus House at Gordonstoun that "three boys and a tutor" moved there for the winter. The landowner thought they were a family party. By the summer of 1934, the numbers of boys surrounding this 'tutor' had grown to the point that they moved to the larger manor house of Gordonstoun. By Autumn of 1935, the group of 'tutors' and boys had now grown so they needed Duffus House once more, this time as a preparatory school.³⁷⁹ Hahn had found the site for his "demonstration of Salem."

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Archie Dunbar, "Letter from Sir Archie Dunbar to David Byatt on 1-10-1987," January 10, 1987, SER 009 / I 006, Gordonstoun School Archive. Sir Dunbar, son of the landlord of Gordonstoun at the time of Hahn's arrival, remembers Hahn and the then-bursar, Laffan, inspecting the drains by sniffing them.

Gordonstoun, the Place

Compared to the majestic, lovely, and temperate surroundings of the Bodensee district in which Salem is nestled, Gordonstoun and the Morayshire are windy, wild and remote. The Gordonstoun estate lies two hours by car northwest of Aberdeen. The nearest train station is 20 minutes away by car in Elgin, and the nearest village is Hopeman, which sits directly on the Moray Firth in the North Atlantic. The school is only 60-70 miles south of the northern end of the contiguous United Kingdom, as the crow flies. The region is dominated by the forbidding waters of the North Atlantic to the north and east, and the Cairngorm mountain range and Caledonian forest to the south.

To an outside observer, the entire region appears windswept and spare. A gorgeous deep green covers most planes. Older buildings in the towns near Gordonstoun are constructed of grey granite and other stonework, rendering an infrastructure that looks ready to withstand a gale.

Gordonstoun itself is a manor first built in the early 1600s and acquired by Sir Robert Gordon, the First Baronet of Gordonstoun in 1638.³⁸⁰ It sits on an impressive 300 acres of grounds. As one faces the imposing main manor house, to the right is an even more unusual structure, the Round Square. Built by the third Baronet, Sir Robert Gordon the Wizard, the Round Square is a massive and completely circular structure of three stories. In the center these days is a lush green lawn. Legend has it that the round shape was an obsession of Robert the

³⁸⁰ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 23.

Wizard, as he didn't want the devil to be able to 'catch him in a corner.'³⁸¹ The Gordonstoun School Archives are located in the Round Square.

The Gordonstoun physical plant is similar to Salem in that, though locals occasionally refer to each as 'castles,' they are not obviously martial in any way. Salem seems open to its surroundings, reflecting its Cistercian beginnings, and Gordonstoun is regal rather than defensive. By far the most profound aspects of Gordonstoun is its wealth of sea and sky. There is a path leading from the massive front entrance of the Gordonstoun house directly north toward a set of cliffs that soar hundreds of feet above the Moray Firth. Gordonstoun's sports fields and roads are laid out in such a fashion that trees do not impede sightlines. It is an expansive-seeming place, with horizon and ocean adding to the sensation of being small and glad one is near a sturdy stone structure.

The situation was much different in 1933. The physical plant had endured decades of destruction and neglect by the time Hahn and his staff took over.³⁸² Gordonstoun's Director of Studies and eventually headmaster himself, Henry Brereton, affectionately referred to the older buildings as "piles." Though he confessed to loving the legend and history of the place, he felt that "Gordonstoun and the Round Square are still awkward and inconvenient buildings and if Dr. Hahn had been looking for buildings which would ease his administrative and economic problems, he would never have chosen them."³⁸³ But choose them Hahn did, and for most of the next two decades Hahn would hatch a series of innovations at Gordonstoun that, though evolutions of the Salem system, became something altogether new.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 72.

³⁸² Ibid., 149.

³⁸³ Ibid., 3.

THE SAME SYSTEM IN A NEW CONTEXT

An optimistic tone fills the report Hahn delivered to the Gordonstoun governors on July 17th of 1935. Enamored by the spare but lovely environment of northern Scotland, and especially pleased with the quality of the local people, Hahn reported happily that “Gordonstoun is situated in a peaceful and fertile land . . .” and noted with satisfaction that “there is challenge on the horizon; to the north the challenge of the sea, and to the south the challenge of the high hills.” This was an ideal location for the next phase of his system.

That system was imported to Scotland almost intact. Letters home from a boy in the first years of Gordonstoun are filled with discussions about Colour Bearers, Helpers, Guardians and Training Plans.³⁸⁴ Hahn felt that the self-governance, physical training, and student governance structure had stood up to steady usage at Salem and he implemented them once more with only a few modifications.³⁸⁵ He did not do so without reservations, however. Hahn worried that the British context might reject the assumptions that had rendered the Salem system so effective in its native Germany. In particular, he worried that the culture of “cheating and cribbing” so common in British Public Schools would be incompatible with Salem’s, and now Gordonstoun’s culture of trust. Indeed, at first Hahn had to mete out stiff punishments as the boys adjusted to unusual expectations.³⁸⁶

Hahn installed roughly the same six-day schedule as well, though the initial class time was even more abbreviated because the tiny number of boys supported only a handful of

³⁸⁴ H.C. Nohl-Oser, “Relevant Extracts from Letters Written Home by Christel Nohl,” to 10/1936 1934, 1–4, SER 009/ I 0006, Gordonstoun School Archive.

³⁸⁵ Nohl-Oser, “Relevant Extracts from Letters Written Home by Christel Nohl.”

³⁸⁶ Kurt Hahn, “Report on the Progress of Gordonstoun School, 1934-1935” (British Salem Schools, Ltd., July 17, 1935), 12, KHA-SK-31, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

masters. As a result, in the early years Gordonstoun students had an even more intense extra-curricular experience, both in project and in practical work.³⁸⁷

One important factor that changed dramatically was that Hahn elected to make Gordonstoun a single-sex boy's school. At least one source indicated that Hahn did so in order to differentiate the Gordonstoun from other "progressive schools."³⁸⁸ This is an odd assertion, as so many of Hahn's directors of study and other upper administrative leaders were dyed-in-the-wood progressives.³⁸⁹ It is possible that, at this stage of Hahn's career, he was taking umbrage at other progressives' suggestion that the 'character training' taking place at Gordonstoun was uncomfortably similar to that of the youth programs of the Third Reich. Gordonstoun did not become co-educational until 1972.

Due to the degraded state of Gordonstoun's buildings and grounds, much of the initial practical work and grounds work was focused on the rehabilitation of Gordonstoun itself, just like the early years of Salem. In the first year the students had built their own rowing boat, high jump pit, shot putting green, and 100 yards of track.³⁹⁰ Hahn also thrilled to see how the boys loved to garden.³⁹¹ Hahn ended his report to the Governors on a note that signaled where he,

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 15.

³⁸⁸ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy*, 9.

³⁸⁹ Rohrs, Hermann, "The Educational Thought of Kurt Hahn," *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, 1970, 124. These progressives included most of his leadership at both schools. "What Marina Ewald, Karl Reinhardt, Wilhelm Schmidle, and Kurt Blendinger signified for Salem, Erich Meissner (starting with valuable experience of Salem), Henry Brereton, and Bobby Chew came to signify for Gordonstoun. They were all pioneers of progressive schooling backed by sound educational theory—and prepared to experiment with extremely unconventional methods."

³⁹⁰ Nohl-Oser, "Relevant Extracts from Letters Written Home by Christel Nohl."

³⁹¹ Hahn, "Report on the Progress of Gordonstoun School, 1934-1935," 13.

and therefore Gordonstoun, were headed in the coming years. "Gordonstoun can serve the district in which it is placed."³⁹²

Academics at Gordonstoun

Gordonstoun's curriculum would be supervised by Henry Brereton, an Englishman. Brereton met Hahn in his first months of exile when he visited Brereton's school. The men felt a strong connection, Hahn feeling again that strong sense of "English ballast" that he so enjoyed at Oxford, and Brereton a deep admiration for someone who had "already been to jail for his principles."³⁹³ Though their partnership was to undergo many transitions, Brereton was first tasked with installing a "modified Dalton Plan" at Gordonstoun and protecting the academic base of the school from too many character-training-related interruptions and dilutions. In 1950, Brereton privately circulated a lengthy self-titled account of Gordonstoun. In it he provides an excellent explanation of the curriculum innovations at work in a school more famous for its non-academic activities.

It is a compromise between the orthodox class method and the individual assignment method as advocated by those who believe in the Dalton Plan. . . It may be regarded as an application of the methods used at universities, but adapted to the needs of younger boys. One of its merits is that a boy so taught is better prepared for his studies at the university. At Gordonstoun, by assignments and projects . . . boys discover for themselves and not depend on spoon feeding by a master.³⁹⁴

³⁹² Ibid., 17.

³⁹³ Henry L. Brereton, "Kurt Hahn of Gordonstoun," in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, English Edition with Additional Material (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 41.

³⁹⁴ Henry L. Brereton, "Gordonstoun" (Privately Circulated, 1950), 51, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

Brereton goes on to wish that these successes in the classroom were less “apt to get hidden behind discussions of our international connections, character training, fitness movement, and social services.” He then points out that Gordonstoun boys have historically done well in academic competitions, university scholarship examinations, and especially later university performance. “Let us face the truth,” Brereton boasts quietly, “we have done the jobs of a secondary school and a coaching establishment at the same time.”³⁹⁵

From a ‘Demonstration’ of Salem to advent of the Gesundheitsherd

Resolved that this public school would deliver where Salem had failed, Hahn immediately implemented a series of initiatives that connected Gordonstoun with the local community to a degree far exceeding his efforts in Germany. In an address in 1950, Hahn went as far as to announce “I no longer believe in isolated adolescent communities,” concluding that “they cannot fulfill the Cistercian assignment.”³⁹⁶ Hahn had forsaken the tendency of Salem to “look inward.” Going forward, the schools Hahn would found would be “outward looking.” This penetrated Hahn’s thinking to the extent that he rewrote the oath that the highest-ranking boy at Gordonstoun, the Guardian, his version of the Platonic ideal of the moral, educated warrior, would take. The new oath would reflect Gordonstoun’s specific geographical context. It read “I promise to serve Hopeman village and this district, through them my King and country, and Christ through all.”³⁹⁷ Outward looking, indeed. The first of these outward gazes centered on Gordonstoun’s proximity to the Moray Firth.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Hahn, “Untitled Retrospective of 30 Years,” 6.

³⁹⁷ Flavin, *Kurt Hahn’s Schools and Legacy*, 25. Hahn did not officially convert to Anglicanism until 1945.

Gordonstoun and the Sea

Gordonstoun soon became famous for its seamanship program. Relying on the harbor at Hopeman village, Gordonstoun boys were soon engaged in daily sailing expeditions in small boats. These soon grew into week-long journeys once the school had acquired a series of hand-me-down yachts or larger vessels.³⁹⁸ Hahn was overjoyed at this new development in his system. The boys were as well. A letter from 1936 reads “the Seamanship guild . . . invited many people to visit the “Home Fleet,” which is at the moment doing maneuvers in the Moray Firth. They went on our large sailing ship the “Diligent.”³⁹⁹ According to Brereton, the week-long trips were highlights of the terms, and the boys often begged Hahn to let them go farther and longer.

An important distinction was made at this time regarding the difference between training for the sea, or developing skills and experience as a sailor; and training through the sea, where one learns the skills and gains experience as a sailor while also overcoming fears, building self-respect, and broadening one’s ability to trust others.⁴⁰⁰ This distinction, “through” as opposed to “for” became a vital philosophical departure point for what was to come next for Gordonstoun: Outward Bound.

This move to the external community surrounding Gordonstoun represented a crucial departure from Salem. The boys were simply out in the community more, traveling to and from the harbor

³⁹⁸ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 157.

³⁹⁹ Nohl-Oser, “Relevant Extracts from Letters Written Home by Christel Nohl,” 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 157. This may have been retrospective memory, as the phrase is later attributed to Lawrence Holt of the Blue Funnel shipping company, in discussing what the Outward Bound schools would do. This was four years *after* the moment Brereton describes here.

and beach, as well as developing relationships and learning the actual craft of sailing from the fishermen in Hopeman.⁴⁰¹

Instead of a single system of schools dedicated to the incubation of moral leaders and active citizens, a task that demands a school ‘turn inward,’ one of the main functions of a Hahn’s new approach to school would be the healing and support of its surrounding district. He began using the phrase *Gesundheitsherd*, which means “island of healing.” With Salem as the first *Gesundheitsherd*, Gordonstoun would be the second. On the eve of the Second World War, his second school barely staggering to its feet, Hahn’s vision was already lifting up from the Scottish coast. Where else might there be an opportunity for a third *Gesundheitsherd*?

THE BIRTH OF THE RESCUE SERVICES

Gordonstoun’s steady engagement began to ignite educational opportunities that are still rippling through educational circles today. Through his connections with the local authorities developed from Gordonstoun’s seamanship program, Hahn learned that Gordonstoun was positioned exactly inland from an important blind spot on the coast, where the two existing observation points could not surveil the dangerous coastline, leaving a dangerous blind spot. Remembering the occasional successes of the Salem fire brigade, Hahn immediately volunteered Gordonstoun boys for the task. Hahn dug up an old legend about an

⁴⁰¹ Kurt Hahn, “Outward Bound,” in *The Year Book of Education, 1957* (London and New York: Evans Brothers, LTD, Russel Square, London and World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York. In association with the University of London Institute of Education and the Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1957), 437.

eighth century monk, Grenadius, who would patrol the windswept shore with a lantern, “to warn the fishermen against the dangers of shoals and rocks.”⁴⁰²

Equipped with a founding legend and the moral impetus that Hahn insisted be at the center of any activity, The Gordonstoun corps of Coastguard Watchers was born. A deal was struck with the local Board of Trade that if the boys built an observation hut, the city would run infrastructure to it.⁴⁰³ The Coastguard Watchers did far more than simply scan the North Atlantic for crafts in distress. They drilled for cliff rescues, using equipment supplied them by the HMS Coastguard Service, including rockets, flare pistols, and breeches-bouy apparatus.⁴⁰⁴

Far beyond merely being acquainted with the locals, the boys of Gordonstoun were now regularly contributing in a substantive way to the fabric of the community in which the school was nestled, moving intentionally toward the ‘epic continuity of service’ that Hahn envisioned. It was a tipping point in the evolution of Hahn’s evolution as an educationalist. It was a real-world, every day application of the ‘Third Law of Salem’: Give the children the opportunity for self-effacement in the common cause, and it ignited the fires of imagination in the boys of Gordonstoun. Adam Arnold-Brown enrolled at Gordonstoun at the very beginning, in 1934.

Writing in 1962, he remembered his duties vividly:

I helped build the first log cabin on the clifftop. I now looked out to sea, hour by hour, never daring to turn my eyes away, until relieved by another, for fear that an ‘insufficient flare’ might burn and expire unnoticed by me. The fact that few boats were likely to be out on the Moray Firth, that it was most unlikely that any would get into trouble, and that in any case the majority of boats would have wireless which would do much more efficiently what flares could barely do, weighted little with me... It was an

⁴⁰² Kurt Hahn, “‘The Decline of Democracy’ - A Speech to the 60th Annual Meeting of the Parents National Educational Union” (The Parents’ Review, May 26, 1949), KHA SK - 19, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany. 280.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 280.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

experience never to be forgotten to be on watch on that clifftop during a howling gale, waves thundering against the rocks below... this was service with some purpose.⁴⁰⁵

This 'self-effacement' was coming into full view on the shores of the Moray Firth.

As the success of the Coastguard Watchers grew, so too did Hahn's articulation of the intangible benefit for the young person. "We can capture the young for such a service, if we fire their imagination, if we stir their hearts, if we are prepared to use them in danger and in need, remembering all the time that he who demands much from the young commands their willing service."⁴⁰⁶ The martial implications were not lost on Hahn, long enamored with William James' essay "A Moral Equivalent to War." Indeed, in a written explication of that essay from 1948, Hahn suggests that "not even James could have foreseen the revelation about the young brought about during both world wars. . . that a boy between 16 and 18 will render service almost beyond human strength to a cause he regards as sacred."⁴⁰⁷

Since the days of Salem, Hahn had professed disdain for the methods with which adults recruit the efforts of young people. "There are three ways of trying to reach the young. There is persuasion, there is compulsion, and there is attraction. You can preach at them, that is a hook without a worm; you can say 'you must volunteer.' That is of the devil; and you can tell them, 'you are needed.' That appeal hardly ever fails."⁴⁰⁸ He had found the 'needed' for Gordonstoun. Inspired by the successes of the Coastguard Watchers, Hahn began to configure a new approach to the idea of public school, an evolution of Salem's character training.

⁴⁰⁵ Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character*, 38.

⁴⁰⁶ Kurt Hahn, "A Memorandum," May 1948, KHA-SK-18, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰⁸ Kurt Hahn, "'Outward Bound' - Transcript of Address Given by Kurt Hahn at the Annual Meeting of the Outward Bound Trust" (Outward Bound Trust, July 20, 1960), www.kurthahn.org.

In 1938, this approach found purchase when the Blue Funnel shipping line representative, Alfred Holt, sponsored two scholarships to Gordonstoun for local fishing boys. Their requisites were clear: “Character first, and then a competent mind, capable of reaching the Credit Standard of the School Certificate of Mathematics.” Holt implied that, were this initial experiment to be a success, his company and another could take 15-20 boys just like the first two.⁴⁰⁹

THE DEMONSTRATION TAKES ROOT

Henry Brereton remembered the challenges of Gordonstoun’s founding and early years to be markedly different from the reports he’d heard about Salem’s beginnings. Gordonstoun had no nationally-recognized patron like Von Baden, and it certainly had no nest egg. Neither did it have the luxury of an expansive, well-maintained estate such as the Salem Castle. Gordonstoun might have been expansive, but maintained it was not. Furthermore, Salem took its first steps in a vacuum - public schools were an oddity at that time in Germany, with the only well-known representations being the strange lineage that descended from Hermann Lietz’s efforts, as we have seen.

Gordonstoun on the other hand, was founded by a relatively unknown foreign national in a nation that gave birth to the concept of the public school that so inspired Hahn during his time at Oxford. This was the nation of Eton, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Winchester, Harrow, and Hotchkiss. Due in part to the power of this centuries-old conservative tradition, Britain was also

⁴⁰⁹ Kurt Hahn, “Ten Years of Gordonstoun: An Account and an Appeal” (“County Times” Printers, Welshpool, 1944), 18–19, SER 0009/I30, Gordonstoun School Archive.

the nation of staunch alternatives to this old guard, famous educational experiments like Abbotsholme, Bedales, Summerhill, and Dartington.

Due to this market saturation, but also due to Hahn's strong feelings about enrolling a wide swath of the population, both in terms of ability and wealth, Gordonstoun took most comers in the early years regardless of ability to pay or academic qualifications. As Brereton noted, this became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Gordonstoun became known as the school that could work wonders with a boy of marginal ability or emotional issues. This in turn, began attracting more of the same sort. It was only through conscious effort and incremental change did Gordonstoun slowly reverse this trend over many years, mixing the 'troubled' boys with other demographics.⁴¹⁰

Christopher Arnold-Forster took Brereton aside in the very early months of Gordonstoun's existence and warned him that without a substantial endowment of some kind, the breathless 'demonstration of the Salem system' would soon run out of air.⁴¹¹The school was on the edge of financial ruin for the entirety of its first six years, and "not a term passed without thoughts of closing"⁴¹²

Part of this was due to the meager times in which Gordonstoun was founded, and part was due to Hahn's relentless outpouring of ideas and new initiatives. In the early years he was counterbalanced by a bursar with a personality as powerful as his own. Walter Laffan occasionally quipped that "Gordonstoun has not been planned, but has merely happened." Hahn preferred an environment where intentionally-created camps must vie for students' time

⁴¹⁰ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 150–151.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 201.

and school resources. Nowhere was this more often the case than with Laffan and Hahn, one representing the cold reality of a school at the sickening edge of insolvency and the other the wild potential of a school at the precipice of true innovation. Witnesses reported meetings with the two men as being “with a lion and a tiger in a cage.”⁴¹³

THE MORAL EQUIVALENT TO WAR VS. THE TENTH CHAPTER OF LUKE

One of the reasons Laffan found Hahn so impossible to contain was that Hahn’s educational concepts had evolved in an important way, with vast implications for Gordonstoun and what would become the field of experiential education. Hahn’s lifelong commitment to *erlebnistherapie*, or healing through experience, had long been informed by William James’ concept of a ‘moral equivalent to war.’ As we have seen, Hahn was drawn to James essay because of its call to action, and its suggestion that if one could yoke real meaning and patriotism to an act of selflessness and sacrifice, one might be able to stave off the biological bloodlust, the “pugnacity” with which all are born. A crucial aspect of this move would be the approval and membership of the state or larger social authority for which the act was executed.

Witnessing the regular contributions and successes of the Coastguard Watchers, however, moved something new inside Hahn. Long having admired the sacrifices young people were inspired to make in service of a greater shared goal, Hahn wrote Salem’s third law: “Give the children the opportunity for self-effacement in the common cause.” But it was at Gordonstoun where Hahn saw the full power of this self-effacement. As the rescue services grew in impact and in number, Hahn’s feelings about the primacy of James began to change. In a

⁴¹³ Ibid., 196.

speech in 1950, Hahn asserted definitively that “William James is wrong. War did not show human nature at its highest dynamics. To do as we are told in the tenth chapter of St. Luke shows human nature at higher dynamics.”⁴¹⁴ Though the tenth chapter of St. Luke contains three main stories, Hahn was almost certainly referring to Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan. It is worth a close reading of the parable to understand the expansion in Hahn’s thinking at this time.

A man is set upon by thieves while traveling a dangerous road. The thieves beat him badly and leave him in a ditch. Three men encounter him. The first, a Priest, passes and does not stop. The second, a Levite, passes by also. The third, a Samaritan, stops. The Samaritan cleans the man’s wounds with wine and binds them. He places the wounded man on his beast of burden and walks with him a long distance to an inn. The Samaritan pays for the wounded man’s stay, and fronts the innkeeper more money if the man must stay longer. The Samaritan promises the innkeeper to pay more upon his return if that money runs out as well.

Importantly, Jesus tells the parable in dialogue with a witty lawyer, as an answer to the lawyer’s demand to know how to define the famous ‘love thy neighbor as thyself’ admonition. At the conclusion of the parable, Jesus asks the lawyer which character in the parable has defined ‘neighbor.’ The lawyer answers the Samaritan. Jesus agrees and famously admonishes him to “go and do likewise.”

In the rhetorical moment of the parable, Samaritans were racialized others, social outcasts, untouchables. That an outcast helped an anonymous traveler to such an extent is a radically inclusive definition of ‘neighbor,’ and a very high bar for the act of loving thy neighbor. The Samaritan’s creative transgression of social, racial, and ethnic thresholds is remarkable and

⁴¹⁴ Kurt Hahn, “Aims and Obstacles” (Aberdeen University Press, October 22, 1950), 8, KHA SK - 34, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

functions as an essential layer to the parable. The Samaritan was exercising a radical, universal compassion.⁴¹⁵

Hahn's embrace of the tenth chapter of St. Luke signaled a shift in his orientation to service and also explains a subtle but essential difference between Salem and Gordonstoun. At Salem, the central project was Germany itself. James' configuration, in his 1908 essay, fit perfectly with 'national rock' of martial values.⁴¹⁶ At Gordonstoun, and soon enough in the plentitude of rescue services that Hahn would ignite around Europe, a radical compassion that transcends social order, race, or ethnicity is the order of the day. Hahn would have his school and his programs "go and do likewise" across a vast array of national, social, and ethnic thresholds.

AN ATTEMPT AT SCALE-ABILITY: THE MORAY BADGE

Not very long after the establishment of Gordonstoun, Hahn began looking for ways to expand the 'Salem system' even further. So far his educational innovations had found success with the self-selecting demographics of families seeking a boarding school for their children in Germany and now Britain. Hahn wanted scale-ability:

All round us there is a decline in human strength at such a rate that no healing force, emanating out from an isolated boarding school, can keep pace with it. Public schools should build themselves into strongholds of fitness for the districts in which they are placed. We want to throw open our training facilities and also our training instruction to every boy who wants to avail himself of them.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Max George, The Parable of the Good Samaritan and its Implications, Telephone, December 28, 2015.

⁴¹⁶ I draw specific attention to the essay itself because William James was absolutely not a nationalist in any sense. However, his proposal in this essay is to enact a national conscription as a 'moral equivalent to war,' a proposal he makes on a national scale. It appears that Hahn interpreted it as such.

⁴¹⁷ Hahn, "Outward Bound," 1957, 438.

Using his own “Declines of Modern Life” as a starting point, Hahn began working on a system of training that would, though initially based at the school, would not be dependent upon it. He called the first incarnation of this system the “Moray Badge,” after the region where Gordonstoun was located. The participants would undergo “certain tests in athletics, expedition, and life-saving” aimed at shoring up the declines Hahn had long identified. Once the badge scheme was established and Gordonstoun set up as the initial training grounds, Hahn formed a partnership with the Elgin Academy, a local day school. “Boys of all types, farmers, fishermen, masons, clerks, apprentices, presented themselves for training.”⁴¹⁸ In a later report on Outward Bound, Hahn indicates that, though response was “feeble” in 1937 when the Moray Badge was first introduced, by the summer of 1939, 100 boys were training at Gordonstoun to pursue the Moray Badge. When Hahn wrote an open letter to the *London Times* advocating an expansion of the program, he received only one letter in response. It was of congratulations and encouragement and it was from Lord Robert Baden-Powell.⁴¹⁹ Even with such support, the Moray Badge scheme did not have the reach or impact Hahn hoped for. That would happen later in Wales.

ANOTHER GROWING SCHOOL, ANOTHER RISING STORM

Despite Hahn’s ferocious initiatives and the constant uncertainty of finances, Gordonstoun did flourish. Beginning with 13 boys at the end of 1934, the school finished 1935

⁴¹⁸ Hogan, James, *The County Badge or the Fourfold Achievement - A Report Delivered by the County Badge Experimental Committee* (London, Toronto, Bombay, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1941), 8. There is no early indication that girls were part of the Moray Badge, but, after a time, they were allowed to participate in the County Badge which followed. I describe that program below.

⁴¹⁹ Hahn, “Outward Bound,” 1957, 437–438.

with 66. This number went up by thirty more the next year, and thirty more the next, ending 1937 with 121 boys, less than a year before Hitler's Germany annexed Austria. Still sickened and shocked by the Röhm Purge of June 1934, Hahn initiated a flurry of meetings and sent a barrage of letters seeking to both warn the powers that be about Hitler's true danger, but also to raise awareness of the nightmares growing and deepening in German concentration camps. Whether his missives went ignored is unknown, but he never got a high level meeting. The shameful and willful ignorance of the existence of the concentration camps by the allies is well-documented elsewhere.⁴²⁰

By May of 1939, Germany acquired the Sudetenland from the Czechoslovak Republic via the Munich Agreement, and then violated that agreement to seize crucial Slovak lands.⁴²¹ Gordonstoun's numbers increased slightly that year. By 1939, Germany's disenfranchisement of its remaining Jewish population was complete. The number of boys at Gordonstoun had settled to a strong 135.

On September 1, 1939, the *blitzkrieg* came to Poland, stunning everyone in Europe with its speed and power, especially the Poles. Conservative estimates put Polish battle deaths in the month-long conflict at 120,000. The Germans lost 11,000. The Russians, who had joined Germany in the invasion, lost 700.⁴²² It was a new kind of war, a distinct escalation in the speed and power of weaponry and machines. A European state had fallen in 35 days. Germany, so long on its knees, was no longer. Not only had the 'inflamed state' that Hahn so badly wanted to heal

⁴²⁰ David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*, Complete Numbers edition (The New Press, 2007).

⁴²¹ Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 683.

⁴²² Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 7. This number does not count Polish wounded, 133,000; nor does it count those captured by the Germans, 700,000, and another 500,000 by the Russians.

remained sick, now it was belligerent and very dangerous. England was now at war with Germany for the second time in Hahn's life. The modern age, against which Hahn had been intervening for years was mutating once more. No longer pinned to the nightmare trenches of the First World War, this new manifestation of modernity was devastatingly fast. One imagines that especially painful for Hahn would be the fact that the primary aggressor was his own home nation. Salem had been founded to head off horrors just like the one that was gaining momentum in Eastern Europe.

It did not go unnoticed in Britain that a former German official, who had accompanied Germany to the negotiating table at Versailles and had been the personal secretary to a former German head of state, was now running a boy's school on Britain's vulnerable northern coast. The eyes of some locals, as well as the War Department, began to turn suspiciously toward Gordonstoun.

WAR AND RUPTURE

As the ramp toward war steepened, wild rumors began to circulate about Hahn as well as the twelve German masters and staff that taught and worked at Gordonstoun. Furthermore, there were fifteen German boys, some of whom had fled the Hitler Jugend, enrolled at Gordonstoun. Hahn, no stranger to xenophobia from his pre-war years in Morayshire assured the parents "I have seen spy fever before" and that Gordonstoun's actions would be careful and proactive, keeping their children's safety at the fore.⁴²³ Furthermore, Hahn noted that Gordonstoun coalesced as never before as a result of the rumors and looming threat. "The crisis

⁴²³ Kurt Hahn, "Three Crises in the History of Gordonstoun" (Privately Circulated, November 26, 1946), 2, SER 0009 / I013, Gordonstoun School Archive.

and its outcome have had a cleansing and bracing effect. Never in 21 years have I seen our system of trust less abused.”⁴²⁴ However, due to Gordonstoun’s proximity to two Aerodromes as well as the tactical nature of the particular coastline on which the school sat, Gordonstoun decided to evacuate.

The Army would inhabit the estate in the school’s absence. For the second time in a decade, Hahn was homeless. This time, however, he was carrying a school. Relief was found through the intervention of Lord Davies a father of two Gordonstoun boys and a full convert to Hahn’s pedagogy. Lord Davies offered up his property in Llan Dinam, Wales. It was inland from the Welsh coastline, but Cardigan Bay would be a fitting place to moor Gordonstoun’s boats.⁴²⁵

Despite this generosity, relocation was a small cataclysm for Gordonstoun. Numbers fell precipitously, stabilizing at around 50 boys, and once again the school faced financial ruin. Furthermore, despite its small numbers, the school didn’t fit at Llan Dinam entirely, and was forced to open a second campus 30 miles from the first one. It was a time of strain and darkness for the staff. It would only be through the intervention of a shipping magnate that Gordonstoun would survive this particular bout of financial insecurity.

FROM THE MORAY BADGE TO THE COUNTY BADGE

Despite Gordonstoun’s financial straits, Hahn remained committed to the scale-ability of the “Salem System.” By 1940 Hahn’s qualified successes with the Moray Badge had been noticed outside of Scotland. A series of powerful men lent their support to the program, now

⁴²⁴ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 157.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 154–155.

called the County Badge, and an Experimental Committee was formed, led by James Hogan.⁴²⁶

Hahn's educational innovations at a boarding school were already well-known. How they applied to the general population was a topic of increasing interest to other educators and public health officials.

The County Badge had also evolved from its previous contours as the Moray Badge. There were now four "fields" within which a participant must achieve in order to win the award: Physical achievements, an Expedition achievement, a Project achievement, and a Service achievement.⁴²⁷ In a direct citation of the Salem System's training plan, the participants would record their deeds in a "Book of Progress"⁴²⁸ Hahn and his new committee saw the goal of the County Badge as being compensation for the failings of mainstream education, which they listed as being a lack of any education at all to 75% of the boys and girls of the nation, a narrow education to those that do stay in school, a widespread lack of "health, vigor, and stamina," and the discipline necessary for "adult citizenship."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Hogan, James, *The County Badge or the Fourfold Achievement - A Report Delivered by the County Badge Experimental Committee*, 6. The committee consisted of A.D. Lindsay, a master at Balliol College, Oxford; R. Birley, Headmaster of Charterhouse school; Henry Brooke; Sir E. Farquhar Buzzard, Professor of Medicine at Oxford; F. Clarke, professor of Education at London University; W. McG. Eagar, Editor of *The Boy*; Julian S. Huxley, Secretary of the Zoological Society of London; Maurice Jacks, Director of the Department of Education, Oxford University; Major-General Sr. Neill Malcolm; Sir Walter Moberly; W.F. Oakeshott, High Master of St. Paul's School; Dr. J.H. Oldham, Editor of the *Christian News-Letter*; Flight Lieutenant J.G. Paterson, RAF, late Advisor on Physical Training, Industrial Welfare Society; Admiral Sir Hubert W. Richmond, Master of Downing College, Cambridge, and the secretary of the Committee and a later luminary of the Outward Bound movement, J. M. Hogan of Balliol College, Oxford.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19. Hahn and the committee appeared to differ on the appropriateness of this training for females. Later in the report, the committee goes on record as advocating that "their training scheme should be open to girls as well as boys, and that the same badge should be awarded to both."

APPENDIX 'THE FOURFOLD ACHIEVEMENT'			
1. Physical Standards (Boys)			
	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
GROUP I. Swimming and Life- saving.	(a) 150 yds. swimming. (b) <i>Standard.</i> 25 yds. in 30 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 25 yds. in 28 sec. (c) Diving.	(a) 300 yds. swimming. (b) <i>Standard.</i> 25 yds. in 27 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 25 yds. in 24 sec. (c) Two dives, Side and Springboard. (d) 25 yds. swimming in clothes. (e) Knowledge of defence. (f) Demonstrate 2 methods of resuscitation. (g) Within 3 min. dive from surface and retrieve object from depth of 5 ft.	(a) 500 yds. swimming. (b) <i>Standard.</i> 25 yds. in 23 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 25 yds. in 20 sec. (c) Three dives, side, spring- board, and 3 feet. (d) 90 yds. swimming in clothes. (e) 10 yds. life-saving, both dressed, knowledge of defence. (f) Demonstrate 2 methods of resuscitation. (g) Within 3 min. dive from surface and retrieve object from depth of 6 ft.
<i>N.B.—Holders of Bronze Medallion of the R.L.S.S. are exempt from tests c, d, f, and g.</i>			
GROUP II. Jumping.	High Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 3 ft. 8 in. <i>Silver.</i> 4 ft. Long Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 12 ft. 6 in. <i>Silver.</i> 13 ft. 6 in.	High Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 4 ft. 2 in. <i>Silver.</i> 4 ft. 6 in. Long Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 14 ft. 6 in. <i>Silver.</i> 15 ft. 6 in. 30	High Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 4 ft. 6 in. <i>Silver.</i> 4 ft. 10 in. Long Jump. <i>Standard.</i> 15 ft. 6 in. <i>Silver.</i> 16 ft. 6 in.
GROUP III. Throwing.	Throwing the Cricket Ball. <i>Standard.</i> 110 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 130 ft.	Weight (12-lb. shot). <i>Standard.</i> 29 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 32 ft. OR Javelin (600 grams). <i>Standard.</i> 65 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 75 ft. OR Discus. <i>Standard.</i> 45 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 55 ft.	Weight (12-lb. shot). <i>Standard.</i> 29 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 32 ft. OR Javelin (600 grams). <i>Standard.</i> 85 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 105 ft. OR Discus. <i>Standard.</i> 60 ft. <i>Silver.</i> 75 ft.
GROUP IV. Running.	80 yds. <i>Standard.</i> 11 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 10½ sec.	100 yds. <i>Standard.</i> 13 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 12½ sec. OR Half-mile. <i>Standard.</i> 2 min. 54 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 2 min. 36 sec.	100 yds. <i>Standard.</i> 12½ sec. <i>Silver.</i> 11½ sec. OR Half-mile. <i>Standard.</i> 2 min. 36 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 2 min. 30 sec.
GROUP V. Stamina.	Not applicable.	2 Miles Run. <i>Standard.</i> 14 min. 30 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 13 min. 30 sec. OR 5 Miles Walk. <i>Standard.</i> 1 hr. 5 min. <i>Silver.</i> 1 hr.	2 Miles Run. <i>Standard.</i> 14 min. 15 sec. <i>Silver.</i> 13 min. 10 sec. OR 5 Miles Walk. <i>Standard.</i> 1 hr. <i>Silver.</i> 55 min.
2. The Expedition Climbing, exploring, seamanship, mountaineering, riding, &c. For Senior and Intermediate Boys it should involve a night spent away from home. A record should be written and submitted to the judges on completion of the journey.			

Figure 4: The first two "fields" of achievement of the County Badge, circa 1941. The sprinting times are fast! Excerpted from Kurt Hahn, "The Badge (From an Address at the Annual Conference of the National Association of Physical Education, September, 1941)" (Gordonstoun School, 1941), 10, SER 009/I31, Gordonstoun School Archive.

In a speech in 1941, Hahn vigorously defended the County Badge, insisting that "we must overcome the sloth which accompanies our diseased civilization."⁴³⁰ On the strength of his experiences with the Moray Badge, Hahn advocated for a four-week program, a shortening and intensifying of the Salem System, in order to jump-start the healing process in as many participants as possible. He called the four weeks a "training holiday," and issued a call to action

⁴³⁰ Kurt Hahn, "The Badge (From an Address at the Annual Conference of the National Association of Physical Education, September, 1941)" (Gordonstoun School, 1941), 10, SER 009/I31, Gordonstoun School Archive.

to other public schools and voluntary organizations.⁴³¹ In a passage that worth rendering here in its entirety, Hahn also answered criticisms that his program smacked of another well-known youth movement just to the south:

The gravest objection to the programme comes from representatives of progressive education. They will say, and have said again and again, "All these demands, resourcefulness, tenacity, patience, are basic in the plan which the Nazis put before their young." Is that so? I am afraid we must admit that the young Nazis are expected to be hardened, self-controlled, resourceful, and observant. Of their best it is not untrue to say that they bear all things, endure all things, undertake all things. So does charity, according to the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians; so do our merchant seamen; so do the watchmen in the Coast Guard Service. We can definitely say that you must have "watchmen's virtues" to be a good Christian, and you cannot be a good Nazi without them. It is nonsense to call them either Nazi or Christian. . . These human powers can be harnessed to good or evil purposes. They serve the devil or his counterpart.⁴³²

Hahn then goes on to say that, though it is natural for the terrified masses to resist the use of this educational technology (training young people to be resilient, resourceful, tenacious and patient) in light of the nightmare of Nazism raging just to the south, but warns that if such use is resisted, "We may well lose this struggle."⁴³³

LAWRENCE HOLT AND OUTWARD BOUND

The full-scale evacuation of Gordonstoun necessitated the relocation of most of the school's boats via rail. This transportation left only the majestic three-masted *Prince Louis* back in Scotland. These were crucial resources to Gordonstoun, especially with the primacy of seamanship in the non-academic program. After their successes with scholarships to

⁴³¹ Ibid., 11.

⁴³² Ibid., 11–12.

⁴³³ Ibid. By "this struggle," Hahn refers to not only the war itself, but the return, after the war, of the "sloth of the twenties," which, Hahn implies, led to this war in the first place.

Gordonstoun, the Holt family, especially Lawrence Holt, the owner of Blue Funnel Shipping Line, had become an ardent supporter of the school, so much so that his own son attended.⁴³⁴

The Helper in charge of Seamanship, Stephen Philp, did not feel right with the school's flagship loitering in Scotland, far from the school. After being lobbied relentlessly, Hahn agreed to let boys sail the ship south as long as a capable adult skeleton crew went along. In an event that has passed into legend, Holt lent "a sail-trained skipper," two bo'suns,⁴³⁵ and an engineer. The rest of the crew was comprised of Gordonstoun students. The expedition left Hopeman village in late July, 1941, a full year after the Battle of Britain. Three weeks later after becoming lost, joining a war-imposed safety convoy, and nearly being rammed, the Prince Louis sailed safely into the Menai Straits. Hahn was relieved and ecstatic: "I shall never forget my own release from anxiety and the glow of achievement on the tired faces of our boys – they had rendered a good account of themselves."⁴³⁶ Hahn was not the only one impressed.

Laurence Holt was the supervisor of the training ship *HMS Conway*. As such he was in the unique position to be able to notice a troubling phenomenon. When one of Blue Funnel's ships was sunk by Hitler's submarines, it was the younger, stronger, but less-experienced seaman who tended to perish in the unforgiving waters of the North Atlantic. The older, possibly weaker veteran sailors managed a much higher survival rate.⁴³⁷ Holt had been looking for a vehicle to prepare his new recruits for the vagaries of the sea. Looking at the flushed faces of

⁴³⁴ James M Hogan, "The Establishment of the First Outward Bound School at Aberdovey, Merionethshire," in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, English (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 62.

⁴³⁵ A ranked crew member who looks after the hull and deck of a boat.

⁴³⁶ Hahn, "Ten Years of Gordonstoun: An Account and an Appeal," 18-19.

⁴³⁷ James Martin Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences: The Story of the Outward Bound Schools* (Educational Productions, 1968), 64.

the Gordonstoun-trained teenagers that afternoon, Holt saw evidence of real skill and confidence in a demographic much younger than his newest recruits at Blue Funnel. He turned to Hahn on the dock and said “you must pool what you have in experience and good sense and with your joint support we can start a sea school at Aberdovey.”⁴³⁸

Hahn and Holt collaborated on the foundation of a series of “short term training holidays” based on the curriculum of the County Badge. Instead of reserving them for only the boys from Gordonstoun, Hahn and Holt offered the trainings to all manner of takers: local state school boys, members of Holt’s crews that had only been out to sea a few times, local men interested in eventually joining the British Navy, and others. It was wildly successful from the beginning and the profits stabilized the displaced Gordonstoun. Holt suggested Hahn consider the name “Outward Bound” for the new venture, but Hahn demurred at first, thinking it too flashy.

Outward Bound and War: “A Time of Danger and a Time of Hope.”

It in our current context, thankfully so far removed from large-scale war, it is perhaps difficult to imagine a youth movement springing into life in the context of a massive armed conflict, and yet that that is exactly what Outward Bound did.

The Outward Bound program quickly became a codified four-week program that condensed the ethic of ‘training through the sea’ into an abbreviated time frame. It was an unreal scene, as seen in a description by the first Warden of the Outward Bound School, James Hogan, of the training practices of the director of physical training, Dr. Zimmermann:

Dr. Zimmerman’s running tracks perforce were main roads, fortunately denuded of fast traffic by the exigencies of war time. The small boats were obliged to operate in a tidal

⁴³⁸ Hahn, “Ten Years of Gordonstoun: An Account and an Appeal,” 19.

estuary without confidence they could be supported, as they are today, by a powerful and reliable motor vessel. The schooner operated in the unlit waters of a bay round which were situated no less than seven military establishments training men in anti-aircraft, and anti-tank gunnery, bombing, rocket-firing, and other highly lethal practices. . . Later the mountain country used for expedition training also became an area selected for battle-training by marine commandos and others, all of whom scattered a quantity of unexploded ammunition to add to our concern.⁴³⁹

War was on. Dr. Olivia Campbell, long a history teacher at Gordonstoun, remembers what it was like to be in Wales during the Battle of Britain. "My husband and I took charge of a large marquee where many boys slept. It was not a comfortable sort of place when German bombers dropped their unexpended bombs after a raid on Liverpool."⁴⁴⁰ It must have been a compelling but confusing time for Gordonstoun, the staff doing its best to instill in the students the "moral equivalent to war" when real war was everywhere. As Campbell observed, "the fact that Gordonstoun boys would soon be fighting in a war against Hitler was understood by Hahn a considerable time before most of us."⁴⁴¹

Dr. Eric Meissner worked with Hahn at Salem, and acted as the headmaster for a short time after Hahn escaped to Scotland. A few years later, Meissner himself fled to Gordonstoun as well. In a public lecture in 1942 about the connections between Salem and Gordonstoun, Meissner managed to distill what was at stake in that historical moment. His comments are remarkable not only for their applicability to the situation facing Gordonstoun, barely surviving in its second home in Wales with German bombs falling on the countryside all around, but remarkably also to the later founding of the Atlantic College. Indeed, of our times today.

⁴³⁹ Hogan, "The Establishment of the First Outward Bound School at Aberdovey, Merionethshire," 65.

⁴⁴⁰ Olivia Campbell, "Gordonstoun - The First Seventeen Years," in *Kurt Hahn: An Appreciation of His Life and Work* (Elgin, Morayshire: Gordonstoun School, 1976), 38.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

If European men nowadays talk about their common inheritance which is at stake, they are not talking in a flowery manner, they are using well-chosen terms... The war is not fought on national lines; it has been called an international civil war. The complexity of our shared inheritance is great indeed. It would be futile to enumerate what it consists of, it is as complex as the word 'home'... It is the general situation, a situation full of danger and full of hope, that is reflected in the story of these two schools. The great rebellion of anarchy which now overshadows the world and the fight against the menace are reflected in that simple story.⁴⁴²

How effective could these new, shorter additions be as 'Islands of Healing,' especially in this context? Hahn was optimistic, especially regarding the intangible effects, "You cannot transmit a craft in four weeks, but you can stir a conscience for care. You cannot train a Good Samaritan in but you can make a boy or a girl wonder whether they should not "do likewise."⁴⁴³

Braced by these successes, Holt and Hahn founded the Aberdovey Sea School in 1941. Only three years later, Hahn was able to claim in a report that more than a 1000 boys across 20 courses had been through Aberdovey.⁴⁴⁴ By the time Gordonstoun returned to Scotland in 1945, the number of students that had passed through Aberdovey had reached 5000.⁴⁴⁵ The archipelago of *Gesundheitsherds* had a new island.

Evolutions of Outward Bound

Hahn realized quickly that a shorter, modular version of Gordonstoun's character-building through activities had the potential to serve much more varied and economically-diverse populations than a public boarding school. Following the Aberdovey Sea School, Hahn and Holt started two more Outward Bound schools, the first a Mountain School at Eksdale, and

⁴⁴² Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 145–146.

⁴⁴³ Hahn, "Aims and Obstacles," 6.

⁴⁴⁴ Hahn, "Ten Years of Gordonstoun: An Account and an Appeal," 19.

⁴⁴⁵ Brereton, "Gordonstoun," 1950, 45.

the second hosted at Gordonstoun itself and a version of Aberdovey: The Moray Sea School.⁴⁴⁶

In each of these schools, for a duration of four weeks each, participants, in Hahn's words,

practice active citizenship within a self-governing community; to taste vital health as a result of athletic training, to gain self-respect through their surprise at what they can do; to experience (through the sea, the forest, the hills, the air), the brotherhood of adventure and the cleansing that can go with it.⁴⁴⁷

It was a moment of quickening for his ambitions for Gordonstoun and the Salem system.

If Outward Bound had such a positive effect in such a short time, what limits could there be to the total reach of the Salem idea? And yet, given the already-ferocious pace of Gordonstoun life, it was difficult to find time to grow these new projects properly. The Outward Bound Trust was formed in 1945, taking administrative duties from Hahn completely. Almost immediately recruitment surged due to the trust's deliberate building of partnerships with companies, municipalities, and education departments.⁴⁴⁸ Four years later, 500-600 boys a year were graduating from Aberdovey.⁴⁴⁹

Prodded by this success, the trust began to open more schools, Ecksdale and Ullswater, this time in the mountains. Forestry, riding, and canoeing in local rivers took the place of sailing. The other curriculum norms remained the same. To the normal Hahnian *erlebnistherapie*, school leaders added public speaking, and a direct engagement with non-denominational spirituality.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Hahn, "Untitled Retrospective of 30 Years," 7.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁴⁸ Hahn, "Aims and Obstacles," 7.

⁴⁴⁹ Sir Spencer Summers, "The Outward Bound Movement," in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics*, English (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 67.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

WAR'S END AND GREATER GORDONSTOUN

Gordonstoun was able to return to Scotland in 1945. They found it nearly unrecognizable. The British Army had let the estate slip once more into neglect, and a fire had gutted Gordonstoun house itself. Once again, Gordonstoun faced a financial crisis. They had no main building and only 100 boys.⁴⁵¹

As the school moved into Nissen huts they purchased from the Army and began the slow process of once more rehabilitating Gordonstoun, Hahn's eyes began to once more rise to the horizon. Reports were arriving about the incalculable damage done to Germany during the war, and how post-war conditions were quickly sliding into a humanitarian crisis. It must have felt to Hahn as if all of the facets of his life were collapsing inward at the same moment: his native Germany was in full crisis. Opportunities for an expanded constellation of *Gesundheitsherd* and their capacity for Samaritan service literally everywhere. Salem, his first love, had just struggled free of SS occupation.

Perhaps most crucially, Hahn had first-hand knowledge of what could happen in Germany if a post-war recovery was mishandled. Salem had come into being precisely to thwart such a process and had failed. Hahn now feared that a cataclysmic third war was possible if stability did not come to the region and inspiration to its peoples. Looking back on this time from 1952 in a discussion about programs in Greece, Hahn remembered, "Greece, Like Berlin, is in the forefront of the spiritual struggle on the outcome of which may well depend whether or not there will be a Third World War. The aggressor watches the young all the time . . . just across

⁴⁵¹ Ian Tennant, "Address to a Meeting of the Board of Directors and the London Friends of Gordonstoun," November 27, 1957, KHA SK - 44, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

the border on this side.”⁴⁵² The ‘aggressor’ in this case was of course Stalin’s Russia. What Germany needed was schools, short programs, and someone to ignite the dormant energy of young people. A letter arrived in the late summer of 1945 from his old ally and colleague, Marina Ewald from Salem. It is worth the reprinting of some longer excerpts to comprehend what the experience would have been like for Hahn, so long separated from his beloved Salem.

. . . The foremost question all the old farmers, craftsmen, and of course, colleagues have is: When is Hahn coming back? They expect your return any hour. . . They speak of it as the dawn of a golden age for Salem. I mutter in return that you are now bound by two loyalties but instinctively I catch myself sharing their hopes. . .

. . . Our first Guardian was wounded in France in 1941. One leg is stiff but otherwise he is well. Few of his equals in rank and righteousness survive to fish in their ancestral burz [print issue] and to continue the work of their fathers. The number of Salem boys killed in the war or missed will leave us sad at heart forever. Many of our best and beloved are among them. How many Gordonstounians will you add? . . .

. . . The countryside has escaped all devastation. It is spread out, basking in its overwhelming beauty, furnishing cartloads of sweet smelling hay. . . there are no trains. There are 180 legionaries François in Salem, but they are about to leave us. We don’t know who or what is next. . .⁴⁵³

Hahn returned to Germany as soon as soldiers would let him over barricades.

Between the end of the war and 1953 Hahn was frequently absent from Gordonstoun.

He made it clear many times that in these cases, the stewardship of Gordonstoun itself fell to Brereton.⁴⁵⁴ Though this was doubtless the correct management decision, it would soon have turbulent consequences.

⁴⁵² Kurt Hahn, “Report to the Chairman of the London Advisory Committee and the President of the American-British Foundation for European Education,” Transcribed Speech (London, April 1, 1952), KHA SK - 37, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

⁴⁵³ Marina Ewald, “Letter from Marina Ewald to Kurt Hahn Regarding Salem and Germany After the War.,” June 5, 1945, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

⁴⁵⁴ Hahn, “Report to the Chairman of the London Advisory Committee and the President of the American-British Foundation for European Education.” “Mr. Brereton must be relieved of routine duties so that he can really be a partner in the Headmastership when I am at Gordonstoun, and take over when I am

Hahn's absences grew more frequent and longer because he held two new mutually-supporting opinions. The first was that the world needed his *erlebnistherapie* now more than ever before. The second was that the triumphs of Outward Bound had proven his concepts were scalable. He had conceived of a new concept: 'Greater Gordonstoun.'

Hahn began referring to Greater Gordonstoun as a unified initiative, ending speeches and pamphlets with the phrase "we are a movement."⁴⁵⁵ A vital aspect of this movement was something he called "the Quadrangle," or as he defined it in the 1948 pamphlet, "A Memorandum": a "federated whole of service to the young of Europe."⁴⁵⁶ The Quadrangle was composed of Salem, Gordonstoun, the Outward Bound Sea School, and a school he hoped to be open soon in Germany, Luisenland. Hahn proposed an administrative structure that was linked, with members on more than one board of a school in the Quadrangle, and with the member schools sharing resources and staff. Crucially, each member school of the Quadrangle would also have much in common philosophically: a sincere dedication to service in their region, a wide range of pupils from all socioeconomic levels, and "Christian faith as the spiritual foundation."⁴⁵⁷ Sceptics among Hahn's devoted supporters referred to this dream as "castles in the air," finding it impossible to think of expanding when Gordonstoun's fate was still so uncertain.⁴⁵⁸

From Hahn's perspective the need was dire. "Nationalism is maneuvering into position," Hahn warned, meaning the settling of the post-war political arena into its Cold War realities.

absent. It so happens that we, while healthily disagreeing on many minor points, share the same convictions on all fundamentals and on all relevant details."

⁴⁵⁵ Hahn, "Three Crises in the History of Gordonstoun."

⁴⁵⁶ Hahn, "A Memorandum."

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Brereton, *Gordonstoun*, 1982, 207.

Worse still, just as in the years after the First World War in Germany, “the response amongst the young is neither lively or manifest.” Once again, a forgotten generation was forming in the nations that had suffered the worst during the war. “Sooner or later emotional conditions will develop which will again invite a false prophet.”⁴⁵⁹ This fear began driving Hahn to an even more heightened level of activity and stress.

He began taking longer trips to Germany and other European nations, advocating relentlessly for new schools, new short programs, and new interventions into what he saw was, once again, a fraying social fabric. The difference this time was that his efforts were international. Just as his primary frame for the ‘Salem system’ had shifted from James to St. Luke, so too had his focus shifted from Germany to the constituent nations of Europe. Hahn began sleeping less and less. His health began to falter.

INTERLUDE: JOSH MINER AND THE BEGINNINGS OF OUTWARD BOUND, USA

In June of 1950, an American teacher named Josh Miner left the Hun School in the United States and traveled to Scotland. He was sent to learn more from the increasingly well-known Kurt Hahn by his father-in-law, who had in turn been asked to help fund programs showing they had a “helpful influence on post-war Germany.”⁴⁶⁰ He visited Gordonstoun, the new Ecksdale Outward Bound School, Aberdovey, and finally Salem. Hahn knew a full tour of most of the ‘Quadrangle’ would likely loosen American purse strings. An excerpt from Miner’s travel diary simply reads “It’s all too unbelievable.”⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Hahn, “A Memorandum,” 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Joshua L. Miner and Joseph R. Boldt, *Outward Bound USA: Crew Not Passengers*, 2nd Edition (Seattle: Mountaineers Books, 2002), 17.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

During a quick stop back in Scotland, he met with Brereton and Bobby Chew, the Warden of Gordonstoun. Tellingly, they had a long conversation with Miner about the particular challenges of working with a visionary with “certitude” that his ideas would work, while it was up to others to fit the new ideas into the hard realities of finance, distance, and time. Miner was also taken with both men’s devotion to Hahn.⁴⁶² In less than eight months, Miner was teaching science and math at Gordonstoun, and running the famous Morning Break. He would spend a year and a half at Gordonstoun.

Upon returning to the states, Miner won a teaching job at Andover Academy in Massachusetts, where he was permitted to set up a Morning Break, but only for a small cohort of boys who weren’t on sports teams. Miner lovingly referred to them as the “lame and the halt,” boys whose muscles were “virtually unused.” The rest of the housemasters, teachers, and coaches looked at Miner’s European techniques with suspicion, worried that time out of the classroom would hurt academic performance. All of Miner’s Morning Break boys were in one house, Williams. Compared to a nearly identical cohort in a different house, Rockwell, Williams boys had a higher grade average and rank during their exposure to the Morning Break. Nothing else was different.⁴⁶³

This absolutely converted an early skeptic, Roger Wetmore, and he and Miner returned to Gordonstoun to spend more time with Hahn. Upon their return to Andover, Wetmore institutionalized as many Hahnian changes as he could into the physical education program at Andover, as well as into his coaching of the swimming and diving teams. Swim team

⁴⁶² Ibid., 44.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 68–70.

participation ballooned from 12 to 200. ⁴⁶⁴ Wetmore would soon play a crucial role in establishing a beach head for Outward Bound in the US.

'BOUND BETWEEN TWO LOYALTIES': THE HEADMASTER WHO EVENTUALLY WASN'T

By 1951, Hahn's charming habits of having two breakfasts at the same time had become a furious, incoherent three breakfasts. Followed by three lunches, and then three dinners. Completely obsessed with developing more *Gesundheitsherd*s around Europe, and especially in Germany, but simultaneously unwilling to completely relinquish control over Gordonstoun, Hahn began the terrible process of exhausting and alienating those closest to him. ⁴⁶⁵

All of this took place while his health continued to nose-dive. Those closest to Hahn, paradoxically also those who took the most punishments in his cycle of absences and hurricane-like returns, began to fear that something was seriously wrong with him. They became very direct with their concerns. Hahn ignored them. Soon his idiosyncrasies, once charming, had begun to resemble real mental illness. In a confidential letter, his beloved brother Rudolf confessed "I fear Kurt is in real danger of destroying his life's work." Days later, Rudolf and his wife Lola (one of Hahn's closest and most trusted friends) admitted him into a residential treatment center for mental health. ⁴⁶⁶

What followed is perhaps the most painful chapter in a career that saw two world wars and an endless litany of crises and near-failures. Brereton communicated to the board of Governors that he was unwilling to serve under Hahn were he to return to Gordonstoun

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁶⁵ Henry L. Brereton, "Chairman's Memorandum - December 1953" (Privately Circulated, December 1953), SER 00043 / I3, Gordonstoun School Archive.

⁴⁶⁶ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 121.

following his convalescence. Hahn for his part felt threatened and abandoned by those closest to him. It was a nightmare tangle of personal wounds amidst a fleet of still-ongoing projects and schools. Bobby Chew, the Warden of Gordonstoun in his classically direct way, made his concerns clear in a letter to Hahn at that time: “You see you have not been an easy person to work with in the last year, and as the strain of work has worn you down, so it has been harder for us to have a workable understanding and a happy relationship with you.” Chew went on to the real point of his letter. “My real concern is your health. In the past you have never taken things easily, never accepted the advise of others, driven the “machine” till it broke down.”⁴⁶⁷

Eventually, Hahn and the Board agreed to a graceful exit from Gordonstoun, citing health concerns. Hahn left Gordonstoun in 1953. He was 65. His relationship with Henry Brereton, one of his closest allies and confidants since 1934, never recovered. A set of single-line notes from Hahn about the subject make for difficult reading. “I am grateful for this settlement. In Salem it flowers like never before. If I had returned – two alternatives: Civil war. Peace at the price of integrity. I sever all ties with Gordonstoun. I was completely undefended. Room for repentance on both sides. I believe they were right on the evidence before them.”

Some years later, he would look back at this phase of his time at Gordonstoun with deep regret. “Intermittent and absentee Headmasters cannot be reformers. You need a calm and watchful presence and an epic patience. . . in fact it is no exaggeration to say that the Gordonstoun Public School has been neglected in favour of our European assignment and our social services.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ Bobby Chew, “Letter from Bobby Chew to Kurt Hahn Regarding Hahn’s Illness and Potential Return to Gordonstoun,” Typed, (1953), SER 0014/I1, Gordonstoun School Archive.

⁴⁶⁸ Kurt Hahn, “Hopes and Fears” (Privately Circulated, 1954), 7, Kurt Hahn Archive, Salem Germany.

For the second time in his life since he and Von Baden founded Salem, Hahn found himself cast out and without a school to lead. For many men, this would have turned into the ideal moment for a graceful descent into quiet retired life. And indeed, Hahn did retreat to a home near Hermannsburg, close to one of the Salem schools for a time. The difference between Hahn's loss of Salem and exile from Germany and this moment was crucial: in 1953 Hahn still sat at the center of a massive international network of supporters and contacts. With Gordonstoun, Salem, and Outward Bound all attributed to his innovation and work, there were many yet who were ready to back another Kurt Hahn initiative.

FROM THE COUNTY BADGE TO THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

A little over a year after he led the team that successfully summited Mount Everest in 1953, Brigadier Henry Cecil John Hunt was approached by Kurt Hahn about taking the County Badge program to the national (and hopefully international) level. Hahn wanted to create a "royal badge," which would carry the name of a Gordonstoun graduate, HRH Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh.⁴⁶⁹ Hahn hoped the scope of Duke of Edinburgh's award would extend the notoriety and therefore reach of the County Badge.⁴⁷⁰ Levels would soon be added to the four fields of achievement: bronze, silver, and gold, each describing incremental levels of challenge in each of the fields of achievement.

⁴⁶⁹ Sir John Hunt, "The Duke of Edinburgh's Award," in *Kurt Hahn: An Appreciation of His Life and Work* (Elgin, Morayshire: Gordonstoun School, 1976), 55. Hunt's retelling of the meeting involves Hahn walking in to his office, "advancing on the window" and throwing it open to get some fresh air, "only then offering me a limp hand." It is one of countless such anecdotes.

⁴⁷⁰ Hahn, "Outward Bound," 1957, 461.

In 1959, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award initiated a girl's version of the program, and in 1969, the gendered sides of the award were unified.⁴⁷¹ By 1970, around 600,000 participants had entered the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program and 240,000 had earned awards.⁴⁷² By 2015 the program had enrolled 5.6 million participants and 2.4 million had earned an award.⁴⁷³ Hahn, for his part, got the program going and then stepped away. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award website makes no mention of him in its short official history. Back in 1956, Hahn had other projects that needed his attention.

⁴⁷¹ Peter Carpenter, "The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme," in *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 94-95.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁷³ "Stats & Facts - the DofE," August 3, 2011, <http://www.dofe.info/go/stats/>.

PART IV: The Atlantic College Project

A SPEECH IN PARIS: ANOTHER DREAM BORN FROM ANOTHER WAR

In 1956, Hahn was invited to speak at a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defense College conference in Paris on the state of the young in Western society. The NATO Defense College had come into being on the initiative of President Eisenhower, among others, and was an institution dedicated to “strategic level” education of members of the alliance, with conduits directly to decision-makers and framers of policy. Especially of concern was the perceived menace posed by communist expansion, and early participants received training in “communism, communist countries, and non-aligned nations.”⁴⁷⁴

The commandant of the NATO Defense College, Commandant and Air Marshall Sir Lawrence Darvall, an Englishman, was most impressed with his passion and the content of Hahn’s presentation.⁴⁷⁵ Darvall had found the internationalism of the defense college remarkable. By 1955 NATO included Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey, Germany and the United States. Many of the military students at the Defense College had been locked in a deadly world struggle with each other only a decade earlier. Now Darvall saw them collaborate daily in the face of the external Soviet threat.⁴⁷⁶ Darvall approached Hahn about an idea he’d been harboring.

⁴⁷⁴ “History of the College,” in *NATO Defense College* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2011), 9, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/about/organization.php?icode=7>.

⁴⁷⁵ David Sutcliffe, “The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges,” in *The Story of St. Donat’s Castle and Atlantic College* (Cowbridge: D. Brown and Sons, Ltd. in conjunction with Stewart Williams Publishers, Barry, 1983), 88.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

if we [the Defense College] can plant the germ of new loyalties in mature men, how much deeper are the roots we could sink in Atlantic young, if at their most impressionable period we would gather them in residential colleges, making them members of a self-governing community which demands much of them?⁴⁷⁷

Unsurprisingly, this proposal found an enthusiastic champion in Hahn. It was a crystallization of the same ‘two loyalties’ that had so utterly sundered him personally and professionally only a few years earlier: his administrative duties at a single school and an ever-increasing drive to use his educational practices for societal healing on a much large scale. Two years later in 1957, Hahn spoke at the plenary session in the Atlantic Conference at Bruges; Hahn proposed the following,

That Atlantic Colleges should be founded in six different nations (Canada, France, Great Britain, Greece, Germany, USA) . . . carefully selected boys aged 16-19 should be sent without regard to financial position . . . from the 15 NATO nations, from uncommitted countries, it is hoped from the satellite states, and some day even from Russia. They would be prepared for a University Entrance Examination to be recognized throughout the free world. Each national group would be accompanied by a teacher of their own language and history.⁴⁷⁸

Hahn went on to breathlessly explain how each contingent of students would live in a “national house”, which would be “suitably equipped with furniture, pictures and a library” so that each boy at the college would be reminded of “their respective roots, and not be estranged.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Hahn, “Transcription of Kurt Hahn’s Speech at Plenary Session of the Atlantic Conference at Bruges,” 2. (Punctuation mine)

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 4. The Atlantic College would start out boys-only, but would not stay that way for long. It became co-educational in 1967.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

The boys would of course receive the standard Hahnian *erlebnistherapie* , replete with its development and protection of their ‘vital energy’ via physical training. They would also encounter the full Hahnian diet of skill training and then rescue service participation: Boys from former aggressor nations literally in the same boat as they execute rescues.⁴⁸⁰ Upon returning to their home nations, Hahn’s hope was that they would inoculate their home nations with “infectious health,” a reversal of how he normally used medical metaphors. Hahn warned that these transformed boys, full of “missionary zeal,” would not be able to transmit this infectious health unless their home nations were prepared for such an arrival by the pre-existing establishment and function of similarly-aligned programs on the ground, such as Hahn and others had established in Germany, Greece, and Britain beyond the ‘Quadrangle.’⁴⁸¹

The transcript of Hahn’s speech in Bruges is a remarkable document. Through the new medium of an intentionally-international boarding school, Hahn would blend the two major ‘higher dynamics of humanity’ that run through his speeches and writing like veins of ore. James’ nationalistic concept would be conflated with the more universal tenth chapter of Luke, resulting in a brotherhood of man (read nations) dedicated to the “service of humanity.” Importantly, boys would not give up their nationhood. Far from it, they would inhabit what would amount to miniature embassies. One imagines an Italian boy studying math in his small Italian library in his Italian House before heading out to do mountain rescue with youthful ambassadors from Germany, Britain, and France.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

Given the almost heartbreaking optimism of Hahn's and Von Baden's hopes for Salem, that even a school system of 500 would contribute substantively to the healing of Germany, it is difficult to read Hahn's speech without feeling similarly. Instead of one school, six. Instead of Germany, the Atlantic community.

Hahn was not alone in his enthusiasm. It is a remarkable feature of the Atlantic College origin story that so many professional military men, nearly all of which had endured, and in some cases executed the large scale horrors of at least one, if not two world wars, were primary movers in the founding of such a school. It is even more remarkable when one considers the crucible in which it was conceived: the conference of an organization set up to resist the expansion of the Soviets and to prepare for a possible third world war.

A FOUNDING AND A NEW HEADMASTER

For this new quest, the founders needed a knight. They found one in an engineer and Rear-Admiral Desmond Hoare. Hoare and Hahn had crossed paths a series of times from 1955 onward, beginning with Hoare's three-month attachment to the Imperial Defence College during the time Hahn made his fateful speech in Paris. Later when Hoare was volunteering with the Harrow Boys' Club in Notting Hill Gate, a very rough neighborhood, it was Hahn that introduced him to the President of the Australian Surf Life-Saving Association. Soon that boys club had a Corps of Canoe Lifeguards.⁴⁸²

A fierce, analytical, and visionary man in his own right, Hoare was so taken with the Atlantic College project that he forsook his hard-earned navy pension to retire early and become

⁴⁸² Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 259.

the founding headmaster of the school.⁴⁸³ Given the high-mindedness of the project, Hoare's focus was practical yet hopeful. ". . .airy slogans about international cooperation are a common and dangerous form of intellectual tranquiliser" he warned. The Atlantic College would hopefully simply "permit the boys to assemble unforgettable memories and may, we hope, plant a lifelong obligation to help their fellow men."⁴⁸⁴

The Atlantic College would take a unique shape. Though "sixth form schools" are a common phenomenon in contemporary British education, as well as internationally, they did not exist in 1962. The sixth form is a tier of schooling that functions as a bridge between secondary school and university, where students can study for advanced certificates, such as the British A-levels, or build other skill sets. The Atlantic College was the first example of this.

As graduates of high school, or the equivalent in their home nations, expectations would be higher for Atlantic College students: "The boys, who will enter about the age of 16, will be selected and financially paid for by the state educational authorities in their own countries. They must have promise of University quality and be of sterling character. . . it is proposed to have no privately paid-for pupils."⁴⁸⁵ Repeatedly, Hoare referred to the Atlantic College as a "staff college for international teenagers," directly referencing the NATO Defense College. Though this usage was eventually dissuaded, it belied a major departure from Hahn in the conception and execution of a boarding school.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 258.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 274.

⁴⁸⁵ Desmond Hoare J, "St Donat's Castle, South Wales - The First Atlantic College," unknown, likely 1960 or 1959, UWC-AC - Library Archive.

St. Donat's Castle was purchased and then donated to the Atlantic College for £65,000 by Antonin Besse, a close friend of Kurt Hahn's and a Frenchman.⁴⁸⁶ On September 19th, the Atlantic College opened its 14th Century portcullis with 61 students from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and Wales.⁴⁸⁷

Almost immediately, Hahn and Hoare disagreed on fundamental issues of structure. Most contentious was Hoare's abandonment of the Colour Bearers and Guardians structure. Discussion of this change appears in his 1963 report to the Governors of Atlantic College: "Experience has now shown what we expected; that it would be both unwise and very unpopular to create a hierarchy of Prefects or Guardians. The increased maturity of 16-18-year-old intelligent boys today makes them impatient of institutionalized leadership of this kind, and they are ready for a more mature way of life."⁴⁸⁸

Already Atlantic College was more academically selective and socially permissive than its educational ancestors, Salem and Gordonstoun. Yet despite his differences with Hoare, Hahn remained completely devoted to the project, using much of his new wealth of time to fund-raise and advocate for the new school.

St. Donat's Castle, the Place

Salem Castle and the Gordonstoun House are impressive but as we have seen, they are not defensive in nature, at least not entirely. Quite the opposite is true for St. Donat's. The

⁴⁸⁶ Sutcliffe, "The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges," 86.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁸⁸ Desmond Hoare J, "Headmaster's Report to the Governors on the Autumn Term 1962," January 5, 1963, 2, UWC-AC - Library Archive.

earliest buildings that compose the castle were likely built in the late 1200s or early 1300s. There is a Norman church in a depression below the castle that may have been constructed earlier. Buildings were added through the ensuing centuries, but many of them went up at a time when high walls, murder holes, arrow slits, and parapets were far more than decoration.

It is a massive light grey structure, with the blind corners and winding tower staircases that would have lent castle defenders the upper hand in melee combat. I had the opportunity to stay in a guest room that is still called the “upper gibbet,” a name that comes complete with its own ghost story.⁴⁸⁹ St. Donat’s sits on an overlook walking distance from the town of Llantwit Major, near the larger Welsh capitol of Cardiff. It is connected to the surrounding countryside via a series of narrow roads bordered by hedges.

The castle’s location is strategic. It has commanding views of both the countryside and a large exposure of the turbulent and frigid Bristol Firth. Below the castle is a series of outbuildings and then a massive set of gardens. These taper down the hill toward the water, concluding in a huge stone yard, in which there now sits two swimming pools.

Beyond this yard is the sea wall and beyond that is the firth itself. A spillway cuts into the seawall and connects the stone yard directly with the water. This juncture of ocean and castle is improbable and breathtaking. It is easy to imagine how such a physical plant fired the imaginations of Hoare and his pioneer staff.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ I was told that if I saw light under my door and then smelled lavender, I was under no circumstances to open the door, despite what might be my own suicidal curiosity. I slumbered undisturbed both nights. As far as I know.

⁴⁹⁰ There are significant drawbacks to the physical plant as well, especially in light of 21st century environmental standards and the unending difficulty of doing maintenance on a school for young people that is also a protected historical site.

The Atlantic College Curriculum

One of Hahn's original proposals was that the Atlantic colleges would generate a certification program that would allow its graduates access to university in all the member nations of the new Atlantic college family. This immediately became extremely complicated given the intricacies of each nation's educational system. Atlantic college needed to delay the institution of such a standard while the school itself got to its feet. As a result, friends of the new project developed a stop-gap curriculum based on the British Advanced Levels (A-Levels) but sufficiently broadened to meet the ideals of the College and to reassure the Europeans."⁴⁹¹

A factor that would prove to be crucial over and over in the early history of the Atlantic College was the support it had in so many national governments. As became obvious from the avalanche of media coverage that soon showered the fledgling institution, the Atlantic College made for a good story. Admiral Hoare made note of the school's almost instant popularity in his first report, indicating "the College is virtually never without visitors . . . they are a very heavy burden to the top level of management."⁴⁹² This same name recognition helped in other ways, however. The Atlantic College curriculum officials were able to win a series of reciprocal agreements with foreign ministers of education, allowing many early Atlantic College students to qualify for university in their home countries even though they were being schooled in Britain. This relationship-building set the table for the development of the International

⁴⁹¹ Sutcliffe, "The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges," 93. A.D.C. Peterson played a central role in both the initial Atlantic College curriculum as well as the development of the International Baccalaureate. He also authored the detailed origin story of the IB. See Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*.

⁴⁹² Hoare, "Headmaster's Report to the Governors on the Autumn Term 1962," 3.

Baccalaureate (IB), which Atlantic College converted to in 1971.⁴⁹³ I address the IB in depth in chapter 4.

Hoare observed with disappointment that English A-Levels were simply too difficult for a sizable portion of the student body. Given the speed and intensity of life at Atlantic College, Hoare immediately began to intensify the admissions standards. “Boys who have not the appropriate Ordinary Level passes for university entry when they arrive here have been a problem. I intend not to accept these boys . . . in the future.”⁴⁹⁴ Gordonstoun’s policy of attracting and serving a wide swath of the population, academically-speaking, would not be part of Atlantic College’s culture. Tom Dickerson, a graduate of Atlantic College in 1967, remembers school being extremely difficult. “I got my first history paper back and it had an ‘F’ on it. I had the audacity to go into the professor and tell him that he had forgotten to cross off the ‘A.’”⁴⁹⁵

Life at the Atlantic College

For students and faculty alike, life in the first years of the school was breathlessly exciting and shot-through with the pioneering spirit. The school was brand new on many levels. It was the first sixth form school, the first of what many hoped would be a series of Atlantic Colleges, and the first school to explicitly try and break down national barriers while also honoring them. David Sutcliffe, then a housemaster and eventually headmaster at two United World Colleges, remembers “intense enjoyment, based, no doubt, on complete

⁴⁹³ Sutcliffe, “The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges,” 93.

⁴⁹⁴ Hoare, “Headmaster’s Report to the Governors on the Autumn Term 1962,” 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Tom Dickerson, Interview with Tom Dickerson, Phone, January 3, 2015. By this Dickerson suggests that he thought he had received an “A” and that the “F” was actually a typo, an “A” with a missing long section.

involvement.”⁴⁹⁶ The ferocious speed and volume at which life was lived at Atlantic College would soon be well known phenomenon across a growing United World College system. It was of central concern to Hoare. “The intensity of life in the College, both academic and physical, throws an unacceptable burden on any but the really able and committed boy. Even the best are really tired mentally by midday Saturday, and a lot of work is done on Sunday.”⁴⁹⁷ As we shall see in later chapters, that concern remains central to administrators and students five decades later.

At the same time, Dickerson remembers an incredibly vibrant environment. The boys slept six to a dorm room, waking every other morning for a swim, and then walking back up across the fields and gardens to a hot breakfast. He remembers a shocking level of freedom and trust, and that “everyone admired Desmond [Hoare] immensely.” The system of discipline that Hoare installed was Navy-esque: each minor infraction earned one a demerit. If one accumulated too many demerits, it resulted in owing the school “a log.” This meant the offending student had to spend precious free time in the wood yard cutting a long log in eight pieces for the castle’s many fireplaces. More demerits meant more logs.⁴⁹⁸

Activities and Rescue Services in the Bristol Firth

Though the Atlantic College, like Gordonstoun before it, would become famous for its seamanship and water rescue services, in 1962 the safety preparations were not ready for the treacherous waters of the Bristol Firth. Instead, the pioneering students earned a series of

⁴⁹⁶ Sutcliffe, “The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges,” 90.

⁴⁹⁷ Hoare, “Headmaster’s Report to the Governors on the Autumn Term 1962,” 1.

⁴⁹⁸ Dickerson, Interview with Tom Dickerson.

swimming, lifeguarding, and lifesaving certifications, such as the Bronze Swimming Award and the Bronze Medallion.⁴⁹⁹

And yet the Firth beckoned. The chief problem was temperature. In order to make good on the school's promise to put the youth of the Atlantic community into the actual Atlantic, Hoare and his staff made Atlantic College into a testing location for the new technology of neoprene body suits. By early 1963 he could report that "all boys and more than half the staff have been equipped with neoprene skin-suits which have been cut mostly by my wife and glued up by the owners themselves. . . a wide range of hand-skill has been shown."⁵⁰⁰ Soon the school was sailing dinghies and executing rescues through most of the academic year.

Without neoprene, Hoare quipped that sailing at the college would have been limited to only the fairest days of the summer. Dickerson remembers that the building of one's wetsuit became a de-facto initiation: on Monday a new student would get a six-by-six-foot sheet of neoprene and cut it into pieces according to their measurements. On Tuesday they would glue the seams. On Wednesday they would tape the now-glued seams. On Thursday they would turn their newly-made wetsuit inside out (so the seams were on the inside) and try their new creation out in the Bristol Firth.⁵⁰¹

Soon the school had developed a canoeing lifeguard corps, with its eyes on even more wide-ranging craft. In the second year had begun the work on a prototype of an unheard-of

⁴⁹⁹ Hoare, "Headmaster's Report to the Governors on the Autumn Term 1962," 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁰¹ Dickerson, Interview with Tom Dickerson.

style of boat. Hoare himself developed the raw sketches, and staff at the college built his vision with the help of students. The Rigid Hulled Inflatable boat (RIB) was born.⁵⁰²



Figure 5: A RNLB RIB rescue boat waiting for its next patrol, 2011. Photo by author.

The design is now used in most beach and ocean lifeguarding systems around the world, as well as enjoying widespread civilian and military use. By 1963 the Atlantic College had an official relationship with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Her Majesty's Coastguards. Soon the students at the Atlantic College were solely responsible for aquatic safety along 20 miles of very dangerous water.⁵⁰³ It was a powerful evolution of an impulse that started in the fields of Salem four decades earlier, and bloomed on the cliffs of Scotland.

⁵⁰² Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 261.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 263.

TO NAME A MOVEMENT

No matter what the original idealistic motivations were for naming the Atlantic College, the name endlessly invoked NATO itself, narrowing potential constituencies and undermining its orientation toward internationalism, understanding, and peace. It did not help that the headmaster was a Rear Admiral in the British navy, one of two crucial founding figures was the former commandant of the NATO defense college and an Air Marshall, the bursar a Captain, and a Major-General was the first secretary to the board.⁵⁰⁴

A new name was quickly an important topic of discussion, especially since proposals were already being floated for new locations for the next 'Atlantic' school. A circular from the newly-appointed President of the International Council of the Atlantic Colleges, Admiral of the Fleet the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, called the question. Mountbatten suggested the name of "One World Colleges" but admitted such a name might not play well in the United States. He offered a second title of "World Colleges."⁵⁰⁵ Kurt Hahn responded immediately, counter-proposing the title "the All Nations College Foundation," which would render the Atlantic College "the All Nations College of the Atlantic." A volley of letters followed, with most voices heavily favoring a blend of the two approaches. The movement was renamed the United World Colleges, and the Atlantic College became the United World College of the Atlantic, or UWC-AC.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Sutcliffe, "The First Twenty Years of the United World Colleges," 88.

⁵⁰⁵ Lord Louis Mountbatten, "Title of Atlantic College Project," Circular Letter, (December 11, 1968), United World College International Office Archive.

⁵⁰⁶ The name continues to be a liability, especially in the United States. Most Americans only know one usage for the term 'college,' and are therefore perpetually confused about the nature, purpose, and constituents of the school.

THE FURTHER EXPANSION OF OUTWARD BOUND

Josh Miner was already co-conspiring with two other teachers from the Andover Academy, Reagh Wetmore and Ed Williams, as the headmaster of a Colorado school, Chuck Froelicher, about starting an Outward Bound school in the United States when Miner got the phone call from the White House. On the phone was Sargent Shriver, brother-in-law to the President. Tasked with the development of the fledgling Peace Corps, Shriver was confronting the potential public relations nightmare of a host of recently-graduated do-gooders, answering their President's call to "ask not what their country can do for yourselves," going overseas and then quitting when a "bug fell out of the thatch and into their soup."⁵⁰⁷

Shriver felt that if the Peace Corps experienced the same rate of attrition as the Foreign Services corps, 50%, that the Peace Corps would be stillborn.⁵⁰⁸ According to Miner, Shriver was direct. "I want you to build eight Outward Bound schools for the Peace Corps. We'll pump our volunteers through them before they go overseas."⁵⁰⁹ Miner and his allies, sputtering, agreed to build one. Shriver convinced him to do two, one in Puerto Rico that would be Peace Corps exclusively, and another in Colorado. On June 16, 1962, the first American Outward Bound course opened in Colorado. It trained 76 members of the fledgling Peace Corps, all headed to Nepal. Much of the program curriculum was based on the Outward Bound School in Ecksdale that Gordonstoun had started.⁵¹⁰

Following the first course's success, Outward Bound exploded in the United States. The abundance of likely settings for courses and soon the involvement of institutions of higher

⁵⁰⁷ Miner and Boldt, *Outward Bound USA*, 84.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

education like Prescott College and Mankato State University caused Outward Bound's momentum to increase steadily. Just as Hahn had noticed how the 'short course' model applied to a wide array of settings and demographics, so has Outward Bound in the U.S. broadened into classrooms, at-risk youth treatment programs, indeed, entire public schools. This same pattern has happened internationally. By 1981, Outward Bound schools in the United States had graduated over 750,000 students.⁵¹¹ Outward Bound had gone from a curiosity on a cliff to a feature of mainstream educational culture. At present, the Outward Bound USA graduates 35,000 participants a year from its 1000 courses. These courses happen at one of eleven campuses in the U.S.⁵¹²

KURT HAHN GOES HOME

In 1968, while visiting his beloved sister-in-law, Lola, Kurt Hahn was struck by a car near Gordonstoun, Scotland. To the dismay of those closest to him, the event triggered a return to the cycle of mania and depression that harkened back to his first injury on the shores of the Havel River in Germany. His health, having recovered after his breakdown at Gordonstoun, began to decline. He convalesced in Lola's flat in London, and then eventually returned home to Germany, living in Hermannsberg, near Salem. Despite recent successes in a number of projects, including the now-international Outward Bound movement and the United World Colleges, of which there were now two, Hahn slid ever deeper into depression and ill health. Lola remembered a morning during one of her many visits at that time, when Kurt came into her

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 11.

⁵¹² Outward Bound, "The OB Approach."

bedroom and said “the difference between you and me is you always have faith and hope, I wish I had the same.”⁵¹³

It is a sad and remarkable end to such a life. Hahn was a man who endured two world wars, and was evicted from two schools that he founded. In 1933 he fled violent tyranny, leaving his life’s work, citizenship, wealth, friends and loved ones to fend for themselves against Hitler’s Third Reich. Hope was often all Hahn *did* have. And then, some point after leaving Gordonstoun, somewhere after the second United World College was founded in Singapore, Hahn lost hope. He died in Ravensburg in December of 1974, and was buried in the yard of a small church perhaps 1000 meters from the gates to Salem Castle.

CONCLUSION: A MAN OF AND BETWEEN NATIONS

Hahn’s educational innovations were so fascinating because they were never only theoretical. Whatever intellectual genesis he started with before the creation of Salem, Gordonstoun, Outward Bound, the Atlantic College, and the larger constellation of the *Gesundheitsherd*, was akin to the template a craftsman has in mind before they first lay hands on their tools, before the problems and opportunities of the project begin to generate a feedback loop. Like a craftsman, Hahn responded to the evidence he received from the world and from the instrument of his own insight.

Because that instrument was of course flawed, occasionally so too was the result. But far more often, Hahn’s ability to synthesize the micro – the need for a fire crew in a quiet district of southern Germany, for instance, with something macro – such as the need teenagers have to belong to a cause greater than themselves – led to educational innovations that fit their time.

⁵¹³ Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges with Other Founding Figures*, 375.

The profoundly generative properties of cooperation in the face of adversity, for instance, or the power of learning by doing. Too often these contributions and the pedagogy that grew out of them are written off.

Hahn's own massive personality, or his relentless, sometimes self-destructive drive to bring new projects into being lead some scholars to see his projects as ultimately short-lived expressions of his own psychology. One such scholar quipped that "in a very real sense, Hahn was the greatest, indeed only product of his own system,"⁵¹⁴ implying that nobody but the great headmaster himself could possibly deliver on the moral imperatives that Hahn tried to infuse into each unit of each day at his schools and programs. This same scholar once complained that when he asked Hahn questions he received anecdotes and aphorisms. I see this as a wonderful example of how Hahn saw the world. Big ideas were only interesting if they were useful. And they were only useful if they found purchase in the specific. This erasure of the theory-practice division led Hahn to innovations that could only ever be developed in the contingencies of real life.

Hahn's pedagogy was not distilled in a single book or a manifesto: it was written in the bricks, mortar, and curricula of Salem, Gordonstoun, the sea schools of Aberdovey and Moray, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the bold project of Atlantic College and host of schools and programs that followed each of these. What wasn't written there was scattered across speeches, calls to action, and mini manifestos. But it existed.

Finally, any understanding of Hahn's collection of pedagogies must consider the conditions of their creation: always in the context of national crises, strife, or war. While leading

⁵¹⁴ Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*, 239.

Gordonstoun, Hahn's students left the school and joined the military. In doing so they were taking up arms against an army full of students from Hahn's previous school, Salem. As Marina Ewald put it in her heartbreaking post-war letter about the Salem boys killed and missing: "How many Gordonstonians will you add?" Hahn was forever encountering modern war, that particularly dark mix of modernity and nationalism.

In this way, Hahn was constantly confronted with the complications of his own identity. Whether he was reporting on English national sentiment to the German Foreign Services department, seeking to heal the deep wounds of the Treaty of Versailles, challenging Hitler on a national stage, being suspected as the leader of a German 'fifth column,' during World War Two, or being recruited by an optimistic air marshal to counter the menace of the Cold War, for Hahn the personal and the national were never separate. It makes sense, then, that Hahn's last major initiative, the Atlantic College, sought to create understanding across national lines.

It is with all this in mind that this project now turns toward the United World College (UWC) movement. The same year Hahn died, a new UWC was founded in Singapore. A few years later, another in British Columbia, Canada.

In 1982, the first students walked through the doors of the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West, a few miles from Las Vegas, New Mexico. They stood, breathless with hope and excitement, under the shadow of the neglected elegance of the Montezuma Castle. It was a troubled time, full of danger and full of hope. Argentina had just invaded the Falkland Islands. Israel had just invaded Lebanon. Commodore had just released its Commodore 64 personal computer.

CHAPTER 3 - INTERLUDE: FROM HISTORY TO ETHNOGRAPHY

10:30 am, November 22, 2011: Llantwit Major, Wales, United Kingdom

Paul Motte, the interim head-of-school for the United World College of the Atlantic (UWC-AC), doesn't like some aspects of running a school in a 12th Century fortress. I have finally found his office after wandering through the blind corners and grey granite walls of St. Donat's Castle. In searching for his office I have twice walked past the large dining room twice with its vaulted timber-framed ceiling, and walked down what I thought was the same hallway more times than that. I found the correct passageway eventually, and stepped down a small staircase into a stone-walled room on the ground level. Motte waited patiently for me, gracious to allow me a few minutes in the busy life of a boarding school headmaster. He is a large man, and I am surprised by how tall and broad-shouldered he is as he stands to shake my hand. Motte's grey hair is cropped short and a small pair of reading glasses stands on his nose. He exudes a humble dignity and sense of officiousness. He is happy to chat, it's clear, but he has other things to do as well. Our conversation turns quickly to the role of the United World College movement in the 21st Century.

Motte gestures in annoyance at the thick stone walls of his office as we talk. Skyrocketing heating bills dog the budget at the UWC-AC. Perhaps worse, any maintenance to the massive estate needs to be processed through the proper regulatory channels that allow (or disallow) changes to be made to a historical building. "It's a constant niggle," he says flatly.

"Peace and a sustainable future," Motte quips with the faintest hint of a smile, "is a lot easier said than done when you live in a building that is nine centuries old." I ask him where he sees the relevance of the movement, starting as it did in the contexts of the first and second world wars. Motte fixes me with a steady gaze. "Kurt Hahn created his schools for his era, his

historical moment. But that era doesn't exist anymore." Motte pauses. "Those aren't the issues that threaten world peace," Motte says finally. He goes on to list different threats. Water security, religious fundamentalism and extremism, climate change, migration. The UWC movement needs to address the problems of the times now, he says directly. Not of the past.

I spent the next two days mining the UWC-AC archives, but my conversation with Motte hung with me. It made me very grateful that I had decided to blend historical and ethnographic tools for this project. Even as I uncovered archival footage of Prince Charles and the Duke of Edinburgh inspecting the first ranks of the student canoe lifeguards, I found myself thinking about the students back in New Mexico. They didn't need a conversation with Paul Motte to reset their thinking about the UWC movement in the 21st century. They were born here.

THE UWC MOVEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Kurt Hahn spent his life bringing boarding schools into existence to heal the wounds caused by what he called "modern society." To Hahn, that modern society was populated (and brutalized) by nation-states with distinct national characters and personalities. A national character was something that could be known. A national disposition was something that could be discovered and reported upon, as Hahn did for Germany regarding Britain during the First World War. Indeed, the tendency to refer to nations as monolithic identities with a discrete set of goals or tendencies must have been encouraged and galvanized by the fact that most of Hahn's adult life was dominated by some form of global war. It was an era of national teams, competing in bloody contest after bloody contest. With a few exceptions, everyone even had the good manners to wear the appropriate uniform.

This pattern of global-scale conflicts—the Entente vs the Central Powers in the First World War, the Axis versus the Allies in the Second World War, and the Soviets and their eastern bloc client states vs NATO in the Cold War—began to wane just as Hahn died in 1974, though the Berlin wall wouldn't fall for another fifteen years.

It would be quite impossible to chart all the important ways in which life on the globe had changed in the 50 years since Hahn, Hoare, Darvall, and the host of other visionaries conceived of and then brought into being the UWC movement. However, between the founding of Atlantic College in 1962 and the 30-50 celebration at the UWC USA in 2012 when the UWC movement turned 50 and the UWC USA turned 30, some important thresholds have been crossed.

A year before Hahn died, Augusto Pinochet executed a US-backed military coup against the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile, bringing into being what David Harvey has called the first “neoliberal state.”⁵¹⁵ Two years later, Milton Freidman won the Nobel Prize in economics. In 1980 Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter and became the American president. The Keynesian economic policies of the Great Depression, Second World War, and post-war boom gave way to neoliberalism as Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher led a broad campaign to deregulate national and international markets, knocking away the fetters on “controlled capitalism.” As the controls fell away, capitalism began to exhibit new characteristics: what Harvey came to call “flexible accumulation.” This new capitalism was typified by “entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial

⁵¹⁵ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. The neoliberal age had begun.

Though this new era would mean scaling back on social spending and many features of the welfare state, the same would not be true for governmental protections of the free market. Some of the most powerful governments and militaries in the world would now, according to Harvey, “set up those military, defense, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets.”⁵¹⁶ These markets that needed to function properly were positioned all around the world, leading to the rise of meta-national institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. Other harbingers of the neoliberal age have included an increase in contract (vs salaried) labor, a weakening of social provisions and organized labor, and the meteoric rise of the multinational corporation.⁵¹⁷ Generally, this has not been good news for those who occupy the bottom rungs of global wealth distribution.

In part as a result of the surge in innovation and emphasis on information systems, accompanying the rise to dominance of neoliberal economic policies and their social logics was the initiation and explosion of the digital age. The advent of computers gave rise to the internet which blended with cell phone technology to give rise to smart phones. The advent of the smart phone took what, in 1989 David Harvey had called the “time-space compression”⁵¹⁸ of the post-modern condition and compressed *that* into a computer the size of one’s wallet. The technology

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁵¹⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* ([Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1989), 240.

that was putting rockets and humans into space the year Hahn died is now dwarfed by the technology in our pockets. The panopticon that Michel Foucault famously warned us about in his 1975 *Discipline and Punish*⁵¹⁹ is now carried around with us, augmented by global positioning systems and backed up by a proliferation of wireless cameras and the storage of captured footage in the cloud.

Yet there are a handful of contemporary anthropologists that see room in this new reality for human agency. Aihwa Ong insists that Harvey's account of globalization leaves out exactly that, and therefore studies "the production and negotiation of cultural meanings within the normative milieus of late capitalism."⁵²⁰ In this vector of inquiry she joins Arjun Appadurai, who rebooted the discussion of agency in the neoliberal age with his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.⁵²¹ Appadurai here asserted that "over the past century or so, imagination has become a collective fact" and that in this "postelectronic" era the immensely creative power of the ordinary person is liberated because technology is democratized. No longer is the imaginative and the creative limited to elites. Furthermore, this new context of mediation, when mixed with the transnational migrations that are a manifestation of the constantly-mobile flexible accumulation of the neoliberal age, create a new

⁵¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 249. Foucault describes the panopticon as a design for prisons where one central tower can see into every one of hundreds of cells, as the cells are arranged in a theater design. "The theme of the Panopticon – at once surveillance and observation, security and knowledge, individualization and totalization, isolation and transparency – found in the prison its privileged locus of realization."

⁵²⁰ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1999), 3.

⁵²¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

present where neither actors or audiences are easily bound.⁵²² In a later section, Appadurai challenges fellow scholars with this:

What a new style of ethnography can do is capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences. Put another way, the task of ethnography now becomes the unraveling of a conundrum: what is the nature of a locality as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world?⁵²³

Both Ong and Appadurai indicate that the ruptures created by neoliberalism and globalization might open up quiet, autonomous spaces for creativity and, within a certain bandwidth, self-determination and resistance. They both hope that by articulating the ways in which structures of domination do and do not discipline the contemporary subject that one might find room to maneuver. Unfortunately, also finding room to maneuver in this new era are other “creatives.” Fundamentalist jihadists and other architects of tragic, often public, violence, themselves perhaps responding to a new reality of drones and proxy wars, are now delivering beheadings online and publishing recruitment magazines with the same production value as the latest newsletter from the Harvard Business School.

It is within this discussion that I direct attention to a small international school in New Mexico during the years 2011-2013, filled with students, all digital natives,⁵²⁴ who have migrated to the school for the *very reason* that it seeks to destabilize rigid concepts of national identity and culture “for peace and a sustainable future.” It may be that Paul Motte needs to

⁵²² Ibid., 4.

⁵²³ Ibid., 52.

⁵²⁴ A term first coined by Marc Prensky to refer to children born during the age of digital technology and the internet. They have never known a time when fast hand-held devices deliver answers on the information superhighway. By way of example, when I allowed my students to have their laptops in class, they would instantly look up a topic that interested them, sometimes to fact-check me. It never felt disrespectful, but rather that these digital natives had a different relationship with knowledge. They can just look it up.

convince me of the immediacy of our circumstances. But not them. They don't need to be told about the outdatedness of a paradigm that sees one nation rumbling helplessly to war with another unless a well-placed graduate of a particular boarding school can phone a friend. Their world is more fluid, less knowable, and much faster than that.

The first half of this dissertation used historical tools to trace the evolution of Kurt Hahn's pedagogical innovations over the period of sixty years. The first two chapters of this project were rooted firmly in the past, hoping to create a rich context for the present.

Chapter 1, "Progressive Utopian Ferment," revealed the historical precedent that led to Hahn's founding of Salem with Prince Max von Baden, highlighting Hahn's debt to the progressive romantics before him. The chapter also showed how Hahn's personal context deeply affected him: his injury, his time at Oxford, and his galvanizing experiences as an attaché for the German military high command and the failures of physical courage, as he would call them, he witnessed in those roles.

Chapter 2, "Three Wars, Three Castles," charted the inception and bloom of all three of Hahn's schools: Salem, Gordonstoun, and the Atlantic College. It revealed how Hahn's educational innovations (student leadership, skill-training, project work, service to the community, rescue services and wilderness expeditions) were always configured with national character, as well as national and international issues in mind. Especially important to Hahn were issues of morality, spiritual strength, and the courage to do the right thing in a difficult moment. These innovations were always developed in response to and in the context of war.

Hahn had enormous optimism about the human development that could occur at a boarding school. He believed that such a school could infuse a graduate with moral courage,

capable of affecting the trajectory of a nation. Hahn placed adversity in the path of his students intentionally, making them “meet with triumph and defeat,” so they might “treat both these imposters the same.” He fully intended that they would use the skills he and his faculty had given them to transcend these hardships and in doing so become immune to the sicknesses of modern society.

This half of the dissertation reaches for different tools. Using ethnographic methods, it seeks to answer Aihwa Ong’s call for an “anthropology of the present” that will “analyze people’s everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts.”⁵²⁵ It will do this while answering a question raised by the first two chapters of this dissertation. Can a single ideological boarding school actually, as Kurt Hahn believed so fervently, create truly changed graduates? If so, what is the engine of this change? What happens in the machinery of a school year that causes real change in students?

A THEORY OF IDENTITY IN PRACTICE – HOLLAND, LACHICOTE, JR., SKINNER, AND CAIN

In their excellent and far-reaching book *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Dorothy Holland, William Lachicote, Jr., Debra Skinner and Carole Cain synthesize and then evolve the ideas of the cultural psychologist Lev Vygotsky and the literary critic and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin to “articulate a vision of both person and society true to the parts played by cultural forms, the machinery of power and social positioning, and the *continual* process of identification.”⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 5.

⁵²⁶ Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, 5. Italics mine. The concept of identity construction as a ceaseless process is one of the most compelling aspects of this formulation.

In doing so, Holland et al. develop a way of understanding identities that is parallel to, but not the same as, the cultural studies of the person inspired by thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall. Holland et al. differentiate themselves from such thinkers in the way that they see identities forming in response to large cultural forms such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, and national identity. Whereas cultural studies (broadly defined) suggests that such identity construction takes place through a psychodynamic response to large cultural forms, Holland et al., following Bakhtin, suggest that a superior approach consists of seeing identities as developing as the result of an ongoing, intimate, dialogic process with oneself and one's context as one lives "in, through, and around the cultural forms practiced in social life."⁵²⁷ The fundamental question is one of agency.

This approach to the problem of identity construction is distinctive because it highlights the iterative and improvisational nature of the process of identity construction. Holland, et al. exchange Stuart Hall's well-known "suturing" metaphor, in which a subject is permanently stitched to a social position via the process of identification, for the concept of "co-development."⁵²⁸ Such co-development is possible (within a certain bandwidth) even with hostile or oppressive cultural forms. This co-development is made possible because subjects tend to execute improvisational responses toward their context. In other words, one never

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁵²⁸ For the "suturing" metaphor, please see Stuart Hall and Du Gay, Paul, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 7th ed. (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 3. Hall describes identity construction as "a process of articulation, a suturing, an over determination. . . like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play' of *différence*. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects.' It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process." I find all of this compelling, except that for Hall, agency is a blind spot. In this regard, Holland, et al.'s configuration is superior.

knows exactly how a specific person will creatively respond to their social and cultural landscape, either in the public or intimate spheres. What is certain, however, is that the process of identification is not static, but rather continuously iterative, constantly responding to the slowly-shifting large cultural forms, but also representative of a single person's imperfect ability to direct and train their internal, intimate responses to external stimuli.⁵²⁹

Holland, et al.'s configuration of identity construction is elegant because it allows for the organic response of an individual to their context, including in that context the interior landscape of self-talk, emotional state, and psychological health or sickness. For this reason, Holland et al.'s conceptions are marvelous tools with which to interpret a community as rife with both dominating cultural forms and audacious individual and group agency like the student community of the UWC USA.

The "Contexts of Identity": The Figured World, Positionality, the Space of Authoring, and the Making of Worlds

Figured Worlds

Holland, et al. identify four interconnected "contexts" within which identity is constructed. The first context, the "figured world" is a recent evolution of the long-used concept of "frames," first fully developed by Erving Goffman in 1974, as "basic elements" or "principles

⁵²⁹ Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, 45. This "self-direction and self-training" is seen as flawed, but also forms a crucial part of Holland, et al.'s formulation. Vygotsky's concept of "semiotic mediation" is the centerpiece of this formulation, wherein humans self-referentially use an external object as a symbol to intentionally trigger a memory or behavior in themselves. The most well-known example used by Vygotsky is the tying of a knot in a handkerchief so that one might recall something that has nothing at all to do with knots or handkerchiefs. Also important to mention is Holland et al.'s debt to George Herbert Mead's concept of selfhood.

of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them.”⁵³⁰ Holland, et al. take this central idea and expand and complicate it. If a frame is a basic element, an initial level of the organization of experience, then a “figured world” is a more complex, often collaborative, constellation of frames. It is an imagined space with its own “disposition, social identification, and even personification”⁵³¹ that adds richness and deploys power relationships in addition to the usual task that frames accomplish of organizing the micro-beats of everyday social life.

A figured world is a place many persons can visit or inhabit through a combination of physical or intellectual action as well as imaginative work. This is just as true with a handful of children playing “build a city” in a sandbox as it is with a handful of adults playing “New Year’s Eve party” in a Manhattan loft. Holland, et al. define a figured world as a “socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others.”⁵³² This sounds overly complicated until one imagines a child entering the above-mentioned sandbox and starting to “build a river” instead of “building a city,” or an interloping adult arriving at the Manhattan loft wearing workout clothes and headphones on New Year’s Eve. Such a disruption would reveal the figured world of both scenarios for the imaginative exercises that they are.

⁵³⁰ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1974), 10. Here Goffman takes Gregory Bateson’s concept of “the frame” and adds to and develops both its power to clarify human interactions. Goffman also exposes and elaborates on the concept’s weaknesses. For the original concept, please see Gregory Bateson, “A theory of Play and Fantasy”, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, 177-193.

⁵³¹ Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, 271.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 52.

Due to a figured world's collaborative and complex nature, it becomes an imagined space where a subject's social and cultural position can harden and clarify. For instance, though the sandbox play is absolutely a figured world (there is no *actual* city being constructed by the children in the sandbox), the social rank of, say, the most dominant child in that sandbox could certainly be established and oppressively reinforced within that figured world. This oppression and dominance would then have real consequences once the play frame of the sandbox had expired. In exactly the same way, truly equal "city-building" collaborative play could be initiated and sustained by all the participants in the sandbox. The figured worlds are full of potential as well as danger: "People have the propensity to be drawn to, recruited for, and formed in these worlds, and to become active and passionate about them. People's identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically in these "as if" worlds."⁵³³ The more intensely the individuals that constitute a figured world participate dialogically and dialectically in that world, the higher the stakes. This has powerful ramifications for figured worlds like those at the UWC USA, where youthful enthusiasm and unfettered idealism add a great deal of charge to systems that are already complex. We will witness the strange consequences of this 'extra charge' as we examine the phenomena of what I call *nationalization* and *transgressive humor* at the UWC USA.

Positionality

The second context of identity formation advanced by Holland, et al. is that of positionality. For these scholars, positionality refers to "durable social divisions" that have the ability to penetrate and effect nearly all figured worlds.⁵³⁴ Using our earlier example, though

⁵³³ Ibid., 49.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 272.

those festive Manhattanites all playing at “New Year’s Eve Party” in that loft might be in full mutual collaboration in regards to their figured world: a specific degree of formal-yet-provocative dress, traditional songs at specific times, counting backwards from 10 at midnight, the presence of certain types of alcohol, there are other positionalities that might not be so easily left at the door. These durable social divisions most certainly include continuums like race, class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, as well as the privileged access to resources or denial of access to resources that placement on such continuums might invoke.

In the deeply-layered environment of the UWC USA, a constant eye on positionality is essential, especially given the passion and enthusiasm with which the students and faculty mutually collaborate in the many figured worlds at play. It can be easy, for students and participant-observers alike, to skip over the inconvenient positionalities constantly troubling the utopic figured worlds of the UWC USA. For example, the degree of difference in socio-economic standing between the students at the UWC USA was profound, with students who only ate at the “Caf” (the UWC USA term for the school cafeteria) and survived on \$30-40 per month at the school, to a student who was so famously wealthy other students joked about him owning his own submarine. Though the school did much to level these discrepancies, such a difference in point-of-origin obviously calibrates a given student’s orientation to the UWC USA in fundamental ways.

The Space of Authoring

Drawing on Bakhtin’s notions of mandatory authorship, Holland, et al. explain “the space of authoring” as a “matter of orchestration: of arranging the identifiable social discourses/practices that are one’s resources in order to craft a response in a time and space

defined by other's standpoints in . . . a social field conceived as the ground of responsiveness."⁵³⁵ In other words, the existential question of "who are you?" must be answered constantly by a subject, and the process of answering this question, is an authorial process. The crucial verbs in Holland, et al.'s description are "orchestration" and "arranging." Using the available resources, and considering the field into which one writes, one writes oneself. But one does not do so in vacuum, but instead must contend with the larger cultural forms that (at least partially) make available the resources with which one is to "write" and also contend with the contours and agendas of one's "readers" or "audiences." In this way, one authors an identity: a creative process within larger cultural and structural constraints. Holland, et al. refer to this creativity *in situ* by using another word: "improvisation."⁵³⁶ This process is the central preoccupation in the following chapters. We will see this answering of the "who are you?" question take so many forms, from transgressive humor to high-stakes alliances to an evolving relationship to the concept of "home." It is within this self-authoring that much of the work of the engine of change is done at the UWC USA.

The Making of Worlds

It is this collaborative improvisation during the transactions between the intimate and the public that allow individual subjects to forge new figured worlds, albeit always contending with the forces of positionality and the social fields from which and into which one writes

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 276.

oneself. As Holland et al. note, these new collaborations, this “serious play,” are forged at the “margins of regulated space and time.”⁵³⁷

It is this final context, this forging of new figured worlds at the margins, that is particularly germane to the context of the UWC USA, where such a multitude of positionalities, institutional controls (but also new freedoms!), and ideologies combine and recombine in the tumult of a student’s two years at the school. The regulation is, at once, more intense (in the form of the demands of the IB, the politics of national representation, and the pure regulation of the institution of the school) but also more permissive (students are geographically as well as emotionally removed from normal fields of regulation: home nation, home culture, family). In many ways, the margins are larger. The figured worlds have the possibility to be less fettered. Much of what follows engages with the positionality of each of the ethnographical informants. But, as Holland, et al. insist, “position is not fate.”⁵³⁸

The students at the UWC USA undergo remarkable transformations. After protracted observation, contemplation, and two years of ethnographic interviewing, I separate attribute these transformations to what I call the three phases of the engine of change at the UWC USA. The first, explored in detail in Chapter 3: “Fall at the UWC USA,” consists of the surprising phenomenon of *nationalization*. That is, UWC USA students take on a mostly-absent (or mostly-unconscious) national identity as part of their acculturation into the UWC USA. I have given the second phase, explored in Chapter 4: “Spring at the UWC USA,” a name borrowed from Hahn’s “Laws of Salem”: *self-effacement in a common cause*. It is in this phase that UWC USA students

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 272.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 45.

move beyond their new national identity as they undergo the challenges of the wilderness program, the co-curricular program, and the intense showmanship of the cultural days and their corresponding cultural shows. The third and final phase of the engine of change at the UWC USA is also explored in Chapter 4. I call it the *triumph of the personal*. This phase consists of the deep bonds the students forge with each other that results in a profoundly-politicized and personal world. We've already seen a non-UWC version of this in action in the opening pages of this dissertation, as Mimmo the Maltese boat diver, identifying his own children with those he sees in the refugee boats headed to Greece, volunteers his time to pilot a rescue boat.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS ETHNOGRAPHY

So much of the school culture and student experience at the UWC USA is shaped by institutional features: the yearly school calendar, the weekly class and CAS schedule, and the timetable of a single day, for example. Less tangible institutional features also supplied scaffolding upon which the student experience was lived. Operational functions like daily check (the nightly roll-call of the students), curfew, morning break, "after school" (how the students refer to the portion of the day that proceeds after classes conclude), and CAS (the co-curricular program) all contributed in substantive ways to the UWC USA experience. For these reasons, I have taken the liberty of distilling the UWC USA two-year experience down to a single week, following the example of Jay Mechling's excellent ethnographic work on the Boy Scouts of America, where he distilled 20 years of ethnography down to a symbolic week at boy scout camp.⁵³⁹ Though I stick to a more literal timeline than Mechling, I do take some liberties with

⁵³⁹ Jay Mechling, *On My Honor: Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

some scenes in chapters 4 and 5. Given that the span of my ethnography was two years long, and yet the timeline of chapters 4 and 5 is only one year, some events that happened in 2012-2013 are inserted in the 2011-2012 timeline. This is done with narrative cohesion in mind.

A “Week” and a “Year” at the UWC USA

Because the student experience is in many ways circumscribed by the rhythms of a week, so too shall the reader encounter this ethnography. Everyone, even the reader, must to go to class on Monday! However, in order to chart the arc of a year at the UWC USA, each day of this single week at the UWC USA also represents a different phase of the school year. The reader will experience the UWC USA week as a student does, but in doing so will also spend a “year” at the school, following the students from the arrival day and welcome ceremony in August to the graduation of the second-years in the following May. Chapter 4 therefore covers Arrival day in August, a Sunday in September, a Monday in October, and a Tuesday in December. Chapter 5 covers a Wednesday in January, a Thursday in February, a Friday in April, the Saturday of Graduation in May, and a crucial encounter with Dvora from Israel the following fall.

During each “day” the reader will encounter “check-ins” with a handful of my informants. Mathias, Rahma, Xolani, Anne, Elena, and Dvora appear most frequently in these check-ins. Though the other nine informants will appear in specific vignettes and features, limits of space insist I constrain most of my check-ins to these five. These check-ins occur at different locations in each day, depending on how the other elements are arranged.

Finally, the reader will notice a repetitive structure I call “Notes” toward the end of each “day.” This is a formalized space for analysis before the focus of the chapter moves onto the

next day. I use this space to critique or explain any elements presented in that day that would otherwise escape without commentary.

METHOD

My ethnographic method had two main approaches, ethnographic interviews and participant-observation.

Ethnographic Interviews

For my ethnographic interviews I selected a group of “informants.” After my initial interviews in 2008, I knew that student experiences were crucial to any assessment of the UWC movement, and therefore diverse student voices must play a central role. It would be even more powerful if these voices could be accessed throughout the rendering of the lived experience of a single year. I selected 15 students. 10 were second-years in 2011. Another 5 were first-years. Of the 10 second-years, 5 were from the United States. With the help of other faculty members, I attempted to select a group of 10 non-Americans that would attempt the impossible task of “representing” most continents, broad global divisions, and language diversity. The UWC USA normally features a diverse membership of close to 80 nations among 200 students, so my selection of ten students was difficult.

So that my ethnography would not have a negative effect on the students involved, the Dean of Students, the Vice President, and the President of the UWC USA all vetted my list of 15. There were many iterations. I finally settled on students from Australia, Tanzania, Swaziland, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Israel, Syria, Iran, Nepal, and of course, the United States. I introduce each of my informants below in detail, but it bears mentioning that due to ethical

constraints regarding the identity of what the Institutional Review Board (IRB) considers vulnerable populations, I asked each of my informants for pseudonyms. I did not extend this practice to faculty, administration, or staff during my study, as it seemed an unnecessary and useless step that would actually not shield their identity at all, given the size of the school. When I introduce a non-informant student in the course of this ethnography, I signify their given pseudonym with quotation marks (“Rami,” for example), and thereafter any references to Rami will not include those marks.

Once my project was up and running I interviewed my informants every week-and-a-half to two weeks. This went on for the entirety of the first year, from late September of 2011 to graduation in May of 2012. Students and faculty at the UWC USA are extremely busy. Life is intense and workloads are high. As a result, there is variation in the total number of repetitions I was able to execute with each informant. With most of them: Anne, Xolani, Brenda, Mathias, Agni, Dvora, Davo, Sohrab, Lavinia, Rahma and Elena, I was able to strike a regular rhythm, amassing up to 26 interviews at 45 minutes to an hour each per informant. Others, like Falhuveri, Veronica, Grace, and Ismael, I either recruited a little later, or found it difficult to hit a regular stride with them. At the conclusion of the 2011-2012 year I realized I had the opportunity to continue to follow the five first-years through their second year at the UWC USA. I stayed on. As a result, Davo, Sohrab, Lavinia, Elena and Rahma all provided crucial longitudinal perspective on the full arc of a UWC USA experience.

The ethnographic interviews were open-ended and thematic, often centered on events that the students and I had shared the previous week at the UWC USA. They addressed life back home, frustrations, triumphs, and challenges in academics, excitement about dances,

expeditions, friendships, and frequently dealt with struggles with the peculiarities of life at the UWC USA. When the interviews addressed national identity, personal transformation, or issues of language or power, it was generally because I raised those questions. However, those topics were not stretches for the subjects, as the UWC USA experience is shot-through with such concerns. When I encountered a fascinating node of discussion in one interview and then raise it in the ensuing interviews with other informants. By the end of the ethnography, I had amassed close to 300 hours of interviews, which were then transcribed and annotated.

Participant Observation

I also functioned as a participant-observer. In 2011 I taught one code (the UWC USA word for “class”) of IB English A, Language and Literature. That first year I also administered a series of CASes (the IB acronym for ‘Creativity, Action, and Service’), co-curricular offerings that together constitute a massive portion of a student’s week and a crucial way in which the IB differentiates itself from more conventional modes of education. I supervised Physical Fitness, Lifeguarding, Creative Writing, Field House Activities, and Swimming Instruction. I shared an office in the Field House with Gita Eglite, a faculty member from Latvia who had a similarly diverse set of duties.

As much as possible, I tried to participate in large-scale campus activities as a first-year student might. This meant that I attended orientation, and joined a small group of first-years on a wilderness orientation trip into the mountains above Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu, New Mexico, a trip led by two eighteen-year-olds. Outside of my own code, I attended most meals in the cafeteria, all the assemblies, the collaborative professional development period for faculty on Friday mornings, and most large-scale campus events including guest speakers, cultural days,

and conferences. I also did my best to be available for smaller tasks, so that I might learn more about the student experience. I frequently volunteered to drive for other faculty members' projects, and therefore found myself piloting one of the boxy commuter vans to and from Santa Fe on afternoons or weekends when I wasn't administering a CAS. In my second year these additional duties waned, as the writing process had begun.

In the second year, another crucial ethnographic opportunity became available. In the last semester of my ethnography during the spring of 2013, I executed a day-long "shadowing" five times, once for each of my remaining informants. I met each of the students, Sohrab from Iran, Rahma from Syria, Davo from Australia, Elena from Denmark, and Lavinia from Brazil, at their dorm before breakfast (around 8 am) and followed them through their entire day, leaving them finally at bedtime (around 11 pm). This would have been absolutely impossible and certainly unethical in my first year as I did not have the full trust of the administration, faculty and especially not of the students. However, thanks to the fast student turnover rate at the UWC USA, I had trust and common ground with both the second-years and the firsties in 2012-2013. This meant that my presence 'during the day' and in the normally student-only spaces during that day was treated with amusement and curiosity as opposed to suspicion. It was precious ethnographic terrain. As much as is possible for an adult, I saw behind the curtain. It would be hard to quantify the amount I learned in those five days about the student experience at the UWC USA.

POWER AND TRANSPARENCY

I was an American teacher at a boarding school in the United States full of students far from home. This meant that I had even more potential leverage than that afforded me by the

axes of power and privilege I have listed above. Put another way, teachers are the most powerful entities at the UWC USA, and I was one of these.

This situation had obvious ramifications for an ethnography where I would attempt to simultaneously participate in and examine the UWC USA culture without warping it too much with the acts of either participation or examination. It seemed the best way to navigate this confluence of data and action was to offload as much power as possible to the most vulnerable and also the most interesting group at the school: the students.

Rhetorically, this meant frequently reminding the students and faculty that I had dual roles. This was accomplished in a series of ways. Twice in two years, early in the fall, I stood up in the all-school assembly and distributed an announcement of my project. I announced myself as an outside researcher and participant-observer, and explained how important it was that the power relationships favored them, the students, and that I was serious about mitigating the fact that the balance of power initially favored me. As a result, I promised then and there that any student at any time for any reason could ask me to leave a conversation or a social situation and I would do so. The notable exception to this off-loading of power was my own classroom and other direct institutional responsibilities like CAS or check.⁵⁴⁰

In regards to my 15 informants, this meant a permission slip to be signed by their parents if they were underage, as well as a direct conversation about their voices and our respective levels of power. The most important aspect of this conversation was my promise to

⁵⁴⁰ “CAS” is an acronym that refers to the massive co-curricular program of the UWC USA, which is itself an expansive interpretation of the co-curricular program of the International Baccalaureate. The acronym stands for Creativity, Action, and Service. “Check” is a daily duty of faculty on campus, usually residential staff, to literally check on the students in their dorms. It involves a form of in-place taking of roll, in each dorm. I will delve into both institutional features later in chapters 3 and 4.

them that they would be able to see how I used their voice or the details of their experience at the UWC USA. Following the framework of the “Collaborative Ethnography” as advocated by Luke Eric Lassiter, informants would have power over how I used their voices and my interpreted renderings of their experiences and perspectives.⁵⁴¹ Lassiter also advocates “clear and accessible writing” so as not to inadvertently exclude or alienate one’s informants. I strive to do that here as well.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMANTS

It was difficult to choose 15 informants from a field of 215.⁵⁴² Once I had established my selection criteria, I sent an initial list of about 40 students through an informal vetting ‘committee’ that included the President, Vice President, Dean of Students, and two other faculty members I had come to trust. Given the power dynamics at play, my first criterion was that any participant in this study have the strength of will to persevere if they did not want to answer a line of questioning or if they needed to protect themselves in any way: intellectually, ethically, socially or emotionally. My second criterion was that the commitment of participating in my study could not adversely affect the social, co-curricular, or academic experience of a student who might participate. The third criterion was that the student displayed a likelihood that they would finish out my research project with me provided the first two criteria were met - that there was a low chance they would leave the study early. The fourth criterion was the most

⁵⁴¹ Luke E Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁵⁴² For a reminder of the degree of diversity of the student body at the UWC USA, please see Gallery 1, immediately following this chapter.

difficult. I needed to somehow distill a group that would be “representative” of the UWC USA student body while also featuring a significant portion of Americans.

As one can see below, curating such a representative group descends into a confusing exercise where one is trying to disengage one identity frame from another identity frame when they are mutually-constitutive. It also left me feeling a little silly and very conscious of my own assumptions and the inherently tokenizing logic of such categorizing.

As a way of example: the final group of students could possibly be divisible in these ways: there are five firsties, five non-American second-years, and five American second-years.⁵⁴³ Region-wise, there are two Africans: Xolani and Ismael, one European, Elena⁵⁴⁴, two Latinas: Lavinia and Brenda, three middle-easterners: Debra, Rahma, and Sohrab, three Asians: Agni, Falhuveri, and Veronica, and the lone Australian: Davo. Racially-speaking (though this is an especially-fraught category at a place this diverse), there are three black students, four Asian students (counting Agni from the Indian sub-continent and Falhuveri from an island off the same)⁵⁴⁵, one Arab student, one Latina student, one Persian student and six white students.

This vaguely essentialist logic is constantly at play at the UWC USA, a manifestation of the “brutal shorthand” I explore below in a section about the opening days of school at the school. It emerges in comments by students such as “there weren’t any Africans at the party until about 11 pm.” Or “dude, look: we are having a conversation about the EU without any Europeans!” and regularly in transgressive humor like “Can I get a Latin to tell me if this taco

⁵⁴³ This includes Debra as an American because she holds Israeli and American dual citizenship. She was born in Evanston, Illinois, but has lived most of her life in Israel.

⁵⁴⁴ If one counts Israel as European, a matter that is sometimes disputed at the UWC USA.

⁵⁴⁵ And also counting Veronica, who is Asian-American

from the Caf is legit?” or “Hey, that American looks kinda mad, don’t let her bomb your country.”

In a pattern reminiscent of Kurt Hahn’s frequent off-hand references to “England’s national character,” This logic refers to massive swaths of the global population as if they were knowable groups. And yet when any one person is processing such a multitude of identities, cultures, and national identities all at once, it is an easy habit into which to slip. At the risk of explaining away the obvious power relationships involved in this slippery kind of brutal shorthand, I will only point out that I found myself needing to assemble a representative group of international students from a larger group of 215 students. I found myself counting Africans, Asians, North Americans, Europeans, and Latinos. I found myself counting white kids and black kids to make sure I had “enough.”

The Second Years

Second-years at the UWC USA have returned from their summer break to lead campus. They range in age from 17-19 years old, and have two more semesters left at the school.

Agni is from Kathmandu, Nepal. She is bright and curious and has the physical grace of a lifelong dancer. She is well-known on campus for her level of energy, her heartfelt advocacy for a series of causes, and her trait of feeling deeply about many things. She often refers to herself as a “sub-contie” referring to the Indian Sub-continent. Other students tease her affectionately for her habit of crying suddenly as well as her deep belly laugh that frequently rings out in public spaces like the dining hall or at school assembly. She has a brilliant smile and bright eyes that dance under her jet black hair. Agni’s default setting is to humor and joy. She is an RA in the Kili dorm as well as an organizer of the Middle Eastern, Asian, and Australian National Day.

Xolani is an alert, lithe Swazi boy from the Lubombo Plateau. He was raised in poverty conditions, only traveling to South Africa once in his life as a child. He identifies as black. His deep voice and careful, articulated speech are a couple of reasons that students and teachers respond well to him. Xolani is effortlessly charming. He is polite in a deep way, making allowances for others' small inconsistencies as a matter of course. His huge smile and his ability to remember details endears him to others. He is a lead singer and leader in the African Choir, one of the leaders of the African National Day Cultural Day as well as a participant in the Boys to Men CAS. He is also an RA in the Kozzy dorm. He went home for the first time since coming to the UWC USA in between his first and second year.

Veronica is from Maryland, near Washington, DC. Her father is from Hong Kong and her mother is Italian-American. She has a regal bearing, and a methodical, intellectual perspective. She identifies as Asian-American, but just as often just says "I'm half-Asian." She has the sometimes-unnerving habit of taking a long pause before responding to a question, and then delivering answers all wrapped up, having fully conceived of them before answering. Veronica grew up in a series of private schools, and came to the UWC from a Quaker friends' school. There is a guilelessness to her physical movements and a direct, intentional, effortless precision to her conversation and thought. The IB curriculum is not difficult for her.

Anne is a tall, strong, American girl from Minnesota who identifies as white. She is very intelligent. She has a steady, easy physicality about her and this allows her to wait for others to show their cards so she can outmaneuver them. She keeps pace easily in conversation with adults, and quietly delights in their acting as if she is a pseudo-peer. Because of her nearly flawless degree of follow-through and her deep dedication to the UWC mission, Anne has

become one of the most respected student leaders on campus. She is an RA in the Acon dorm, as well as leading the Recycling CAS. In her second year she helped found the new CAS Practical Activism.

Matthias is an American boy from metropolitan Detroit. His mother is white and his father is African-American. He identifies as a black American. He has delicate features and a confident bearing. Matthias is articulate and deftly humorous in his speech, often deploying faint sarcasm or understatement to make a point. He looks people in the eyes when he speaks to them and has a mischievous, bright air about him. His comments in our discussions often turned to the UWC movement as a whole. He gravitates to the social aspects of student life at the UWC USA, leading the organization of the Buddy Dance (a 'platonic' dance where firsties are welcomed by the second-years) and Expressions, a roasting of the firsties by the second years early in spring semester.

Grace is an American white girl from Orcas Island, Washington State. She is most happy when she is active, and it is not uncommon to see Grace playing soccer barefoot with each of the other players on the field being both cleated and male. She is curious and empathetic, though these deeper traits are sometimes overshadowed by her relentless optimism and physical energy. Prior to the UWC USA, Grace spent significant time overseas in Costa Rica. One always has the sense that Grace is either just getting back from an involved physical activity, or just getting ready to leave for one.

Falhuveri is a broad-shouldered, steady boy from the Maldives. Only a few months into his time at the UWC USA, Falhuveri discovered horses, ranching and the New Mexican outdoors. He is one of the UWC USA students that is most connected to the nearby town of Las Vegas and

the various satellite communities that orbit it. He has a measured, weighty wisdom about him that is eerie for someone so young. This impression is deepened by his habit of speaking slowly and with precision. He frequently sports a worn Carhartt vest or jacket, cowboy boots, and a thick beard. He is a Wilderness CAS leader, along with community work crew. The first day he rode a horse was a year earlier, September 13th, 2010. "The horse I got on the first time was a wild horse rescued from the mustang program. So it was kind of intimidating" he remembers with a small smile.

Debra is a Jewish girl from Israel. She also holds American citizenship. She is strong and confident, and loves to wear a black leather jacket. She has a fountain of curly black hair that is always an additional participant in any conversation one has with Debra, as she often punctuates her sentences by moving a handful of her hair from one side to the other. She is an artist, as well as another ferocious campus leader, dedicated to both the ideological and social aspects of the UWC USA. Of all the informants, Debra is possibly the most deliberately social. She is an RA in the Acon Dorm, as well as a co-leader of the MAAD Cultural Day show. Debra has a clear-eyed swagger about her, which she simultaneously lampoons and maintains.

Brenda is a "Tica" from Costa Rica. She came to the UWC USA with almost no English, but now in her second year has achieved near-fluency. She is an unofficial social leader of the "Latin Family," the loose affiliation of most of the Spanish-speaking and/or Latino(a) students at the UWC USA, often baking cakes for birthdays or arranging Latin dinners. Brenda was raised on an organic farm five hours from San Juan, near a village of 150 people. Brenda grew up with itinerant international farm workers, including many Americans, who had come to work on her

farm and learn from her parents. She has a grin that is so big her eyes disappear when she smiles. She has a gentle, nurturing presence.

Ismael is from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. His intelligence is so profound as to be a force one must reckon with at all times. Ismael lost both his parents at a young age and lifted himself, his siblings, and a few of his relatives up from brutal poverty through his academic prowess. His speech is precise, sharp, and often punctuated by sudden chuckles. Ismael is often laughing to himself at something he has thought or sensed. Ismael is a devout Muslim. He is also a deeply practical young man who often waives away the institutional demands of the UWC USA in favor of topics or activities that are either more practical (how to avoid attending assembly, which he sees as a profound waste of time) or more idealistic (how to position himself to solve the AIDS crisis in Africa) than the daily rhythms of the UWC USA.

The Firsties

First-year students are called only “firsties.” This term is mostly one of endearment, but occasionally can become a pejorative or a marker of inexperience or naiveté. At the time of this ethnography they have only just arrived at the UWC USA, and are adjusting as fast as they can while also accidentally re-setting the entire social fabric due to their replacement of the roughly 100 second-years that graduated the previous May.

Elena is from Denmark. She identifies as white. She is a naturally cautious-yet-warm girl who connects easily one-on-one. The social tumult of the UWC USA is occasionally a challenge for her, as is the breakneck pace of academics and co-curricular activities. She has the white-blond hair typical of some Danes, and this feeds into the easy initial stereotypes other students and faculty supply about Scandinavians. Elena has two little brothers at home whom she

references frequently. She has many wonderful traits that are harder to express in the melee of the UWC USA: a quiet humor, a tendency to listen first and talk second, and a lack of interest in being on stage. She is a new member of the Kilimanjaro dorm.

Davo is a boy from a rural part of Victoria, Australia, 70 kilometers from the nearest town. He is from the Milewa region along the Murray River. He identifies as white. He is equal parts iconoclast, proficient student, and pragmatic country boy. Thickly muscled, showy, and friendly, one of Davo's most charming characteristics is his open-heartedness toward others. Davo is one of the few UWC students whose plans after the UWC include potential voluntary military service. In a way, he is stereotypical culturally western boy: full of a naïve optimism and a wonderful excitement about new horizons, including being a soldier. He arrived at the UWC USA with a huge mop of curly hair, which bounced as he enthusiastically greeted the people he was sure would be his new friends. He is a new member of the Mont Blanc Dorm. He is on the Community Work Crew CAS.

Lavinia is from the countryside in São Paulo state, Brazil. She identifies as white. Demonstrative, affectionate, and mostly uninterested in institutional constraints like the school's timetable, Lavinia's personality exploded onto the UWC USA scene well before her heavily-accented English caught up. She simply didn't care that most people couldn't understand her, she wanted to communicate and seemed to sense that the raw force of her feelings about people and topics would make its way through language barriers, which it mostly did. One of the youngest incoming first-years at 15, every so often the adult expectations of the UWC USA would weigh heavily on Lavinia, and she would be leveled by homesickness. Lavinia does not simply like things, she adores them. She does not dislike things, she hates them.

Though Lavinia matches the expressive, joyful personality stereotype of Brazilians, her appearance is quite different. Her long jet black hair is offset by an extremely fair complexion. She is a new member of the Aconcagua dorm.

Sohrab is a first-year from Tehran, Iran. He is a tall, wiry, angular boy with an easy smile and a habit of nodding in agreement with a conversational partner, even though he is most often in sharp disagreement with them. He identifies as Persian. Sohrab is as active, intellectually-speaking, as any student at the UWC USA, but in this I mean that he participates in the world of ideas, not necessarily academics. A fierce individual, Sohrab can be seen on campus wearing bright red pants and a bow tie, which sets off his jet black hair and dark stubble. He signs up to present to the students and faculty at almost every assembly about the power of skepticism, and is an ardent reader of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. He is a new member of the Mont Blanc dorm.

Rahma is a first-year from Damascus, Syria. Rahma is disarming and warm, with an unconscious tendency to reach out and hold or physically touch especially her female friends. Fair-skinned and light-eyed, she often is mistaken for a white westerner until she speaks. Rahma is nostalgic about Damascus and its cosmopolitan charms and is secretly deeply concerned about the growing unrest there. She is an accomplished dancer and frequently takes part in cultural day dances and dance recitals. Rahma is skilled at making friends, and a short time into her first year is one of the most recognized first years on campus. She is a new member of the Aconcagua dorm.

HOW STUDENTS GET HERE: THE NATIONAL COMMITTEES

The UWC USA does not interview or manage the recruitment, application, interview and acceptance process for 75 of its incoming students each year. These students (the non-American portion of each incoming class) are selected and submitted to the UWC USA by entities called “national committees,” groups of UWC alumni and other converts to the larger movement who run recruitment and admissions processes in all of the 140 or more nations from which UWC students have originated since 1962. These operations run from highly professionalized groups such as in Germany, Mexico, and Hungary, to tiny outposts of idealism and hustle in nations that have a small UWC presence, qualified, Tim Smith jokes, because they are the only interested party in that area who has a FAX machine.

Tim Smith is the Director of Admissions and University Advising at the UWC USA. He is an intent, dedicated man, with a self-deprecating sense of humor and a constantly-rumpled suit from frequent travel. He processes a truly impressive amount of information as a function of his position at the UWC USA: the intake of new students and the placement of outgoing students at universities and colleges. Though the students are often stressed out after encounters with Smith, he worries about them, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a level of care that can only be described as parental.

Smith is also heavily involved in the activities of the American national committee admissions process, which selects the 25 Americans that will become firsties at the UWC USA each year, but also 25 more that will attend one of the other UWCs around the world. Both years of my ethnography, the American UWC national committee receives something in the neighborhood 700 applications, and admitted 50. This means that an American applicant faced

an acceptance rate of roughly 7.1% in 2011. This rate was only slightly higher than that of Harvard College in 2011, 6.2%.⁵⁴⁶

Dan Willms, a math teacher at the UWC USA, and contributes to the efforts of the initial reading and screening process of applicants by the American national committee. “These are already high-achieving kids,” he says, musing about the unusual applicant pool. “They’ve already self-selected. They fit what this place is about. It is often a very difficult choice, as the students who seek entrance to a movement with such a mission statement are often very likable. Willms especially enjoys watching the students he helped select as they excel on campus, or hearing about their successes in other UWCs: “It’s pretty rewarding.”

As for the other national committees, Smith admits that each one has its own agenda, particular biases, and particular strengths and weaknesses. “I can’t control the [selection of] overseas kids. That is, I mean I don’t advertise to them. The national committees advertise to those kids.” Despite an effort in some groups of national committees to share best practices and admissions techniques, there is still huge variety in the process of selecting UWCers around the globe. To some extent, the UWC USA gets who it gets. What Smith and the American national committee can control is the admissions process in the United States.

In recent years, Smith has been very pleased with the American national committee’s moving from prioritizing “performance” in the admissions process to prioritizing “promise,” a philosophical shift that has extended access to the UWC movement to much wider set of American demographics. Still, Smith points out, two aspects are crucial: motivation and the

⁵⁴⁶ “An Unprecedented Admissions Year,” *Harvard Gazette*, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/03/an-unprecedented-admissions-year/>.

basic proficiencies and interests that will allow a student to succeed in such an intense place. He and the rest of the national committee look for signs that a prospective student is “running toward us” instead of “running from something else,” and that they have the basic tools to survive. “I think if you don’t have these 3 things: an interest in global issues, an interests in service and an ability to pass the IB I don’t think you are going to be very happy here.” Smith says, with a faint tone of warning.

WHERE THEY GO FROM HERE: THE DAVIS UWC SCHOLARS PROGRAM

In 2000, Shelby Davis, founder of founder of Davis Selected Advisers, L.P., a mutual fund management company managing more than \$40 billion,⁵⁴⁷ in partnership with then-UWC USA-President Phil Geier, piloted a series of scholarships for students from UWCs to five schools in the United States: Colby College, College of the Atlantic, Middlebury College, Princeton University, and Wellesley College.⁵⁴⁸ It was the beginning of the Davis UWC Scholars Program.

Since that time, the Davis UWC Scholars Program has grown exponentially, currently offering need-based scholarships to any graduate of any of the UWCs who gains admission to American universities on the “Davis List.”⁵⁴⁹ Davis has also extended his support of the UWC USA in particular, not only funding the complete renovation of the Montezuma Castle in 2000-

⁵⁴⁷ “Founders | Davis UWC Scholars,” accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.davisuwcscholars.org/founders>.

⁵⁴⁸ “History | Davis UWC Scholars,” accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.davisuwcscholars.org/program/history>.

⁵⁴⁹ “Founders | Davis UWC Scholars.” For a full list of the partner institutions to the Davis UWC Scholars Program, please see Appendix A.

2001,⁵⁵⁰ but also establishing continuing scholarships for the UWC tuitions for each of the admitted Americans each year. In sum, Davis' scholarship programs currently fund the UWC high school education for all American UWC students, either at the UWC USA or elsewhere, and an American university education for any graduate of any UWC that gains access to "partner institution."

The degree to which Davis' shockingly-generous contributions have contributed to the stability and growth of the UWC USA itself, but also the larger movement is difficult to quantify. Yearly outlays of the program top \$40 million dollars, and Shelby Davis and his family have personally contributed another \$75 million in separate gifts and endowments.⁵⁵¹ As Phil Geier put it to me in 2012, the original idea was to "start small, and design the scholarship program to be scale-able."

⁵⁵⁰ Queen Noor Utz Craig Smith, Elmo Baca, Nancy Hanks, Heidi, *Montezuma: The Castle in the West by Heidi Utz, Queen Noor, Craig Smith, Elmo Baca, Nancy Hanks, (2002) Paperback* (University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 8.

⁵⁵¹ "Founders | Davis UWC Scholars."



Figure 6: The Davis scholars of the UWC USA, 2012-2013, standing in front of the Sasakawa Faculty Lounge during the 30-50 Celebrations in September of 2012. Shelby Davis is standing center right front, holding a white hat. Phil Geier, former President of the UWC USA and Co-founder of the Davis UWC Scholar Program, is the man standing the left of Davis.

When asked about the effect on the UWC USA of such a powerful set of scholarships and financial support, Geier, the co-founder of the Davis UWC Scholars Program, points out that as the second head-of-school of the UWC USA, he saw the institution benefit in profound ways. Besides the obvious effect that so many scholarships have had on the students themselves, the increased presence of magnetic UWC graduates in so many reputable American universities granted the movement and the individual schools “increased respect, visibility, and understanding of the UWC movement to a larger world.” He admits that there is little doubt the Davis UWC Scholar program also made the UWC USA more college-placement oriented.

For Geier, the influence of the program on the “partner institutions” in the United States has been no less profound. Especially for universities that recruit heavily from UWCs, the program literally “brings the world to campus,” establishing a scenario where in some smaller schools, the UWC ethos has a chance to “become culturally dominant.” Such a scenario has an opportunity to play out in universities and colleges such as Earlham, Dartmouth, Brown, Macalester, and Middlebury, which often boast more UWC graduates in attendance in college than are enrolled at most UWC schools.⁵⁵²

The goal of the Davis UWC Scholar program is the proximity of UWC graduates during their college experiences to each other, but also to American undergraduates. “We strive to foster highly personal relationships between outstanding Americans and non-Americans on U.S. campuses, and to seed global networks. These networks can serve a higher calling of international understanding and common purpose among future leaders.”⁵⁵³

The effect of this consolidation of able and interesting international students at American universities (all already galvanized by their UWC experiences) raises questions of potential brain-drain for their home nations, of course. And yet the overall situation is more complicated than that. Many students from outside the United States had already set their sights on college or university in the United States. The Davis UWC Scholar program became the means to achieve that goal.

For Tim Smith, this possible orientation means he must be wary of applicants who seek only to use the UWC USA as a springboard to placement in the best universities in the United

⁵⁵² The exception to this is the only UWC that is K-12: the UWC SEA, in Singapore. It has 5,500 students between two campuses. For a list of the top 30 schools to which UWC USA students matriculated from 2005 to 2012, please see Appendix B.

⁵⁵³ “Founders | Davis UWC Scholars.”

States, a reality that has become more frequent since the Davis Scholarships entered the picture. “The bad part [of the Davis program] is of course some people might try and get in here for the wrong reason . . . Our interview process is designed to weed kids like that out. . . we do not want someone coming here for the wrong reasons.” And yet he is only speaking of the American application process. The larger field of national committees has their own biases and goals.

THE INSTITUTION ITSELF, A VERY SHORT HISTORY

The property just across the Gallinas river from the Montezuma hot springs where the UWC USA now stands has had a curious history for what is now an out-of-the-way place. It is a history shot-through with struggle and occasionally bedazzled with celebrity.

The first white people to develop the location garnered permission from the Mexican government to erect a few rough buildings in the 1840s. By 1846, war had reduced Mexico’s holdings significantly and moved the border far to the south. The US Army created an adobe structure as a hospital near the hot springs. This was later sold and became the Adobe Hotel, where, on July 27th 1879, Billy the Kid and Jesse James had dinner together. The Old Stone Hotel, occupied today by the UWC USA administrative offices and library, was built near its location later that year.⁵⁵⁴

The famous Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company had just arrived in nearby Las Vegas, bringing with it rails stretching across the plains and connection to the glittering east just as the Gilded Age began to gain momentum. For a stretch of years, it looked like Las Vegas

⁵⁵⁴ Philip Geier, “Montezuma: Myth and Symbol of the American West,” in *Montezuma: The Castle in the West* (New Mexico Magazine, 2002), 10–12.

might be the most important city in the American southwest. The railway built a spur line toward the springs and in 1882 the palatial Montezuma Hotel opened, boasting Queen Anne Style, stained glass and 270 rooms of graceful wooden architecture. A clogged gas line burned all of this graceful wood to the ground three years later. Undaunted, the railway rebuilt the Montezuma Hotel up on the hill overlooking what would eventually become the UWC USA soccer fields. It was completed in April 1885. This version of the grand building burned down only four months later, in August of the same year. The Santa Fe Railroad Company rebuilt the hotel a third time, this time naming it the “Phoenix” until their attempt at poetry began to feel more like a cruel joke, at which point they returned to the hotel’s original name. Luck was still not on its side, however, and the hotel steadily lost money. On Halloween night of 1903 the hotel hosted its last guests.⁵⁵⁵

The site was converted into the Montezuma Baptist College following its closure. In 1912, “Fireman” Jim Flynn, used the campus to train for his legendary boxing match with Jack Johnson, a contest that went up in a different kind of flames.⁵⁵⁶ In 1937 the property was purchased by the Catholic church. The church held the property for the next many decades.

On November 8, 1978, Lord Mountbatten (by then the head of the international UWC movement) and Prince Charles cornered the iconoclastic Cold War entrepreneur and oilman Dr. Armand Hammer at a reception at Buckingham Palace and insisted he join the UWC movement,

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 12–15.

⁵⁵⁶ John Bowman, “Parade of Celebrities Make Montezuma Pilgrimage,” in *Montezuma: The Castle in the West* (New Mexico Magazine, 2001), 22. Flynn lost the fight because he wouldn’t stop head-butting Jack Johnson.

specifically in regards to spearheading the initiative to finding and funding a site for an American school. He assented.⁵⁵⁷

The search had already gone on for years. For more than a decade before the school's founding, the American National Committee had been looking for a suitable location for an American UWC. Sites in San Diego, Vermont, and even an unused island near Boston had all been raised as possibilities and then dismissed. An internal report from May of 1981 lists Guadalupe College in Las Gatos, California; the "Highlands Seminary Site" (the Montezuma Castle); the Claremont Collegiate School in Claremont, California; and the Capital Christian Center in Sacramento, California as "available sites" and the former Synanon Property in Marin, California and two properties belonging to the Catholic Archdiocese, one in Phoenix, Arizona and the other in Tucson as "other potential sites."⁵⁵⁸

The man who would eventually become the founding head of the UWC USA, Theodore Lockwood, was the former President of Trinity College and Hartford College and a dedicated academic. He originally was brought on as an advisor to Hammer and the other UWC advocates searching for a site. A letter from Lockwood to Hammer's personal assistant, Jim Pugash, dated June 19, 1981, distills Lockwood's impressions after a scouting visit to the dilapidated Montezuma site. The presence of two major non-white minorities (Pueblo Indians and what Lockwood refers to as "Spanish-Americans"), a decent water supply, and support from

⁵⁵⁷ Theodore D Lockwood, *Dreams & Promises: The Story of the Armand Hammer United World College: A Critical Analysis*, 1st Edition (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1997), 12.

⁵⁵⁸ Robert E Knox, "Status Report: Possible Locations for a United World College Site in the Western United States," Typed (San Francisco, California, May 22, 1981). Also in Knox's report is a longer list of "Properties Considered, but Unavailable or Unsuitable" including the Desert Sun School, the Happy Valley School, the Athenian School, the Dunn School, Marymount College, Prescott College, the San Francisco Theological Seminary, and the University of California, Riverside.

Highlands University in Las Vegas were all major positives for Lockwood. His feelings for the site are more qualified:

It must have been impressive! . . . With some imagination, hard work and money, it could regain a sense of integrity as a campus that is so hard to visualize in its current condition. The castle is key to that redevelopment. . . the newer dormitories are solid, useful, and tasteless. But some vines, shrubbery, even solar panels for supplementary hot water, would remove the curse of antiseptic cellularism. . . the more I looked and left out of view the nearby shacks, the more persuaded I became that it could acquire a charm and distinctiveness capable of inducing student pride, concern – and work on the less essential repairs and renovations.⁵⁵⁹

A report from the Director General of the United World Colleges, Ian Gourlay, a few months later adds an important detail: that “mountain rescue, desert survival, and wildlife census-taking, to name a few activities, were to be fitted into the programme and that the local communities would welcome student volunteers at the general hospital, the mental hospital, homes for the elderly, and so on.”⁵⁶⁰ Though Kurt Hahn had passed away seven years earlier, it is clear that the same framework that had inspired and shaped the Atlantic College was still in place: rescue, service, and Cistercian-inspired connection to the community.

Hammer bought the 110-acre property from the Santa Fe Archdiocese for \$100,000,000 and immediately set about convincing Lockwood and his wife Lu to stay on after the deal Montezuma site was complete.⁵⁶¹ The school opened its doors on in the early fall of 1982 with 100 students from 46 nations in a ceremony attended by Hammer, Prince Charles, and Lord Romsey. The morning before the ceremony, the recently-revamped plumbing gave out. Prince Charles famously quipped that it was the coldest shower he’d taken since Gordonstoun.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Theodore D Lockwood, “Letter to Jim Pugash: Evaluation of the Montezuma Seminary Site,” Typed, (June 19, 1981), 1–2, United World College International Office Archive.

⁵⁶⁰ Ian Gourlay Sir, “Report of the Visit of Sir Ian Gourlay, Director General, to the USA 12-17 August” (London, August 1981), 2.

⁵⁶¹ Lockwood, *Dreams & Promises*, 22.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 60.

Given the visiting dignitaries, Lockwood decided to ask each new UWC student if they would bring their flag up and place it in a standard on the platform. According to Lockwood, the stage “would be outlined by the flags of the countries represented in the student body. We were establishing a precedence. . . As the dean intoned the country, a student placed its flag on the platform. People were moved by this spectacle.”⁵⁶³ The Armand Hammer United World College of the American West was a going concern.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 61. Though initially a flourish to honor the royal guests at the school’s opening, the tradition of linking individuals to their home nations via national flags has become a sacrosanct practice at the UWC USA. It contributes powerfully to what I am referring to an “ambassadorial rhetoric” and is a crucial part of phase I of the engine of change at the UWC USA: nationalization.

CHAPTER 4: FALL AT THE UWC USA

(First and Third Semesters: Arrival, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday)

Fall semester begins in the heat and electricity of a New Mexican August. Though known for its dry conditions, New Mexico has a “monsoon season” and the second-years arrive in the middle of this period to prepare for the arrival of their firsties. Throughout each day the tension builds until a late afternoon explosion. Around 3:30 or 4:00 pm, the sky quickly darkens and the air becomes still with the threat of an electric storm. Rain lashes the mountains, vanishing into the high desert as soon as it lands. The evenings that follow are sweet ones, the scent of fresh water on dry ground sending everyone to sleep.

This electrically-charged season is a fitting backdrop for the return of the new second-years to campus. As we will encounter below, though they are campus veterans, their entire social landscape is in flux. Once the inexperienced firsties, they are now de-facto campus culture-setters. Once confused and quietly terrified on the orientation wilderness expeditions, they are now wilderness leaders. They arrive full of excitement and anxiety, wondering how they will acquit themselves.

For the firsties, it will be a semester full of trauma and wonder. For many of the incoming firsties, the UWC USA is a figured world dedicated purely to ideals: a castle on a mountain where young international students hatch solutions to worldly problems while breaking down the barriers of prejudice. This idealism will be tempered by the process of *nationalization* – when firsties first understand that their national identity has meaning outside themselves, that others have already created the figured world of Danish-ness, Brazilian-ness, or Iranian-ness, and that they will be joining that world, not creating it from nothing.

Nationalization is the first phase in the trio of phases to what I call the engine of change at the UWC USA. The firsties must pass through a stage of an emerging national identity before they experience the other two phases: *self-effacement in common cause* and the *triumph of the personal*. A strange feature of the process of nationalization is that the firsties' idealism will be met with the transgressive humor and easy trafficking in stereotypes that is a cultural norm at the UWC USA, a confusing encounter for new arrivals to a place with such ideals.

The second-years are excited too, but their excitement is leavened by the knowledge that it is now up to them to run campus, to attempt the task of standing-in for their *own* powerful, experienced, worldly second-years. A little later in the semester this excitement will be directly challenged by the gritty, worldly demands of third semester: a gauntlet of university applications, familial pressures, and the accelerated demands of the IB. They will sleep little and work very hard. The ideals of the UWC USA will at times seem very distant indeed.

Arrival Day and Welcoming Ceremony – Dislocation and Nationalization

The Albuquerque airport was obviously constructed to welcome travelers to the physical world of the “Land of Enchantment,” New Mexico’s moniker. The airport consists of a series of low, broad buildings positioned on a plateau above the high desert valley in which New Mexico’s largest city sits. High windows in most of the gate areas allow the near-constant sunlight to illuminate the faux-adobe (a building material often referred to as “faux-dobe”). Accents of turquoise persist throughout, from the lettering of many of the signs to the small stands selling the stone itself to tourists. The low roof signals the adobe architectural style to the traveler, a visual rhetoric that will be repeated in most of the buildings in Albuquerque or Santa Fe. Walls are thick. Ceilings low. Lots of light brown and faint peach colors. Constant sun.

It is into this airport that the new UWC students stream, exhausted, on arrival day. This time Kris Wilson, the Biology teacher at the UWC, and I took a long shift at the airport on this arrival day. The UWC USA has been welcoming students to New Mexico since 1982. There is a system.

A cadre of second-year students wait upstairs by large glass revolving doors for the new arrivals. Kris and I are downstairs in a quiet corner of the baggage claim area with pizza, water, bus-and-van manifests, disposable cell phones, and after hours of arrivals and the same questions and answers over and over, smiles that don't quite reach our eyes.

As an arriving traveler approaches the end of the secure area, they walk up a long ramp toward a wide wall of glass. In the center of this glass wall are revolving doors. New firsties see the second-year welcome crews long before passing through the doors. The crews are equipped with hugs, grins, colorful hand-painted signs, and an often inaccurate manifest of arrivals, names, and home countries.⁵⁶⁴ As the student approaches the doors, the crews begin to shake the signs and cheer, madly waving their hands. Other travelers look at this multi-national group of celebrants with mild curiosity.

The arriving first-years, or "firsties," range from a little travel-worn to teetering on the edge of physical and emotional breakdown. As a result, the welcome crew's excited waves are met with a range of responses. Delighted, relieved smiles are most common, and the welcome crews follow these cues with long hugs and high fives. Underneath these smiles are the furtive

⁵⁶⁴ This manifest was, at best, a guideline. Due to the vagaries of international travel, firsties arrived early, terribly late, and sometimes were not the gender that was expected. Communication between the UWC USA and the various National Committees that recruit and send students to the UWC USA can be spotty. Of course, the incorrect gender can mean a student is slotted for living in a dormitory that would be quite inappropriate.

glances of young people who have taken a huge risk. Their gazes cast about, ravenous for social cues and physical directions, all while keeping a guarded eye on their belongings. They have come a long way and, at least at first, are all alone. And yet for most of the arriving firsties this is precisely the moment they've been waiting for. The UWC USA has been a dream and an idea for the entirety of the application and interview process with their home national committees. The students and their parents have agonized over travel details and packing choices. They said the hard goodbyes.⁵⁶⁵ But they've made it to New Mexico. They beam at their new classmates, called "co-years," and at their second-years. They are now UWC USA students.

The welcome crews have been given very clear warnings by Linda Curtis, Dean of Students, to not assume physical contact is appropriate. This guideline is mostly obeyed, though any westerner or anyone who displays any kind of comfort with physical contact is often swept up into a hug. But there are other responses.

A very tall West African boy with dark skin and a black suit watches the welcome crews carefully as he approaches the glass wall. He flashes a quick embarrassed smile when the cheering rises up for him, and then forces his face back to neutral. The welcome crew members read his body language and do not try to hug him. He stands near the hugs and bedlam with an awkward sense of belonging, and then walks dutifully with the rest of the firsties toward the escalators down. He is the sharpest dressed of any of the travelers that day.

⁵⁶⁵ These goodbyes are harder for some than for others. Domestic American students obviously travel less distance and can therefore go home more easily. Students from far-away countries, or students with limited financial resources (and especially students with both challenges) may not be able to return home at any point in the two-year arc of the UWC USA. This means that at 16 or 17 years of age they have just left their family, home culture, home nation, and often home language. As I explore below, dislocation is a major feature of UWC USA life for all students. For those that travel far from poor backgrounds, the dislocation is profound.

This same process plays out all day long and into the evening. In a dynamic that will grow increasingly complicated as the year develops, I notice that the welcome crews, who are operating from the general cultural norm of the UWC USA, where warm, informal physical contact is common, are the most careful with the students that are the most distant culturally from a vague western center. Therefore, in the exchange of greetings and initial conversation at the airport and in the buses, westerners are more likely to hug and extend themselves to westerners, boosted by common language and general cultural norms about physical contact. Latino students (referred to at the UWC USA as “latins”) at the airport are very warm with each other and with anyone else that appears comfortable with touching. Any obvious marker of cultural distance from a western center, Muslim head-scarves, traditional (read non-western) dress of any kind, or obvious difficulty with English signal to the welcome crews that caution must be exercised... most of the time. There’s a good reason for this. After a year at the UWC USA, the second-years are nimble negotiators of cultural space, well aware that it can be an act of great rudeness or religious transgression to assume contact is permitted.

In the late afternoon I notice that a small group of six or so firsties has settled in a nook formed by a wheelchair ramp near the baggage carousels and our tables covered with pizza and water. At the center of the knot of firsties is a Mexican boy. He is stocky, with a thick hedge of jet-black hair. He is dressed in simple trousers, white shirt, and a wide-brimmed hat. As far as I can tell, he speaks no English at all and is happily communicating with a series of gestures. The group around him is correspondingly quiet as he sets his hat aside and begins gesturing toward his large satchel. There is an air of charming obliviousness to him and the other firsties are responding by mirroring his quietness.

The Mexican boy reaches into his satchel and removes a large brown paper-wrapped package. He opens it up and reveals another wrapping, this time in wax paper. Everyone in the circle is watching closely. Other firsties gather around. Behind this growing group of international teenagers, regular travelers gather their luggage from the carousel. They glance in passing curiosity at the strange group of young people and then stride out of the automatic doors.

The Mexican boy pulls back the wax paper and shows the group a large hunk of cheese. He gestures to his chest with his palm, implying “from me,” and then moves the cheese toward the circle with both hands, indicating “for you all.” The firsties coo with delight, some of them saying to each other “he made this!” or “this is from his farm!” The Mexican boy begins to break off pieces of the cheese and give it away. He grins and watches the eyes of the other firsties as they eat his cheese, all while nodding happily. Other students, including some second-years, crowd around to get cheese. There is plenty for everyone. The Mexican boy watches them eat, smiling confidently and nodding. He does not look tired. ⁵⁶⁶

Later, many of these firsties will reflect on their arrival day. They had planned and packed for leaving home for anywhere from four months to the full two years of the UWC USA experience. They had scoured Facebook for pointers from second-years and their co-years. Perhaps most difficult, they had said goodbye to their family, loved ones, and friends. Some students would not see anyone they knew for an entire two years. But they had made it. If Kurt Hahn was sometimes almost uncomfortably optimistic about the power of a single school to

⁵⁶⁶ English language proficiency is a powerful determinant in terms of the incoming firsties’ ability to socialize and integrate. Some students, like this Mexican boy, or as in the cases of Lavinia and Brenda, use force of personality and hustle to bulldoze their way through their language challenges. As we shall see later in this chapter, other students become isolated and find themselves quickly out-paced academically.

change the world, he is matched in optimism by these firsties on their first day in New Mexico. Later these students (and their second-years) would all tell me about their mindset when they got off the plane in New Mexico. Some of them smile softly when they remember this, but they do not scoff at it. It is a precious memory for them. Mathias remembers how it felt to first arrive: “Last year I remember being a first year and being so mystified by this place. And being so inspired to change the world and just loving every part of the UWC, and our second-years... how they seemed so cynical.”

I feel a tap on my shoulder. It is the boy in the black suit. Now that he is standing close, I see that he is taller than me. I have not met someone this tall all day. He hands me a slip of paper with a strange phone number on it. I look at his face. He is intent on the piece of paper. “To call,” he says, in a surprisingly deep and husky voice. Ah, I think. He needs to call home. I ask Wilson for the disposable cell phone. He hands it to me with a calling card and mentions something about a code. I get the card and the phone and hand it to the boy, who walks away to dial. I turn my attention to other firsties, but in a few moments the boy in the suit is back. He shakes his head, indicating the code didn’t work. There is a faint note of what might be anger in his eyes. I dial it for him and hand it back with it ringing. I turn away, but in less time the tall boy in the suit is back again, gesturing with the phone to me, shaking his head. He does not look happy.

I put down everything in my hands and walk with him to a quiet spot away from the others. I try to dial the code for the phone. I try the number three times before I realize that I need to dial a country code before I enter the code for the calling card. He and I have been failing by three digits. I carefully dial the phone number he gave me. There is a pause and then

the long beep of an international call. A voice answers, and I say, "Hello?" The voice responds in a language I do not recognize. I do the math. It is late afternoon in New Mexico. It is the middle of the night in Congo where I later learn this young man is from.

I hand the phone to the tall boy in the suit. He immediately begins speaking at a rapid rate, suddenly turning and walking away. I go back to the fray. After a few moments I look back at the tall boy in the suit over the heads of the other firsties. I see his head hunch down. His elbows are up, one hand pressed to the phone and the other pressed to his other ear, shutting out all the noise of the arriving firsties so that he might hear home better. I learn later that today was the boy's first time on a plane.

Standing alone beyond the whirl of nervous chatter and laughter, the boy's shoulders begin to heave sharply as he cries. More New Mexican travelers surge around the tall boy in the black suit, their roller suitcases catching as they cross the threshold into the New Mexican sunshine.

THE DISLOCATION FACTOR

From the moment I watched the tall Congolese boy's face go still, and then watched him stand away from the hugging at the revolving doors upon leaving security at the Albuquerque airport during the arrival of the firsties, an idea had been bothering me. I'd been processing the concept that the UWC USA experience, though traumatic for most firsties, was exponentially more so for students who traveled a great *cultural distance* to arrive at the UWC USA. I needed an aggregating concept in order to engage how the UWC USA experience was powerfully informed by one's own cultural starting point. I had begun to refer to this distance as the "dislocation factor" in my notes. In this way, I follow Arjun Appadurai's idea of culture as "not

usefully regarded as a substance,” but instead “regarded as a dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference.”⁵⁶⁷ Appadurai wisely configures culture as not only fluid, but fluid in *response* to others’ fluid cultures. Despite this, it is also embodied.

As I struggled with this concept, I flirted with and then abandoned more concrete frameworks often used in studies such as this one, the most famous example of which being the Hofstede model of the Six Dimensions of National Cultures.⁵⁶⁸ Though Hofstede’s model is intriguing, I found it too positivist and not quite nimble enough for the surge and warp of identity construction and de-construction that happens at such a rapid pace at the UWC USA. Furthermore, Hofstede is insistent that his definition of “national culture” specifically references the predictable tendencies of millions of people, and resents the deployment of his framework at smaller scales. I, on the other hand, found myself searching for a framework that would be able to apprehend and engage the intense personal specificity of culture.

⁵⁶⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 13.

⁵⁶⁸ After theorizing my own term, I discovered the plentitude of citation and controversy surrounding Geert Hofstede’s model of the Six Dimensions of National Cultures. Geert Hofstede, “Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context” Hofstede, G. (2011). <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>”

Hofstede developed his theoretical model through the statistical processing of a large sample of surveys administered to a large number of countries by the same multinational corporation: IBM. According to Hofstede, by first sorting the results by home nation (as opposed to comparing individuals), what was once data noise became compelling patterns about “national cultures.” According to Hofstede, all national cultures can be plotted on a six-dimension scaffolding. These dimensions are: (1) Power Distance (actually power distribution: authoritarian vs. egalitarian) (2) Uncertainty Avoidance (tolerance for ambiguity) (3) Individualism (actually individualistic vs. collectivistic) (4) Masculinity and Femininity (this most confusing. A mix of process vs results-oriented decision-making and gender roles) (5) Short vs Long-term Orientation and (6) Indulgence vs Restraint (effectively societal norms regarding delay of gratification).

For the purposes of this project, “dislocation factor” refers to the layered, fluid, and mutually-constitutive ways in which a subject’s aggregate of cultural assumptions and practices, linguistic skills and habits, citations of external culture, and cultural literacy in any host culture, *do or do not align with their immediate context*. This alignment, or lack thereof, can take the form of physical distance from home (defined as a site with little, if any, dislocation factor) and the immediate context, wealth disparity between home and the immediate context, or any other axis upon which difference and sameness might be assessed.

For an example of how the dislocation factor plays out, let’s look at Anne from Minnesota as a firstie. Adjusting to the demands of the IB, living in close quarters with a new roomie from Afghanistan, negotiating the cultural norms of the UWC USA as dictated by her second-years, and missing the comfortable rhythms of home and family were all forms of cultural distance for Anne. And yet she was still in the United States, still able to sense and manufacture nuance, sarcasm, and complex humor and sentiment in her native language, still able to call anyone in her cell phone just as soon as she had a free moment, still able to send and receive an unlimited number of American cultural references, and still able to buy the occasional meal in Las Vegas or outfit her dorm room with her spending money. For Anne, the dislocation factor between Anne from Minnesota and the UWC USA in 2010-2011 was relatively low when compared with other students. Within a certain bandwidth this was the same for Veronica from Maryland, Grace from Washington, and Mathias from Michigan.

For Brenda from Costa Rica, on the other hand, the dislocation factor was much greater. Brenda’s first language is Spanish. This means that at first she was isolated any time a social transaction happened in English. And even as her English improved she was still vulnerable to

miscommunication or exclusion when it came to the soft edges of jokes, the imprecision of understatement, the reverse logic of sarcasm, and, at least at first, nearly all American cultural references. Furthermore, Brenda found herself in a social environment, at least in the United States outside of the UWC USA, where physical warmth, kissing on the cheek as a greeting, and asking about one's family are not cultural norms. Finally, Brenda was physically removed from the biological reality of home: the lushness and moderation of Costa Rica's climate and all the attendant norms that stem from that: from available cuisine and dining practices to the specific sounds and behaviors of the birds and insects.

For Xolani from Swaziland, the dislocation factor was also higher than that of the above students, but in different ways. Though proficient in English, Xolani was still left behind by many American or western cultural references. Furthermore, Xolani's family was not wealthy. He made it from month to month at the UWC USA on what many Americans or western Europeans would happily spend on a meal for two at a restaurant. This meant that cultural norms at the UWC USA that dealt with consumption or spending were potentially humiliating social stumbling blocks. From the perspective of travel and connection to home this financial dislocation factor is connected to *actual* distance. Veronica, Grace, Mathias and Anne could all renew their cultural membership and relax into a nearly "0 dislocation factor" scenario by simply going home at breaks and for the summer, whereas Xolani was limited to one trip home during his entire UWC USA experience. This meant that not only was Xolani constantly dealing with a much higher dislocation factor in general, but he also got far fewer breaks.

The last and perhaps most crucial aspect of the dislocation factor is that it is fluid and constantly evolving. For example, the dislocation factor between Anne and Xolani might have

been very high in the first days of orientation in 2010. They are from vastly different cultural fields (North-American upper Midwest vs. Southern African Swazi semi-urban), different linguistic traditions (English vs. Bantu⁵⁶⁹), and different socioeconomic contexts (upper-middle class American vs. disadvantaged Swazi). And yet a year later Anne and Xolani have discovered a series of axis upon which there is high alignment: altruism, dorm leadership, work ethic, academic prowess, and emotional intelligence; as well as an entire year of common experience and, particularly important, mutual immersion in the same institutional culture. Little by little, Xolani and Anne begin to develop a growing dislocation factor in regards to each their respective homes, and a steadily-decreasing dislocation factor in regards to their common habitation at the UWC USA. The needle can be moved. The most powerful “movers” in this process are the forces of the co-curricular program, especially CAS, wilderness, and Cultural Days, as I explore in Chapter 4.

THE RIDE ‘HOME’

The students assemble in baggage-laden groups, awkwardly exchanging basic information. There is a great deal of nodding and smiling. As the groups build, we get notification that a bus has arrived. We collect the students that have been waiting the longest. An English teacher from the UWC USA arrives, Parris Bushong, and motions the students to follow them. He strides quickly back out the automatic doors. The firsties, laden with three or four bags of luggage each, struggle to follow. Pillows drop on the airport floor. Roller bags corkscrew and fall over as the gaggle of firsties makes out the automatic doors with some effort.

⁵⁶⁹ Though it must be said that Xolani’s English is truly excellent.

Some of them help each other carry especially massive trunks. The air is dry and sweet in Albuquerque.

The students encounter one of two vehicles in the parking lot: either the white UWC USA school bus, or one of the many hotel-style commuter vans that the school owns. There are two categories of these hotel-style vans, the old ones and the new ones. The old ones are wobbly bread-box-like contraptions with a distinctive smell of crayons and the sound of a large hamster wheel accelerating when one steps on the gas. The new ones are sleek and comfortable but lack cargo space. All of these vehicles, the old and new hotel vans and the school bus, will play a central role in the lives of the students over the next two years.

These vans will bring the students to their wilderness trips, their service commitments, or for the ones that can afford it, their mid-year trips home. The UWC USA is almost exactly two hours from the Albuquerque International Sunport, and an hour and fifteen minutes from Santa Fe. A great deal of contemplation, socializing, and especially sleeping happens in these vehicles.

For the teachers, who are often also the drivers of these vehicles, the vans are noisy and unwieldy objects that symbolize the significant extra duties that teachers at the UWC USA are asked to shoulder. The vans lurch in high winds, and take an extremely long time to fill up with gas. And yet the vans are also marvelous sites of student interaction. For some reason, UWC USA students of both years seem to forget the teacher driving the vans can hear what they are saying. As a result, driving students becomes an accidental immersion into the unguarded banter, flirtation, frustration, and friendships of students.

To get to the UWC USA campus, the vans and buses travel through Albuquerque on Interstate 25. To the right as they travel north, the firsties first see massive Sandia Mountain on

the right, looming over Albuquerque. To the left and east as the vans and buses drive north, the firsties look out over Albuquerque itself, dwarfed by the empty desert beyond it.

The physical landscape of New Mexico exists on a scale that makes the towns and cities of the state seem like footnotes. Given the exceptional clarity of the New Mexican air, astounding views are commonplace when flying in or out of Albuquerque. From thousands of feet up one is confronted with the magnitude of the high desert, the Sangre de Cristo range, and the gargantuan convolutions of the erosion-scarred landscape. The towns and cities look like symbiotic organisms, lichen attached to boulders.

It is through this landscape that the firsties travel, first northeast to Santa Fe, with its fairy-tale-like adobe opulence nestled right up against Atalaya Mountain and Thompson peak, and then directly east, around the southernmost nose of the Sangre de Cristos to Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Whatever the firsties have heard or read about Las Vegas, the first encounter with the hometown of the UWC USA is always a surprise. Las Vegas is a town with depressed economic prospects. Sidewalks often simply don't exist, or peter off into non-existence a few blocks from the main plaza downtown. Stray dogs are common. Single men slowly walk the shoulders of the main roads in town during the day. So many of the wonderful aspects of Las Vegas - the warmth of its inhabitants, its powerful sense of community and family, and the kindness that is routinely extended to the endless stream of international teenagers from the "world college," as the locals refer to the UWC USA⁵⁷⁰ - are invisible on the first ride through town. Instead, what

⁵⁷⁰ Local inhabitants never refer to the UWC USA by any name other than the "world college," including the maintenance, motor-pool, and security personnel who work here. The students, for their part, mostly call it "the UWC" or "UWC." Only in comparison to other UWCs do students use the full name, and then it

firsties see is a lack of infrastructure, poverty, and barbed wire fences around dusty yards that hold a few broken-down vehicles. Students from developing countries frequently comment upon how, when driving through Las Vegas for the first time, they were reminded of home.

Las Vegas sits on the same plateau that makes up the beginning of the Great Plains. From Las Vegas directly eastward, it is one long gradual descent to the Mississippi river basin. Directly westward, however, elevation changes starkly. Only four miles from the city center, the subrange of the Sangre de Cristos rises directly out of the plain. Leave Las Vegas and travel west, and you are headed right into mountains.

Nestled in the beginnings of these mountains is the campus of the UWC USA. Firsties peering out of the windows of the vans see the dust and desert of Las Vegas give way to the piñon pines and rock outcroppings of the Gallinas river valley. As the vans slow to take a left off of State Highway 65, firsties see the tiny United States Postal Service outpost on the right and a low stream valley on their left. Inevitably, all eyes then turn to the castle.

The Montezuma Castle sits proudly on a small plateau, perhaps 3000 yards west and 200 feet up from the post office. Behind it the foothills of the Sangre de Cristos continue to rise, covered in dark green piñon. The Montezuma Castle is referred to only as “the castle” by everyone and it is absolutely beautiful. Grey-blue slate tiles set off the entire roof, but especially the cone of the main turret against the dark green background. Stark also is the contrast between the trees and the two-tone red brick of the body of the building. A massive wrap-around deck completes the lofty authority of the castle. It is common to hear an exhalation of awe when someone first sees the stately building. Any students that arrive during daylight hours

is often referred to as “USA” without the previous three letters. Absolutely no-one refers to it as the “Armand Hammer United World College of the American West” unless doing so in jest.

remember when they first saw the castle. The tall, fast-walking English teacher has a tradition at this moment. He stops the van he is driving and wakes up any exhausted sleeping firsties. He says, "You only get to do things the first time once," and then, before they can wonder what is happening, pulls around the corner slowly so the castle floats into view, resplendent among the pines.

On arrival day the vans and buses pull up to the castle itself. All of the second-years that were not part of welcoming crews at the airport are waiting for the arrivals. As the vehicles slow down, the second years begin pounding on the walls of the buses and vans, hooting and screaming. For some firsties, this is a moment of joy and welcome; for others, excitement is blended with terror. As the firsties exit the vehicles, they are met with a larger version of the same exuberance they encountered at the airport: joyful teenagers doing their best to balance their joy upon meeting what will constitute half of the student body, with an awareness that a bear hug might not be what every exhausted firstie wants at this moment. As Elena (from Denmark) remembered, "It was quite scary. Wow, I have to get out of this bus and say hello to these people and I haven't slept for 20 hours and my roomie is going to be one of those people out there. They are really excited to meet us!"

It is a particularly intense UWC scene: a bewildering diversity of young people, all overflowing with emotion and warmth, hugging and kissing cheeks, cheering, singing, spontaneously dancing in place - yet also dancing around and sometimes directly through the prickly fields of cultures and expectations. This scene is at once a stark opposite and yet also an analog to the tangible grief and acute dislocation on display during the boarding and departure

of the “midnight bus” and the “2 am bus” that each leave the night after graduation, a short 10 months from now.

The figured world of the UWC USA, so long an ephemerality accessible only online and in conversations with current students, alumni, and national committee members, now merges with physical shape and the reality of logistics: Aha, think the students, the school is next to a poor town. It is 20 minutes from this town. It is dry here. It is a little hard to breathe. My dorm is far from the castle. It is always sunny. And yet the figured world of the UWC USA never stops being ephemeral: a collaborative, co-created multi-layered frame where ideology (and idealism) are as centrally configurative as the soccer fields, the 131 stairs, and the Caf. Indeed, though on arrival day they seem to merge, over time the two figured worlds seem to separate once more: that of the physical environment of the UWC USA (for the trees and hills, buildings and hot springs are certainly collaboratively imbued with meaning by the students) and the figured world of the UWC USA, ever an imaginative landscape of aspiration and frustrated hopes.

ROOMIE, DORM, COUNTRY, REGION

In the avalanche of UWC USA vocabulary that an arriving firstie learns, a crucial subset of lingo quickly emerges that directly describes a nested set of affiliations to a series of social units, starting with “roomie” and zooming out to “region.”⁵⁷¹ It is within this settling in that the

⁵⁷¹ All of these terms: *roomie*, *country*, *region*, and the mutations of *dormie* (which is implied in this list, but never actually used): *chumie*, *d-boy*, *kili-girl*, *kozyboy*, *acon-girl*, and *MB-boy*, are but some of the most common in a larger lexicon of the UWC USA lingo of social connection. There are other important terms such as *wallie* (two students who share a dorm wall), and *buddy* (the formalized alliance between a single firstie and a sponsoring second-year). Usage is almost always possessive: “She’s my wall-ie” or “She’s a chumie,” or descriptive: “They are both kozy-boys.” This pattern of usage holds with the complicated accounting of relative years at school that I explore later: “She was a third-year, and a chumie.”

firsties begin to understand the ways in which the figured world of the UWC USA, in all its idealism and hope, will be undergirded by elements of their own positionality. Before the students can break down barriers, they must be nationalized.

“Roomie,” of course, refers to one’s roommate in the dorms. Roomies form the first and often most essential building block of a student’s social and emotional life. Each firstie receives a second-year roomie from a different large global region, which I address below. As a result, roomies often function as one of the most intense cultural contact zones. Anne, whose second-year was from Afghanistan, remembers one of these experiences very early in her first semester weeks as a firstie.

One morning all the Persian students all came into my room to have breakfast before Ramadan fast that day... I remember waking up and just being so shocked to see all of these people in my room. They were being quiet, but I was asleep at the time. You know what I mean? Maybe they did something loud accidentally that woke me up, but I remember being like “Wow! This is such a cultural moment that I should appreciate.” Whereas if it had been someone of my same cultural background, I would have criticized it, “What the hell are you doing in my room at 4:30 in the morning?” You know?

Roomie changes are almost unheard of. Linda Curtis, the Dean of Students, is not blind to these difficulties. Indeed, she sees them as central to the experience of the UWC USA.

It’s purposefully putting them in a room with someone from a different region, and someone from the different class that they are from. I think that’s an important way for them to learn tolerance or even if they don’t accept the kid for who he is, or whatever that may be, but at least we can learn to live together, even with our differences.

And so as the firsties begin to map out their new social landscape, they are confronted with the unchangeable reality of their roomie: another person permanently installed in their private space for the duration of the year.⁵⁷²

The second level, which doesn't correspond to a single word, is one's dorm membership. A girl from Chumalungma is known as a "Chumie," a boy from Denali is a "D-boy," and the four remaining dorms follow suit: "Killi-girls, MB-boys, Acon-girls, and Kozzy-boys." Each floor of each dorm has a Resident Assistant, or "RA," and each dorm has an adult in charge of it known as a Resident Tutor, or "RT." Each RT is assisted by another adult, their Assistant Resident Tutor, or "ART." It is said that the personalities of the dorms follow the personalities of the RTs. Whether this is true or not, the dorms certainly develop and maintain different personalities, as I will explore below.

The third level, "country," is shorthand for country-mates. "Hello country!" is a perfectly acceptable greeting between country-mates. Latin students have converted this to the Spanish "Contri." Brenda, for example, refers to her friend Grace as her "Contri" because Grace spent a long period in Costa Rica and is fluent in Spanish. Country-mates are essential allies in cultural performances and often travel logistics. As we shall see below, they are also a crucial refuge of the familiar.

The fourth level, though zoomed out to the extreme, is "region," and it is extremely important distinction at the UWC USA, though a new firstie won't know that for a few weeks yet. There are five Cultural Day weekends that happen over the course of a cycle of two years.

⁵⁷² Second-years can submit preferences for their firstie roommate. They often submit these preferences based on wanting exposure to another language or because they would like to try a different roomie from a different region as the previous year. In at least one instance, a second-year asked for a roomie from a nation with whom his nation was in conflict: A Jordanian boy sought out an Israeli firstie.

The names of these Cultural Days have been converted into an acronym that describes a regional group, or “region.” The five regions are named NAD (North American Day), AND (African National Day), END (European National Day), MAAD (Middle East and Asian Day), and CLAD (Caribbean and Latin American Day). Even though the acronyms refer to days or weekends, someone who is from a given region can also be referred to by that acronym. In other words, Brenda from Costa Rica would be a CLADer. Veronica from Maryland would be a NADer, Agni from Nepal a MAADer, and so on.

The Resident Tutors (RTs), in concert with Linda, pair firsties with a second-year from a different region. This means that if one happens to be from the United States (part of NAD), they will be paired with someone from a different regional group, CLAD, AND, END, or MAD. The quick-and-dirty exchanges that this process necessitates are famously direct. The goal is a more-or-less even blend of nationalities across any one dorm. Linda replayed a likely scene for me:

We don't look at names; all we look at is countries... [Let's say we have] the three male RTs together, here's the list, okay there are six Africans, everybody gets two. There are... there are four Caribbeans, who gets that fourth one? You look at your second-years, who has an extra Caribbean? The other larger dorm gets him. So it's all horse trading, it's totally what it is.

This same intentional mixing is carried out in other institutional practices, such as the arrangement of eating groups for the three-day wilderness trip during orientation. These wilderness divisions then drive the groups for the non-wilderness orientation activities. This system thrusts firsties into context after context where they cannot retreat into their home cultures.

And yet the significant autonomy that is also a facet of the UWC USA program allows this flight to take place after orientation has concluded, but perhaps in ways that would surprise

the outside observer, as will be clear below. Indeed, after the first few weeks of settling in, firsties come to realize that their regional affiliation will emerge as a source of comfort, a stable of allies, and a fraught cultural crossroads. It will arise as new figured worlds in which they only dimly knew they had membership. Beyond Syrians, Danes, Americans, Nepali or Swazi, they will come to understand and inhabit the larger figured worlds of being Arabs, Europeans, Westerners, Asians, and Africans.⁵⁷³

CHECK-INS FOR ARRIVAL DAY

Xolani from Swaziland had an intense summer. On the flight home from New Mexico to South Africa, Xolani had processed how many things would be different from the UWC USA. “No more big, comfortable bed, no more showers. Coke is really expensive. Everything is different.” His family’s house in Swaziland is small and crowded. Xolani’s bed, now taken over by his 16-year-old sister, is a sponge pad with a cover sheet and pillow. In the nearby bigger bed, his 12-year-old brother and 9-year-old cousin sleep. Soon after his arrival, Xolani’s mother insisted he begin returning home by 5 pm. When he complained to his sister about this restriction, she told him that their mother was doing this because she was worried Xolani would be targeted for witchcraft killings. Because Xolani has been to the states, his body parts would be prized more highly. The epidemic of HIV and AIDs in Swaziland has had a profound effect on how Xolani sees the world. He refuses to kiss anyone with a cut on their lip, and won’t allow a doctor to come near him with a needle unless he witnesses it come out of the package. This does not affect his general warmth, however. Each firstie that encounters Xolani comes away a little stunned by his

⁵⁷³ Israelis and Arabs do inhabit the same figured world of “region.” This has remarkable ramifications, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

friendliness and tendency toward inspiring oratory. When I first met Xolani, I offered him the Sotho greeting “Dumela Ntate,” which means “hello, sir.” He laughed in delight and immediately wrapped me up in a bear hug, a huge grin on his face.

Falhuveri from the Maldives had a transformative summer working out on the ranches to which the Quivira coalition sent him. Quivira is an organization dedicated to building resilience on agrarian and ranch properties through sharing best-practices, partnering with indigenous peoples, and building bridges between stakeholder groups that are often opponents such as ranchers and environmentalists. Falhuveri loved it. He was taking the first steps toward becoming a cowboy, though he would never claim that title. He barely considers himself a “horseman.” He has a hard time fully explaining how the summer changed him. “It gave me a lot of new things. Learned how to be patient. Humble yourself a lot. Find beauty. I see a lot of stress here [at the UWC USA] and I see a lot of not knowing what to do. The idea of one day being a working cowboy is enough daydreaming to keep me stress free.” He once picked Russian thistles for four days. When I expressed astonishment with this, Falhuveri simply smiled and said “Every Russian thistle is different from the other. You learn to treat the plants, the air, the water, the land, the animals, like human beings.” Though the ranchers gently teased him about his habit of wearing a baseball cap instead of his cowboy hat (“it’s a bit much”), and he occasionally got ribbed for his terrible roping, Falhuveri was completely welcomed in the ranks of the horsemen working the ranches.

Anne from Minnesota spent the summer working for a branch of Catholic Charities near Minneapolis. She spent two-and-a-half months assembling apartments for refugees that had just arrived in the United States. An organization called Bridging supplied the branch for which

she worked with sets of donated furniture, and volunteers like Anne set up apartments in inexpensive parts of town. “I was very interested in working with people in that sort of situation because it sounds so, how am I going to say, just because it was so like—just to imagine the experience of being completely uprooted, not knowing the language.” Much of this impulse derived from her experiences as a firstie roomie to an Afghan second-year whose family had gone through a similar experience. Her roomie’s stories about the raw dislocation that her family experienced stuck with Anne, especially costly mishaps that were caused by miscommunication or lack of resources. Anne found herself stocking refrigerators with groceries that were strange to her so that the arriving families wouldn’t feel alienated by American food.

NEW MEXICO IN THE FALL

New Mexico is beautiful place. It is also a hard place. Cacti and scorpions live here. It is not a place where one wanders off the trail too far without the proper equipment. One checks for spines, edges, or stickers before one steps or sits. The dual realities of the scarcity of water and widespread poverty affect one’s emotional response to the lift and fall of the terrain. After some time in New Mexico one can begin to feel that it will always be wanting for more water. The altitude of Santa Fe and Las Vegas combine with the dramatic mountains and valleys to elicit a feeling of being perhaps too close to the sky. It is nearly always sunny, and the sky’s blue seems lighter, as if one has traveled upwards to where the atmosphere is thin. After weeks and weeks of uninterrupted high desert sun, the thin blue sky can begin to carry the faint tang of menace.

This menace first appears in small ways, like the threat of altitude sickness, or sleeplessness caused by the same. Lowlanders find themselves gasping as they first climb the

hills behind the castle, their lungs groping for oxygen that isn't there, their thin blood surging frantically through their too-small cardiovascular system that is carrying too few red blood cells. One adapts over time, of course, with a surge in lung size, red blood cell count, and an increase in number and spread of capillaries, but at first New Mexico's highlands deny a visitor enough air. Go much faster than a walk, and you won't be able to breathe.

For me this faint menace adds to New Mexico's larger beauty, making it far more interesting than the soft landing felt by most tourists safely accommodated in Santa Fe, with its various art markets (kitsch, native, native-essentialist, high) and its waves of covenant-mandated adobe. Every day New Mexico is a place where the landscape has consequences. The elevation and lack of water demand respect and preparation. Grow something that doesn't belong in this ecological zone, and the high desert will come and kill it. Wander too far off a major highway and social services disappear with the pavement. It doesn't take long in New Mexico for a situation to spiral down to how prepared, resourceful or resilient one is - or is not. It is into this environment that the firsties find themselves thrust: living in near a remote wooden castle 6400 feet above sea level, surrounded by piñon pines, thick and short.

An Orientation Wilderness Trip

I can still see the buildings and the UWC USA vehicles down at the Ghost Ranch facility near Abiquiú, New Mexico, but I won't be able to for long. I am part of a wilderness orientation group, and we are walking away from civilization, up onto the plateau above Ghost Ranch. I contemplate the vans shining white against the green lawns at Ghost Ranch, the only green grass for what looks like hundreds of miles in any direction. I am glad for the water in my

backpack. We will sleep tonight in “the saddle,” a depression in the massive land form rising out of the desert plain below.

Leading this group are three second-years. The first is a sunny Chilean girl, a yellow bandana worn wide against her forehead, her strong legs motoring up the trail. The second is a tall, angular American boy from the Midwest, his wavy dishwater blonde hair also pinned down in places by a headband, and over that a red-and-yellow camouflage bucket hat. The third wilderness leader is a stocky, square-shouldered boy from Vermont in a shapeless baseball cap, known for his contrarian tendencies and force of personality. All three of them appear to be delighted about this trip, especially the Vermonter. I don’t know any of the students very well at all, but it seems like his normally-dour face has lightened considerably since we left Ghost Ranch. They discuss small adjustments to our route with each other extra-diplomatically, modeling good leadership for their firstie charges.

This cheerful air is not shared by the firsties in the group. Two of them, a boy and a girl, are from China, and look very uncomfortable under the strange, high weight of the backpacks. They veer and teeter on the trail, not seeming to notice the rocks and irregular desert floor as they gawk at the stunning views around us. A Belgian girl with flaming red hair and bright blue eyes seems to be doing well, and smiles brightly at anyone who meets her gaze, though after a few more hours on the trail I learn that this might be because she is still learning English and doesn’t really know what anyone is saying.

A short, fearless girl from Uruguay is not smiling. She seems simultaneously annoyed at the school’s requirement that we execute this trip, and resolute that she will not show weakness or hold the group back. A graceful, quiet boy from Uganda says nothing, looking out

over the vistas above Ghost Ranch with careful eyes. A strong blonde girl from Austria seems almost completely unaffected, silently listening. Every so often the Uruguayan girl will talk back to someone in a reflexively feisty way, especially with the two male second-year leaders. Her English is still bumpy in places. One gets the sense that she will be a social force once she becomes just a little more fluent.

The ground is inhospitable. Low cacti of at least three types hides beneath spiky underbrush. Unused to this kind of aggressive flora, I've wandered off-trail a few times and now my shins and calves are cut and bleeding. One stays on the trail in New Mexico. The firsties are wary of each other, carefully extending deliberate overtures of friendship and camaraderie. They've only been at school for less than a week. Jet lag has only just worn off for those students who traveled far. The Chilean second-year leader hands around some trail mix, smiling as she does so, showing us how to pour the bag into our hand so we don't accidentally contaminate the contents by digging in with our fingers. As someone who is not a native English speaker, she is careful with the other language-learners, smiling encouragingly at them and making sure they understand. The two second-year boys have their hands full with the Uruguayan girl anyway, who is chiming in uninvited as they discuss the group's route up to the saddle.

I am walking close to the two Chinese students, both of whom seem completely bewildered by their surroundings. Twice already I have grabbed the Chinese boy's backpack to steady him as he careens around the trail. He doesn't seem to notice when I do so. The nearby cliffs look dangerous, and I stay near him just in case he loses his footing completely. He says far less than the girl but they hang together, seeming to find comfort in a mutual disbelief that this

is all happening. Soon we leave the area with the views and the precipices and I relax a little, letting him stumble and learn his way.

The next night we are at the plateau. Dinner was supposed to be pizza, but it went a little sideways. The dough didn't quite work. Everyone is hungry after a day of hiking in the desert and so no-one is complaining as they devour the mashed-up tomato-sauce-covered carbohydrates. The day of hiking together has changed the group dynamic. The firsties are joking with each other, and gently teasing the second-year boy from the Midwest who made dinner. He takes it well, and I notice him making sure everyone has food before he takes his own.

The sun begins to go down over the far mountains, and the group separates into little clusters here and there. The Belgian girl and the Uruguayan girl set off to themselves as the sun sets, exploding the western sky into layers of orange and pink. The darkness settles on all of us and soon I can only see the bright orange of the Belgian girl's jacket. The two talk together for a long time.

We don't sleep in tents, but rather in "mega mids," specialized tarps with open sides. I am in the firstie boy mega mid with the boy from Uganda and the boy from China. The Ugandan boy's eyes peep out from the edge of his sleeping bag. As soon as the sun has set on both nights he has been freezing. He giggles helplessly as I teach him how to tense up his muscles in his sleeping bag to generate heat. They both start doing it, grunting as they exert themselves and then laughing. I remind them that they don't have to hold their breath. Eased by this ridiculous (but effective) activity, the Chinese boy starts talking. I ask him how he found out about the UWC USA, and he tells me the most extraordinary thing: he is a serious online gamer. He first

heard about the UWC movement in an internet chat-room dedicated to the wildly-popular real-time strategy game, StarCraft. The Ugandan boy made him say it twice. After all he himself went through to get here, it's clear he can't believe that's how the Chinese boy discovered the UWC USA.



Figure 7: The wilderness orientation group. Left to right: Belgian girl, Ugandan boy, author, Chinese girl, Austrian girl, American boy (wilderness leader), Chilean girl (wilderness leader), Chinese boy, Uruguayan girl, American boy (wilderness leader).

It is the third day and we are heading back. The talking has slowed down; all of us are excited to be headed back to showers and toilets. But I notice the Belgian girl and the Uruguayan girl have begun hiking together, and the Chinese boy now speaks to both myself and the Ugandan boy, though the latter is just a slow speaker, always waiting politely for his conversational partner to finish. For the firsties, the social awkwardness has eased. The three

second-years have relaxed as well: everyone is safe, and the largest issues were some navigational confusion and uncooperative foodstuffs. They did it: they led their peers.

THE BRUTAL CULTURAL SHORTHAND OF THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF SCHOOL

It is in the first days and weeks of school that the firsties begin to realize how well-known (or completely unknown) their nation, and by extension, their way of life, is to this particular global community. The firsties are eager for connection, but proportionately wary of embarrassing themselves. Those that have enough English to communicate at a cultural level do a careful dance around each other and around the veteran second-years, listening intently for cultural norms and doing their best to avoid gaffes. I witnessed the watchful wait-and-see tactic emerge in each new configuration of firsties and second-years, just as it did in my wilderness orientation group. The social landscape is unstable in these opening weeks, made more so by such an intense confluence of languages and cultures.

The firsties are also initially confused and a little scandalized by the second-year's free use of transgressive humor, often freezing in shock when a second-year breezily refers to the "fact" that Africans and Latins are always late for meetings, that "white girls want to get good grades" or that "the Asian students are hyper-focused on school."

From the perspective of the firsties, this transgressive humor between second-years appears to come from a place of belonging, of easy familiarity, and many firsties want to own that space too. The firsties also note the easy way in which the second-years display physical affection for each other, sitting on laps in the dining hall, studying in close proximity on the dorm beds, and cuddling on the couches, steps, and day room's couches. And so most firsties

take their own stabs at both the obvious physical norms of the UWC USA, as well as the strange new humor.

The result of the former is that a generalized physical freedom becomes the norm at the UWC USA, with a careful eye on comfort levels of those students who still might find this liberality uncomfortable or immoral. In this way, students from cultures who tend to be “colder” physically but for whom such touching is not a moral issue find themselves subsumed in hugs, lap-sitting, and physical warmth. This is the case even for religious students like Ismael, for whom such a transition is more loaded:

I remember one of my friends was upset because I refuse to hug her in her birthday. . . she didn't told me the whole that until January next year because she felt so bad that I refused to hug her in her birthday. . . I came to realize those sort of things are important. But I never hugged my friends before. I only hug boys not girls. And then it never felt like anything.

The quick result of the latter is that the student body of a school dedicated to “making education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future” quickly develops a distinct cultural norm where humor about ethnicity, cultural practices, and race is tacitly approved.⁵⁷⁴ The same is true for stereotypes themselves, which are lampooned just as often as they are used as a kind of brutal shorthand for knowing something, anything, about a new friend. It would be completely normal for a firstie to witness a second-year boy who happens to have a best friend from India to reference how his friend always smells like curry, to the glee of both boys. This humor quickly begins to be targeted at the firsties.

⁵⁷⁴ This doesn't always work out. As we shall see in the next chapter, this dangerous humor can go badly awry. And yet what is most shocking about this phenomenon isn't the outrage and protest that it engenders, but rather the absence of these things.

This is sometimes done performativity as an indirect way to communicate to the firsties that they are new and don't understand the "cosmopolitan" and complicated ways in which humor works at the UWC USA. This accelerates the degree to which the firsties themselves want to play by the same transgressive rules.

The Retreat Toward the Familiar

This is not to say that all the firsties find the adaption easy, or that they choose to participate in either the physical norms of proximity and physical contact, or the frequent transgressive humor. It is common, for instance, for religiously devout students to initially retreat to toward groups of students of similar faith.⁵⁷⁵

But it is not just the religious students that initially recoil from the overwhelming diversity and corresponding transgressive humor. In the opening weeks of school many students who have an available ready-made group (Spanish-speakers, Muslims, Portuguese-speakers, Christians, weight-lifters, Arabs, Americans boys, wealthy Europeans) migrate to that group. When the phenomena of performative transgressive humor and this flight toward those who are similar to oneself is combined with the process of "nationalization," which I explore in a later section, it can seem to an outside observer that the UWC USA's student body is headed in a direction that is simply incompatible with the mission statement.

It is essential to realize that the brutal shorthand is happening to every firstie at the same time. All 100 students are decentered, confused, threatened, intrigued, and deeply

⁵⁷⁵ There are religious organizations on the UWC USA campus, though the path of my research did not intersect with them often. Eyad Shabaneh, the Muslim Economics teacher, gathered an informal group of Muslim students around him and functioned as a kind of informal advocate for that demographic. There was also a student Christian organization in effect during my time at the UWC USA, though I heard far less about it.

curious at the same moment, all while second-years are investigating how this new half of the UWC USA community will affect friendships, alliances, romances, CASes, and the beats of daily life. It is an intense series of days. Processing the vast diversity that has just collected in the same place requires one to take shortcuts.

FREE DAY

Nine days after arrival day, after an exhausting orientation at the Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center⁵⁷⁶ that introduces the firsties to the UWC movement, the International Baccalaureate, and the rigors of hiking and camping in the high desert, the students get their first free day. Classes start the next morning. The firsties have heard repeated warnings from their second-years that their free time is about to get seriously limited. This is true, but the irony is that it is the second-years that have not fully realized how hard their semester will become.

A free day is a rare and precious thing at the UWC USA. The firsties don't know it yet, but with only a few exceptions, each of them is about to be more committed and more scheduled than they have ever been. The double rigors of the International Baccalaureate Programme (only ever referred to as the "IB"), and the blast furnace of non-class demands on their time: the massive co-curricular program, the siren song of so many fascinating new peers, and the garden-variety social positioning, flirtation, friendship-building and social intrigue of any group of 200 15-19 year olds, will soon push most students past their previous limits. The second-years know this, and some of them do their best to warn or even scare the firsties. The firsties can only wonder and brace for impact. The free day commences.

⁵⁷⁶ A private retreat facility near Abiquiu, New Mexico made most famous by the patronage of the famous painter Georgia O' Keefe.

After a lazy brunch, Frisbees break out on the soccer field. Students begin experimenting with the fieldhouse. New roomies begin to work out the chemistry of sharing a small-to-medium dorm room with another person. Students begin to wander out and above campus, second-years showing firsties the interlocking series of trails that weave through the piñon forest and up the ridge to the wonderful overlooks that rise above the castle.

Initial friendships have begun to form, though many of these newly developed connections will not survive the buckling and reforming of the social landscape that typifies a year at the UWC USA. When I asked my informants to list their initial friendships upon arrival and then the friendships they eventually settled into after they began to feel comfortable at the school, the lists were often quite different. There are so many social fields interlocking and overlapping in these opening weeks, and then so many other avenues for stronger bonding later - CASes, classes, Cultural Days, wilderness trips and service expeditions - that these first connections are often sundered or left to become fond memories.

THE WELCOMING CEREMONY

The firsties have been instructed to meet just before dinner time in the Student Center, a large basement room directly under the ballroom that serves purposes as diverse as a student lounge, a meeting space, a location for open mics (only referred to as 'cafes,' even though there is no way to serve coffee or tea), and on dance weekends, a dance club. The firsties and the second-years have been invited to dress in their 'national costume.'⁵⁷⁷ Tom Oden, the Vice-

⁵⁷⁷ The firsties received a welcome packet that instructs them on all manner of UWC USA life in May before their September arrival. In this packet they are asked to bring a national costume. The packet suggests that a "national costume (if you have one!) is not a necessity but it is a great way to show your friends and guests a part of your culture. There are times when it is comforting to have something to remind you of home and your traditions, especially on your national day! [This references the cultural

President of the UWC USA, has requested that the new teachers join the firsties. As a result, I am down in the Student Center, in line with everyone else. It is dark down here, and smells strongly of perfume and cologne.

The national costumes are wild and distracting. All the students are openly staring at each other's clothing. A girl from Trinidad wears an evening gown and a headdress with enormous orange and blue feather plumage. The Congolese boy in the black suit from the airport is now wearing a loose suit of checked beige-on-beige, with matching checked beige-on-beige banana beret. A boy from the Bahamas wears a bright orange-and-yellow tropical shirt with a wide straw hat. Japanese kimonos and Palestinian kufiyahs float through my peripheral vision. A German girl from my advisee group spins by in a dirndl. Scattered throughout are firsties simply wearing formal suits and ties. Lacking a distinct costume, many of them have simply draped their nation's flag over their shoulders. An American boy wears a suit jacket and a Dr. Seuss-like felt top hat in bright red, white, and blue. Another American boy wears a green button-down shirt, a tie, and a foam statue-of-liberty headdress. The gamut of national costumes ranges from a kind of earnest citation of 'national culture' to a wearable punchline.

After a sincere welcome from Oden, the firsties walk up the stairs from the student center, through the ornate castle lobby, and into the dining room. In front of me walks a graceful, composed girl from Bahrain. She is wearing a "Thobe Al Nashel," which translates to "national dress." It is a dazzling medium-green sari-like garment that wraps up from her legs

days.] If you do not bring your costume, there are certain occasions when you will wish you had. Most students like to wear their national costumes at graduation, matriculation dinner and the welcoming ceremony, for international day and cultural days, and at other special events."

around her body and concludes in headdress that settles over her brow. I am dressed in a suit coat and white shirt. I feel pedestrian.

White tablecloths set off the polished bright wood of the floor and the darker 19th-century cabinetry on the walls, all of it brighter for the late afternoon sun cascading through the tall windows. Contrasting even more sharply than the woodwork is the explosive color of the national flags of each of the firsties, already in place in a ring that goes halfway around the room.



Figure 8: Second years at the welcome ceremony from Palestine and Israel (France in the background), left to right. Photo by author.

The firsties file into the dining room and circle around near the flags, creating a quiet ring of people a single person deep around the entire circumference of the room. Joke outfit or sincere national costume, the resultant visual splendor of so many young people from so many places in front of so many flags makes me quiet with wonder. The students seem to feel the same way.

Everyone is quietly smiling at each other. The air is still. Motes of dust filter through the strong beams of light that irregularly illuminate the white tables. We are waiting.

A cheer goes up from the firsties who are nearest the fireplace opposite the entry to the dining room. We all turn to look. The first second-year enters the room, striding briskly, carrying their nation's flag snapping from the six-foot flagpole as she walks. They stride proudly down the aisle, eyes forward. Here is Xolani from Swaziland, a patterned tunic and the traditional Swazi bead choker. Here is Agni from Nepal, a bright headband, called a *sir bandi*, of gold, green, and red (setting off a thick necklace of the same). Under a black felt shirt, called a *cholo*, and a yellow sash, she is wearing a long dress of orange and black stripes riddled with iridescent flowers, called a *fariya*. Here is Brenda from Costa Rica, brilliant white dress with red and blue lining and a thick red sash, here is a girl from France, wearing a red tights, a white skirt and a slim blue suit jacket, topped with red lipstick, walking as if she were headed to the French revolution itself. In a tradition that goes back to the first welcoming ceremony in 1982, each second-year places their flag in a stanchion around the edge of the ballroom.

The 25 Americans come in as a group, all following only one American flag. Representing the United States itself risks being both gauche and not "cultural" enough. Many American UWC students therefore choose instead to represent their state. Here is Mathias, decked out in a Captain America Halloween costume. Here is the boy from Vermont doing his best to wear a state costume: a plaid shirt, thick jeans, suspenders, and a fluorescent orange woolen winter hat. Grace and another American girl are wearing what first appear to be some sort of yellow beauty queen sashes, but the sashes simply read "Seal of the State of Washington 1889." They have taken scissors to their own state flags and are wearing the cut-out circle of text that

surrounds George Washington's head on the seal. They mug and chuckle, and especially Grace does small flares and flourishes with her hands.

The students and us faculty take our seats. The youngsters breathe with the perfumed heaving of teenagers at prom, stunned at each other's' beauty. I sit amongst them. Before the president speaks, the music teacher stands next to the grand piano in a full tuxedo and explains that he chose Beethoven for tonight because Beethoven spent most of his life in Vienna, even though he was German. This made Beethoven international. Before the room's intellect's can land too heavily on that one, the music teacher begins to play. And beautifully.

The room falls silent. All the stunning costumes stop rustling: the folds of the Spanish dresses, the feathers in the Trinidadian headdress, the bells on the gaucho vest, the knotted ends on the grey and white keffiyahs around the necks and heads of the Arabs. The velvet. The Hong Kong silks. The wraps of the saris. All of it stops moving as the Beethoven streams from the grand piano. The thick, sweet rays of final sunlight alight on the tables, intensified by the stained glass above them. The student's faces turn orange and red as the sun moves down behind the mountains and they listen in their national costumes. The Beethoven and the sunlight moves from table to table. I will never be here again, I think. Such a thing is like a comet or a large geode. You'd better look hard.

The Performance of Nationality and the Ambassadorial Rhetoric of the UWC USA

National costumes are a form of drag for many of the students. It is a crucial aspect of what I call the "ambassadorial rhetoric" of the UWC USA. Most of the students who wear national costumes purchased them shortly before departing for the school. When I asked Rahma from Syria whether she ever wore her national costume before coming to the UWC USA,

she laughed. She and her mother had traveled to a specific neighborhood in the city and carefully selected her costume. When I asked her what would happen if she wore it around in Damascus, she laughed happily. "I would attract less attention if I was naked," she answered.

A few of the students do wear national dress that had resonance for them before they got on a plane for New Mexico, such as the girl from Bahrain and her "Thobe Al Nashel," but these students are not the majority. Often when a student-to-be is selecting a national dress to purchase and bring to the UWC USA to "represent" their nation, they are choosing from a varied series of choices of possible costumes, often settling on period-specific outfits that go back decades or even centuries. The choice often seems to be informed by what they think the international community at the UWC USA *wants* to see. In the figured world of the UWC USA, one must have an outfit that embodies the same figured national identity that functions as one's cultural passport.

Whenever I attended events where national costumes were suggested, such as formal dinners, Cultural Day weekend dinners or graduations, I can't help thinking that some costumes in the mix were tantamount to myself dressing up in a pilgrim's outfit.⁵⁷⁸ The effect remains powerful, however, when all of these costumes are present in the same room at the same moment. Outside of the raw visual impact of the colors, fabrics, and architecture of such a variety of costumes, there is the range of kinetic difference. A kimono moves differently than a Costa Rican ruffled dress, which moves differently than an Arab's long robes, held down only by a leather belt and pouches, which moves differently than a European's tailored suit. The overall

⁵⁷⁸ Indeed, at one formal occasion I noticed a boy from Massachusetts was clad in an outfit from revolutionary-era Boston. It must be said here that the formal rhetoric of graduation ceremonies curtails the joke or period-piece outfits, though they do still appear in this context.

effect is one of the celebration and intensification of difference, and yet all circumscribed by the ambassadorial rhetoric of an official gathering and the admiration for other cultures. One could imagine this is as the United Nations of Teenagers.

This rhetoric is boosted by the presence of national flags. Flags for the firsties ring the room during the welcome ceremony, are carried into the hall by second-years, and always fly in the traffic circle in front of the castle. They also fill the walls of dorm rooms, given as gifts from departing second-years to beloved firsties and from second-year to second-year. These flags-as-gifts function as artifacts of great meaning and of goodbye: a well-connected firstie could collect as many as ten or fifteen flags from their departing second-year friends at graduation, all of them covered in wordy inscriptions in sharpie pen from the giver to the receiver.⁵⁷⁹

Just like most things at the UWC USA that seems to take itself too seriously, however, the ambassadorial rhetoric becomes instantly vulnerable to play and satire. In formal events with lower stakes, such as a Cultural Day that is not one's own, it is common for students to switch national costumes. Later in the year I saw Lavinia parade into the dining hall in the Bahraini girl's Thobe Al Nashel, reveling in its opulence and doing small twirls for anyone who commented on her outfit.

National dress is also deployed for other strategic goals. As the intensity of the third semester shifts into the phase where universities and colleges travel to the UWC USA to interview students, a student here or there will suddenly and startlingly be clad in their national costume at lunch on a Wednesday. No one even has to ask: Brown University is on campus for

⁵⁷⁹ I explore the symbolism of national flags in some depths in Chapter 4, but it suffices to say here that the national flags on the stanchions and the national flags that are written-on and given as gifts function in much different ways.

interviews, which is why that boy is wearing the black pants, red sash, and stark white shirt on a normal Wednesday. The performance of national identity has purposes beyond representation: in this case impressing visiting interviewers in hopes of gaining admission to college or university.

THE ENGINE OF CHANGE, PHASE I: NATIONALIZATION

Unless they come from a background that has exposed them to a wide variety of national identities, cultures, and ethnicities, UWC USA students often don't know much about their own national identity until they arrive in New Mexico.⁵⁸⁰ Once they do arrive their national identity is brought to the fore and emphasized by many stakeholders: their peers, the institution of the school, and in response by themselves. In this way, the process of uniting "people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future" first requires that any one student put on the garb of nation. This is literally true in the case of national costume, and also figuratively true as well.⁵⁸¹ After a few early moments of confusion as they get their bearings, the students collaborate in the creation of the figured world of their Israeli-ness or their Costa Rican-ness. Fascinatingly, the less well-known their nation is by the aggregate mob of students and faculty, the less they need to contend with existing fields of stereotype and expectation. In this way,

⁵⁸⁰ There is a large body of research on young people who grow up in more than one culture. The most important book in this historiography is certainly David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken's, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, Revised Edition*, Revised Edition Edition (Boston: Nicholas Brealey America, 2009). In this volume, Pollock and Van Reken define a "third culture kid" as "a person who has spent a significant amount of time outside their parent's culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, without having full membership in any." 14.

⁵⁸¹ Firsties are invited to bring along a 'national costume' so they can wear it at ceremonies and other important events. The costumes, also referred to as 'national dress,' become a fascinating site of the projection of nation, and, when worn by a group of students, a visual rhetoric of international utopia. This is a version of what I am calling the "ambassadorial rhetoric" of the UWC USA.

someone like Falhuveri from the Maldives is forced to collaborate less in his own nationalization than someone like Elena from Denmark. This doesn't mean that he is exempt from expectation, only that nobody has ever met a Maldivian before. The fields into which he writes his own nationalization are vaguer notions of stereotypes associated with the Indian sub-continent. No less reductive, but, in a strange twist, more *broadly* reductive.

The Rise of a Conscious National Identity: From Non-nationalized to Nationalized

It is important here to arrange students on a continuum between two extremes. One side of the continuum, at a pole I call "non-nationalized," is made up of students like Brenda, Anne, Ismael, Falhuveri, Agni, Xolani, and Rahma, Davo, Lavinia and Mathias – all of whom spent most of their lives up to this point inside one relatively stable national field, and therefore haven't conceptualized their own national identity very much. The other end of the continuum, where students like Dvora, Veronica, and Grace would fall, have experienced some degree of crossing over into another national field. Dvora, who spent summers in the United States and lives in a constant state of nationalization in Israel, or Grace, who spent extended time in Costa Rica, or Veronica, who grew up with a non-American parent, all dealt with the process of others recognizing and categorizing their difference, and therefore also doing so themselves. They have been *named* a national identity by others. I shall refer to those students who land near the far right pole of the continuum as the "nationalized." These students have already begun to inhabit what Holland et al. would call the imagined world of Israeli-ness, or American-ness.



Only a few weeks before embarking on their trip to the UWC USA, those students who would land near the left of this continuum were just a member of a large group of people with roughly the same set of broad *national* assumptions and practices (Americans, Australians, Israelis, Syrians).⁵⁸² Far more important to their day-to-day existence than their national identity was the more fine-grained identity frames that directly informed the small moments that make up a life.

Of course many of their identity frames were already established due to years of living and growing within the structures of the existing cultural fields of their lives. For Ismael this all took place within the larger field of Tanzania. However, since he knew nothing else, being Tanzanian was far less relevant than being male, poor, an orphan, a brother, a grandson, a Muslim, and, fortunately, startlingly intelligent. For Brenda being Costa Rican was probably a little more relevant than being Tanzanian was for Ismael due to the many international travelers she encountered on her family's farm, but still far more relevant were her identity frames of being female, from the country, a daughter of an organic farmer, one of many siblings, and a good student.

And yet these existing frames, cultivated through the various identity-forming contexts of figured worlds and positionalities, eventually led to spaces of authoring which led to other, newer identity frames. Importantly, these new identity frames are self-authored: young people finding room to exercise agency in the story of themselves that they tell themselves.

⁵⁸² An essential point here is that I am only talking about national identity – not ethnicity, regional identity, or any of the other identity frames that can be related to, or stem from, national identity. And I am speaking extremely broadly here, careful not to conflate the myriad of cultures and backgrounds that would constitute any national identity.

For Ismael from Tanzania it was the story of the entrepreneurial climber, using his intelligence and force of will to organize all the other orphan children in his neighborhood who scavenged for sellable scrap metal into more efficient teams so all would benefit. This self-authored identity led him to later lend himself out as a tutor for the children of wealthy families, using his powerful intellect to financially support his family that had been ravaged by disease and early death. For Brenda from Costa Rica it is the story of the identity of an explorer: watching so many traveling international farm workers come and go had helped her author an identity where she might one day be as curious and intrepid. For Davo from Australia it is the story of being a tough and resourceful country boy from the Millewa region along the Murray river. For Rahma from Syria it is the story of being a city girl with a growing love of the cafes, music, and markets of Damascus. For Dvora from Israel it is the story of being an artist and a free spirit, with a gently-critical view of the actions of her government regarding the Palestinians. For Mathias from Michigan it is being an African-American boy in a large school and feeling as if other African Americans didn't want to read him as one of them because he was in the advanced classes and didn't like sports. All of these self-authorings would now continue, but from a new and complex starting point: the figured world of an idealistic international boarding school.

Imagined National Identity as a Passport to the Figured World of the UWC USA

A student's movement through the contexts of identity construction (figured worlds, positionalities, spaces of authoring, and sometimes the making of worlds) prefigures the construction of national identity at the UWC USA, not the other way around. Arriving at the UWC USA with an intact conception of oneself as a Costa Rican or a Dane or an American simply

doesn't happen that often. In fact, the insistence on such national parameters can be confusing, even though the outgoing student packet for firsties certainly references "your culture" and "your country" repeatedly. "It was weird to me when we first came here that everyone introduced themselves with their names and their countries," Veronica remembers, "because I thought the purpose of coming here was to transcend that whole idea of the national identity. "

I asked each of my informants what their conception of their national identity was before they arrived at school and I received mostly embarrassed silence, sometimes followed by short, awkward lists of customs or behaviors. Aside from the students who would fall toward the "nationalized" side of the above continuum, my informants didn't really have a national identity they could describe.

Minutes after stepping off the plane at the Albuquerque International Sunport, however, most students feel their national identity rise sharply in importance. They become that Australian boy, that Syrian girl, that Israeli girl, that American boy. Quickly the same shorthand that students apply to others they also apply to themselves, most commonly during introductions. Ismael becomes "Ismael from Tanzania," Sorhab becomes "Sohrab from Iran" and Mathias becomes "Mathias from Michigan." In a matter of minutes, students are using national descriptors where they never had before, the phenomena that Veronica (from Maryland!) found so strange at first. UWC USA students introduce themselves in this fashion for the entirety of their two years at the school. As a reminder to the reader of how much this phrasing dogs the students throughout their UWC USA career, I use the same pattern throughout this ethnography.

Following Holland, et al., figured worlds are complex and layered imagined spaces that multiple individuals co-create and then inhabit together. A utopic international school where education becomes a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future is precisely such a figured world. Imagine it: teenagers from all over the globe, all different, yet all the same in their fierce idealism.

Imagine it the students do. And in doing so they present their own national identity as a kind of imaginary passport into that world. They create not only a figured world that they name the UWC USA (different in many important ways from the brick-and-mortar institution near Las Vegas with the castle and the river), but they create and then began to inhabit the figured world of a national entity: a Tanzanian or Costa Rican or an American in the context of such a place. How else but with a national identity could they contribute to an international school?

And yet there is only so much construction of national identity that can happen while one is still *in* Tanzania or Costa Rica or Michigan.⁵⁸³ All of that imagining, regardless of where one initially took their place on the above continuum, will be blown out by the nationalizing project of the first few weeks and months of the UWC USA in events like the welcoming ceremony, but more so in the daily interaction with others, steadily inflected by the brutal cultural shorthand constantly at play. When I approached Sohrab (from Iran) about participating in my ethnography, he smiled happily, said “yes,” and then said: “But I must warn you, Josh. I don’t think I represent Iran. I have a strange relationship with my country.” His comment missed its mark in two ways. First, it implied that his relationship with Iran was voluntary, that there

⁵⁸³ The Americans often default to representing a state, and then “nationalizing” themselves in that state. Just as one might say “I am Emma from Washington State,” so too will Emma sometimes dress up as a Washingtonian. Punchline costumes, such as Emma’s during the welcome ceremony, are most common among Americans and western Europeans.

was only a 'representative' relationship, one that Sohrab (at least on that day) preferred to void. Second, Sohrab's comment assumed that the rest of us had nothing to do with his identity as an Iranian. The truth is, the rest of us need to attach convenient handles to Sohrab's Iranian-ness, and we need to do so quickly. For behind Sohrab is a Bajun. Behind her is a Norwegian. Behind him is a Peruvian, and behind him is a girl from New Mexico. Things are moving too fast for anything but shorthand. As we shall see, the *triumph of the personal* is but some way off.

The Nationalizing Project of the UWC USA: Welcome to Your Danish-ness

The process of what I am calling *nationalization* is often initiated by contact with people from other nations and cultures. Here I build upon on Holland, et al.'s articulation of the contexts of identity construction, especially positionality and spaces of authoring. I see nationalization as a dialogic process across three points of resonance: the *contextual*, the *sub-textual*, and the *authorial*. This is why the students above who had regular or deep access to other cultures before coming to the UWC USA are placed further toward the 'nationalized' end of the above continuum: they have been through the dialogic process across these points of resonance to a greater or lesser degree already. They already understood what it was to receive input from one's *context*, that made obvious aspects of one's own *sub-text*, and allowed them to *author* this new information into their identity, or to dismiss it.

Contextual Point of Resonance

There are, of course, external social forces that inform one's national identity. One of the most important and least noticed aspects of students' construction of their own national identity at the UWC USA is the positionality imposed upon them by the faculty and other students. When I asked Elena from Denmark about her national identity, she cast around for a

bit and then settled on a certain Danish guardedness, where strangers are treated coolly and where Danes don't demonstrate joy or effusiveness unless, she half joked, "there is a lot of alcohol." According to Elena, this contrasted sharply with how most people at the UWC USA understood Danes, whom they often lumped in with the other Nordic countries: Sweden and Norway. "Here I hear about how sweet we are. People think we are innocent and sweet and insecure. They say 'You're so cute. Your country-mates are so cute.'" There is a reductive aspect to this, of course, but also a transmission. Elena's social context is telling her what Danish-ness might mean outside of herself. For his part, Xolani from Swaziland jokes about how at first everyone thought he would be able to dance (he can) and be good at math (he is). Of course I am talking in part about stereotypes, but to limit our conception of the 'external' node to stereotype is to miss a much more powerful, deeper form of cultural contact with the external. That is, the external noticing of what might be unconscious. One is not a Dane unto oneself.

Sub-textual Point of Resonance

A powerful reason for the rising sense of national identity at the UWC USA where one did not exist before is the sudden emotional resonance for the particular "self-understanding," to follow Holland, et. al., of what traits one already possesses that might be linked (by others and oneself) to a larger *national* culture. In other words, though Anne might not have had anything more than a vague concept of her American-ness when she was safely embedded in a mostly American community before the UWC USA, once she arrived her American-ness was noticed and commented upon by others. This is because Anne was unconsciously exhibiting markers she didn't know (or only faintly knew) she had: American-accented English, tacit

American cultural assumptions, and American behavioral habits and norms. These were all sub-texts, assumptions and habits picked up uncritically from her upbringing and distilled from the “common-sense-ness” of her cultural context. In the warm, mischievous, and mostly-safe student social environment of the UWC USA, these traits are teased, satired, and complimented. Anne learned that she had a catalog of previously unknown traits: admired for the “American work ethic” and teased for her tacit “American” ignorance of world geography (even though Anne works hard to not be ignorant). Through this process, Anne learns that she has “national” traits. Beyond stereotype, Anne’s assumptions, the sub-texts to facets of her identity, are revealed as she interacted with her peers. What was sub-textual becomes available to become textual. At the UWC USA, this process is often executed with glee and humor.

For Grace from Washington State, the process is often surprising. “Someone will be like, ‘Oh that’s so American of you,’ or ‘what an American perspective.’ And I don’t know, I don’t realize I’m saying anything that’s particularly American. I’m just saying a phrase like ‘icing on the cake’ or something... maybe what I’m saying makes me American? I keep thinking about it.”

As another example, Lavinia is widely-seen as being “very Brazilian,” with her endless hugs, showy personality, tendency to smooch her friends dramatically (often leaving bright red lipstick), love of dancing, and emotional surges that often test the limits of her own prodigious skill in language. She had a second-year country mate with few of these traits, and, though nobody would openly dismiss his Brazilian-ness, it was occasionally said that he “wasn’t as Brazilian” as Lavinia.

An American boy from the upper Midwest whom we will call “Billy” is seen as being “very American” because he loves American sports, wears sports jerseys frequently, eats

mainstream American food, has, at best, a lukewarm interest in international politics, and dreams about playing football for his favorite American college team, Notre Dame. Billy is unapologetically American, and often takes part in the performative patriotism of the Skinny White Boys Club in order to rile up his friends. It is in scenarios like this where facets of one's identity can become conscious points of resonance. Billy has agreed with his context that his liking of sports *is* American. And that opens up this particular facet of identity to play, subversion, and celebration. Though he was teased for being a "normal American boy" and "just liking sports" for his entire career at the UWC USA, when the Notre Dame football team played USC in mid-October, seven other students dyed their hair green in solidarity. None of them were American.⁵⁸⁴ It is here where the "space of authoring" field of identity construction comes into play.

Yet this revealing of the sub-textual is not always done with humor. For example, one of the features of the brutal cultural shorthand is that firsties that come from nations with a history of imperialism often find themselves personally held responsible for the transgressions of their home nation, often with anger or derision. This is most common with the students from the United States, but extends to other aggressor nations too. As we shall see later in this ethnography, Dvora from Israel was deeply affected by this phenomenon, her idealism directly threatened by the widespread backlash at the UWC USA due to Israel's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

⁵⁸⁴ The dyed Notre Dame fan club included Ramah from Syria, and boys from Croatia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, the Bahamas, and Austria.

Authorial Point of Resonance

At the point of movement from the unconscious to the conscious, whether it is through outside feedback such as observation or satire, or through internal reflection, a subject has the opportunity to internalize a piece of information, to author it into the fabric of the story they tell themselves (and others) about themselves, or to dismiss it, to edit it away. Given the many overlapping fields of positionality from which and into which an individual must self-author, the success of the attempt to either internalize *or* dismiss a revealed aspect of identity can range from being so easy as to seem pre-ordained, such as Billy's "well, I just always knew I was kind of a normal American" approach, or so difficult as to cause major psychological and emotional rupture, as we shall see later with Dvora.

As a low-stakes example, Anne can choose to see her work ethic as an expression of her American-ness, or she can attribute it to the priorities of her family or simply her personality and be amused by how outside personalities attribute it to her being American. But her friends may never relent in telling Anne she is hardworking because she is American. She may dismiss it immediately but find herself wondering about the truth of this observation later in the year after many repetitions.

As a further example, later in this chapter I explore the experience of teaching English at the UWC USA. A few of my students approached me about the cultural assumptions I was making as a teacher, gently suggesting that my teaching was "very American." My emphasis on classroom discussions, on many possible answers to a prompt, and my habit of making popular culture references was, they insisted, very cultural. Though I knew this on some vague level, their *external* noticing of my *unconscious* behavior, habits, and assumptions led to a conscious

point of resonance. Following our conversation, I was keenly aware of all three facets of their feedback. My Americanness was no longer background traffic in the classroom. Interestingly, whether or not I interpreted my love of discussion classes as “American” became beside the point (even though there are many Americans who hate discussion-based classes). My students interpreted my style of teaching as American, and that became a narrative with which I needed to contend if I wanted to negotiate my class successfully. My students had intervened in my narrative about myself.

THE TRAUMA OF ARRIVAL

In the UWC USA New Student Packet, there is a long Frequently Asked Questions list. One of the first questions that the packet asks itself is, “What is the worst thing about the UWC USA?” The answer reads as follows:

Life here is very hard. Everyone will tell you that. No matter how academically capable you are, no matter how prepared you feel, it IS hard. Not necessarily your studies, but your life. By now you know what the UWCs are about and what they represent. But what you don’t realize, and can’t realize, is that not everything about this global arrangement is so easy. Most of you will be far from home and living in an entirely different culture. People will not speak your language, nor will they identify with your cultural heritage. You will be alone, in a land of foreigners, surrounded by strangers, and that is one of the greatest challenges you may ever come face to face with.⁵⁸⁵

Linda Curtis tells me a story of a non-American girl many years back, keeping all specifics vague to protect the girl’s identity: the national committee in the girl’s home nation that had recommended her strongly. Linda was eventually summoned when the RT in question realized that this girl was refusing to sleep in her own bed at night – slipping into other rooms and other beds for the comfort of another human body. There was never any impropriety. She was simply

⁵⁸⁵ Linda Curtis, ed., “New Student Packet” (UWC USA, 2011).

so far from home, prepared for the UWC USA in all the ways except one: she was not ready to be on her own. The dislocation factor was large for her, but not as large as some students. And yet the combination of the blur of cultures, increased autonomy, and academic demands, all of this taking place in a foreign language, had proven too much for her at first. The girl sought out a great deal of attention of the RAs in her dorm and the physical comfort of a shared bed. Other students tolerated this for a short while but quickly sought help. Linda and the RT resolved the situation with frequent “mother to daughter” conversations.

When I asked Linda about what the adjustment to life at the UWC USA is like for a new student, she responded:

They get fooled, and I think that a lot of the kids before they get here, don't realize how hard it is to live here, how hard it is to live away from their parents, and they struggle with that. They [the National Committees] do see something that made them think 'this is the kid we want to send there.' A lot of times when we talk in national committees they are quite surprised that we have some concerns. Very surprised that this kid is not going to classes or this kid is whatever it may be.

When I asked how the parents and the national committees responded to the situation of the girl who wouldn't sleep in her own bed, Linda responded “they were shocked.”

And yet the girl in question did have facility with the English language. Anne Farrell, an English teacher who shares responsibility for English language learners with another teacher, Cheikh Badiane, compiled a file of excerpts of firsties who were still in the beginning stages of learning English about their social and academic experiences in the first semester.⁵⁸⁶ One of the excerpts is telling:

⁵⁸⁶ Farrell did this for many reasons, but chief among these was to help other UWC USA teachers realize the struggles that an English language learner undergoes at the UWC USA. Her packet certainly helped me re-calibrate my own approach to a classroom that had a diversity of English language proficiency in it.

For a long time, it was scary for me to be here. I felt embarrassed to talk to a native speaker because they would either talk too fast or talk with a ton of slangs. I couldn't understand and I felt so stupid when I couldn't get the jokes. I pretended to laugh but felt sad. I felt jealous of the native speakers.⁵⁸⁷

For students like the girl who wouldn't sleep in her own bed, the UWC USA was initially bereft of one crucial element: human connection. Students with limited English are vulnerable to isolation on any front that requires communication.

Brenda from Costa Rica was one of these students. She quickly developed a series of coping mechanisms to help her through each day. She began to sit next to another Spanish speaker in class, at assemblies, and at meals so that she could use them as an informal interpreter whenever she lost her way. She benefitted greatly from having a large contingent of Spanish speakers at the UWC USA. And yet the first months were not easy. She recalled her first class discussion in Social Anthropology: "I read the article. That took me like five hours, and I *understood* the article. It was about religion, about the Virgin of Guadalupe. I wanted to give my opinion about what the virgin represents for us. I couldn't. I felt really frustrated for not being able to communicate."

The initial dislocation factor was high for Brenda, but she had other traits that helped her with the transition into the UWC USA. "I am very patient," she jokes. When it came to social interactions, she simply refused to fall back. "Actually, I just didn't stop myself. I didn't think that way. I just tried to speak with a lot of people. I tried to learn some things better." Brenda's closest friends that year ended up not being Spanish speakers at all: The Italian girl who, as a second-year became Ramah's roomie, and girls from Senegal and Bosnia.

⁵⁸⁷ Anne Farrell, "Student Experience of 'Sink or Swim,'" n.d., 2.

Dvora had a difficult entry in a different way. “My first semester was very hard for me. I was very homesick. My thought is about leaving. I can reflect on it now and say I had thoughts about leaving. I don’t think I had realized it then. I was very, very homesick and I wasn’t myself. So I didn’t really act or do anything right.” In addition to missing home, Dvora, who describes herself back home as “center left” suddenly found herself defending Israel’s military presence in Palestine. “I found myself just advocating to one side where I don’t fully agree with what I said. And sometimes, I had to make extreme points in order to make my point.” The more the scale tipped against Israel in conversations, the more Dvora found herself advocating a position that was far right of where she actually stood politically. For Dvora, the figured world of Israel and the figured world of being Israeli had blended. “And then I started finding myself actually believing what I’m saying.” She continues: “I was shocked at myself.” As the year wore on, Dvora’s views roughly returned to their original positions, complicated and tempered by her new friendships with Palestinians and her further nationalization as an Israeli.⁵⁸⁸

Notes on Arrival Day and the Welcoming Ceremony

The New Student Packet warns incoming firsties that life at the UWC USA is “very hard.” The first few weeks at the UWC USA are traumatic. Firsties experience the intense dislocation of leaving behind everything with which they are familiar, traveling to New Mexico, and immediately trying to integrate into a social fabric that is not only complex, but has recently been reset by their very arrival. The firsties are simultaneously the focus of the intense curiosity and welcome of their second-years, but also the unlucky targets of the second-years’ displaced

⁵⁸⁸ Dvora later reflected that the process of realizing how far right she’d moved was fully rendered when she returned to Israel and her old friends, aware of her previously leftist views, asked “what happened to you?!”

grief and frustration, for the firsties cannot replace the second-years that the *current* second-years have lost. This phenomenon takes place at the same time as firsties acclimate and adapt to the IB, dorm life, CAS, wilderness, the food, and the faculty, the haunting and alien New Mexican highlands, and deal with the process of nationalization, a process that directly addresses a facet of their own identity. It is traumatic to come to the UWC USA as a firstie. With commendable honesty, the UWC USA does not shrink from this reality.

This trauma is important for two reasons. First because it often sends firsties into the arms of other students who are like them in some way, creating the preconditions for pan-regionalism, tables at meals, and smaller, devoted cliques like the “Acon Six” or the “Skinny White Boys Club.” The second reason is that, though these initial groups may break apart and re-form as the forces of CAS, wilderness, and Cultural Days begin to work on the students, there is still a void left by the trauma of this dislocation. The students are alone in a strange place, most of them very far from family and loved ones. To survive and thrive, they must forge new pseudo-family bonds with their peers. Though the machinery of this bonding may be the co-curricular program and the students’ encounters in residence life, the impetus behind this bonding is that the students are disconnected from home, dislocated. They need people. They need a new family.

DAY 1 - A Sunday in September – The Institution

In 1961 the sociologist Erving Goffman defined a “total institution” as “a place of residence or work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the larger society at the time, lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.” He was careful to note that though mental hospitals and prisons were obvious examples they were, by far, not the only ones.⁵⁸⁹ Such a definition is a remarkable fit for the UWC USA, removed as it is from the rest of the world while ironically so full of that same world as well. Goffman used the term “formally administered” to differentiate the total institution from other phenomena with no driving ideology or, for lack of a better word, program. There is no such lack at the UWC USA, dominated as it is by the IB (which I will address later in this chapter), residential life, and the commitments of CAS. Life at the UWC USA is intense, but it is also intensely scheduled.

In the spring, Veronica from Maryland had the opportunity to visit an actual juvenile detention center for young people convicted of sexual assault. The group of UWC USA students modeled positive peer relationships with these troubled youth, among other therapeutic activities. Reflecting on the experience, Veronica accidentally drew eerily similar conclusions.

Yeah. It's funny the parallels between like UWC and their [the juvenile detainees] life in a prison. It's really weird but they were like a dorm. Their unit was just like a dorm . . . Yes, their doors lock from the outside, but like all their doors were painted purple and they had pictures up in their rooms and blankets and trinkets just like we have in ours, and it was strange the way that they're there for max 2 years just like we're here for 2

⁵⁸⁹ Goffman, *Asylums; Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates, With a New Introduction by William B. Helmreich*, 3–5. ⁵⁸⁹ In Goffman's famous typology, there are five categories of total institutions. Those that administer care, such as hospitals, retirement homes, and orphanages; those that administer care as well as protect society at large, such as disease centers, and mental hospitals; those that only protect society at large through containment, such as prisons, jails, and concentration camps; those that execute, in his words, “worklike tasks” and are built around a purpose such as army barracks, work camps, boarding schools, and naval ships; and finally those that function as retreats from the world and incubators for the religious or otherwise metaphysically-inclined. Obviously, the UWC USA would fit in the fourth and perhaps even the fifth. Notably absent from his typology are summer camps.

years. And like they go through incredible transformation there just like we do, and then they have a choice whether or not they take that transformation and make something of it in their lives as we do as well.

These similarities in the structure and function of institutions that Goffman and Veronica both noticed parallel similarities in the techniques deployed by movements such as the Hitler Youth and Outward Bound or the UWC movement. Institutions, like the educational techniques that Hahn distilled and codified, are simply technologies that can be deployed. The difference lies, as always, in intent and execution.

BRUNCH

The UWC USA cafeteria, or “Caf,” is positioned in the ballroom of the Montezuma castle. Besides the gorgeous remodeled lobby, the ballroom is perhaps the most striking room in the castle. Vaulted ceilings dwarf the low, heavy wooden tables, and the entire hall was restored in 2001 to match the opulence of the original 1880’s woodwork. High windows drench the room in sun for most hours of the day. The large room echoes badly, and during a busy lunch or dinner it can be hard to hear anyone who is not at your table.

As one walks in through the double doors, the wooden tables play out to one’s left and right. Across from the doors on the other side of the aisle between the tables is a massive wooden fireplace inlaid with blue and yellow stained glass. This same stained glass adorns the wooden ornamentation on the entire bank of windows to one’s left. To the right, huge windows look out over the traffic circle and the fourteen flag poles that stand in its center, with the flags of each of the nations which hosts a UWC: Swaziland, China, India, Singapore, Italy, the United Kingdom, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Costa Rica, and the United States, moving in the mountain breeze.

Unlike the noise and motion of weekday meals, the mood is light and the sound low at weekend brunch. From 10 to noon students eat quietly in little knots scattered throughout the hall. Most of them wear some form of pajamas. Makeup is absent, or still left on from the night before. Bed head is everywhere. Outfits do not match. The sense of informality that pervades the school is brought down even further. It is common to see students without shoes. Especially with students that live in the castle, levels of dress that would border on the inappropriate in public or even in lower campus are common, along with bed head.⁵⁹⁰

Nobody is in a hurry. This is highly unusual for the UWC USA, with its tumult of schedules, classes, excitement, and CASes. Knowing they have hours before any commitment, these students act like teenagers in the morning do all around the world: they lounge. After dishes are pushed back the students lean back in the heavy wooden chairs and tell stories about the night before, or chat nervously about how much homework they have on this weekend day. But they don't move. Students get up for seconds. The small knots begin to gather together as the brunch crowd builds, filling the few tables closest to the doorway to the kitchen. Each of the Caf tables fits six to eight seats, depending on how close the diners want to crowd their chairs. This does not limit the number of students at a table to eight. It is not uncommon to see ten or twelve students crowded around one table where a particularly good conversation is brewing, with many of them sitting two to a chair.

Physical affection is very common in general at the UWC USA, but it is a brunch standard. Students lean heavily against each other, and arms rest easily on shoulders. Girls who

⁵⁹⁰ Student clothing is rarely policed unless it is deemed obscene, too revealing, or directly offensive to a member of the community. Students frequently attempt to enter the kitchen with bare feet, and are sent packing by the kitchen staff. Pajamas are standard at brunch.

are friends frequently play with each other's hair. There is much lap-sitting regardless of gender or romantic status.

Daily life at the UWC USA requires a great deal of psychological effort. Most students do their best to negotiate the complicated fields of different cultural expectations without making gaffes or offending. Even for students for whom English is a native language, this can feel like constantly attempting to speak a different language, and in a sense they are: a slightly different dialect of physical and behavioral communication. And for the students for whom English is not a native language, which is probably just over half of the students at the UWC USA, the day is filled with the mental challenge of expressing oneself in a non-native tongue, all while negotiating the same difficult cultural fields as the native speakers.

This daily battle requires linguistic and behavioral alertness that gives rise to a low-grade anxiety, constantly humming in the background. This level of anxiety is proportional to the dislocation factor between that student and daily life at the UWC USA. In this way, the entire student body is on-guard in a way that more homogenous high schools are not.

At weekend brunch, this on-guardedness is dramatically lessened. One can see the relief on the students' faces, leaning into each other in the steady New Mexican late morning light. For a few hours, they are just sleepy teenagers hoping breakfast will last a little longer, for the afternoon is full of homework, CAS duties, and perhaps sometime in the late afternoon, the arrival of a Wilderness trip.

As the sun fades on the canyon-sides, students will appear in the Caf, using the wide tables for homework. Dinner anchors the evening, with some students feeling the sinking sensation of not having done enough schoolwork over the weekend. After dinner the choirs

sometimes practice in the ballroom, the instructions of the directors and the sung notes both ricocheting off the spun glass of the Chihuly chandeliers. By evening check almost everyone will be gaining momentum for Monday. But for now though, all is sunshine, pajamas, and conversation. At present the engine of the UWC USA is quiet, but it will be spinning madly soon enough.

THE CASTLE, THE DORMS

The UWC USA is set into a steep hillside which is part of the beginning of the rocky mountain's lift out of the Great Plains. At the bottom of the hill, beyond the two soccer fields, the security building, and the parking lot for the vans and buses lies the Gallinas River. The Gallinas changes mightily during the year depending on precipitation, but in the early fall it is a sleepy trickle.

The castle dominates the surrounding area, looming over the entire campus and implicitly transporting the students and teachers at the school to a place set apart. When there is a castle always in the corner of one's eye, one feels like they are somewhere special. Most of the inner workings of the school occupy lower campus, or what the students call "downstairs." The large auditorium, theater, jewelry-making shop, sound-recording studio, music department and music practice rooms, the field house, science laboratories and most of the classrooms all sit on the alluvial plane below the castle. Closest to the river on one side is the President's residence and the school offices and library, and closest on the other side, across the soccer fields, is the school gate.

Three major stairways lift the castle level above lower campus. The largest of these stairways has 131 steep steps. As with anything that a group of teenagers does over and over,

the stairs and the obvious obstacle they offer to smooth movement between the two areas of campus has become a cultural node. Students have timed how long it takes to get up or downstairs, and some have become adept at sliding down the long railing of the long stairway, ignoring the rough hillside zipping by on the other side of the rail as they hurtle downhill.

Lower campus has four of the six dorms on campus all named after the highest point on each continent. On lower campus there are two girls' dorms, Chumolungma and Kilimanjaro, and two boys' dorms, Mont Blanc and Denali. In the castle are the two final dorms, Aconcagua and Kosciuszko. No one uses any of the dorms full names except for "Denali." They are almost always referred to as "Chum" (Choom), "Kili" (Keelee), "M.B.", "Acon" (Ah-Kahn), and "Kozzy."

The four lower dorms occupy a quadrant of lower campus in a block. Because these dorms contain a little over two-thirds of the student population, lower campus becomes the largest social hub. The dorm buildings themselves are squat brown affairs, made of concrete and brick. These are the ones that Lockwood referred to as "solid, useful, and tasteless." In good weather, students spill out onto the beige concrete terraces and stairways that wind through the four dorm area. In cold weather, the day-rooms of each of the lower campus dorms are popping with activity.

"Upstairs," the two castle dorms, Kozzy and Acon, enjoy larger rooms, castle views of the Gallinas river valley, and easy access to the Caf, which is downstairs in the castle ballroom. But any member of Kozzy or Acon must traipse down the stairs to visit the social hub and then much worse, travel back up. As a result, there is a friendly rivalry between upper and lower campus residents, with good-hearted jabs at the "snobby girls in the castle" or the "Kozzy Kings" at the center.

CHECK

Check happens at 9:30 pm. The rules are simple. Each set of roomies needs to be in their dorm room and waiting for a faculty member or other ranking adult to come by and check them. The two castle dorms have around 30-35 students, the four dorms in lower campus have 40-45 each. As a faculty member, it was my duty to do check twice or three times a semester. Tonight I am checking MB, known for its respectful boys, all under the supervision of one of the Chemistry teachers, Mike Hatlee.

I start on the bottom floor of Denali, near the dayroom, and work my way to the top. The four lower dorms are labyrinthine concrete structures with many blind corners and sprawling restroom and shower areas. Doors are festooned with national flags, posters of campus events, and a whiteboard with hand-erased smudges under the most recent notes. I pass a notice of a missed visitor. Scattered amongst the decoration and visual is a name tag for each student. I knock.

“Come in,” comes the cheerful reply. Laptops play a powerful role in the social culture of the students and it is common to find both roomies looking up with the tell-tale blue face of a screen when I knock on the door. Because I am an irregular checker, surprise and the constant good cheer of the UWC student follows. I am required to see each of the students and make eye contact with them. As this happens I make small talk, often observing some detail in their room. If it is especially messy, I comment about how clean it is. I check them off a sheet. “You guys are checked,” I say with finality.

“Thanks Josh!” they answer, as if I have done them a favor.

Because I am an irregular checker and because the students and I have a good relationship, I am occasionally hazed. Toward the end of November, I opened a dorm room door after hearing no “come in” and found an empty room. Almost ready to leave, I heard the exhale of breath. Then, “dang it!” Both boys were under their beds, gasping with the immensity of their joke, and also because they were both holding their breath. Two doors later I heard the normal “come in” and opened the door to see no boys at all, only a laptop open on a chair. Playing on the laptop was a National Geographic show about elephants. It is the ‘mating habits’ phase of the show.

“Wow,” I said quietly, grinning to an empty room. The two occupants exploded from the sides of the room, sides splitting with laughter as if they can’t even believe it. The second-year boy from Ghana alternated between laughing and checking to make sure I wasn’t mad. The firstie, a tall and well-liked Uruguayan, could barely breathe he was laughing so hard. They watched the show for a few moments with me with me in mock amazement, laughing the whole time. As I walked out, they showered me with empty apologies. As the door shut the laughing began anew. I heard the sound of high-fives.

INSTITUTIONAL FATIGUE

Five minutes before check each night students are flying around campus trying to get back to their dorm room in time. In a matter of only weeks, most students learn how to take the stairs down at two or three at a time, or to step on each one in a blur of feet, usually either grimly silent or sing-songing their plight: “I’m gonna be laaaaate for cheeeeck.” This same pattern happens before most morning classes as well, but it is the sprint to check that the students dislike the most. This is because check is a disruption and a reminder that adults are

still in charge of them. The truth is that students at the UWC USA have a startling amount of autonomy throughout a given day, measurable in part by how much they buck at constraints like check. Once in check itself, however, the mood is cheerful, and obviously sometimes playful. Because check forces an entire dorm to be present at the same time, it also sets the preconditions for other events. Birthday parties, organizational meetings, and general mischief are all often orchestrated and executed “after check.”

The other constraint that the students hate is curfew. Set at 12:00 midnight, there are theoretically “curfew strikes” that can accumulate and lead to student discipline. In my time at the UWC USA, curfew was a rough guideline, regularly and strictly enforced only by Mike Hatlee, the chemistry teacher and RT of Mont Blanc. Students carefully avoid the lower campus crossroads near Mont Blanc after midnight because of Mike. Beyond this, curfew only comes up when a student is clearly not getting enough sleep or has broken other campus rules after midnight. Linda’s feeling about curfew is clear: “Students don’t like curfew. I love curfew because I think every kid needs to be home at some certain time. I think it’s important so that they can get their sleep.”

And yet two years of running to one’s dorm at 9:30 for check and then back again two and a half hours later for curfew, day after day, begins to take a psychological toll on the students, if not on their actual freedom. This, mixed with eating at the same dining room for three meals a day for two years contributes to what I call “institutional fatigue” – a dissatisfaction with anything relating to the UWC USA’s machinery: security, check, curfew, the lack of spinach on the salad bar, that light in the bathroom that is always flickering. As Anne put it, “this place doesn’t just manage your academic life it like completely – it encapsulates your

entire life, it's completely dominating." By the time the second-years have entered their fourth semester, many of them are 18 and 19 years old, having now survived and, for the most part, thrived hundreds if not many thousands of miles from their home culture. To these students, curfew would be a quaint concept if it wasn't so condescending.

CHECK-INS FOR A SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER

Davo from Australia is very excited to be at the UWC USA. Raised in the countryside and in a milieu where he was perhaps the most curious of his peers, this school is a wonderland of new perspectives and potential friendships. When many of his peers were shrinking from the fray of the Culture Shock dance party⁵⁹¹ on the opening night, Davo went the opposite direction. Unintimidated by the shock tactics of the second-years, he took his shirt off and danced on a table until an administrator made him get down. This set the tone for Davo's opening act at the UWC USA, and many second-years appear either amused or annoyed with him. Davo seems to care little what they think. He does notice that being the singular representative of any nation has its drawbacks, however, especially at the beginning. "I get a fair bit jealous of people who have country-mates. The Americans have like 40 country-mates, the Chinese have a lot of country-mates, the Germans have like 5 country-mates. They get to connect with their own culture. They get to connect to other people like them." Davo's irrepressible enthusiasm and his focus on others has led to an easy settling-in period between him and his Afghan second-year

⁵⁹¹ Perhaps the strangest of the student parties, the Culture Shock dance party happens the night of arrival, so many of the firsties who arrive late miss it entirely. Culture Shock is a strange mix of a welcome dance and cultural micro-aggression, where especially a group of second-year female students, as a group, dress-down to provocative clothing and dance. The sudden display of western-centered sexuality is supposed to "shock" incoming firsties. In 2011 especially, this goal was met. Many firsties, especially those from conservative backgrounds, did not return to student dances for a long time, if at all. It is the only dance that has such aggression in its DNA. The rest are themed, but collaboratively so.

roomie. His roomie's conservatism (relative to the liberal cultural norms of the UWC USA) has become a topic of conversation, not a barrier.

Rahma from Syria loves it here, but is a little worried that classes are going to be hard for her. She and her Italian second-year roomie get along famously. Her roomie is one of the most successful students at the UWC USA, surrounded by rumors that she will max out the IB at a score of 45. Rahma loves the tidiness of their castle room, and the astounding views of lower campus and the Gallinas river valley from her bed. She is balancing her deep feelings of excitement with a profound sense of having abandoned Damascus and Syria at precisely the worst moment. "I felt so guilty. So terribly guilty coming here... how can I leave my country, the place I was raised in, and leave it in its time of need?" Rahma's mother comforts her by insisting that she will benefit her country here. "You know, if I'm alive, studying, and making progress. If I gain more education I can use that in the future to help my country instead of dying, for example, or being traumatized or whatever." Rahma does this from time to time, downshifting from happily chatting about a dance to directly addressing the possibility that, if she were home, she could be vulnerable to horrible violence. And that her family is still vulnerable.

Dvora from Israel badly misses her second-years, but has already developed a deep fondness for many firsties, especially those in the Mont Blanc dorm – where many of her second-year friends lived the previous year. MB's day room is especially rowdy, and features full-scale arguments between various non-American UWC USA students and a handful of what the students are calling "The Skinny White Boy Club" who jokingly pretend that the United States is the best country in the world in order to get everyone going. One particular boy who

visits from the Denali dorm, Karl, never breaks character and constantly walks the narrow line between being very funny and very offensive. Many students are not sure how to take Karl, but Dvora, very mischievous herself, thinks Karl is a riot.

Anne from Minnesota is on fire. Partnering with Naomi Swinton, the Director of CEC and Ben Gillock, the firebrand Environmental Systems teacher, Anne and a few other students have plans to start a new CAS called Practical Activism. They are already planning a full-scale protest to advocate that the Governor of New Mexico insist that largest energy company in New Mexico, PNM, refit their massive plant near Farmington for improved emissions standards or be shut down. Student enthusiasm is high, and Anne hopes they will pull over half the student body. She has her eye on many good colleges and universities, but her idealistic streak and the fact that she deeply enjoys the leadership of her peers (she runs the recycling CAS as well as serving as an RA in Acon) make her schedule almost unbearable. Her biggest issue these days is sleep. That, and security keeps kicking her out of the library after curfew.

For **Brenda from Costa Rica**, a year has made all the difference. Once a non-speaker of English, Brenda is now nearly fluent, though she is still slightly nervous about her heavy accent. Where the first year was a constant gauntlet of misunderstanding, stress, and impossibly long homework sessions, this year has begun with broad interconnection and a vastly increased social presence. She has taken over the unofficial leadership of the “Latin Family,” and now organizes the birthday celebrations, letter exchanges, and occasional dinners of that group. Her grades have risen steadily, and just in time. The third semester’s workload would have been inconceivable last year with her language challenges.

THE REAL WORLD IS COMING AND IT WANTS TO KNOW YOUR IB SCORE

There is a set of dominoes that begin to fall, one against the other, in the minds and emotional landscapes of most second-years at some point early in the third semester. I address the International Baccalaureate (IB) in detail later, but it suffices to say here that it is a two-year academic program of the same six classes, usually three “higher levels” and three “standard levels.” Given the massive load of co-curricular and social engagements at the UWC USA, only the brilliant or the truly mad attempt more higher levels than three.

Given the huge variance in degree of preparation which incoming firsties bring with them to the UWC USA, it is difficult to characterize how any one student’s academic experience will go, but there are certainly recognizable patterns. It is common for a student to spend the first and second semesters (their entire first year) acclimating to the IB’s demands, as well as to the UWC USA itself. For students with a functional command of English, the first year is filled with cultural encounters, expanded perspectives, and, again depending upon their degree of academic preparation, a reckoning with the IB. They either find themselves woefully unprepared and therefore striving to make up their deficiencies, roughly even with the demands of the IB, or in much rarer cases, far better prepared than the IB is difficult.

For students with weaker English skills, the entire first year is exponentially more challenging. Lacking the connection and support that socialization with their co-years and second-years offers, while simultaneously falling behind in any class that requires strong English for success (anything besides hard math and science), these students are simultaneously left behind academically and isolated socially. This double impact is lessened if the student in question happens to be a member of a language group that is well represented at the UWC USA,

such as Spanish-speakers, French-speakers, or Arabic-speakers. However, if the student in question lacks both a language cohort *and* the connection achieved through social connection in English, the UWC USA, a place dedicated to uniting people, nations, and cultures, can be very lonely indeed.

Either way, however, for the first year the thought of leaving the UWC USA really only enters the collective consciousness as the graduation of the second-years approaches, and then only faintly. For the entire first year, most firsties emotionally contend with the UWC USA as if it were an entity that will continue indefinitely: an insane little cultural utopia without end.

This all changes in the third semester, and with this change some of the happy idealism of the first year crashes and breaks apart on the hard rocks of the real world just beyond the school gates. This is because university applications become due sometime during the third semester. The adrenaline-inducing drumbeat of SAT test dates, college interviews, preparatory meetings with the UWC USA Vice President for Admissions, Tim Smith, and college visits creates a broad disturbance in the just-stabilizing social ecosystem of the 100 or so second-years. They have only recently acclimated to their official and unofficial leadership roles at the school. Now they must win admission to university.⁵⁹²

The question of university immediately invokes both pressures from home and the economic and status pressures of the real world. This invocation in turn sets off discussions about the role of the UWC mission, idealism vs pragmatism, and how a UWC USA graduate might deploy their UWC status beyond university. In a very short amount of time second-years

⁵⁹² I use the more international term “university” to refer to what most Americans call “college.” This is both because it is a more common usage at the UWC USA, but also because the name “United World College” further complicates the use of the term “college.”

are given the reins to the UWC USA and also asked how they intend to get into university and, because it matters for admission, what they intend to do after.

At the center of this discussion sits each student's IB score. Standing in sharp and ironic contrast to the blizzard of identities, figured worlds, shifting friendships, and developmental stages that a UWC USA student tries on, encounters, and sometimes inhabits and then shrugs off, there is a hard number that follows them through their UWC USA career. It is their IB score and if they want to go to university after the UWC USA, it matters a great deal.

The IB awards a score of 1-7 per class. There are six classes, adding up to a base of 42 possible points. To this number is added a possible 3 points for the other elements of the IB Diploma Programme: Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS), the Extended Essay (EE), and Theory of Knowledge (TOK). This amounts to 45 total points. Since anyone in the high 30s or 40s will probably get the 3 additional points due to the amount of effort and intelligence it takes to get to that level in the first place, most students leave those points off during conversation. It is common to hear the phrase "I've got a 38" from students, and "she's a 38" from faculty and administration.

NOTES ON A SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER: SECOND-YEARS AND THE TRAUMA OF RETURNING

A year ago, as firsties, the second-years acclimated to the UWC USA as best they could. For everyone save for the few students who had already attended an international school, arriving at the UWC USA was akin to arriving on an alien planet: the endless performance of national identity, the sudden and unfair surprise of being held responsible for one's nation's actions on an international stage, the natural teenage curiosity about others now superheated by the diversity and exoticism of so many young people from so many places, and the pressure-

cooker of a small remote campus ringed by mountains covered with piñon pines. None of this was like home, or like their school at home.

Their meaning-makers and guides in the bracing trauma of the first year were the second-years at that time. Deep friendships, rivalries, alliances, and love affairs all formed the social fabric of life as a firstie. Each of the attendant nodes of UWC USA social life: the dorm partnerships, the unofficial alliances based on language groups, the widely-recognized social groups like the African table, the Latin Family, the Muslim prayer group, all of these micro-cultures were led and, from the perspective of the firsties at that time, *founded* by second-years, as the firsties never saw anyone else lead these groups. The same was true for all of the large CASes: Recycling, Community Work Crew, Wilderness Guides, Sustainability, and for each of the Cultural Day groups: END, MAAD, NAD, CLAD, and AND, as well for clubs like the famous African Chorus. The *social* fabric of the UWC USA is dictated each year mostly by second-years, not faculty or administration.

And now in the first days of the third semester, those second-years are all at once gone. Last year's firsties, initiated and trained by their second-years, are now second-years themselves. It is a tight cycle. And so as the new firsties arrive by the bus-load, the new second-years are grieving for the loss of their own second-years. Even as they pound the sides of the arriving buses and hoot and scream and cheer, they are wondering how the UWC USA could ever function without *their* second-years. They feel alone. If a current second-year had developed mostly second-year friendships as a firstie, they can feel quite abandoned.

The departing second-years also just left a lot to do. All of those roommate relationships are missing one half of each partnership. Leaderless unofficial groups like the Latin Family need

a second-year to steer them, and vacated CAS and club leadership positions must also be filled. Once so nervous and green, second-years, willing or not, are now the culture experts on campus. They know how things work. They must teach the firsties. This speed of transition from initiates to culture-setters gives rise to a micro-genre of labeling that students use to describe their own position relative to their own second-years, their own firsties, and the rest of the UWC timeline back into the past and forward into the present. The entire relativist articulation centers on the speaker's year as a firstie.

For example, Anne from Minnesota might refer to a boy, "Henry," who graduated the year previous, as *her* second-year, because that was his status when Anne herself was a firstie. Lavinia, Anne's current roommate, is of course now a firstie. Henry is therefore Lavinia's "third-year" while being Jane's "second-year."

This relativist logic continues far up and down the numerical scale. If, the next year Lavinia, now in her second year at the UWC USA, had a firstie roomie named "Miranda," then Miranda would be Anne's "0-year." A girl one year younger than Miranda would be Anne's "-1 year." Anyone in Anne's class would be Anne's "co-year." Following this logic in the other direction, a boy two years older than Henry would be Anne's "4th year," Lavinia's "5th year," and Miranda's "6th year."

Most times I observed students discussing either potential incoming students or long-graduated students, this ladder of relative time-position was invoked. It would look something like this:

FIRSTIE from PALESTINE: "So it looks like we might get a couple of students from Palestine next year."

SECOND-YEAR from AUSTRALIA: “Really! That’s so cool! I’m jealous. I have a third-year and a fourth-year from home, but no second-year. It must have been grand for them to have each other. I’ve got nobody.”

FIRSTIE: “Yeah, we got lucky with a donor. They might split them, though. So I’d have a first-year, but then so would *that* person.”⁵⁹³

SECOND-YEAR: “That’s awesome. I didn’t get anyone! No second-year and no firstie!”

When I first encountered this unwieldy ladder of relative time-positions, I wrote it off as an oddity possibly fueled by teenage self-absorption: “what does that young person have to do with *me*?” However, after witnessing the significant struggle most firsties endure as they acclimate to the UWC USA, as well as the powerful joy-pain continuum upon which second-years simultaneously grieve for their lost second-years *and* welcome their new firsties, I believe the obsession with relative positionality to one’s own firstie year belies something far more interesting and complex.

Whether Henry is Lavinia’s “third year” or not is less important than whether Lavinia is able to mark and do honor to what social and emotional connections Henry might have had with Anne well before Lavinia arrived at the UWC USA. For Anne was once just a firstie too. Anne would have needed some version of the same initiation, succor, cultural training, guiding and protection that Lavinia now needs from Anne, her second-year and roommate.

⁵⁹³ Some donors set aside scholarships at specific UWCs for specific demographics. For instance, there is a scholarship at the UWC USA for a handful of female Muslim students each year.

The genre of relative time-position actually points to a vital structure of relative initiation and support. It asks, “Who taught you about the UWC USA and then looked after you?” and also, “Who will you train and look after?”

This, in turn, points to another important reality: that with such a tight initiate-to-expert cycle, and such a formidable experience to negotiate, students badly need teaching and support from their older peers. And when they are second-years, ready or not, they must teach and support their firsties.

Finally, this relative numerical scale indicates the most fascinating of figured worlds: a ladder of cultural training and exchange with rungs that stretch back to 1982, simultaneously featuring the status of the cultural neophyte and the cultural expert, and in doing so revealing the simultaneous embodiment *and* fluidity of identity.

The intensity with which the students categorize this ladder of relative association again indicates the degree to which they desire and crave deep connection with each other, in part a result of their dislocation from those same structures back home. The relative numerical scale is something like a family tree superimposed on the two-year school cycle – a codification of who meant what to whom. It also underscores the separation these students feel from their family, and how much of their need for emotional connectivity is being supplied by their exact peers and students only one year older than them.

DAY 2 – A Monday in October – The Classroom and the IB

BREAK

It is 9:23 am, and the castle lobby outside the Caf is filled with wordless students. Backpacks hang on jacketed shoulders. It is almost time for “break,” the 20-minute free period between the first and second code. Most of the students wait for break to eat breakfast. They are hungry, in a hurry, and wish the doors to the Caf would open. They mostly don’t talk, or if they do it is only in small bits of conversation. They are all looking at the door. A few of them sigh. Teenagers are quiet in the morning regardless of national background or ethnicity, it appears.

Whatever laziness had settled on the students during Sunday brunch a short 24 hours earlier is now gone. All the weeks at the UWC USA are big weeks. Class, CAS, and a slowly-dwindling number of sleeping hours per night turn each week into a balancing act. There is a grim saying at the UWC USA: “Study, Service, Socialize, Sleep. Choose three.” Students often choose the first three.

One of the Caf workers, Nancy, opens the door, and the students stream in after dropping their bags in the lobby. A few of them murmur “good morning” at Nancy. It’s Monday break. They have 20 minutes to eat and be downstairs for class. Break occupies the same rough spot on the timetable as the legendary “morning break” that Kurt Hahn was so adamant about back in the Salem of the 1920s. There is no long-jumping or javelin happening here, however, just a fast breakfast.

Actual breakfast is served from 7:00 to 8:00 am, before the first code at 8:00. It is sparsely attended unless it is exam time. Of the 215 students at the UWC USA, probably 30 or 40

eat at “regular breakfast.” The rest either surge through the Caf at 9:20, or they skip breakfast altogether. Matthew Miller, the wonderful and calm Director of Food Service, joked to me more than once that he and his staff feed the entire community in fifteen minutes at break each weekday.

Many students grab a banana and drink a cup of coffee and then head down the stairs. Those lucky enough to have a class in the castle, most likely economics or history, will attempt a bowl of oatmeal or some eggs. Some teachers, so annoyed at the habitual tardiness of students in post-break codes, have taken to locking their doors and disallowing entry after class starts at 9:45 am. The students who have to travel downstairs therefore eat jackets-on, all watching the Caf clock.

I fall in behind a pod of my own English students heading out the castle doors and downhill. It is a bright October morning and the air smells cleanly of pine. Everyone squints as the sunlight hits them. The air is sweet and cold from the morning and the sun is only beginning to warm the hillside.

It is only Monday so the students are lively: they have caught up on sleep over the weekend. Even though the group I have left the castle with are not late, they still walk quickly, their happy chatter keeping pace with their feet. They do not notice me and are talking excitedly about what happened over the weekend. The Blackout Party is coming too, a dance that takes place on the stage of the auditorium with the curtains closed and the lights off.

There is a zig-zagging handicapped-accessible path that runs down the main hill between “downstairs” and the castle. It is a lovely trail, paved with red brick and running through high brush and pine. Because it is beautiful the students choose to take it as a first leg

down the hillside, backpacks jumping slightly with each of their quick steps. Students coming up the hillside toward the castle choose the same path. They see me, and many of them greet me. “Good morning, Josh. Good morning sir.” The students whom I’ve been following turn around in surprise and grin as if to say “what are *you* doing here?” They know that if I am behind them they cannot be late.

The students have been in classes for about six weeks now. A rhythm has settled in, and each human being on campus has identified their long days and their short days. Friendships have begun to stabilize, at least for this semester, and bit-by-bit, romances have begun to bloom. Southwest Studies Week has just concluded, where all the firsties embark on long trips together, led by faculty. Kris and I took a group of 12 to Taos, New Mexico, intending to hike and mountain bike. It snowed over a foot the first night we were there. We spent a week cooking with the students, exploring Taos, and sledding where we had intended to mountain-bike. After the first intense blast of UWC USA life, the firsties unclenched during Southwest Studies, returning to campus with less of an edge. In the weeks following Southwest Studies, there is a sense among the firsties that everything is going to be ok.

At just about the same time, the second-years are starting to get very worried. They have all begun meeting with Tim Smith, the administrator who handles both the admissions to the UWC USA and the college admissions process of UWC USA students. He is a caring, earnest man with a self-deprecating sense of humor and a tendency to wear a slightly-rumpled suit jacket (no doubt due to his aggressive travel schedule). Whether they know it or not, Tim worries about the second-years constantly, often on the phone in the middle of the night with parents on the other side of the world. He holds one-on-one meetings with second-years and

helps them build their college list. It is after conversations with Tim that second-years emerge and grimly begin planning the third semester. It is also after conversations with Tim that the second-years begin talking nervously with each other, initiating a flywheel of stress and comparison that only finally dissipates sometime during Spring semester.

Just as the firsties get back from Southwest Studies, the second-years begin to feel the atmospheric collapse of SAT test dates, early-decision application deadlines, IB extended essay deadlines, and perhaps most importantly, the significant increase in workload in the second half of the IB curriculum, all of this taking place as they assume the stewardship for so much of student culture and CAS leadership. Jaws become set and circles develop under second-year eyes.

Outside the bedlam, the season is changing. Just about when the climbing the campus stairs no longer leaves the firsties light-headed and gaping, and just about when the huge aspen stands on the mountainsides above Santa Fe begin to soften into light green and then brilliant yellow, and just about when the locals in Las Vegas begin to pick out a face or two amongst the new 100 students, that's when the signature smell of fall in New Mexico begins to come in through the windows of the buses and vans as the UWC USA students are driven to their co-curricular obligations in the towns of Las Vegas and Santa Fe. It is the smell of the open-air roasting of green chilies.

In the unused corners of parking lots, in the center of Santa Fe's Saturday Farmer's Market, and sometimes just in roadside turnouts, New Mexicans use gas flames and large hand-turned cages to roast bushel after bushel of green chilies. The unmistakable smell rises in the clear air of New Mexico in the fall, one-part deep green earthy brightness, one-part spice, and

one-part char. It means enough time has passed since the first tough weeks of school; those days now feel long gone.

The second-years know that it also means that soon a colder note will appear in the evening desert air. That wilderness expeditions going out from this point forward will require warm bags and extra layers. That sometime soon, one never knows when in the high mountains, many of the firsties will see snow for the first time in their lives.

MONDAY CLASS

It is 9:48 am, and I am standing at the back of my English class. My classes take place in the computer lab, in a building that was formerly the cafeteria before the castle was remodeled. The room still resembles a cafeteria, low slung and a little sterile. Class was supposed to start three minutes ago. Of my eighteen students, four are missing. Since this version of my class meets directly after the fifteen-minute mid-morning snack session called “break,” I have little doubt that at least three of the four will be with us momentarily. Though we don’t have a seating chart, the students have settled into taking the exact same seats around the horseshoe desk arrangement each class period, and I can do roll call simply by glancing for an empty chair. As usual, the English boy with the three names is missing, as is the girl from Hong Kong and the thin, thoughtful boy from New York. Always present and in the same seat on my left is the girl from Ghana, who greets me the same way each morning. She is there early every time, even on the rare occasions when I arrive fifteen or twenty minutes early.

“Good morning,” I say to her with an air of cartoonish formality.

“Good morning, Josh,” she says back, with a slight down-lilt, as if we are all headed somewhere bad. She smiles through our little daily tradition.

Sometimes the girl from England who is also half Persian will look up at me with tired eyes and ask, “What are we doing today, Josh?” or “I really didn’t understand today’s reading at all” in a put-upon tone, as if I had assigned the text specifically to bother her. I grin back at her and say nothing. She is very bright, and yet the adjustment to an “American style of teaching,” as she puts it, has been difficult for her.

The thin American boy arrives with a contraband small plate from the Caf with a biscuit on it. He sits in his seat. I say good morning to him and he returns the greeting. He looks tired, too. He does not apologize for his tardiness, nor will he ever in the two years I teach him. He opens his book; his biscuit remains untouched in front of him.

We are reading *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’ Brien. I say, “Five minutes, everybody,” and point at the whiteboard in front of them where I have written a question in giant letters: “According to O’Brien, what is a true war story?” The Persian-English girl looks at the board and sighs. She takes out her notebook with resignation. More abstractions. More ‘American-style’ teaching. She already knows that I think there is no *one* right answer to the question on the board.

The girl from Hong Kong shuffles in quickly, holding two classes’ worth of books under her arm and wearing, to my great delight, fluffy bedroom slippers. She is disheveled and has no book bag. “Sorry!” she says in a whine. I smile at her and shake my head to say ‘no big deal.’ She sighs heavily as she sits down. She is often in a state of agitation. She is also capable of startling realizations during discussion when many of the other students are stumped. She has no pen, no paper, and is forced to borrow both from one of the girls from Trinidad, the one who is also always sleepy.

The students of B-Code get out their notebooks and begin. I walk around the outside of the horseshoe of desks, watching them write. We've been doing free writes for many weeks now, and though most of them hated it at first, they have doggedly participated. I've noticed with no small satisfaction that the writes are getting longer and seem to come out more easily now. The only rule is that one must keep writing. Every so often a student will balk. I gently insist they keep going. Counter-intuitively, on the rare occasions that I ask for a 10-minute free write, the content seems to be even better.

Halfway through the free write, the boy from England shows up, panting. "Sorry," he says. "Slept in." He sits down, lets out a sigh of relief and then suddenly rolls his head back in disgust. I raise my chin, asking 'what?' since everyone is quietly writing. "Forgot the book," he says, knowing what is next. "Go get it," I say with a small smile. He sighs. He looks tired. He walks out of the classroom, and then opens the door into the bright New Mexican morning sun, breaking into a jog. By the time he gets back, we will have started the discussion. But he will be very awake.

When he gets back the class is embroiled in a discussion about truth from O'Brien's perspective. The American students, including the thin boy who was late, are battling about the passage of O'Brien's where he tells the reader that a true war story should not have a moral. If there is a message to the story, then it isn't a true war story. The discussion is fast and energetic, even though about half the class looked exhausted before we began. An American girl from Massachusetts is explaining how morality has no place in war, and if someone infused a story with a moral it would ring false to O'Brien.

“O’Brien?” I ask. “Or O’Brien’s narrator?” The girl purses her lips, annoyed. “Narrator, of course.” She is the daughter of a literature professor and is one of the most well-prepared high school students I’ve taught. When I ask the question about narrators, the sleepy girl from Trinidad raises her hand. “What’s the difference between author and narrator again?” she asks, unafraid of admitting that she can’t remember. The Persian-English girl answers, spot on. She has zeroed in on vocabulary definitions because they constitute the closest thing to right and wrong answers in this ‘American style’ class.

It is a pleasure to teach these students in this context. They are socially-attuned and, though some of them dislike the fray of a discussion class at this point in the year, they seem to flourish in an arena where the social and the academic mix. For the most part they routinely do the reading and attempt to engage the text and their classmates in the following class. That said, if a series of assignments stacks up in other classes, they will slough their English reading in favor of other homework. It’s easier to tread water in a discussion class. I can often tell who has done the reading by the quality of the free writes. If it gets bad enough, I toss in the occasional simple reading quiz.

As a teacher, I must be careful. If I use American popular culture or American slang to make a point, I will often lose the non-American students. This then further disadvantages them beyond whatever fluency issues with which they may already be struggling. I have learned to read facial expressions when everyone is tired. The feisty Persian-English student is a marvelous truth-teller. If I sense I have confused the class with a reference, I have only to ask her to get an annoyed confirmation. This delights me. I appreciate that she is direct and unafraid of showing displeasure with how the class is going.

That said, she is a western girl, raised for her whole life in England. I must be even more careful with non-Americans from other educational contexts. The girl from Hong Kong is just as accustomed to an education culture where right and wrong are constants, but far less likely to speak truth to power in a setting as rife with implied and explicit authority as a classroom. It is a fascinating place to administer a discussion class.

At the beginning my habits frequently alienated non-Americans. Far too much slang, far too many US-based jokes, and far too many graduate-school-sized words spoken far too quickly. I learned that direct questions to individual students mandated different wait times, often dictated by the educational culture in the students' home country. If I ask the thin American boy a synthesis question about O'Brien's intent as an author, he will likely begin to answer quickly, happy to think about it as he speaks even if he isn't exactly sure where he is going. Ask the same question of the other girl from Trinidad, and she will go quiet as she considers the answer. It comes out fully-baked and cogent. Forget these important calibrations and one risks silencing Non-American perspectives.

Occasionally the discussions become heated in the best way. The girl from Ghana has a strong personality, and responds to the text and her classmates in powerful, declarative sentences. Her tone often elicits grins along with increased heat from her sparring partners. Volumes rise and sleepy eyes open wide as the shouting and laughing begins.

Classes and schoolwork dominate the daylight hours of four of the five weekdays at the UWC USA. In a remarkable vestige of the patterns that appear in the schedules of Salem and Gordonstoun, Wednesdays after lunch are reserved for CAS. Aside from that day, however, classes run from 8:00 am to 3:10 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Classes at the UWC USA are hard to describe for anyone that has not experienced hyper-diversity. In that B-Code, for instance, I had 18 students. Given that the class in question was English A: Language and Literature, our class was one of the least diverse on campus due success being in part dependent on English fluency. That said, the various points of origin of my students included Ghana, Trinidad, England, Hong Kong, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Barbados, and, among the Americans, New York, Colorado, Massachusetts, Florida and New Mexico. Later in my time at the UWC USA, I taught a “standard level” English course to firsties. Out of 19 students, only one was American. A large portion of our first semester consisted of the analysis of arguments surrounding the use of drone warfare by the American government. During the duration of our writing sequence, at least two nations represented among my students had American military drones aloft in their airspace: Afghanistan and Iraq.

This ethnography, especially in chapter 4, highlights the transformative power of the UWC USA’s co-curricular program. A similar, if less noticeable force is exerted in the classroom as the students encounter new ideas but especially each other in discussions and mutual projects. Properly harnessed by a teacher, the diversity in a classroom can become its own curricular feature. This is more difficult than it sounds, as one risks both tokenism and essentialism if they find themselves in the position of asking a student to “speak for their culture.” However, particularly the humanities-based classes such as the languages, social anthropology, and history offer teachers and students a powerful arena within which to showcase a startling diversity of perspectives.⁵⁹⁴ One of the most powerful teaching experiences

⁵⁹⁴ This is, of course, not limited to these disciplines. Such encounters can happen in any classroom. Davo once reported to me that he was having a little difficulty in Dan Willms’ math class because Australian math classes were different, a cultural distinction I found fascinating. Music, theater, geography, and economics are all also obvious places for such cultural encounter and growth.

of my teaching career at any level was the frustrating, explosive unit on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, with members of my two English classes representing most regions that the slave trade affected, the entirety of what Paul Gilroy calls "the black Atlantic."⁵⁹⁵ The engine of change at the UWC USA makes its effects known most powerfully and most quickly in the co-curricular program, but such change takes effect in the classroom as well.

THE IB: AN EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT FOR A GLOBALIZING PLANET

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme hovers above the classrooms of the UWC USA like the Roman Empire over Gaul: a distant, controlling presence, a runaway bureaucracy, a better way of doing things. A curriculum with high stakes and no face beyond those of one's colleagues in the UWC USA teaching ranks and the school administration. Students and teachers alike refer to it only as "the IB."

In faculty meetings, references to the IB imply that it is disconcertingly sentient. Phrases such as "what the IB wants is..." or "in order to satisfy the IB you must..." are common. Especially to teachers who have yet to undergo "IB teacher training" (itself an Orwellian phrase) it can feel as if one is contending with an occupying force. The students often feel exactly the same way. Anne, one of the most successful students at the UWC USA during this ethnography, expresses her frustrations in this way:

I feel that the IB becomes the central focus of the UWC USA, and then what that means is that UWC kind of comes later, you know? I mean, you know, you come to school and you aren't so much spoken to about the mission statement as you are about what classes you are going to take. And then it becomes a very big focus on how you are going in your classes. Are you working hard? After orientation, everyone is happy-go-lucky. And then it's like you are working. And there's not a lot of time for anything other than working and CAS. And it's very hard. It's very hard... in order for you to "live UWC" you have push yourself to sleeping four-and-a-half hours a night like I do, or, you know,

⁵⁹⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

crazy things. It's not made easy. I wonder if that's part of the test. How you grow? You know, by working yourself to the bone?

The IB program itself is also a remarkable achievement, and is inextricably linked to the UWC movement. The IB started out as a structural and curricular bridge between the many international schools that flourished after the Second World War and the top universities around the world. Following the Second World War, governmental funding around the world made university attendance both more popular and more competitive. International schools around the globe began to realize that they needed a common certification that would set a level playing field across a diverse array of international schools for entrance to a diverse array of world-class universities.

The alternative to such a certification was to continue with the practice of trying to accommodate all the national graduation exams under one international school roof. For instance, German students studying for German physics exams at the same school in London as French students studying for French physics exams: a colossal waste of resources, time and effort.⁵⁹⁶ At the same time, such an international certification faced serious challenges. Teaching history at an international school was a daunting prospect, as was selecting the language of instruction. Whose history? In which language? Taught by whom?

In 1962, the same year as the founding of the Atlantic College, a small meeting took place in at the Ecolint school in Geneva, Switzerland, where the words "International Baccalaureate" were first used.⁵⁹⁷ These first meetings were funded by a series of small grants

⁵⁹⁶ A.D.C. Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers: The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges*, 2nd ed. (Open Court, 2003), 16-17.

⁵⁹⁷ "Ecolint" is an abbreviation for the International School of Geneva.

from UNESCO.⁵⁹⁸ In 1964, growing out of the already existing International Schools Association (ISA), the International Schools Examination Syndicate (ISES) was founded to address the possible creation of the International Baccalaureate. A little later that year, the Twentieth Century Fund donated \$75,000 to ISES in order to assess the feasibility of such a project.⁵⁹⁹

The particular challenges of administering international education were not specific to the Atlantic College or the Ecolint. The new United Nations International School (UNIS) in New York City had been facing these same issues since 1947, preparing the hundreds of children of foreign diplomats for acceptance into universities around the globe. UNIS, coincidentally, had attracted the support of the Ford Foundation, and expressed interest in the nascent International Baccalaureate were it ever to come to pass.⁶⁰⁰ The partnership was generative. Soon funds and personnel were moving toward the IB project from UNIS and the Ford Foundation, augmented by collaborations from the ISA and staff from the Atlantic College in Wales. A crucial move was the knighting of A.D.C. Peterson as the first Director General of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in 1967. He set up the first office of the IBO in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Oxford.⁶⁰¹ The aims of the fledgling program were clear.

We were seeking to design a genuinely international curriculum to meet all the various needs of those sixteen-to-eighteen-year-olds in international schools who were seeking entry to different forms of education all over the world. We believed those needs and interests included the moral, aesthetic, and practical education of the whole person and

⁵⁹⁸ Marc Abrioux and Jill Rutherford, *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 7.

⁵⁹⁹ Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*, 20.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁰¹ Abrioux and Rutherford, *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme*, 8.

thus extended far beyond the purely intellectual and academic preparation normally sanctioned by university entrance examinations.⁶⁰² Peterson was an ally and admirer of Kurt Hahn's. It is therefore no surprise that many traits of the IB's co-curricular program, indeed the entire center of 'the IB Hexagon,' which I address below, are direct adaptations of Hahnian practices at Salem and Gordonstoun. Quotations from Hahn lead off most of the chapters in the handbook *Introducing the IB Programme*, especially those concerned with the co-curricular program.

This new entity in international education would not be only an academic standard, but hopefully a threshold for acceptance into universities around the world that folded in progressive elements such as (education of the whole student, presence of arts, physical education, and project work) advocated by Kurt Hahn himself. Furthermore, the IB would hopefully include Hahnian innovations directly, as can be seen today in the architecture of the co-curricular program, the extended essay requirements, and the emphasis upon service, all of which we shall examine below.

Peterson was clear about what elements this highly idealistic, infant program required to survive, and it wasn't a small list: "A unified international curriculum and examination system, university recognition of the examination as an entrance qualification, schools to teach it, parents willing to commit their children to this untried system, and a secure source of funding so it would not collapse in mid-programme."⁶⁰³

To accomplish this, Peterson and his small paid staff along with a small army of volunteer international school teachers, administrators, and governmental officials, began the

⁶⁰² Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*, 34.

⁶⁰³ Abrioux and Rutherford, *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme*, 8.

exhausting process of weaving together these diverse strands: curriculum creation, examination, university acceptance, participating schools, willing parents and funding, all across an international milieu that was still wrestling with the aftermath of the Second World War and the very real menace of the Cold War. In this context, it is less shocking that the IB emerged from this process imperfect, and more shocking that it emerged at all.

This weaving required certain regressions to the mean. In order for the initial set of participating schools and universities to accept the IB at all, framers of the curriculum and examinations first had to agree on a generally western-centered curriculum. It would be a curriculum informed by comparative assessments of the American College Board Advanced Placement program, the German *Abitur*, the French *Baccalaureat*, and the British A-levels, among others. It would also be the result of fierce debates between advocates of an encyclopaedist approach to education, where students memorize rote facts across a wide breadth of subjects, and a specialist approach, where students dive deeply into select subjects without time for breadth.⁶⁰⁴ IB founders agreed on a 'habit of mind' approach where students would develop the curiosity, critical thinking skills, and rigor for later study by deep work in six subjects over two years.⁶⁰⁵

And what of those target schools and students that were not even remotely western? As Peterson observed, "the answer to this question is a practical one. Students at international schools working at the IB level, even Third World students, if they sought entry to higher education, were overwhelmingly seeking to enter colleges or universities in Europe or North

⁶⁰⁴ Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*, 42–43.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

America.”⁶⁰⁶ As a result, for its first many years of existence, the International Baccalaureate was more “international” for some students than for others.

The second practical accommodation that IB founders had to make was the realization that if the IB was to deliver on its goal of becoming a catalyst of university acceptance to a vast array of universities, the certification examinations would become very important indeed. This counteracted the initial idealistic impulse that the curriculum drives the examinations and not the other way round.⁶⁰⁷ An accidental result of the high stakes of an IB education led to a situation where curriculum planners were increasingly incentivized to concentrate more on “what can be most fairly and accurately examined rather than what is most educationally desirable.”⁶⁰⁸ In order to get off the ground, the IB had to incorporate a high-stakes test.

Regardless of these early compromises and concessions, the IB found purchase in a steadily-globalizing world. In 1970, 29 students gained admission to university using the IB diploma, having studied under the brand-new system at nine different schools around the globe. They were able to take their examinations in French, English, or Spanish. This number grew to 601 graduates a year later. Fifteen years after that, the original 9 schools had ballooned to 300, and the number of graduates to 6000.⁶⁰⁹ Forty-six years later, with an annual growth rate of around 10%, the IB’s total reach is approaching 4400 schools, with yearly graduate numbers in the tens of thousands. Between 2011 and 2016 alone, the IB experienced a surge in

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Abrioux and Rutherford, *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme*, 11.

growth of 46% in its programs.⁶¹⁰ As the world shrunk, the IB exploded. A collaboration in the heady post-war years of the early 1960s between UNESCO, the United Nations International School, the Atlantic College, Oxford University's Department of Educational Studies, and countless governmental and university officials has grown into the gold standard for international education: a kind of educational passport, allowing students from around the world entry to universities around the world.

The IB Diploma Programme at the UWC USA

UWC USA students take the full two-year Diploma Programme, or "DP." In this course of study, a given student must select six courses, one from each "group" from the offerings at the UWC USA. Three of these are to be taken at the higher level (HL) and three taken at the standard level (SL). Higher level courses require roughly 240 hours of instruction as compared to the 150 at the standard level.⁶¹¹ Students agonize over their selection, because their registration will affect both their prospects after graduating from the UWC USA and their experiences at the UWC itself.

⁶¹⁰ "Facts and Figures," *International Baccalaureate*®, accessed February 21, 2016, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/>.

⁶¹¹ Abrioux and Rutherford, *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme*, 80.

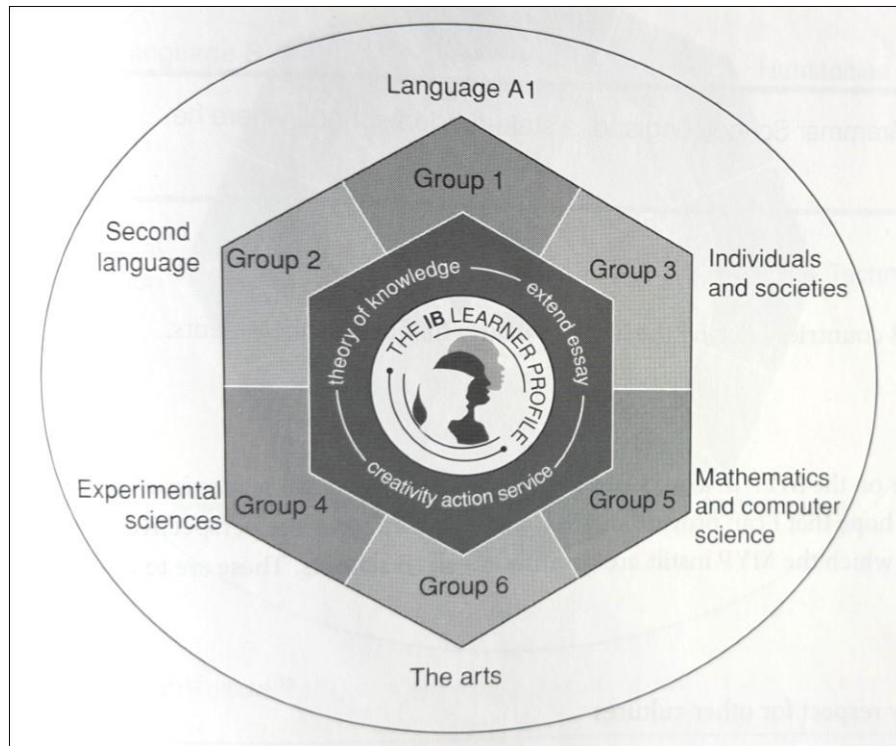


Figure 9: The IB Diploma Hexagon.

“Language A1” in the above hexagon refers to the student’s dominant language. If a student like Grace or Mathias has English as a dominant language, they take an advanced literature course in that language. A student can take English, German, French, Mandarin or Spanish as a Group 1 course at the UWC USA.

Each IB student must also take a second language (language acquisition) from a list of 22 possible options, as represented above by “Group 2.” At the UWC USA these options are also Spanish, French, and German. If a student does not have English as a dominant language, such as Rahmah or Lavinia, they must take their own Group 1 language through a correspondence process called “self-taught.”

Group 3 offerings at the UWC USA include Economics, History, and Social Anthropology. Group 4 offerings include Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Sports Exercise and Health Science, and Environmental Systems and Societies. Group 5 offerings include only Math, but have three levels. Group 6 offerings include Visual Art, Theater, Music, and Dance.

The Core of the Hexagon: CAS, the Extended Essay, and the Theory of Knowledge

A.D.C. Peterson and Kurt Hahn first met each other at a conference organized by NATO in Bruges in 1957. Their friendship developed further through their mutual dedication to the founding of the Atlantic College in the years leading up to 1962. One could say that both men experienced self-effacement in their common cause of founding the first UWC. In the introduction to his account of the founding of the IB, Peterson fondly remembered his three small children playing under the billiard tables in St. Donat's Castle in the year before the first Atlantic College students arrived.

Hahn's emphasis on developing a *grande passion* has received perhaps the most muted adaption, developing into the 4000-word extended essay or "EE." The guidelines for the EE are broad, and the IB literature surrounding this aspect of the course of study display a remarkable open-mindedness and the capacity for significant project-based work. The practical manifestation of the EE on the ground at the UWC USA during my time there, however, were mostly confined to a classic thesis-driven research paper.

Hann's famous insistence on regular reflection has also received an academic translation, giving rise to a remarkable synthesis course called Theory of Knowledge, or TOK. Effectively a discussion-based epistemology class, the stated goal of TOK is to "demonstrate an understanding of different perspectives on knowledge questions, draw links and make effective

comparisons between different approaches to knowledge questions,” and to “demonstrate an ability to give a personal, self-aware response to a knowledge question.” As shorthand, most students and faculty defined TOK as an institutional response to the question, “how do we know what we know?” In an amusing echo of Hahn’s early *Declines of Modern Civilization*, the IB handbook asks rhetorically, “It is a sad indictment of our world that students and their teachers do not have time to reflect on their learning nor make connections between areas of knowledge. We are bombarded by more and more information yet how much of this knowing or remembering?”⁶¹²

Most directly, the entire co-curricular program, Creativity, Action, and Service, or CAS, was designed to reflect Hahn’s emphases on service to a school’s local community, the building of physical skill, in many cases an encounter with adversity and, when possible, the natural world. *Introducing the IB Diploma Programme* insists that the first litmus test for whether something qualifies as CAS is whether it changes the student or not.⁶¹³ I will engage CAS as it is executed at the UWC USA in much more detail below.

FACULTY AND STUDENTS

There is a difference in preoccupation between the discourse happening in the teacher’s lounge, a building near the Old Stone Hotel called Sasakawa, and conversations happening amongst the students in the dining hall, dorm dayrooms, and on the way to the post office.

The teachers often default to discussing the challenges and craftsmanship of teaching, and that means discussing the IB. Though most teachers are also interested in and dedicated to

⁶¹² Ibid., 10. The original ‘decline’ that Hahn worried about was the “Decline of Memory and Imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life.”

⁶¹³ Ibid., 307.

the mission of the UWC USA, they are teachers first. The high workload, intense students, and seemingly unnecessary bureaucratic load of the IB leaving less time for more philosophical concerns.

This contrasts sharply from the average student, who certainly worries about academics and “what the IB wants” but who lives a complete life at the school. This means emotional connection to others, romance, pranks, and to a degree that perhaps escapes many teachers, the non-curricular aspects of the school: the CAS program, the electric social environment of the school, and their own internal mental and emotional horizons occupy a great deal more bandwidth than the IB itself. Notable exceptions to this were exam time or any moment when academics surge to the fore.

As a result, the social culture of the faculty is quite dissimilar from that of the students. This is a common phenomenon at most schools, of course. But at the UWC USA this difference is rendered more starkly for the presence of three additional factors. First, the status of the UWC USA as a boarding school means that the fires of non-curricular aspects of life burn hotter than if the students had a “regular life” and were able to return to a home to at the end of the school day. Because the institutional culture of the UWC USA is so strong, and lived experience of students here so particular to it, there evolves a dislocation factor between faculty and students. In many ways, the two groups do not occupy the same school.

Third, and perhaps most powerfully, the UWC USA is grounded by the powerful moral center of the mission statement, which insists the students wrench their eyes up from their books and engage with the call to action which it trumpets. Uniting people, nations and cultures

means interlocution with others. This means that at some point the chemistry book or Tim O' Brien's *The Things They Carried* must be shut.

As a result of these two cultures occupying the same space, there is a built-in tension between faculty and students at the UWC USA. Teachers frequently grumble about students not doing enough schoolwork (a common hazard of the teaching profession) or, just as common at the UWC USA, about their students being overcommitted and therefore underperforming.

For their part, the students register honest bewilderment at the feeling that many of the faculty are out of touch with the raw power and potential of the UWC USA, and that the faculty cannot understand the depth and breadth of the UWC experience when they are so focused on academics.

This particular social chasm lies parallel to the more simplistic "UWC vs IB" divide that many students report, but it is not the same thing. Missing from the student conception of the faculty in this regard is the reality that teaching at the UWC USA, when mixed in with the myriad other duties of CAS and residential life, can be exhausting. Parris Bushong, the long-time English teacher, has a more specific perspective. He wryly suggested to me on more than one occasion that the UWC USA's faculty *and* students "serve three masters. The IB, the mission-statement, and the matriculation list."⁶¹⁴ In this context, with students that burn as hotly, it can often feel like too much current is running through the electrical system.

⁶¹⁴ Please see Appendix B: "Top 30 Colleges or Universities Which UWC USA Graduates Attended, from Graduating Years 2005-2012, Compiled from Matriculation Lists from UWC USA" for a compilation of the "matriculation lists" that Bushong references here.

Finally, unless they eventually become faculty, most students never experience more than one cycle of arrival and departure, save the transition from firsties to second-years.⁶¹⁵ Faculty, on the other hand, watch the school fill up with an entirely new set of students, all burning just as hotly as the set before them. For any one group of students, the UWC USA experience is traumatic, expansive, beautiful, troubling, and absolutely singular. For any faculty that persist at the UWC USA this singularity lasts exactly one cycle of two graduating classes. And then, unbelievably for a school with so much diversity and such an unpredictable grab-bag of identities each year, phenomena begin to repeat. Too much current in the system, year to year.

Crucially, the UWC USA would not function as it does without the faculty members who absorb this current, often to their detriment, and do their best to channel it toward a strong academic program and a diverse and rewarding CAS program. On Friday afternoon social sessions with other faculty, I regularly sensed an air of relief and exhaustion. The UWC USA experience, as the new student packet warns, is hard. It is only a little less hard for the teachers and staff who work here. And their tenure is often much longer than two years. Though there is tension between students and faculty, the role of the faculty is not missed by everyone. Toward the end of her fourth semester, Dvora reflected on the role of teachers at the UWC USA, especially in regards to the mission statement: “having that pressure of the mission statement and having adults that are willing to devote their life to that mission statement rather than two years, it’s what drives them [the students] to really think about it [the mission statement].”

⁶¹⁵ Only a few of the faculty members at the UWC USA while I was there were former students: Kris Wilson, Gita Eglite, and Naomi Swinton. It bears mention that all three of them were well-known for understanding the student perspective.

CHECK-INS ON A MONDAY IN MID-OCTOBER

Lavinia from Brazil is excited about the coming blackout party. She loves to dance and absolutely adores the idea of a themed party. She has heard that there is a lot of hooking up at this particular party, and she's not very excited about that particular aspect. If it gets too bad, "maybe I just leave" she says dismissively. Her relationship with her roommate, Anne, is flourishing. "She's really not just like a friend, she's just like my *sister* you know, because she's so friendly and, I don't know how to explain because I don't: my sister, you understand what I'm talking about." The advent of classes, on the other hand, has been challenging for Lavinia. She struggles with social isolation she feels class installs in the vibrant world of the UWC, pointing out that for about a month at the beginning of the semester there were no classes, just interpersonal connection. To compensate, she's been staying up quite late to socialize, and has started to occasionally miss morning classes.

Rahma from Syria continues to miss home. She has developed practices that help her stay connected, including listening to Arabic music and eating a specific kind of Syrian candied almonds. She has stopped reading the news, because "it's depressing. It's bad." She feels that as the troubles in Syria gain momentum, her representation of Syria becomes a "huge responsibility." Paradoxically, Rahma therefore finds herself ignoring the mounting political unrest of the uprising at home while simultaneously "being the best person I can be while letting people know more about our culture." She teases her non-American friends as they put their feet on tables in the dorms or face the soles of their feet toward others, both horrible faux pas in Syria. When pressed, Rahma suddenly goes on long, quiet monologues about what it is like being away from Syria while the uprising grows in force. "You can imagine how things are

going to be in a year or in a few months, how everyone is going to turn into savages. It's practically going to be a war zone, or whatever you call it."⁶¹⁶

Mathias from Michigan has settled in, socially, in his third semester. Like many students, he has experienced a large shift in his friends as the second year began. They have begun to solidify into one of the few regular table groups, which has become referred to as "The Table." The table is entirely of second-years. He is looking forward to blackout – a dance only on the stage of the auditorium, with the curtains closed and the lights off. "All those dancing bodies, it's just very confined and exciting." He is also glowing with satisfaction about buddy dance, which everyone agrees was an unqualified success, and which he organized with a few other students. Mathias is loving the surge of agency and promise that the third semester is bringing. With that said, classes are intense. Mathias has been swept up in the same machine that grabs so many other students and, though he receives no pressure from home, now has a list of potential schools that includes three Ivy League institutions.

Xolani from Swaziland, as one of the leaders of the looming AND Cultural Day⁶¹⁷, is pushing his limits. He is concerned with making the audience "get it" while watching the show in a way that is deeper than simply noticing costumes or tasting food. He wants them to see 'African' culture "through our eyes, instead of the eyes of a tourist with their flashy camera." He would like to expose the audience to slums, inequality, folk magic, and systemic sexism. All of

⁶¹⁶ This is the fall of 2011, following the various independence movements of the Arab Spring. In Syria at this time, the widespread and mostly peaceful series of uprisings that had exploded in the streets of Damascus, Homs, Aleppo were being met with increasing violence by the Assad regime. As Rahma and I got to know each other during this fall, protesters had begun to take up arms. The phrase "civil war" was only whispered at this point as a descriptor of a worse-case future scenario. These initial interviews and notes are especially heartbreaking to read in a current context.

⁶¹⁷ African National Day. A strange title, but this is a classic case of the need for a good acronym driving the eventual words used in the acronym.

this is happening while his third semester academics are surging. Xolani is beginning to sense he could land somewhere amazing for university. His story is a good one, and though he wouldn't admit it, he knows he's impressive in an interview. His list of possible schools includes many of the highest-ranked schools on the east coast. But this is all having an effect. He is slow to respond to questions. Day to day it is clear he is not sleeping much.

NOTES ON A MONDAY IN OCTOBER

This ethnography, especially in the following chapter, highlights the transformative power of the UWC USA's co-curricular program. A similar, if less noticeable force is exerted in the classroom as the students encounter not just new ideas, but especially each other in discussions and mutual projects. Properly harnessed by a teacher, the diversity in a classroom can become its own curricular feature. This is more difficult than it sounds, as one risks both tokenism and essentialism if finds themselves in the position of asking a student to "speak for their culture." However, particularly the humanities-based classes such as the languages, social anthropology, and history offer teachers and students a powerful arena within which to showcase a startling diversity of perspectives.⁶¹⁸ One of the most powerful teaching experiences of my teaching career at any level was the frustrating, explosive unit on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, with members of my two English classes representing most regions that the slave trade affected, the entirety of what Paul Gilroy calls "the black Atlantic."⁶¹⁹ The engine of change at

⁶¹⁸ This is, of course, not limited to these disciplines. Such encounters can happen in any classroom. Davo once reported to me that he was having a little difficulty in Dan Willms' math class because Australian math classes were different, a cultural distinction I found fascinating. Music, theater, geography, and economics are all also obvious places for such cultural encounter and growth.

⁶¹⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

the UWC USA makes its effects known most powerfully and most quickly in the co-curricular program, but such change takes effect in the classroom as well.

The stakes of the UWC USA academic program must be part of any discussion of its role in the student experience. Students arrive at the UWC USA with vastly different priorities in regards to the IB. For a student like Anne from Minnesota, devoted to her studies and yet also to the mission statement and its implications, the IB can feel like millstone around her neck, depriving her of sleep and a deeper engagement with the UWC experience. For a student like Xolani from Swaziland, the IB is nothing less than a route out of poverty, both for himself and his family. As we shall see later, he first saw the UWC as a vehicle for access to an IB diploma. The same is true for Ismael, though given his raw talent, such an opportunity may have been available in Tanzania. For both these boys, positionality plays a central role in their orientation toward the IB.

The same is true for Elena from Denmark, but in the opposite direction. She was given explicit permission by her mother to enjoy herself and the UWC USA experience, as long as she just maintained a respectable level of performance. The rest of my informants fit somewhere in between these two extremes: students who feel the weight of family members still in poverty and students who, given their socioeconomic status and national background (Danish higher education is free), initially feel no pressure.

That is, initially. Only a few months into the first semester the firsties have begun noticing the stress and anxiety to which their second-years are subjected. Furthermore, the same firsties are party to second-years' discussions of university applications, a discourse that

has been amplified by the Davis UWC Scholar program. Ivy Leagues are on the table. Why not try and get into one? Imagine what that could do for one's career!

The result of this flywheel of possible university acceptance, pressure from home (sometimes), and the base-level energy and hustle that most UWC USA students bring to campus leads to a campus-wide culture of focusing upon academics, obsessing about grades, and hand-wringing about one's academic future. It is the cultural manifestation of what Phil Geier called "making the UWC USA more placement-oriented," and the magnetic pull of it subsumes most students, even the ones who did not come here with excellence in academics as a primary goal. This dynamic can be confusing to students. "I mean, I was very surprised," Anne reflects, "I mean, it's kind of like one of those contagions that takes root."

DAY 3 – A Tuesday in December – Assembly and the Rise of Pan-Regionalism

FIRST SNOW

It snowed last night. I could hear the shrieks of joy and surprise from my faculty apartment behind the castle. Many students, perhaps 30-40% of the school, had never seen snow before they came to New Mexico. That means that for something like 30 UWC USA students, last night was the first time. For these students, snow was something that happens to other people in the movies.

Last night's snow was a good one: thick flakes that stuck. Hearing the shouting and laughter, I walked down to the castle and stopped at the balcony under the turret. It is a wooden affair, following the graceful contour of the turret itself, with a waist-high railing. It overlooks the entirety of lower campus, save for the sections obstructed by nearby pines and brush. The snow drifted straight down through the lights that illuminated the castle turret and the 13 flagpoles out front in the traffic circle, the slowly falling snow dramatic against the still colors of the flags. The shouting continued, with distant exclamations of "oh my *god!*" and "no way!" mixing with the laughing and slamming of heavy metal day room doors.

I did not go down to lower campus, but behind me the double doors to the lobby of the castle opened and shut in rapid succession. Students who lived in the castle streamed by me and down the stairs, laughing and looking up into the snow in the spotlights. They were going to go find their friends in the lower four dorms.

One of the steadiest features of student culture at the UWC USA, regardless of the point of year, is the deep enjoyment the students get out of experiencing a novelty or common event together. Be it weekly assembly or a yearly novelty like First Snow, the students instinctively

draw together at these moments, perhaps grateful for yet another common experience that can assist with the process of bridging cultural difference.

I stayed put on the castle balcony because I had heard about a UWC USA tradition on the night of the first snow. A female dorm, after building up their courage by daring each other in the day room, explodes out of the building in an international streaking session, running sans clothes into the snowy soccer field below the buildings of campus. A male dorm, knowing this will happen, prepares snowballs and waits. As the story goes it escalates quickly into a massive snowball fight, with other dorms joining in. I stood on the balcony listening to the happy shouting, the entirety of the lower campus hidden behind a sheet of thickly falling snow, and then walked back up to my house listening for the combined cheering and yelling of the first dorm running naked into the storm. I never heard it.

And this morning campus is transformed. A solid four inches has stuck, completely altering the entire color palette of campus. It is white on white everywhere with the usual cosmic blue set off even more starkly against the snow. As I walk to the Caf, the maintenance crew is digging out the handicapped-accessible walk ways. Everyone will be moving slower this morning.

In the Caf the atmosphere is quiet but electric. Even though the actual temperature has not moved much since last night, most students look prepared for the end of the world. Many students from warmer climates are wearing most of their “warm clothes” all at the same time, creating the impression of little colorful Arctic explorers headed out into snowbanks, scarves upon scarves wrapped around their necks and heads. Because this is the UWC USA, footwear is random: just as often light tennis shoes as snow boots.

It is early December. In just under two weeks, the semester exams will conclude. The students who can afford to will return home and do their best to explain all of this to their “regular” friends. The students who cannot afford to travel will most likely tag along with an American for the entire break. Some American’s houses are filled with five or six of these holiday travelers, converting a house in Los Angeles, Ithaca, or Austin into a mini-UWC for three weeks.

Before that happens there are semester exams. These are a culmination of the semester of high-stakes academic thresholds for the second-years. They cannot wait for them to be over, and many of the second-years have a haunted, singed look to them, resenting the degree to which “the IB” is detracting from “UWC.” Increasingly, these two entities are seen to be in direct conflict with each other.

Nearly half of the student body has begun to meet already about the MAAD Cultural Day show. Given the cartoonish reach of the MAAD region (Middle-East, Asia, and Australia), it encompasses about half of the world’s population and almost half of the students at the UWC USA. The show itself will be co-led by Dvora and Agni, who have been friendly in the past but are not yet friends. MAAD will take place four weeks after the students return from break. Everyone will still be mostly fresh. The good news is that there is no reason for MAAD to be anything but amazing. Dvora and Agni have already started joking about how AND’s quality show raises the bar from them. Meetings have begun.

For now, though, the students carefully watch the clock in the Caf. It will take longer to get “downstairs” today. And they have many scarves to put on before the walk.

TUESDAY ASSEMBLY

It is 11:10 and the large beige auditorium is only one-quarter full. Assembly will start in ten minutes and it is mandatory for all of the faculty and students. The seats are arranged in their customary large horseshoe facing the stage, with chairs six or seven deep in the middle of the shape and four or five deep on the arms. The stage is dark and the curtains drawn. Assembly does not make use of the stage.

There is a little commotion in the tech booth far above the seats on the wall opposite the stage. A boy from Jordan is hollering at someone. There is laughing. This particular boy from Jordan often pretends to be angry when he is not. Students run the technological aspects of each assembly.

Linda Curtis, Dean of Students, walks calmly into the auditorium. Her husband, Tom, is a Spanish teacher and the Resident Tutor of the Denali dorm. Linda is a strong presence with kind eyes and a shock of grey hair waving out and back from her temple. She smiles easily. A few of the students in the auditorium see her and immediately move toward her. This one shares a story from CAS last week, to which Linda smiles and delivers a small side-hug. This one sheepishly approaches Linda with an unfilled-out form. Her kind eyes go just a little harder for a moment. The student withers. The form is clearly late. Linda reaches out a hand and grasps the student's shoulder. He nods to what Linda is saying quietly, not making eye contact. He slinks back to his seat. As his back turns, Linda's eyes soften and she smiles at his retreating back. Now that form will get turned in. She turns to the rest of the quickly filling room. Who else does she need to see?

The students are quite fond of Linda. She has the powerful combination of traits of both a strong mother and a skilled administrator. Perhaps unfairly to her, Linda ends up being a surrogate mom to many students, especially those in some kind of trouble. She is also in charge of the assembly, and carries with her the all-important sheet of paper indicating who will speak when and about what.

The snowfall has melted into the hungry ground and sublimed away into the dry air, leaving a light mud. The students arrive in chatty groups, banging their boots and shoes on the series of footpads outside the doors to the auditorium. The day outside is in full swing, the New Mexican sun blazing down on the brown grass and mud of the soccer fields, reflecting off the odd patches of snow gathered in pockets. The students blink as they enter the auditorium. The light in here is always bright and diffuse from halogen lights thirty feet up. It smells of carpet and bodies fresh from the outdoors. Cheeks are rosy.

The firsties tend to sit in the main body of the horseshoe, and the second years on the arm of the horseshoe farthest from the door, to the right as one looks at the stage. The faculty sits in the arm facing the second-years. As the time for assembly draws closer, faculty slip quickly into the large room and stand in the back, under the box of the tech booth. Today has already been a particularly busy week. Exams will be administered soon. At least half the faculty is standing under the ledge of the tech booth looking impatient. The noise in the room has risen in the last five minutes, as has the temperature. The students from cold climates have begun to shed jackets. Students from warm climates remain well-bundled. They will never take off their coats.

“Alright everyone,” Linda announces in a clear voice, “we are going to start in 30 seconds. Everyone find a seat.” The students move quickly to sit down, and stragglers speed up their slow walk. As usual, students are packed into the seats in the same puppy-like tangle one sees any time the students gather as a group. On the second-year side of the horseshoe the talking and laughing is louder.

To the right of Linda is the lineup of faculty who will speak during assembly. Tom Oden stands patiently back behind Linda, and Lisa Darling leans near the outside door closest to the stage. The rest of the faculty sit at the very end of the horseshoe. Usually Tom, Lisa, or Linda begins the assembly, but all three appear to be waiting for something. The room suddenly goes dark.

The back doors to the auditorium open and a student in all white walks through, holding a candle. Behind her is another student, also in white, also holding a candle. The room goes silent, quickly realizing that each of their Scandinavian classmates is in the group in white, holding candles and walking slowly toward the stage. They have begun singing. The candlelight lights only the bottom level of the dark room and suddenly the vaulted ceilings of the auditorium are erased. The room is much more intimate. As the Scandinavians walk down the aisles filled with faculty and students, faces are illuminated by the passing candles. The slow song lifts up from the walking students. They arrange themselves in the front of the horseshoe. A single-voiced muffled cheer of support rises up from the crowd and then falls silent. A second-year girl with long blonde hair explains that we are nearing the festival of St. Lucia, and also the longest, darkest night of the year. Nordics celebrate this great darkness with a festival of lights. After a little further explanation, the students file out and the lights come back on.

Lisa Darling steps to the front of the horseshoe. She is socially graceful and a strategic thinker, a composed woman with clear blue eyes and a warm smile. She laughs easily. And yet it is known that the smile can vanish suddenly when authority is called for. The students fall quiet again. Lisa feels strongly that the future of the UWC movement will depend on much-increased communication and collaboration between the member schools that compose the global UWC movement. The students like it when Lisa returns to campus because she brings news from the other UWCs. Many of them have friends and country-mates in those schools.

Lisa first comments on the snow storm and the melting snow, and asks that everyone be careful as they move around campus. She then reports that another UWC is in the throes of a controversy about discrimination of students' sexual orientation. She assures the students that the International Board is involved, and that it is a complicated situation involving colliding cultural norms from around the world. Lisa remarks that although she knows she can never ask for "complete silence" on an issue like this, she does ask the students to keep the issue from gaining too much momentum on social media, and to trust the administrators at the other UWC to make positive progress in a difficult situation.

Lisa then reminds everyone that many guests will be on campus this weekend and that "we should all be gracious hosts and try to get out of bed well before 2 pm." Wry laughter fills the room. She concludes with a nod to the closing semester, gently reminding the students that "it has been an amazing journey this semester" and "their loved ones back home haven't been present for any of it," so to be patient with them and with themselves. She reminds everyone that there will always be an administrator on duty this weekend if anyone gets in a tough spot.

Tom Oden is next, and the students begin to smile as he steps up to the middle of the horseshoe. Almost immediately the side chatter rises slightly, as Tom is both the day-to-day principal and also often a student advocate. He is a medium-sized man, in excellent shape, and has a habit of standing to the side of someone as he listens to them. Tom's hair is alternately cropped short or sometimes let go bushy. On this day in December, it is a little bushy and swept back, lending him the faint appearance of an owl. He loves the students and begins each one of his assembly introductions with "Welcome to assembly at the United World College, USA: America's Coolest School." The students laugh, as usual. Tom announces that he received three letters from MIT from former students and as he reads them, the room falls silent instantly after a few appreciative exclamations of "ooh!" The second-years look at each other knowingly as Tom mentions "EJ, Michael, and Vu." The firsties look happy but temporarily left out.

Tom then announces the Inspire fashion show that will take place this weekend, as well as the semester-ending Castle concert on Saturday evening. He goes on to reveal the visiting activist-speaker lineup for the Annual Constructive Engagement of Conflict (CEC) Conference that will take place in late January. It is a good list: the writer Courtney Martin, author of *Do It Anyway: The Next Generation of Activists* is bringing many of the featured activists in her book to campus, including the actress Rosario Dawson. Famous speakers and activists frequently come to the UWC USA, but this one is a well-known actress.⁶²⁰ Cheering and wide, excited eyes follow Tom's exit from the center of the horseshoe.⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ Other well-known visitors during my time at the UWC USA included environmentalist Bill McKibben (via Skype), and musician Phillip Glass. The list of celebrities goes on, however. The campus has been visited by Malcolm Forbes, Ann Landers, Judy Collins, New Mexico Governors Bill Richardson and Gary Johnson, Queen Noor of Jordan, and of course Prince Charles, among others.

⁶²¹ The Bartos Institute for the Constructive Engagement of Conflict is an institution within an institution at the UWC USA. It has a budget that supports a Director, Naomi Swinton, as well as a series of retreats

Linda steps up to talk about leaving for the semester, and things go quiet once more as thoughts of home (or not being able to go home) fill the minds of the students. Linda explains in the clear tone of someone used to explaining important details to energetic and forgetful teenagers that all the buses will be departing from in front of the Chum dorm on Friday of next week, except for the 2 am bus, which will leave from in front of the castle. The students stay silent as Linda walks back to her seat. Fall semester is ending, and soon. Home, families, and the looming certainty of Spring (and with it either second semester or, most intensely for everyone, fourth semester) is all right around the corner. For the second-years, this means hearing back from colleges and universities. This means the end of the UWC USA.

Sharon, the Dean of Co-Curricular Activities, reminds all the students to finalize their CAS paperwork. Immediately the student chatter rises to an irreverent level. The students are talking about winter break with each other and Sharon is getting ignored. She attempts to forge ahead but the noise grows. She puts her hands on her hips and waits. The students continue. Other faculty begin shushing the crowd and the noise lessens but does not go silent. Sharon reminds the students that they have had a marvelous semester of CAS and that they need to finish their forms for it all to count. She is smiling at their excitement but also looks annoyed.

The students are next, starting with Student Council (mostly referred to as STUCO), which stands up and gives their report. The students fall quiet immediately, leaning forward in their seats. STUCO reports that they have been working with the faculty and especially Tom Oden to clarify the attendance policy, E-voting for STUCO members, increased communication with between administration and students, and have developed the Student Council Facebook

and this one large conference. The Bartos Institute's contributions make it possible for the above-mentioned big names to come to campus. It is a major asset to the school.

page.⁶²² They are also working on improved access to the school's bikes in order to go to town, increased campus sustainability, and more "grill days," where the STUCO barbecue grill is in operation. There is loud applause for the last item and in general for STUCO.

Many students follow STUCO, with announcements for a firsties vs second-year basketball game, holiday caroling, a student exchange program between UWCs, and finally an Amnesty International letter campaign at dinner for the next three nights.

Linda stands up at the end and wishes a great week to everyone. Those students hungry for hamburgers (always Tuesday's lunch) begin walking fast or running up the stairs. Many others mill about, connecting with faculty and each other, happy to simply chat in the loose minutes before lunch is served. There aren't many moments in the week where the entire community has nothing to do for a handful of moments.

LUNCH

A few years back a resolution was passed to convert the Monday meal service into "Meatless Monday," a move that delighted many students but dismayed many also.⁶²³ Perhaps as a compromise, the traditional Tuesday lunch meal is hamburgers. Many students, especially the boys and especially if assembly has gone on longer than expected, will sprint up the 131 steps to the castle, desperate for a release from the auditorium, but also from the puritanical grasp of Meatless Monday.

⁶²² This entity quickly becomes a digital commons and operational crossroads for the students. The occasional faculty, myself included, is allowed access by the students. It becomes a forum for student support, information sharing, social event planning, and mobilization versus the administration.

⁶²³ A running campus joke is that the African boys were the most annoyed by this development, as they love to eat meat. I address this particular form of humor, an everyday occurrence at the UWC USA, in Chapter 4.

The Caf is packed on Tuesdays, as everyone walks up the hill together. By the time I get up to lunch, the line for burgers has already extended from the kitchen out into the dining room. Teenage laughter and the scraping of wooden chairs on wooden floors lift up above the noise here and there, but in general, high ceilings and the cavernous nature of the ballroom create a white noise din that makes it impossible to hear anyone who is not at your table. Besides dinnertime, the lunch after assembly on Tuesdays is one of the few times the entire school, faculty and students alike, are in the same place in an informal setting.

For this reason, there is often a student initiative organizing near the double doors, trying to snag students before they get in line for food. Today there are two separate groups: the MAAD Cultural Day organizers are collecting money for Cultural Day t-shirts, making sure to get sizes. On the other side of the aisle there are four students with their heads down, writing madly. It is a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the Amnesty International club. On my way to the line I do not notice what this particular campaign is about. There are many.

In the far right corner as I walk in, bordered on two sides by the walls and windows of the ballroom, and opposite the doors to the kitchen and the buffet of food, there is a group of students that always sit together. They do this so often that they are referred to, by themselves and others, as "The Table." They are almost all second-years, and they are laughing hard about something.

Table Groups

At lunch but especially at dinner, there are a series of groups that form at the tables, and often at the same physical table. “The Table” is one of these. Another staple is the African Boys Table.⁶²⁴ Just one table further toward the door is another reliable group, the Asian Table.

These table groups are noticeable if only for their consistency, and, especially in the cases of the African Boys Table and the Asian Table, because they feature a broad cultural similarity (all males from Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance).

“The Table” is a standard high school clique: a series of intense friendships with the organizing structure of a common eating “club” at its center. Other students view “The Table” in a related light as a result, with responses that range from a vague enviousness at their closeness to a profound annoyance that such a clique has sprung into being at a place so dedicated to the breaking down of boundaries.

Interestingly, this same broad range of responses is not elicited by the Asian Table or the African Boys Table, perhaps because their de-facto organization is not read as exclusive, and neither loose group seems like it has a specific list of members.⁶²⁵ Other students are as curious about the phenomena of the self-selecting tables as visiting ethnographers. Rahma reports that she asked Xolani about it.

We talked about it before and he will say ‘they get my jokes and I get their jokes but sometimes I just want to hang out with my homies.’ Stuff like that; so I understand because I have the same feelings, sometimes you just want to go and speak (not your

⁶²⁴ It is also called simply the “African Table.” I use capitalization with this and other student groups that the students and faculty refer to as proper nouns.

⁶²⁵ “The Table” advocated for and achieved their own page in the school yearbook in 2011-2012, as well as posing for a series of photos commemorating their group. This group was composed of only second-years, and the phenomenon of an eating group with a distinct membership died out after they graduated. There was no such group as completely organized and with such a strong identity in the 2012-2013 school year.

own language necessarily language since they [the members of the African Table] have different languages) but then you just feel that you have things in common with that group and it just reminds you maybe of home or makes you feel more safe or more comfortable, so it makes sense why they hang out together.

Rahma here is clearly identifying with Xolani, possibly in part because she belongs to a different group with a common identity, the Arabs, which does share a common language. For Rahma, as well as many other UWC USA students, phenomena like the African Table caused little annoyance because they understood the impulse to retreat toward the familiar. Moreover, a crucial aspect of this lack of annoyance is that the members of the African Table were routinely delighted when a non-African would join them, letting loose cheers of welcome and immediately subjecting the newcomer to good-natured teasing.

HOMOGENOUS GROUPS IN A HETEROGENEOUS SCHOOL CULTURE

Informal Homogenous Groups

For a school overtly dedicated to the breaking down of national and cultural barriers, there are a lot of what, at first, seem like homogenous⁶²⁶ groups at the UWC USA. It is common to see members of language groups - German speakers, Spanish speakers - collected in groups and talking together. Some of these, like the Latin Family, develop into their own micro-culture with their own rules, loose membership guidelines, and routine events. Others, like the African table, are less organized but just as much a presence. A quick look through my notes finds

⁶²⁶ I want to be careful here with the word "homogenous." Obviously MAAD, a region group consisting of all of Asia, Australia and the Middle East as well as most of islands and territories nearby, is far from homogenous. It includes students from Sydney, Tokyo, and Jerusalem. That said, as diverse a group as MAAD is, it is *relatively* homogenous as compared to the diversity present in the school at large. The African Table includes mostly boys from any country from Sub-Saharan Africa. This is also not homogenous, strictly speaking. However, looking over in the dining hall and seeing a table full of only black boys (there is one white South African boy who often joins the table) is stark when compared with the room as a whole.

references to the above two groups, but also to an Asian table, the Acon Six, the Skinny White Boys Club, and a Latin table, among others.⁶²⁷

There are interlopers, of course. Given his academic ability, Ismael frequently makes jokes about sitting with at the Asian table, grinning and saying that, because of academics, he has more in common with them, and usually following that with “you know I don’t talk to black people.” The truth is quite the opposite. Ismael is one of the leaders of the figured world of the African region at the UWC USA, especially among Islamic students. In a way that I examine further in Chapter 4, Ismael jokes about his self-exclusion from the African table as a way of poking fun at exclusive groups (and stereotypes) in general. “I’m in the cafeteria and maybe all the Asians are around me [my African friend] comes there, he’s like what brought you here? I say ‘I mean; you know I don’t talk to black people.’ So of course he will laugh.”

The students are not the only ones forming homogenous groups, however. The last two tables to the left before one walks into the kitchen are almost always exclusively filled with faculty. In my first year, the very last table often seemed to fill up with the most senior faculty, and the next table became a mix of younger faculty and sometimes students. What’s more, every single lunch the third table up from that is filled with the men and women of maintenance, and the motor pool, each one of them wearing a blue worker’s shirt with their name badge embroidered on it. Donna. Chris. Security personnel mixed in with them frequently,

⁶²⁷ The Latin table was new in 2011, according to Brenda. I noticed it and brought it up in one of our interviews, and she insisted it didn’t exist. The next week she sheepishly reported that not only had she noticed it suddenly while sitting at it, but that everyone at the table felt as if they had been caught. Brenda insisted that “if anyone sat down who didn’t speak Spanish, we would have stopped speaking Spanish right away.” The White Girls Who Watch Downton Abbey was a skit about firsties put on during Expressions: a show put on by second-years that lampoons the foibles of the firsties. The Acon Six are a group of second-year girls from the Acon dorm, one of which is Anne.

their black uniforms stark against the blue. Adrian. Pablo. White collar and blue collar staff ate separately almost every single lunch. Most of the non-faculty men and women are Chicano/a. A large portion (but certainly not all) of the faculty are white. Ben Gillock or Tom Oden would occasionally go over and sit with security and maintenance, but the vast majority of the time that table was a solid block of blue and black shirts.

It is important here to distinguish between groups of friends, such as “The Table,” and informal homogenous groups, like the Latin Family. The Table, though certainly exclusive and consistent enough to inspire envy and annoyance among other students, is really just a clique. The Latin Family, the African Table, the Asian Table, indeed the faculty table and the blue collar worker table are all something else entirely. Their membership shares an important trait: a similar dislocation factor from other groups and from the UWC USA “mainstream,” if such a mainstream can be said to exist.

Formal Homogenous Groups: The Regions

For UWC USA firsties the regions are a curiosity at first. They represent a pan-regional identity that, much like one’s national identity, initially does not command attention. But as the hurricane of identities as well as identity construction both take their toll on a firstie, common ground begins to look pretty good. It would be reductive to say that students begin to favor their regions over other groups: there is far too much intentional mixing, innate curiosity and goodwill, and structural shifting for that. But phenomena like the Asian Table, the African Table, and the Latin Family certainly do appear, and these groups often roughly correlate to the regional groups that deliver the Cultural Day Shows. And yet it is there that this line of thought

concludes. For there *is* so very much mixing and so much good-natured curiosity. Friendships bloom and develop across untold dislocation factors.

The regions, therefore, end up fulfilling a statelier, institutional role: they are the social loci around which Cultural Day shows form, and, in the process of forming, in turn cement a shared regional identity. This is because the students do a great deal of “cultural” work for the Cultural Days. They carefully organize a ‘walk-in’: a rowdy formal announcement of the beginning of the cultural show in national dress or some form of agreed-upon common costume the Friday night before the Saturday show. They plan, cook, and serve a meal to the rest of the school community on Saturday night. It is for Cultural Day that many guests, among them recent alumni, travel not only from Las Vegas and Santa Fe, but also universities around the nation. Recent graduates often choose to visit on Cultural Days and it is on Cultural Days that photographs are taken that soon end up on the school website and in the glossy newsletter.

And it is on Cultural Day weekends that, after dinner, the entire campus walks down the stairs from the dining hall to the auditorium. There the students of the region (as well as the legion of other students who can dance, sing, and act) execute the Cultural Day performance, which is essentially a two-hour variety show.

In this way, the execution of Cultural Days formalizes what has been taking shape since the firsties arrived: a figured world of pan-regionalism. Ismael may have had little concept of himself as Tanzanian until he had arrived and was summarily nationalized by his peers and his context. But beyond nationalization, Ismael began to conceive of himself as belonging to an identity greater than that: the figured world of Africans: wildly diverse in specificity, but especially monolithic to many non-Africans. This figured world initially provides the platform for

the collaboration necessary for a successful cultural show, and also supplies the scaffolding for a multitude of friendships and alliances. These young men and women from the continent of Africa were never so “African” in a totality as they are after conceptualizing their pan-regional identity at the UWC USA. Ismael jokes about being “Africanized” after coming to the UWC USA, and being held up to the stereotypes that abound about the region.

Being very good dancers. Well, I've never danced before so I came here. [The other students ask] don't you dance? I'm like, no, I don't. Are you African? Maybe not then. They would say all Africans should dance. I've never danced before so I'm not sure if dancing is actually an African thing, you know. And then for example sometimes I talk to my Asian friends. They'll tell me you know, if I take a picture with you and send it to my mom, my mom will be curious. What am I doing with a black person? It's always unsafe to be with a black person in some countries.

This same phenomenon plays out in different but parallel ways for Arabs, Europeans Asians, and Latins. For the north Americans, representing the host culture of the school and joined in their region only by one other nation, Canada, pan-regionalism is not really an accurate term.

CHECK-INS FOR A TUESDAY IN LATE DECEMBER

Anne from Minnesota is ready for the third semester to end. Always a serious student, the third semester has given Anne gifts of a very non-academic nature. It's been intense for her, but one of the bright spots has been growth she has seen in herself as a leader. Always comfortable in front of a group, Anne has seen her role as an RA and leader of two CASes extend in a way that surprises and delights her. She feels more emotionally-available toward those younger than her, symbolized by the older-sister feelings she has toward her roomie Lavinia, but also extending toward many of the girls in Acon and in the campus generally. “I definitely feel a bit more maternal and I am a lot more comfortable being publicly emotional. At assembly on

Tuesday I almost started crying, thanking everybody for how well they've done in recycling this year." College choices are on the horizon, but for now Anne is just ready to get on the plane to Minnesota.

Sohrab from Iran loves it here, especially in the small, daily ways in which life here is different from Iran. "you can just knock on someone's door you have never seen before, go in and just start talking about different things. Or, having dinner or lunch, or someone just walking around just say "hello." It's very different in this school." From intellectual freedoms to the ability to speak to girls without too much ceremony, Sohrab feels unfettered. Indeed, he sees the same thing happening to lots of his co-years. "East Asians were uncomfortable with hugging. Now they jump and hug you. It's changed a lot in four months, three months. And people are much more comfortable. They aren't as shy as they were in the beginning." And yet, Sohrab notices with a smile, the students are aching to get home. "People were counting the seconds to come here, now they are counting the seconds to leave. People have something to look forward to. Most of – the majority of students are going back home. They will see their family, friends, their house, their street, their country." But not him. He will stay on campus for a while and then spend time with some of his co-years in California.

Agni from Nepal is not going home, but instead traveling down the American west coast, starting with Grace's family near Seattle, Washington and ending in San Diego, California. She has been getting questions about fourth semester from her friends, asking her if she is ready to graduate. She's not. "Right now there are so many things, either the [Bartos Annual] conference or MAAD, things that I want to concentrate on and graduation still seems really,

really far away... I realize it's the fourth semester but it still hasn't hit me like it's the end of UWC USA, two years. Not yet." She is excited to co-lead the MAAD show with Dvora.

Elena from Denmark is delighted to be headed home, though she is not sure how she is going to explain this to anyone. She's a little worried about how the difficulty level of the UWC USA is going to affect her prospects for university, "I am not behind in school, but my grades are not perfect," even though she is not getting pressure from home or from the Danish national committee. For Elena the conflict comes down to spending time with her new friends, whom she finds amazing, or spending time studying. Some of the classes are simply harder, like History, because it is in English.

Lavinia from Brazil is going on a tour of the American northeast, including New York City. It is her first adventure where she will be traveling on her own in the United States. She is extremely excited about it. She is also settling in well in her dorm and in school in general. Her relationship continues to deepen with Anne. Lavinia is talented in languages, and her English and Spanish are both accelerating. Her effusive personality never let challenges get in her way in the first place, but she is noticing differences in class. She has also begun to hit her stride in terms of sleep hygiene, going to bed slightly earlier and managing to make it to most of her morning classes.

Rahma from Syria will be taking a flight to Jordan, and then, if the flights are not canceled due to unrest, to Damascus itself. If it looks like there is a chance she will become mired in Syria after arriving and would be unable to return, her parents will keep her in Jordan. That idea is flatly "awful. Just awful," to Rahma. "We all need to go home. All my friends here. Just for a few days. Then we will be ready to come back." As the semester draws to a close,

Rahma is haunted by the idea of Syria: “Random things cross my mind. The smell of laundry in my house. In the morning when I wake up and my parents are there and we have breakfast together. Sometimes it’s cold in the morning.” But it isn’t just her family and their apartment in Damascus. It is the very feel of the place, the sounds. “Oh my god. The language. Just hearing people speak the language. The jokes. The little things everyone says. Doing the things I am familiar with. Ah. I really hope I get the chance to go home.”

Xolani from Swaziland is exhausted. The work required at the end of third semester and the simultaneous administration of the AND Cultural Day show “almost killed” him. The Cultural Day was intense. “I had to make sure the food was on track, dinner was on track, activities leaders are on track, everything is on track. Two weeks before the show, things got hectic and insane.” These days Xolani moving slowly with the careful actions of the sleep deprived. “Right now I need a break, I need to fall back in love with this place, I need to start missing people, I need to start missing the cafeteria, missing that vibe. Because right now, you know, it’s not there, it’s not that strong.” He will not be going home, but instead is headed to San Francisco for winter break. He hopes to return rested for the fourth semester.

CONCLUSION - WINTER BREAK

The new student packet does not exaggerate. Life at the UWC USA is hard. As the final exams are completed and baggage is moved out of the dormitory store-rooms and onto beds to be packed, the students contemplate the end of the fall semester. The firsties have encountered the “total institution” of the UWC USA. Their “formally-administered round of life” has included their own nationalization, where their Danish-ness, Australian-ness, or Syrian-ness has been

foregrounded by others, performed by themselves, and grown into a figurative world that they only partially control.

The trauma of arrival has been compounded by language challenges, a complex social dynamic, new friendships, loves, and whatever degree of dislocation factor exists between their old home and this campus. This trauma has been made more intense by what, for most of the firsties, is a new curriculum. Especially for those still learning English, the IB at times felt insurmountable. They wonder how they will survive second and especially third semester. They have witnessed their second-years' stress and anxiety: they know what awaits them as second-years. Without meaning to, many of them have been swept up into what Anne from Minnesota calls the social "contagion" of academic pressure, worrying about grades and school in a way that is new for them.

Strangely, the trauma of dislocation has sent them headlong into new relationships, all the more intense for the common experience of their first semester and the raw fact that everyone here needs an ad-hoc family. In this way, they have relocated. When they are honest with themselves, it is hard for them to say which place feels more like home, here or there. For the most part they have been welcomed, filling in as the "little brother" or "little sister" to the authority and experience of their second-years. But they don't know how they will deal with any of this back home (for those that are able to return home), nor what their new ad-hoc family means for their real one.

The second-years are bracing for the end even if they aren't yet talking about it with each other. They have mostly gotten over the huge vacancies in their emotional lives left by their own departed second-years. They have grown into their roles as second-years and culture-

setters. Many of them have surged into new roles, and in doing so authored yet another layer of new identity over those layers that were new for them when they too were firsties. Now they are wilderness leaders, CAS leaders, RAs, veterans.

And then all at once the students are gone. The hallways of the classroom buildings and especially the dorms are littered with the debris that falls when 200 teenagers leave a boarding school in less than 12 hours. In a final spree of socialization before the break, many students slept little the night before the buses left, completely ignoring curfew in a spasm of movie watching and mischief.

As I walk down to the computer lab to add my grades and class comments to the mountain of submissions the faculty will be sending to the IB and out to the students and parents, I am struck by the quiet. We are all tired. The faculty has the same set of circles under their eyes as the students did a week ago. We need a break too.

CHAPTER 5: SPRING AT THE UWC USA

(Second and Fourth Semesters: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Graduation)

Introduction: Back “Home” and the Annual Conference

Students spent much of the winter break sleeping. Some of them slept in their own homes for the first time since August, settling in happily in Minneapolis, Detroit, London, Modi'in or Damascus, but many did not. Instead, they slept on the couches and in the guest rooms of their friends from the UWC USA, surprising and delighting the families of their co-years and second-years with the powerful presence of a foreigner in the various domestic spaces to which the students had retreated. Upon returning, when asked what they did with their break, most of them grinned and replied, with relief, “Slept. A lot.”

Most of the firsties that returned to their own home found themselves confronting a strange new reality. Everything was just as they had left it. Following so much change in their own lives - orientation, the insane first weeks of school, a new roomie from a different region than them, the pressure of the IB, their first cultural show, Southwest Studies week, buddy dance, blackout party, a wilderness trip or two and the varied experiences of CAS - everything in the firsties' world seems different. This was not often the case at home. The firsties reported that their friends from home sometimes looked at them with confusion, feeling a little left behind by stories of this strange school in New Mexico. Home has become a wobbly subject. For Elena, the shift had happened without her noticing. It wasn't until she repeatedly explained events at the UWC USA by starting with, “Back at home this happened” and her friends insisted, “But you live here [in Denmark]” that I was like, “Oh yeah. Damn. I do.” I kept calling here [the UWC USA] ‘home’.” Mathias, in his fourth semester, states flatly, “I don't have a lot of friends

back home at all. Well, maybe they are my friends, but they're not the same friends I have here."

The noise in the Caf on the first full day back is two or three clicks louder than normal. Everyone is full of stories and plenty of energy with which to tell them. Those students who were struggling with English only a few weeks back seem to have taken huge leaps forward. This becomes one of the collections of myths the students tell each other about the UWC USA, saying of the language learners: "Oh yeah, all they needed was to rest a little bit, to not have to *worry* about getting it right all the time."

After two weeks of heavy sleep and awkward pauses with family and friends, the firsties fling themselves back into each other's arms. For the firsties, it is the first time they will have the sensation that only UWCers can really understand them anymore. This sensation will dog them far into their adult lives.⁶²⁸ Back "home" again, the social landscape will settle. Deeper connections are already forming with co-years, second-years and faculty. They've survived the first semester. The next three semesters seem limitless. Having first been dislocated and then nationalized, the firsties now feel at home. They will dig in, developing crucial roles in the CASes and the informal groups that power the campus.

The second-years are happy too. But they are facing a different kind of return: their last one. In four short months they will be graduating. They have already attended a UWC USA graduation ceremony, referred to as "Grad," once before, and know there are a great deal more

⁶²⁸ As UWC USA alumni visited campus during my two-and-a-half years, I did my best to interview them. Often they would come to my interview with their spouses. If the spouse had not also attended a UWC, they expressed very similar feelings to me about their partner's obsession with the UWC: a bemused, curious bafflement at how just two years could have made such an impression. They would often joke that being a UWC spouse should be its own category.

tears than there is cheering. They are already dreading the “midnight bus” that takes so many of the second-years to the Albuquerque airport the night after graduation.

College offers for early decision have already arrived. All around the second-years, classmates are beginning to choose the paths that will lead them away from this place. In two months it will feel as though everyone has gotten into college or university. Already those students who have elected not to attend university or college in the fall have begun mapping out potential gap-year projects. It feels like the future is coming very quickly. The second-years can sense the pending dislocation.

Between then and now, however, there is much to occupy them. There is another cultural day coming and it’s a big one. The Middle East, Asia, and Australia Day members (MAADers) constitute nearly a third of the student body. Lurking at the end of the semester are IB trials and then, during a full three weeks of May, IB exams. Exactly one semester after assuming the leadership of the UWC USA, second-years who allow themselves to ponder it are confronted with leaving the school forever.

Yet, they will leave changed. This chapter explores the last two phases of the engine of that change, phases that I call *self-effacement in the common cause* and the *triumph of the personal*. I borrow one of Kurt Hahn’s phrases for the former, lifted from his 1926 *Seven Laws of Salem*. This is because the phase of identity construction to which it refers remains intact from that time: students putting the concerns of a cause, and their comrades in that cause, above themselves. It is a losing of oneself, a transcendence of the selfish. Were he alive to see it, Kurt Hahn may recognize it as a version of his famous *erlebnistherapie*, or healing through

experience. The resultant transformations that came through so clearly in archival records from Salem and Gordonstoun also happened in front of me at the UWC USA.

Hahn hoped that this self-effacement, this *erlebnistherapie*, would lead to moral courage, a reflexive need to stand up for what is right. If this happens at the UWC USA, it is because the *triumph of the personal* follows the phase of *self-effacement*. As we shall see, the two-year experience at the UWC USA, especially the co-curricular program, creates preconditions where young people strive together in causes with high stakes, from managing the homeless shelter in town and executing a cultural day together to planning, organizing, and executing a cultural show cooperatively. This Hahnian sense of being needed, both by the cause at hand and also by the student at one's shoulder, engenders profound connection between students, regardless of the dislocation factor between them. If students are later moved to acts of great moral courage, it is often because of this connection.

In this way, the remaining "days" of this ethnography—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Graduation—reveal how so many of Hahn's innovations have made the transition to the 21st century intact. And on "Saturday" the second-years graduate. But before any of that happens, a host of activists and celebrities descend on the UWC USA campus for the Annual Conference.

The Palestine Report, Annual Conference

It is mid-morning on the Saturday of the ACTIVATE Annual Conference. Up to this point the event has been a soaring success. Last night the visiting speakers arrived in a mad rush, and immediately set about befriending the students. Speakers and activists that visit the UWC USA seem to fit into two camps; those that ignore or misunderstand the highly-unusual and nuanced student body at the UWC USA, and those that comprehend it immediately. This group of

speakers and activists appears to have figured it out. Raul Diaz from the Los Angeles-based not-for-profit Homeboy Industries immediately joined students in the fieldhouse for a long game of indoor soccer. The other speakers fanned out in the auditorium; Dena Simmons, the teacher is in one laughing with one group of students. Nia Robinson, climate change activist is in another corner leaning closely into another group, making connections that the students would talk about for months afterward. The actress Rosario Dawson was also one of these and certainly raised the energy level of the entire conference with her celebrity and especially her warmth and accessibility, but her mother has already begun stealing the stage. Isabel Celeste (Dawson's mother) invokes such a powerful mothering vibe that students are simply drawn to her. When this happened she smothers them in unrepentant motherly affection. Isabel is now mobbed at mealtimes and in the evenings by students hungry for maternal attention.

It has been a good start, but the presentation I have just walked into has loomed for days. The Arab-Israeli conflict simmers at the UWC USA, sometimes erupting in public moments and at other times set quietly aside. I have just walked into the chemistry room, where the Environmental Systems teacher, Ben Gillock, has begun delivering what the conference program calls the Palestine Report.

Gillock recently traveled to the West Bank and was so moved by what he witnessed there that he has spent significant time preparing this presentation. His report features the difficult circumstances of the Palestinians there. As a botanical enthusiast, Gillock's particular sense of justice and outrage reveals fascinating details that others might have missed: how new Israeli settlements expand their holdings and forcibly occupy land where thousands of Palestinian olive trees had lived for hundreds of years, dispossessing the local Palestinians of

grove after grove of life-giving trees. Gillock also reports on the constructions of masculinity that are folded into Palestinian culture and have special importance for the young men in Palestine, giving rise to their throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers in acts of important symbolic value if not tactical efficacy. In one of the most intense moments in the presentation, Gillock reports on a recent event where Israeli soldiers killed a young Palestinian man by shooting him in the face with a tear gas canister out of the back of an army truck. The room is dead silent. I can see Dvora from Israel. Her face is still. Her older brother serves in the Israeli Defense Force and protects an Israeli settlement just like the one Gillock is describing.

One of Gillock's last points is a re-telling of a visit he and his wife Bianca Sopoci-Belknap made to protest at a settlement near Beit Omar. A small group of protesters were engaged with an equally small group of soldiers, hands waving and shouting about the recent expansion of the settlement into traditionally Palestinian agricultural areas. Gillock and Sopoci-Belknap were in amongst the protesters. Gillock was struck at the youth of the Israeli soldiers tasked with protecting the nearby settlement. He remembered looking into their faces under the Israeli Defense Force helmets at faces that were too young to shave. "They looked so young," Gillock says. "They were so young," he repeats. "And really nervous." More nervous than the Palestinian demonstrators, he notes.

Prior to this report, Gillock invited a Palestinian second-year boy, "Rami" and Dvora to join him at the presentation so they could answer questions afterward. Rami was an obvious choice: he was one of the de-facto leaders of the Arab students on campus. More importantly for a presentation of this level of intensity and potential volatility, Rami is a calm, thoughtful, and solid presence. He is a large boy with massive shoulders and a serious demeanor until he

smiles, which he does often. Dvora is meant to be the Israeli representative at the report. After Gillock approached both of them, the two students met to discuss what they would say. Dvora remembers being emotional long before the presentation began. “When [Rami] and I met before... I guess, when I spoke about my brother serving in a settlement, I couldn’t look him in the eye and that was really hard.”

While giving his presentation, Gillock stands at the front of the classroom. He is a well-liked teacher: short and energetic, with thick curly hair and fiery blue eyes. He is famous for his passion and his ability to relate something small to much larger patterns and dynamics. His tone during the Palestine report varies between outrage and calm sadness. Many students and a few teachers are packed in around the laboratory tables. Gillock is using a PowerPoint presentation to show his photos and the room is therefore dark. Reflecting back on the presentation, Gillock said, “I mean, I’m pretty theatrical. By the time I was done with all these photos of militarization and occupation, people were pretty worked up.”

When he concludes, Gillock asks Dvora and Rami to come up to the front of the room. They do so, setting up their chairs where the lights had been shining on the screen. The lights do not come on. The projector is still on and the front of the room much brighter than the back, where the audience is sitting.

The energy in the room is thick and edgy. I look around and realize that perhaps two-thirds of the room is filled with most of the Arab students at the school, as well as the Economics teacher, Eyad Shabaneh, a Palestinian and a friend of both mine and Gillock’s. If I am Dvora, I think to myself that this is a tough room. “It was hard. I felt exposed,” she says later. There are no other Israelis at the presentation.

The questions begin. A few of them come Rami's way, but there is a tenseness in the room, a sense of outrage at what many feel is clearly an occupation of Palestinian land, regardless of the agendas of the Israeli settlers. Everyone wants answers and there is an Israeli right there. The focus of the room moves to Dvora. She does not look scared, but she does not look comfortable either. Later she will tell me that she was very scared. The questions are respectful, but there are many of them and they are all pointed. They all ask the same basic question: how can this be happening? They want an Israeli answer.

Dvora does her best. She explains that her brother is an Israeli soldier and that he guards a settlement. One can feel the room process that statement: Dvora's brother could have been in a truck just like the one at this settlement. Right now, he is a face under one of those helmets. Dvora pauses and looks over at Rami, who is looking down, expressionless. She goes on to say that when she heard Gillock talking about how the Israeli soldiers are only young men, almost boys, she thinks of her brother. When she thinks of the horrible sadness of the Palestinian young man who was hit in the face with the tear gas canister, and also the Israeli soldier who shot him, she feels very sad. She checks Rami again. He meets her gaze and then looks down. Later Dvora remembers, "I was constantly trying to get that approval... I was trying to make sure it was OK; the things I was saying." Another question comes, and then another. Dvora explains that she finds many of the actions of the military to be awful and that she often disagrees with the actions of her country.

As the questions continue to come, a change comes over Rami. Already calm and steady, he begins to respond to the questions that Dvora is fielding in small ways: a tilt of the head here, an arm movement there. It is clear that he can tell she feels outnumbered, that

maybe she feels alone at this moment. Gillock was impressed with Dvora's intentional vulnerability. "For me the key thing was how the natural response would have been to shut down or be defensive. That's what I would have expected from anybody. That's what I would have expected from myself." But Dvora does not react this way. A few times, Rami looks over at Dvora as she answers a particularly tough question. When a question turns the attention back to Rami, Dvora looks relieved. When the room focuses back on her again, Rami looks almost regretful. From Gillock's perspective, Rami's presence was crucial to the presentation, especially regarding his support of Dvora. "Part of that was how gracious and loving [Rami] was. He carried authority in that group [of Arabs and Palestinians] – and he backed [Dvora] up."

Toward the end of the presentation, an Arab girl from Afghanistan asks an especially difficult question. She wants to know how Israel can see Gaza as a threat, and how there can be missiles from Gaza when the IDF has such a grip on the region. Whether she means this literally or not, Dvora interprets the question as implying that rockets do not fly toward Israeli towns. She thinks of the rocket alarms sounding. She has reached her limit. Dvora explains that she can only tell what she personally knows, and cannot answer for her country. The session is suddenly over. Rami remains close to Dvora as the session leaves the room. Waiting for her is a husky-voiced Colombian boy with dreads. He hugs Dvora and she begins weeping. Everyone leaves.

Rahma from Syria is waiting for Dvora outside. She wants to know if, after all of this, Dvora still plans on joining the IDF. Dvora answers yes. They end up sitting in the sun for a while, discussing this answer. The rest of the audience, including Rami, stream up to the castle. Rahma asks Dvora what she plans to do in the IDF. "Drill Instructor," Dvora answers. She goes on to explain that she wants to change the reason why that person is holding the gun.

“I said, ‘if a soldier that joins the military comes to me and says, ‘I just want to shoot Arabs,’ I’m going to say to him, ‘Hey, one of my very good friends I went to school with was an Arab, a Palestinian.’ I have that face and I’m just going to try and make the connection stronger with every encounter I guess.”

Later, Gillock asked Rami to do more presentations. “I don’t want to do it without you,” he told Dvora. When she told him that the first one was really hard for her, he understood. As she tells it, he began to walk away, and then turned around and said “If you need anything, just come talk to me.” It was exactly what she needed. “I hugged him and I didn’t stop for two minutes or something.” Rami and Dvora had done something quietly profound: they had formed an alliance across dislocation factors rife with misunderstanding, hatred, and decades of violence. Their friendship would bloom in the coming months, a development that delighted not only them, but also the larger campus. After graduation, when the violence of 2012 erupted between Gaza and Israel, this friendship would become very important indeed.

DAY 4 – A Wednesday in January – CAS, Wilderness and the Common Cause

In a remarkable alignment with the weekly schedule first organized by Kurt Hahn at Salem in the 1920s, today, Wednesday, is ‘CAS Day’, and there are no classes after lunch so that an extra-large block of time (lunch to dinner) will be available to CASes. After a long lunch and some grading, I head ‘downstairs’ to get the keys for the van so I can drive my lifeguarding CAS to Highlands University. It’s a cold afternoon, but sunny, the kind of cold where concrete feels harder. The students have been back for a couple weeks now, and the joy of seeing each other again has settled into the grim camaraderie of making it through the weekly grind. As I reach the lower steps, a Frisbee sails past me. There is a gathering of students tossing a couple of Frisbees and clearly waiting for someone.

The door to the Wilderness room is open and I peek my head in to see two second-years wiping down mannequins, all neatly arranged on the floor. On the wall opposite me a huge whiteboard has first aid mnemonic devices scrawled on it and the normal graffiti that appears when pens are left unattended around high school students. Wilderness First Aid class. I pop my head back out of the door and see Arianne Zwartjes coming toward me, wearing a bright-orange shiny fleece and grinning. A lithe, articulate, and passionate woman of medium height and build, Arianne has just taken over the wilderness program from Tom Lamberth, who ran it for 21 years. Under Lamberth, Zwartjes developed a taste for wilderness, especially the connection to others and the development of self-reliance that were baked into Lamberth’s program. As the new director Zwartjes has been focusing on building elements of reflection and framing into the structure Lamberth left for her. She also teaches English with me. Right now she’s just happy to be outside.

“Mannequins?” I ask, knowing what they mean. She rolls her eyes just a little, still grinning. She doesn’t want to teach CPR for the next three hours any more than the students throwing the Frisbees want to take it. “All right everybody!” she hollers cheerfully. The students chuck the Frisbee a few more times before going inside out of the sun. I head for security and the keys to the vans. I need to drive students to town.

Wilderness at the UWC USA: A Direct Connection to Kurt Hahn

October 23, 2011, near Baltimore, 11:45 am: I am sitting in the living room in a distant suburb of Baltimore. It is quiet in here. Across the low coffee table from me is Joe Nold, a close associate of Josh Miner, one of the founders of Outward Bound in the United States, and the first wilderness director at the UWC USA.

Nold is a small, careful man, with a methodical way of speaking. It is not hard to imagine him steadily administering a wilderness expedition. He also served as a teacher for a year at Gordonstoun from 1955-56, directly after the falling out between Hahn and the school and during the ramp-up to the founding of the Atlantic College. Though he does not remember any indication that the Atlantic College was about to be founded, nor any connection to NATO, Nold does remember Hahn being a big man with a floppy hat and pale skin from lack of exposure to the sun. Nold also remembers Hahn being “very funny. Every word was a gem.” Nold served as the inaugural wilderness director at the UWC USA, from 1982-1990.

It was Nold who, after being recruited by Andrew Maclehose, the first Dean of Students at the UWC USA, began the trips out to the Grand Canyon, but also into the wilderness areas closer to the school: The Pecos Wilderness just to the west of the school, and the mountains above the city of Santa Fe. He also initiated the Search and Rescue (SAR) elements of the

wilderness program, a feature that stayed with the school for many years. By connecting with the local State Police and St. John's College in Santa Fe, Nold was able to create the context for a SAR unit based at the UWC USA. "That became a very meaningful activity because one, we were needed, and two, we could respond," Nold remembers. He also recalls SAR being a regular interruption in the UWC USA experience, to his delight. "We got called out frequently... almost weekly, and it was training that directly paid off in terms of our people being needed."

The Lamberth Era

Nold retired in 1990 and handed the reins of the wilderness program to his friend and then-assistant, Tom Lamberth, whom Nold met as he set up the search and rescue elements of the wilderness program. In one of the longer careers at the UWC USA, Lamberth administered the program from 1990 until his retirement in the middle of this ethnography in the spring of 2012. Lamberth is a square-shouldered, blue-eyed brick of a man, with the steady pace and deliberate way common to many lifelong wilderness professionals. He sees his era of the wilderness program as a direct extension of Nold's, who he views as a "very articulate, very visionary guy," where Lamberth saw himself as more of a "nuts and bolts guy: getting things prepared." Lamberth followed Nold's conception of the program as centered on the phenomenon of "students leading students." It was still the early years of the outdoor education movement in the United States, and Lamberth's program was evolving. The students "were given heavy responsibility to take new hikers out and back. They built bonfires in those days in the wilderness. I put the ban on that. I said, 'We can't do that, it's just silly'." Over the years, improvements in practices, equipment, and trips slowly changed the program for the better.

If Lamberth had to point at anything that he himself added to the program, it was his emphasis on hard work and consistency in regards to the students who become wilderness leaders. He admonished the students to become fully immersed: "If you want to learn about yourself then commit to something hard. Commit to something that takes training." As the UWC USA wilderness program expanded Lamberth realized he couldn't do it by himself. He needed student leaders, and lots of them. "What has happened is that in a very necessary and non-contrite way, students take responsibility for the program." Over the next many years, Lamberth developed a leadership training program that generated a year-to-year corps of wilderness guides, trained in wilderness first aid and emergency preparedness. Falhuveri from the Maldives, Veronica from Maryland, and Agni from Nepal are all examples of these wilderness guides.

For Lamberth, wilderness fills a crucial and unique role at the UWC USA, but in a way that is of a piece with the challenges found in the larger CAS program. He feels that challenge is essential for students like these, as a preventative measure against "sliding into something [pursuit-wise] too early in life." To the new student, already so capable, the school adds levels of additional challenge. "We're going to give you a hospital to work in. We're going to put you on a work crew... we're going to send you into the wilderness. You've never slept on the ground before? That's why we're sending you into the wilderness." Lamberth enjoys watching the student transition from "urbanites" with "sweaty palms" to students who are suddenly looking at the Grand Canyon five-day trip with hungry eyes. He loves both phases. "You can tell how nervous a student in wilderness is by how much they attend to the details of first aid and food,"

Lamberth says, chuckling. An important feature of the wilderness program is the role that fear plays.

When asked about Hahn, Lamberth demurs. "I respect the ideas he had and his mission. I think that's a part of me to the extent that I don't think about it anymore... I'm not the visionary that Kurt Hahn was." He goes on to make an observation that many other administrators have made. "He'd probably be bankrupt if he were doing this now, because in a risk management environment like this, oh my gosh, they'd be hauling his ass over the coals." This sentiment is common among executors of Hahn's legacy. Paul Motte, the interim school head at UWC-AC, and Keith Clark, the executive director of the UWC international office, feel similarly: that the scope of Hahn's vision and execution in the wild days of the First World War and especially the Second World War were made possible in part by the lack of regulation and oversight regarding putting young people into potentially dangerous environments.

In the same weekend as the graduation ceremony for all of this ethnography's second-years, Lamberth retired from the UWC USA. The next director of the wilderness program was Arianne Zwartjes, a former mentee of Lamberth's, and someone for whom the SAR aspect of the UWC USA was a thrilling, threshold experience as a high school student. Since her high school days at the UWC USA, Zwartjes developed an entire career as an outdoor educator, working at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and the Wilderness Medical Institute (WMI) as an instructor. Nevertheless, she still fondly remembers the excitement of Search and Rescue, especially when a hiker got lost in the adjacent wildernesses and the UWC USA team was called out.

You would draw this red cross and tape it to your door in your dorm. Tom Lamberth would walk through all the dorms, because it was just the lower dorms then. He would

knock on every door that had a cross on it. He would yell 'Search! Search!' super loud. You'd keep a pack or a garbage bag of clothes under your bed... there'd be all these half-asleep teenagers trailing in with their garbage bags... I would be reviewing my first aid notes on the bus, in the dark with a flashlight, as we are driving off to search somewhere. It all felt very important... during [exam] trials a search was called. Only students who had finished their trials exams were allowed to go. I was pissed. I was like 'I value this. Someone's life is at stake. Fuck my practice exams, I want to go on this search'.

It was Hahn's Moral Equivalent to War alive and well in the Sangre de Cristo mountains.

The UWC USA Wilderness Program Today

To hear Zwartjes discuss the wilderness program is to hear loud echoes of sentiments Hahn was advocating in the 1920s, updated for the contemporary era. This is unsurprising given how much the experiential education movement owes to Hahnian thought, and also how much of that thought influenced Joe Nold, and then by extension Tom Lamberth. Yet Zwartjes is also a longtime NOLS instructor, itself a program that split off from Outward Bound.

It is especially fascinating to hear Zwartjes explain skill instruction, so evocative of Hahn's feelings about the same. One of the most powerful aspects of wilderness education, Zwartjes explains, is that "it's one of the few places where the stuff you learn is immediately applied... you're not teaching stuff that's abstract or in theory. You're giving students skills, in fact, as they need them. Often because the situation calls for it."

The second of these alignments is found in Zwartjes' description of the phenomenon of students connecting as they endure adversity as a team. "[On a wilderness trip] you're in this tiny intentional community where you're having to make it work with people you don't know." Cultural mores must be laid aside. There are shelters to erect and oatmeal to cook. And yet, as Zwartjes points out, this bonding, this "self-effacement for the common cause" isn't enough.

She insists the students be given opportunity to reflect and guided through the reflection process. “The experiential learning cycle doesn’t end with experience. A huge part of learning happens during the reflection period. If you don’t structure the reflection, [the learning] only happens with kids that are naturally reflective.” One is reminded of Hahn’s insistence at Gordonstoun that his colour bearers go for a long solitary walk each Sunday morning in order to process the happenings of the previous week and to ready themselves for the week to come.

Zwartjes built on the systems that Lamberth had established over 21 years, working to extend a leadership trip in the spring to 12 days, far longer than in previous eras. “I think it’s incredibly powerful to be in the wilderness for a longer period of time. You get your buttons pushed in ways that don’t happen when you know you’re going back to a hot shower tomorrow night.” Also, on the longer trips, adults can bring their mentorship to bear over extended timelines and expanded common experience.

Zwartjes also consolidated and streamlined the regularity of the trips, aiming for slightly longer and less frequent trips to allow for depth of experience. During the course of this ethnographic study, UWC USA wilderness trips under both Lamberth and Zwartjes executed “regular” wilderness trips⁶²⁹ to an impressive collection of destinations. These included not only the Pecos Wilderness just up the road from campus, but also trips to Wheeler Peak, Lake Peak, Hermit’s Peak, the Ghost Ranch area near Abiquiú, the Bandelier National Monument near Los Alamos, and the Manzanitas mountains near Albuquerque. During most winters a snowshoeing

⁶²⁹ By “regular” here, I mean a non-leadership trip. Each UWC USA student is required to attend three wilderness trips during their two years at the school.

trip to yurts ranged out either in areas near Taos, or in the southern San Juan mountains of Colorado. In addition to these shorter trips, Zwartjes and Lamberth also directed longer trips into the Grand Canyon during fall semester (both three- and five-day excursions), and occasionally other one-off special trips, such as a trip to Coyote Gulch in southeastern Utah during the campus-wide spring break, named “Project Week.”

For Lambert and now Zwartjes, recruiting and training the next wave of student wilderness leaders was a primary concern. Relying on some Project Week⁶³⁰ trips to execute a longer trip, Zwartjes began the practice of stretching the school’s academic calendar to make room for 12-day leadership training trips so that she and her adult staff would have the time necessary to develop the skill set of the next year’s student wilderness leaders in the essential areas of leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and the "hard skills" of wilderness trip-leading such as first aid, navigation, route selection, and trip resource management. Zwartjes augmented this spring trip with a wave of three simultaneous trips in the late spring, following graduation. This last huge leadership push took place in the Pecos, the school’s “backyard Wilderness.” It is a rigorous offering of trips, densely packed with challenge and the undeniable splendor of the mountains and deserts of the southwest.⁶³¹

During an assembly later in the spring I witnessed Zwartjes’ first group of leadership trainees report back to the student body after their trip to the Gila wilderness in Southwestern New Mexico. It had been a rough trip. Before the group left, they learned that a spring

⁶³⁰ A full week set aside for school trips and wilderness expeditions in the middle of the spring: UWC USA’s spring break.

⁶³¹ In her second year as the Wilderness Director, Zwartjes used Project Week leadership training and the three-pronged post-grad training to prepare around 50 second-years to become wilderness leaders – half the entire second-year class.

snowstorm threatened. What they didn't know was that the large forest fire that had ripped through that area earlier that year was still dumping char into the small streams and rivers above their proposed trip location. This contamination was still washing down the watersheds even this much later in the year. Increased in volume by the melting snow, the streams and rivers in the area not only rose to formidable levels, they turned black. Even after purification the drinking water was a cloudy grey. The pasta in the evening meals had turned an ominous purple. An entire day was spent fording a river as there was no way to judge depths.

Once they were standing up in front of the crowd of their peers, the return leadership trainees looked at each other in silence, trying to articulate how the snowy trip through the wilderness area had changed them. Seeing this odd beat, the student body fell completely silent. The first comments were individualistic. "I came to appreciate little things," one student began, his voice calm. "Eating easily. Sleeping in a comfortable place. Staying warm." Another reported how climbing to the top of a mesa from the bottom of a river valley, though apparently difficult, was actually only "tiny little actions, each of them really quick, really simple little things, repeated over and over."

Soon the comments shifted toward the group. "I learned how to get a lot of pleasure out of helping people," one student began. Another followed with, "I learned how to ask for help." And then, "I got massive pleasure out of making other people happy. Little things began to be hilarious and so fun. We failed to make hot chocolate a bunch of times." The world had collapsed down to their cook groups and their tent groups. All of them marveled at "how close you become with everyone from all over the world in this small group."

Crucial in this self-effacement for the cause is what Zwartjes notes as one of the most powerful elements of the wilderness program: “perceived risk.” She explains that the “danger” the students perceive is quite out of scale with the actual threat. “They are so far out of their comfort zone that it feels like a really big deal for them to be there... of course there is actual risk, but there’s a lot of rote that happens.” This perceived risk pushes the students closer to each other, operating in the same way as the forces that so effectively bonded not only the young members of the Hitlerjugend, but also the fire teams of Salem, together: self-effacement in the common cause.

Such transformation is not lost on the students who participate, especially in the leadership training phase of the wilderness program. According to Veronica from Maryland, the wilderness program is central in the breaking down of national and regional barriers, forcing students “to interact and work as a team and finding things in common that everyone can share.” Especially for the wilderness leaders, Veronica attributes the power of the program to the raw time it requires, dwarfing other co-curricular elements such as CAS or cultural shows.

The amount of time I spent in wilderness just in last year was way more than I have spent in any cultural show. When you enter the wilderness program you spend three hours a week with your group besides expeditions you go on and training [trips] on the weekends. A lot of close friends I have that aren’t American I met through wilderness. In this way, Nold, Lamberth, and Zwartjes, along with the now hundreds of students who became wilderness leaders in the last thirty years of UWC USA’s existence, created very similar situations and results to those that welded together the boys on the fire crews of Salem, the cliff watchers and lifeguards of Gordonstoun, and the boat rescue and canoe lifeguards of Atlantic college together. All the students must participate in wilderness, but those students

that elect to become wilderness leaders take the extra step toward that crucial state Hahn wrote about so often: being needed.

The powerful lever in each of these scenarios, be it a fire crew, rescue boat or cooking group, is that external forces conspire to create a cause-in-miniature. Right here, in this moment next to the black-running river and standing in a snow bank, one can choose the group over oneself. One can self-efface for the common cause.

Lifeguarding CAS

After getting my keys for the van from Security, I am leaning up against van number 6, one of the older, boxy hotel-shuttle-style vans the UWC USA uses to move students and faculty. The sun is on my face. Soon it will set behind the mountains and the evening will get much colder. Best to soak it in. The van is running because we should have left a few minutes ago. We are waiting for the Bahamian boy. Again. The rest of the students are inside, their conversation spilling out into the sun-drenched traffic circle by the castle. The sun starts to get too hot and I move around to the driver's seat.

Inside the van smells of vinyl and painted metal, and in the direct sun, faintly of wax crayons. A cheer goes up. Everyone is laughing and pointing out the window: The Bahamian boy has made to the top of the stairs in a dead sprint, his face serious. He sees the van still waiting and begins shaking his head while panting and smiling. He makes for the van at a jog, bursts through the door, flashes me a "I know this happens all the time" grin and sits down next to two Italians. It does happen all the time. But when compared to the other student groups, my lifeguarding CAS is pretty punctual. We stop by the fieldhouse on the way out of campus and

grab an extra backboard and six lifeguarding rescue tubes, and then go the rest of the way down the hill, out of the gate, past the security building on the right, and suddenly we are off campus.

As soon as the vehicle gets moving I become invisible and inaudible to the students. The Bahamian boy is laughing and chatting happily with the two Italians, also firsties. In the two years I will spend with that particular Bahamian boy, I will rarely see anything but a smile on his face. Agni from Nepal happens to be in this CAS and she is discussing the approaching MAAD cultural day with another girl in her seat row. She is talking with her hands, as usual, and the other girl is listening intently. Two other students are already asleep by the time we get to Highway 65. It hasn't taken much time since getting back from winter break for sleep deprivation to settle back in.

We are driving to Las Vegas and to the campus of New Mexico Highlands University. Many of the UWC USA CASs use the resources of Highlands to execute their programs, be they facilities (we are going to use their deep pool) or their expertise of their personnel. Highlands is a small university of nearly 4,000 students and the relationship between it and the UWC USA is strong.

I look in the rearview mirror at the students. The two conversations are still happening, and the rest of the awake students are simply looking out the windows. There is an air of release when the students get off campus. The students watch the brown fields and fences of the countryside between campus and Las Vegas pass by in silence. There is still snow collected in shadows of buildings, but apart from that, the landscape is the flat brown of winter. The leafless trees are motionless in the still air. When I asked Sharon Seto, the Dean of Co-Curricular Activities, what her goals for CAS are, one of them was this: getting away. "I try to get them out

off campus as much as possible. Outside of the UWC bubble talking with people of all ages, working with kids, with older people, with people with families. Just getting them out.”

The firsties now feel at home at school. The trauma of arrival has settled into deepening connections with each other and with the adults on campus. For those students who are learning English, barriers to social connection are beginning to fall away. One of these students is in the van today. He is a large Italian boy with dark red hair and a careful, rolling walk. He is calm and thoughtful. Within just a few days since his return from break it is clear that his English has gone through a major transformation.

We arrive at the pool a little later than I’d like. I am teaching these students American Red Cross Lifeguarding, which means physical skills training, and that, in turn, means time. Given the wide variety of swimming preparation in nations around the world, some of the students in this class are in need of lots of extra time. Lifeguarding requires deep-water diving, holding one’s breath, and the ability to stay calm while underwater with a “victim.” It also requires physical closeness to a degree that is sometimes a stretch for students from conservative backgrounds, though they mask it with the constant barrage of jokes and laughing that is a part of most UWC USA outings. I am careful to watch the expressions of the members of my CAS and to select rescue partners that help with any discomfort, often pairing students with other students of the same gender.

More than once already in this CAS I’ve seen a student surface with an expression just short of panic on their face. The deep end at the Highlands pool is 12-feet deep. It can be a long way back to the surface for a student who is still getting comfortable underwater. I join any weaker swimmers in the water so I can supervise rescue techniques and comfort levels up close.

By the time we are done with our skills training, it is dark outside. The January night has fallen quickly. I urge the students to pack up fast: we need to make sure to hit the dinner window back on campus, and the drive takes at least 20 minutes. After their swim, even more students take a nap in the van on the way home, the evening lights of the town and then the farms playing across their sleeping faces. The rapid tick-tocking hamster-wheel sound of the van surges as we approach the hill to campus. One by one the student's heads look up. Time for dinner. Then homework. Then check. Then homework. Then curfew.

Creativity, Action, Service

During the 2011-2012 school year there were 104 CAS offerings at the UWC USA, as well as 8 clubs. It is a massive array of activities, ranging from Badminton to the Good Samaritan House, Debate Team to Blacksmithing, Music Theory to Recycling and Yoga. The degree to which this particular CAS program meets and then far exceeds the requirements of the IB is lost on most people at school, faculty and students alike. The students are required to take one creative, one active, and one service CAS each semester. Many of them sign up for more than this because they simply love the idea of Modern Dance, Soup Kitchen, Gardening or the Art of Tea. Furthermore, there is a "grey market" of CAS participation that falls under the description of CASes that the students are taking "unofficially," which means they simply show up whether they get credit or not.

The CASes range widely in content and form, from those that assist in the function of the UWC USA itself (Campus Store, Composting, Wilderness Guides) to those that serve Las Vegas (Homeless Shelter, Tutoring, Children's Choir), those that develop the student (Fitness, Swim Lessons, Cooking and Eating), and finally those that develop levels of facilitation and

engagement (Challenge Course, Peer Mediation, Practical Activism). Each CAS is supposed to take a maximum of three hours a week. Some take much less time, others far more.

This intense set of offerings has logistical needs, of course, and faculty often find themselves recruited to drive to and from Las Vegas on a given afternoon to drop off the CARE Unit (a CAS where students meet with juvenile sex offenders at the nearby state mental hospital and model proper peer-to-peer interaction) and then perhaps pick up HIV/AIDS Peer Educators (a CAS where students first develop and deliver educational workshops about HIV/AIDS to local audiences). In order to fit all 104 CASes in, there is CAS time allocated six days a week, Monday through Saturday.⁶³²

Saturdays that are not already occupied by weekend wilderness trips or special campus events are other prime slots for CASes that take more time such as Community Work Crew (a physical labor CAS where students help non-profit organizations with building projects in town) and Afro-Haitian Drumming and Dance (where students travel to Santa Fe to dance and sometimes drum with the very active community group there). CAS dominates the non-academic hours of each week. It is possible for a student to take “easy” CASes, thereby buying themselves a great deal of discretionary time, but this is so rare as to be nearly unheard of. Far more common is for a student to be summoned into Linda Curtis’ office because of faltering grades, and there reveal that they are enrolled in four official CASes and five more “unofficial.”

⁶³² For a full CAS list from 2011-2012, please see Appendix C. In the middle of the 2012-2013 schoolyear, the CAS program underwent a widely-approved revision. It invited students to cast about in the various types of CASes in their first year, and then asked that they choose a track through their second year from the following three choices: Wilderness, Community Service, and CEC (the Constructive Engagement of Conflict).

Even though nobody here has ever heard of Cistercian monks, the UWC USA is very much in alignment with Hahn's conception of a school's responsibility to its host community. This is most obvious in the degree to which the UWC USA students engage with and serve the nearby town. Las Vegas is full of warm, caring, community-centered people. It is also a town that struggles with poverty and the host of social ills that follow. The UWC USA does not offer a fire-fighting brigade, nor do the local mountains require the search-and-rescue skills that the school offered in its early years, but real social benefit and real-life, time-sensitive scenarios are frequently encountered by students in the CAS program, especially when they are in Vegas.

For example, Elena from Denmark had become very involved in the Homeless Shelter CAS, serving as a helper to the adult supervisor the shelter. She had a regular weekly shift and during the course of her service witnessed first-hand the ravages of poverty that were all too common in Las Vegas. One evening in late spring during her first year, a boy called the homeless shelter to say that he and his mother had been kicked out of where they had been staying and were headed over to the shelter. As soon as they arrived, Elena recognized that the mother of the boy was high on drugs. It also looked like she had been physically attacked.

She was falling asleep on the couch all the time while we were closing down to drive them to the motel and when we got into the car, I guess she was OD'ing because she had white foam coming out of her mouth and she had a blood stain on her from whatever her boyfriend had done to her when they were kicked out, and I could see where she usually fixed and she was just so miserable, and then she passed out and more white foam was coming out so we had to call an ambulance. So they came and the state police came. It was just really, really tough because the boy was like "I've seen this before. Don't call an ambulance" ... they found needles on her and they found things on her that she was not supposed to be in possession of. And then we were questioned by the police. Not a fun experience. I felt like we were in a movie the entire time.

It is this contact with the non-academic that Sharon Seto, Dean of the Co-Curricular program, finds so powerful. “The kind of learning that you can do in the co-curricular program both from each other and from other adults in the community, from other kids in the community is an education that actually can make changes [in a student].” Seto here is suggesting the same thing Hahn was advocating in the 1920s, and what he tried to make good on at Gordonstoun and the Atlantic College: self-effacement in the common cause.

In a truism Hahn often repeated, he addressed how this common cause could be used to attract and motivate the young. “You can preach at them, that is a hook without a worm; you can say ‘you must volunteer.’ That is of the devil; and you can tell them, ‘you are needed.’ That appeal hardly ever fails.”⁶³³

In her second year, Elena will volunteer to be the student leader of the Homeless Shelter CAS. In this role, she will train a handful of firsties how to handle situations like the one she had encountered, as well as how to engage with Las Vegas’ most unfortunate inhabitants with respect and dignity.

Grace from Washington, for one, reflects on how remarkable it is that this system of student leadership works at all, in a 21st-century echo of Hahn’s insistence on “giving boys enough responsibility to wreck a state.” She laughs as she says, “You wouldn’t think 17, 18 year olds could be leading each other, and guiding each other, and organizing things, meetings, CASes, chorus rehearsals would work so well. It really works, really works. Surprising it’s not just chaos, when you really think about it.”

⁶³³ Hahn, “‘Outward Bound’ - Transcript of Address Given by Kurt Hahn at the Annual Meeting of the Outward Bound Trust.”

Check-ins for A Wednesday in Late January

Davo from Australia's break was, in his words, "frickin' awesome." He spent the entire time with his getaway family, and was able to try skiing for the first time in his life. He was able to ski a few times after his first time, and now wishes "there was a bit more snow in Australia." The family that took Davo in is from the country near Taos, and Davo was thrilled to build fires in the woods, work on carpentry projects, and make music. "If I didn't have such great getaways, I would have missed home a lot more." He has returned refreshed and even more enthusiastic about school. He is delighted to be back at the UWC USA, and can feel his friendships deepen: "It felt good [when I came back] to realize you really belong to a close group of people." Davo misses his sisters back home.

Mathias from Michigan refuses to admit that this is the last semester. He had a busy break: he worked 25 hours a week at the same restaurant as he did before he came to the UWC USA, and finished a series of his college applications. The third semester was so intense that just for a second Mathias wasn't sure he was ready to come back. Now that he's back and has seen all his friends, he doesn't want to talk about the end. He has also noticed an increased intensity among his co-years regarding college: "There's a lot of peer pressure. I think we realize that we are competing with each other to get into these schools." And yet the fourth semester is simply better than the third. "I've already had time to chill with my friends and I've even watched some movies." Things seem to be relaxing, at least in comparison.

Veronica from Maryland, on the other hand, has already begun to come to terms with the fourth semester. She worries that students, herself included, act as though their time is not limited. "It's like we're so immersed in the school that we forget where we are." She thinks that

every so often it hits a second-year and they become hyper-aware of the ticking clock. The feeling of not haven taken advantage of everything is “pretty universal.” As the rehearsals for MAAD have begun, Veronica is closely watching how the group is forming. Prior to this, she had some powerful reservations about these shows, feeling that “they can be very dividing because you spend all this really intense time with only people from your region who you theoretically know better because you [already] have that bond.” And yet this one seems different. She is learning so much about other Asian perspectives. She and another half-Asian from Canada are advocating for a skit all about being a fake Asian, or a “Fasian.”

Dvora from Israel is still processing and reacting to the intensity of the Palestine Report, even though it’s been many days. Her friendship with Rami has deepened continuously since the presentation, to the extent that they have collaborated on a skit for MAAD called the Arab-Israeli dance off. That such a skit is happening at all is remarkable, but especially following the charged Palestine Report. The idea of the dance-off is emotionally loaded enough that a few Arabs and Israelis that had originally consented to participate have bowed out. In regards to MAAD, Dvora is less conflicted than other show leaders have been about cutting skits when students aren’t prepared. MAAD is huge and that means some people get cut. The angry emails have already started. The bright side is that Dvora gets to work with Agni, whom she’s “always had a friend crush on.”

Agni from Nepal has finished her college applications and, though she doesn’t feel like leaving school just yet, is excited about the next phase. She’s noticed that being away from home for this stretch of time is really only painful when other students discuss the family they saw: “Whenever someone talks about home, especially their sisters or brothers then yeah, it’s

difficult then.” In her travels through the American west she encountered a friend from Kathmandu who told Agni that she [Agni] had developed an accent in her native Nepali. That was a sobering moment. She especially misses her 14-year-old sister, who, due to her age, is starting to experience a life in which Agni would like to share as an older sister beyond the bounds of Skype. And then there is MAAD. She has already had to miss auditions because of a wilderness expedition (she is a wilderness leader), and so she was out of step from the get-go. Given the size of the MAAD region, there are scores of skits, songs and poetry, far more than can fit in the two-hour maximum run-time. Agni and Dvora will need to cut items and that means hurt feelings. Later I learn that because she is such a good choreographer and dancer, Agni is in most of the dances. Circles have begun to deepen under her eyes.

After two days in Jordan, **Rahma from Syria** made it home. Her family was overcome with relief to see her, is proud of her for her success so far in this adventure “even though I’m not inventing a rocket or anything.” She spent her first night home responding to hundreds of questions about the school. For the entire break she spent the mornings connecting with friends, lunches with her family, and then out in the evenings again with friends until a 9:30 pm curfew. Fridays are family days due to the weekly holy day, and Rahma loved being “stuck” with family and bored after the tumult of first semester. They were delighted to see that Rahma had not become “snobby and all American.” Her mother noticed that she had more confidence. Rahma ate and ate, reveling in the Mediterranean food that is everywhere in Damascus.

On one Friday morning as the family was gathering for a picnic, two explosions rocked Damascus. Everyone thought it was thunder at first, until the second boom sounded, followed by gunfire. Unable to trust public media, Rahma used a Facebook group called “Damascus” to

find out what happened. 70 people were killed. It was the first major violence for 11 months. The Assad regime instantly blamed the explosion on Al Qaeda. A Facebook discussion immediately spiraled into a hateful argument. The opposition blamed Assad. Rahma could feel the chemistry change instantly in Damascus. The unrest had come home. Bit by bit, Syrians are beginning to use the words “civil war.” Rahma has heard that friends have begun reporting friends to the authorities.

Notes on a Wednesday in Late January

Change happens suddenly over breaks and is noticed more clearly at those times by the students who are changing. It is similar to the tension that builds along a tectonic plate and then gives way all at once, causing an earthquake. All the small moments of nationalization, constant negotiation of difference, and the adaption to a strange new set of requirements and cultural norms has led to small changes in a student’s growth. During the breaks these changes become obvious to a student because they see themselves in contrast to the static context of home. This is not always the case, however: Rahma found her entire family waiting for her, delighted to notice her changes. Yet Rahma’s dislocation progresses in a different way. As she has been attending the idyllic school in New Mexico, her nation has become more unstable, wobbling toward civil war. She has begun to sense that her parents are not discussing certain details with her so that Rahma won’t worry and can focus on her studies. Out of love, Rahma is being denied full participation in Syria’s national crisis.

The Engine of Change, Phase II: Self-Effacement in the Common Cause

The growing distance from home the students experience around the breaks from school is complemented and augmented by a deepening of relationships at the UWC USA. This is in large part due to the fact that the co-curricular program has real stakes, such as the politically-charged moments at the Palestine Report, but also in scenarios like the showdown at the homeless shelter and the river turning black in the Gila during the leadership training expedition. These are examples of moments where the self-effacement of Rami and Dvora, Elena, and of the wilderness leadership trainees, is able to triumph over the awkwardness of cultural encounter. They sublimate themselves to the micro-cause of the moment and emerge on the other side slightly changed. Each time this happens, relationships between students and across dislocation factors deepen. Old versions of the students' stories about themselves begin to seem inaccurate. For this same reason, the relatively-new stories about their own national identities are also quickly becoming outdated. Many of the firsties are no longer recoiling from the impact of arrival, and such distinctions begin to lose their importance and zones of safety. Fascinatingly, the receding primacy of one's nationalization makes it easier to take even more liberties with transgressive humor about exactly these same identity frames. As we shall see toward the end of this chapter, this level of comfort can lead to explosive results.

One of the reasons for this growing inaccuracy is that the students are maturing while simultaneously acquiring new skills. It is no small thing to receive the mantle of a student wilderness leader, for example. Such a responsibility means that one has become proficient in first aid, emergency management, wilderness navigation, and small group management. In a very similar process to that which Kurt Hahn had envisioned for the aspiring youth fire-fighters,

sea-rescue sailors, and cliff-rescue personnel of Salem, Gordonstoun and the Atlantic College, students at the UWC USA are motivated to develop such skills because they feel needed. As Zwartjes recalls of her own time as a UWC USA student in the wilderness program, and specifically in SAR, the wilderness program was a place

to gain confidence and trust in my skills, my strength, my self-reliance, my judgment and decision-making, and to gain assertiveness around those skills. I think it's something that I was distinctly drawn to, because I didn't have those skills as a teenage girl and I wanted them.

The execution of CAS and wilderness in this manner is an important new chapter in the stories the students tell themselves about themselves, facets of identity that have transitioned from what a student does, such as learning wilderness first aid, to who someone has *become*, such as a wilderness leader. It is this movement from the external (“Do this and you will have the requisite skills of a wilderness leader”) to the internal (“I take firsties out on trips. I *am* a wilderness leader”). They have become someone who can handle the responsibilities of directing a cultural show, managing a crisis at a homeless shelter, or keeping a group of brand-new firsties safe in the high desert above Ghost Ranch.

For this same reason, even the relatively-new stories about their own nationalization are quickly becoming outdated. Many of the firsties are no longer recoiling from the impact of arrival, and such distinctions begin to lose their importance and power. Play and humor around these frames of identity becomes easier, glibber. Fascinatingly, the receding primacy of one’s nationalization makes it easier to take even more liberties with transgressive humor about exactly these same identity frames. As we shall see toward the end of this chapter, this level of comfort can lead to explosive results.

This entire process is both sad and emboldening for students. Each high-stakes encounter with CAS, Wilderness, even humor, is a moment of self-authoring. Students like Dvora, Elena, and Rami are finding ways to articulate their own identities within (and into) the social fields of their own positionality. And yet each step they take toward their own agency can feel like a step further from the expectations of their friends and families. As the UWC USA becomes centrally located in their new identities, the students become *dislocated* from home.

DAY 5 – A Thursday in February – Pan-Regionalism, Performed

It has been six weeks since classes started. The novelty of returning to campus has worn off. Second-years, delighted to have survived the gauntlet of third semester, are confronted by the fact that fourth semester, though much better than third, is still full of homework, class, check, curfew, and eating at the Caf three times a day. Institutional fatigue is setting in. The firsties, now in their second semester, have started to form friendships that they will maintain for their remaining three semesters at school, though these too will evolve with the intense friendship formation and re-formation that happens as the students explore new avenues in the co-curricular program.

February's weather is also dark, with a number of overcast days that seems strangely high for a place that usually has no shortage of sunlight. A long winter of short days and long nights has had its effect as well. Student visits to the school nurse have increased. The students are quieter, focused on getting through the week at hand. There is an air of determination and struggle throughout the school.

Arabs by the Dish Window

It is lunchtime and I am sitting at the table closest to the kitchen. It is a Thursday, so shoulders are a little more hunched and the sound is a little lower than normal, but it's still lunchtime, and these are still teenagers, so it's still pretty loud. To my right is Ben Gillock, a mountain of salad on his plate sprinkled with easily a full cup of beans and over that, a wild swirl of sriracha hot sauce. Gillock is talking emphatically and eating at the same time, his whole body moving as he nods and talks and eats. To my left is a chair with two little girls on it, daughters of Dan and Jen Willms, Dan a math teacher and Jen a librarian and Assistant Resident Tutor. The

two girls are ignoring Gillock as they reach up to the table for their food. Gillock and Dan Willms are talking about something, and Dan is pushing back against Gillock's conversational fusillade. This is normal, a regular rhythm of their friendship. I am mostly listening and marveling at Gillock's salad. One of his hand motions goes up and my eye tracks it before being caught by movement behind him.

I see Rahma from Syria by the dish window. She is talking to Yazan from Jordan, her face serious, her large eyes moving quickly back and forth as she talks. I note this and then look back to Gillock and all four Willmses. When I check back moments later, Rahma and Yazan have been joined by four other Arab students. The circle has closed and I can see Rahma's shoulders heaving as Yazan hugs her. She is crying. I stand up and walk over to Rahma, and am joined in this motion by three more Arab students. I am careful not to accidentally touch the girl in the hijab. Everyone's face is serious. I find my way to Rahma. A suicide bomber has exploded himself in her neighborhood in Damascus, very close to the building where she grew up. Very close to her parents. Their apartment was above the blast. Other students have begun to walk over, and are standing slightly back from the knot of Arab students out of respect. Rahma is important here. She is kind to everyone. I tell Rahma that I am here for her and go back to the faculty table. Gillock's salad sits half-eaten as he and I and Dan and Jen watch the growing group of students at the dish window. There is little to say. Rahma is here and her parents are in Damascus. Now there are explosions in Damascus.

Collapse

It is 7:03 pm and Anne is, as usual, on time for our 7pm interview. It is a cold night with low clouds and no stars. The night feels closed down in a way that is rare in the mountains of

New Mexico. I feel bad to have kept her waiting. We go inside and I immediately put on a pot of water. If she's working late on homework (and she's always working late) Anne will drink coffee: the blacker the better. My coffee is better than the Caf's, and Anne is becoming something of a connoisseur, so sometimes she gets a to-go cup. She is quiet this evening, less sparring banter. She seems somber. As the water heats up I start the recorder and get out my notebook.

Anne is somber because she suffered a concussion on two consecutive Sundays during the skiing program at Taos. It is a program I arranged, finding a wonderfully-sympathetic administrator at Taos Ski Valley who was shockingly generous in his arrangements with the school. Given Taos Ski Valley's generosity, an entire busload of UWC USA students got to go skiing or snowboarding five Sundays in a row. This included any students who could not afford skiing, and many more students beyond this who had never been skiing or snowboarding before. So far it has been a highlight of the year.

That is, except for Anne's two falls. Despite the fact that she was wearing a helmet both times, Anne was concussed, and then, exactly a week later, concussed again. She had seen a doctor for her symptoms, which included headaches and trouble focusing for long periods of time. Anne is scared. She now sits across from me, the French press between us, chatting as we wait for the coffee to steep. She tells me how she is worried about the concussions and how, as a serious soccer player before the UWC USA, she suffered a third bad concussion. Her face goes still as she describes that injury: a broken nose, blood everywhere, and the concern of her parents.

Anne jokes about the current situation by quoting a past teacher who said that "getting sick at the UWC was like getting sick in hell." Her laughing breaks off quickly as she

contemplates out load the impossibility of finding private time. Her voice changes as she describes not wanting to “drag her friends down,” especially since, even though the concussions are scary, there’s “nothing anyone can do.” She especially doesn’t want to bother anyone “when everyone has got a lot going on, with MAAD and everything.”

Anne goes on, her voice catching every third sentence or so. “Definitely academically it is difficult because you have no time to catch up with anything, everything is so busy and packed in.” She pauses. “I would have loved to take a week. You know, no classes, just sleeping and stuff?” She takes a deep breath. “But school is so intense, there’s no time. So I’ve been falling really, really behind.” She goes quiet. “In all of my courses.” She and I both know, as does everyone else at the school, that Anne almost never admits this kind of fear, possibly because she is almost never behind. She begins to speak again, but all at once she is weeping. I turn off the recorder.

After Anne recovers we quietly make a plan. Anne feels like she can’t ask her teachers for a break, or for permission to hand in assignments late. It simply has not occurred to her that she can wave the white flag. She is bright, one of the more gifted, organized, and hard-working students at the school. But from Anne’s perspective, help is what other students need. As an RA and leader of two CASes, it has never occurred to Anne that she can press “pause.” Or, perhaps more likely, Anne fears what the faculty would think of her if she did.

I spend the rest of the interview time assuring Anne that being double-concussed is a completely legitimate medical reason for consideration amongst the faculty, and that she will be ok. She tells me that it is scary to be used to a sharp intellect and to have it be suddenly fuzzy, hard to focus, and hard to remember details. I have no answer for her.

Cultural Day Rehearsal

It is 10:45 pm on the Thursday before MAAD, only a few hours after I spoke with Anne. She was right to be worried about her friends in MAAD; the show has just unraveled completely. I am sitting in one of the auditorium chairs, having been invited by Agni and Dvora to come and witness the show's progress. The house lights are half-down, giving the room a dreamy feel. The stage curtains are open and most of the 62-person MAAD performance group are milling in front of the stage. There is shouting and arguing. Agni is turning slowly in circles, asking where Dvora went, and generally trying to interpret and explain what just happened to the larger group of MAADers. They do not look happy.

I have arrived directly after Linda, the Dean of Students, and Sharon Seto, the show's faculty advisor, have seen most of the show in its entirety. They came to make sure that the show was under the two-hour limit. It was not. They went down the list, indicating whose skit could be shorter or faster. Here and there they simply cut a skit completely. One of the skits they cut was the "Fasians" skit with Veronica and the Canadian-Asian girl. It just so happened that they also cut all the other skits and songs that the same Canadian-Asian girl was in, accidentally cutting her completely out of MAAD. Without realizing what had happened, Linda and Sharon left. The Canadian-Asian girl broke down completely. Her insecurities about her Asian identity had just been exposed and reified. A skit in which she had planned on exploring hybrid identities had been kicked out of a cultural show, along with everything else she was in. Agni couldn't find Dvora because Dvora was away with the Canadian-Asian girl, doing her best to console her.

As I watch, Agni tries to gain control of the situation. She asks the entire MAAD group to join her on the stage and gets them in a circle. She begins a speech about how tough decisions had to be made, and, to be honest, many of the skits were not ready for the show and weren't going to go well. Lack of sleep and stress is beginning to show in Agni's speech. She is beginning to ramble, but as she does so, the emotional content of her speech spirals upward. I check for Dvora. Still gone. Agni is getting more worked up. She is now talking about how much MAAD means to her, especially in her last semester. She begins to talk about how close she feels to everyone in the circle, and then the tears come and her words falter. The circle draws closer to her. I realize all at once that I am the only adult in the room. I get up and leave.⁶³⁴ Soon it will be curfew. Classes start at 8 am.

"But it is February"

The next morning, I walk into the Faculty and Staff Lounge: Sasakawa. It is a small quaint house-sized building at the base of the 131 steps that lead from the castle to lower campus. I am in search of coffee. Inside I find Linda Curtis. This is perfect timing, as no one else is around and I need to talk to her about Anne, as well as the MAAD rehearsal I witnessed.

Linda listens in her engaged way, especially closely when I get to the Anne part. She agrees that Anne has every right and reason to ask faculty for time and forgiveness on assignments so she can catch up. She also agrees with me that not one of them will balk at this,

⁶³⁴ Every so often I would encounter a moment where I sensed my adult presence was about to significantly change a moment for students. I did my best to vanish at those moments out of respect for the untrammled student experience, at least at high-stakes times. This was sometimes a hard thing to gauge, but I believe it earned me the trust of the students, allowing later to execute the day-long shadowings of students in my second year at the school. I believe there was an understanding that I knew when it was time to get lost.

given Anne's record at the school. It is moments like this when I can see why the students are so fond of Linda: she is both capable and warm at the same time.

She has also seen most of it many, many times. She smiles quietly as we discuss the MAAD situation. She reminds me gently that in her experience, most of the cultural shows are in some form of catastrophic disarray at this point in the week. And then she looks at me and sighs.

"But it *is* February," she says, cradling her cup of tea and looking at me over its rim.

"February?" I ask, completely confused.

"February," she answers. "Everything goes bad in February. The kids and the faculty have both had a long winter, and they can't see the light at the end of the tunnel yet. College admissions haven't really started rolling in so anxiety is high. All that sleep they all got over break is used up. Me and the rest of the RTs can set our clocks to it. February."

A Cultural Show – MAAD

Between the moment on Thursday night when I left the auditorium in the middle of a region-scale meltdown, and the moment the curtains opened on the MAAD cultural show a few days later, many things have changed. Spurred on by the threat of the cutting of some of the show's most beloved skits, performers and show leaders practiced with renewed energy and focus. Long and windy skits have been streamlined and dance choreography sharpened. The wobbly show has stabilized. Ignoring the instructions to cut a few of the longer skits, the students simply tightened things up until MAAD was able to execute under the time constraints. The students have done it.

To a packed crowd, the 62-member MAAD cast delivers a show that is equal parts entertainment, cultural showcase, and layered pageantry. Many of the acts are mostly playful, such as the Japanese students' rendering of a short kung-fu-esque slapstick "drama" with wooden samurai swords and huge "captions" above the stage explaining the action to the crowd. Or "Confucius Say," where two boys, one from New Zealand and one from Singapore, perform a slapstick routine built around the litany of semi-transgressive jokes based on the "wise Asian" stereotype. Through most of the skit it is difficult to tell whether the boys are performing a stereotype, lampooning a stereotype, or both.⁶³⁵

Many of the playful skits include thinly-veiled commentary. An example of this is "the Butterfly Lovers," a modern remake of the well-known Chinese story. In the UWC USA version a circumspect Chinese father insists on knowing the IB score of the suitor protagonist before he will let his daughter date him, finding his perfect score simply not good enough. A more direct commentary is delivered by the "Arab-Israeli dance-off," where three Israelis, including Dvora from Israel, and three Arabs, including Rahma from Syria and Rami from Palestine, "dance battle" as a way to end the decades-long conflict. Unfortunately for the region, the dancing abilities are "equal," and it is only through the sudden arrival of three tackily-dressed American dancers, replete with "USA" T-shirts, that the conflict is "resolved." The scene closes as the Americans deliver diplomatically awful American dancing to Miley Cyrus' 2009 hit "Party in the USA."

A darker message is delivered by the TSA skit, where a series of "travelers" attempt to pass through American airport security. The first, a "foreigner" who can only smile and say

⁶³⁵ I address this issue in "Day 6: A Friday in Late April" in a section about transgressive humor.

“yes,” gets his water bottle confiscated. The second, Dvora dressed up in revealing clothes, gets through without being checked at all. The third, an Afghan boy in western street clothes, is immediately patted down under a spotlight by a TSA officer and sexually harassed in the process. The fourth is “Yazan” from Jordan, dressed in a simple white robe. When he steps through the metal detector, loud alarms go off and the same dropdown screen flashes bright red letters: WARNING: ARAB! He is immediately tackled. He reappears in the second act, having visibly been beaten. When he can’t answer the questions of the head inspector, he is shipped off to Guantanamo Bay, the last words of the skit ringing out as the stage darkens, “It’s Gitmo, baby!”

Right before the end of the first half, in a skit entitled “Arab Spring,” a “panel” including the Deputy Secretary of Jordan, played by Yazan from Jordan and the US Secretary of Defense, played by “Karl” from Tennessee, is interviewed by a television anchor. Yazan’s Jordanian diplomat denies the uprisings outright, blaming them on terrorism and western media. Karl’s Secretary of Defense also ignores the Arab Spring, dimly reminding the audience that the “US had liberated Iraq.” He gets wholesale laughs from the audience. The anchor suddenly interrupts the interview to announce that “the President has stepped down!” The screen fades to black. Suddenly all the UWC USA Arab students are on stage, singing, in Arabic, the song “My Homeland.” The room is silent, all thoughts of the kung-fu and Confucius evaporating as the audience realizes that the Arab students in front of them are living the reality the rest of us watch on CNN. I think especially of Rahma. Only days earlier the Assad regime had laid siege to the Syrian city of Homs.

Other acts are not so heavy. There are eight dance ensemble performances and two live musical acts, as well as a three-stage run-on skit about dating in Malaysia. When the curtain finally goes down, it is after the entire cast performs a series of karate dance moves wave after wave, to Carl Douglas' 1974 hit, "Kung-Fu Fighting."⁶³⁶

Check-ins on a Thursday in Late February

Anne from Minnesota is out of the woods. Her headaches have ceased and she is enthusiastically back in class. She looks much better, and the banter has returned as well. "Thinking clearly and not being freaked out? Big pluses in my day," she jokes. Once Linda got involved, the mechanisms of the school were able to help her. Anne does note that her access to Gillock and myself led to her being able to take advantage of the school's systems. She wonders about other students who are less connected to adults.

Dvora from Israel thought MAAD came together really well, and for a long time it didn't look like things were going to come out that way. For the performance to go from the full meltdown on Thursday night to a show that had pacing, comedy and provocation makes her feel really good. It got pretty hard for her and Agni, especially as the skits were getting cut that Thursday night. But in retrospect, Dvora thinks the pressure was appropriate. She and Agni were the leaders, after all. "When someone is in the leadership position, they're going to get criticized. Halfway through the week, I just didn't give a damn about criticism. I seriously didn't

⁶³⁶ In terms of adult supervision and help, the Cultural Shows have one or two adult advisors, in this case Sharon Seto. In addition, students seek the technical help and expertise of other adults. The theater teacher was brought in to offer his advice on skits, and adults are frequently asked for help with costumes and sets. That said, the vast majority of the conception, administration, and follow through falls on the students. There are shows that go very well, like MAAD and AND this particular year, but also ones that are less successful.

care.” And all at once, Dvora is contemplating a fourth semester with no huge commitments. She is suddenly free of the Palestine Report and MAAD, with a show that was a hit and strong new friendships with Rami and Agni as well.

Agni from Nepal is also delighted and relieved. “in the end it just like worked out really well and everybody was happy and felt proud, and felt connected and at home. It’s good.” She already looks better rested. Dvora was not as socially connected to the cast of MAAD, so much of the turbulence passed through Agni, even if it was aimed at the more-pragmatic Dvora. As a result, the entire experience was especially draining for Agni, constantly balancing fairness to each nation and student while also having high standards for the level of performance, and doing all of that while absorbing much of the emotional heat of a show that was first in shambles and then staggered back to its feet. In retrospect, Agni thinks the power of the show is really in its process: “that it’s not just about having a perfect show. It’s so much more about student leadership, students working together, students working to represent their own culture.”

Rahma from Syria also thinks MAAD was “worth all the drama and the effort,” but it also became a lens through which she saw other facets of the school culture. Especially obvious was the contempt some adults had for cultural shows. “I heard a lot of comments from faculty” that advocated for the cancelling of cultural shows. “I know it’s hard for the faculty to see the students sleepy all the time, or to not be handing in assignments,” but Rahma isn’t hearing it. If the shows got cancelled, “it would take away the essence of the school.” Also, Rahma was taken with the success of such an amateur project. “We have no director; we have no professionals.”

Mathias from Michigan loved MAAD. He likes it when the cultural days focus more on culture than humor. He found the food to be especially delicious, and just thought MAAD was one of the best shows he'd seen at the UWC USA. He especially liked how MAAD approached political issues from a new angle, like the Arab-Israeli dance off. "I understand this is a very serious issue, and yet you were able to make this joking skit together." They made jokes of very serious situations, but Mathias liked that approach, thinking that it might be a kind of approach you could only take here.

Davo from Australia is finding it a little difficult to focus on school all the time. "I haven't been feeling the extra pressure, so I haven't been hauling ass like I could be," he says pensively. He likes the schoolwork, but the environment is simply too interesting to keep his head down. "I'm on top of my workload? I don't have any work due? Instead of reading ahead or really solidifying what I've learned in class or whatever, I'll go do other things." This is starting to affect his grades, which up to this point have been stellar. "The IB tests are just hard," he says. "I understand everything that I'm being taught, but I make crap mistakes. I think it's because of the stress. I just seize up." Davo is competitive, and his slipping frustrates him. And yet, he still feels like socializing and connecting with others is crucial at a place like this. "Besides," he grins, "I see second-years who don't study that hard, and they still get into college."

Veronica from Maryland had a breakthrough during MAAD, suddenly feeling like perhaps the main beneficiaries of the massive weeks-long project was the cast, not the audience. "It brought the region together more to express our culture to other people. It's kind of like picking out the most beautiful things and the most important things from each region and

putting them all together... especially because MAAD is such a vast region, we actually learned a lot about each other's culture as well." She found the TSA skit a little dicey because so many UWC USA students have actual difficulty going through security in the real world, but the Arab-Israeli Dance-off didn't bother her at all. "It was just nice to see those two groups interacting in a very playful way rather than a serious way."

Elena from Denmark watched with alarm as the drama and mounting pressure of MAAD increasingly affected her friends, but then watched the show with joy and surprise. She says she and the other non-MAAD students expected the show to be amazing "because they [the MAADers] were so stressed out it would be taking the cultural shows to a new level I guess." And why would it be an assumption that the show would be so good? "Because they're Asian," Elena quips with a small smile.

Notes on a Thursday in Late February

Faculty and students alike marvel at how strung out students become at the UWC USA. Third semester is well known enough that the most organized students do their best to complete their extended essay before the semester begins. And yet there is a force driving the students to such excess, and it has been present from the beginning of the UWC movement.

In 1962 Desmond Hoare was the first administrator to sound this alarm, writing in his first report to the board of Atlantic College about the difficulty such an avalanche of activity and responsibility pose for "even the most prepared boy." Student over-commitment is still a hobgoblin for the students in 2012, as each large obligation at the UWC USA rises in intensity, is dealt with, and then fades to make room for the next quasi-emergency. Academics, cultural shows, CAS leadership, and residential life duties all wax and wane: each arena of commitment

dominating a student's life as its demands become increasingly more acute. For this reason, as Anne learned, "getting sick at UWC is like getting sick in hell."

Part of this hellishness derives from the significant autonomy that the students enjoy, even if they often don't notice it because they are so busy. Adults at the UWC USA are happy to help when a student such as Anne comes forward, but such students do not usually come forward at all. Instead they hold their breath and work harder, or counter-intuitively, sublimate their over-commitment in yet another massive project such as MAAD. They often find strange shelter in such singular campaigns even as these pursuits cause them to fall behind in other areas. It is in this strange behavior that the answer lies.

There is a good reason for this doubling-down on a large collaborative project when so many other commitments are pressing a student for their time: it feels good, perhaps even on-mission, to execute a CAS or a cultural show with a team of one's peers. Such work resonates with students in a way that English class can never deliver. As Xolani from Swaziland said before he left for winter break, exhausted from the third semester: "I need to fall back in love with this place." Common causes help students do exactly that.

Moreover, students like Dvora from Israel and Agni from Nepal find new social connections and deepening friendships as they strive together. Common causes not only connect one to the mission, but they also open up new avenues of friendship. This last factor may be the most vital in terms of the institution's engine of change: there was a second ring of students (and faculty) around Rahma from Syria when the suicide bomber exploded himself in her neighborhood back home. They were non-Arabs, hanging back out of respect, but no less concerned for the safety of Rahma's family.

When this striving together takes place in the service of a cultural show, it bolsters the common sentiment of the region. This strengthened pan-regionalism becomes crucial in other moments such as the suicide bomber in Rahma's quiet neighborhood. During the cultural shows, this pan-regional bonding happens while the students simultaneously reify and trouble stereotypes of their nations and region, playing in the dangerous waters of transgressive humor in front of a packed house.

In this way, the figured world of the region becomes more populated and more densely-imagined at the precise moment in the school year when that same imagined world is showcased. "Region" becomes collaboratively-constructed, replete with reflexive humor and intentional political commentary, at the same time as it is curated and presented: a transmission of "culture" and a demonstration of regional unity in the same two-hour show.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁷There are other versions of this approach to Cultural Day shows at other UWCs. For instance, UWC-Pearson, in British Columbia, Canada, puts on a "One World" show once a year. A similar pageant but obviously even broader in its reach.

DAY 6 – A Friday in April – Transgressive Humor

One by one, the second years have begun to understand this is all going to be over soon. For some of them, like Mathias, Xolani and Anne, it has been the process of college visits that has done it: encountering the physical reality of what might be their future. For others, it is the tradition of IB trials, a series of intense practice tests in each of their classes intended to simulate the formality and stress of the actual examinations. Teachers do their best to hit their students with questions that will approximate what they think the IB will ask.

For these teachers, the trials period is itself a trial: a process of wondering how closely they have gotten to the mark of “what the IB wants,” soon to be realized or not in the performance of their students. In a way that is not often spoken of in front of students, the teachers also acquire their own version of an IB score: the average final IB grade for each of their classes. This number is able to be compared to the national and international average. The students are not the only ones who must contend with being counted, measured, and compared.

For the second-years, the final phase of school is of course full of academic stress, but also a deep ambivalence. By the end of April, they are emotionally ready to graduate. Many of them are 18 or 19 years old, and are developing adult needs for autonomy. Many of them are excited for university life, and feel very prepared for it. Unlike many entering college freshmen, UWC USA graduates are not intimidated by the dormitory life or intense academics that await them at university. And yet the rules and rhythms of the UWC USA are beginning to feel vestigial. As Anne points out: “It feels like two years is about right is just because it's such an exhausting process to do this for two years, to go through all these pressures, to have all of

these emotional situations, saying goodbye, saying hello, adapting new things, accepting new things, challenging old things, all those sorts of things. It's just exhausting to never sleep and do that and to feel like you have lead all of these things [co-curriculars] and to make your mark and do the IBs."

Whether two years has been the appropriate amount of time for a UWC USA experience or not, each of the second-years considers the emotional toll that graduation will take with grim resolve. A great sundering is coming. As firsties they watched their second-years go through it. It is not something to which they look forward.

"Because it is Spring!"

It is 8:45 am on a Friday in April and I am walking down the 131 steps to class. There is a particular landing on the staircase where two small trees bend over the concrete pad and round the metal railing of the stairs. Both trees have been in bloom for a few days now, and despite the mountain morning chill, butterflies are visiting the flowers. They loop silently amongst the blossoms in the still, sweet air. Beyond this accidental natural threshold of moving color, the campus and the mountains behind it have bloomed into a light green. The piñon pines steadfastly remain deep evergreen, but the grass on the soccer field and the distant meadows and clearings on the foothills have come alive. Flashes of light green are everywhere in one's periphery.

The students are unrepentant in their delight about the season. Without noticing it, I am blocking traffic on the stairs as I watch the butterflies in the two small trees on the landing. I turn around to find three students smiling at me, and also smiling at the watching the butterflies. They are happy to watch. It's spring.

The change in greenery and the lighter temperatures leads to unusual outfits. I walk into my 8:55 code and half the girls are wearing sundresses under thick parkas, while half the boys are wearing shorts and flip flops under heavy sweatshirts and woolen hats. The other half of the class still looks fully prepared for a winter campout.

As I leave class an hour later and head over to the Faculty standup meeting that takes place every Friday morning at 9:40⁶³⁸, I find two first-year boys from Uganda sitting in the direct sunlight on the edge of a concrete garden box. They are huddled together. They are both wearing shorts and flip-flops and thick winter coats. They are shivering and laughing as they watch me approach. It is perhaps 55 degrees outside, and Ugandans are not known for their resistance to chilly weather.

“What are you two doing?” I ask, smiling at their shivering.

“We are dying!” one of them, “Solomon” from my class, announces. The other boy giggles helplessly, drawing his knees up. I point to his legs and feet.

“Why are you wearing shorts and flip flops?”

“Because it is spring! Look, the sun!” They both squint directly into the sun, laughing and shivering as it blinds them. Then they look at me and huddle closer. “We are dying, Josh. We are so cold.” As I head into Sasakawa I look back at them, still huddled as one on the concrete block, delighted to be freezing in their flip-flops.

⁶³⁸ This is the shortest code of the week. For a full weekly timetable, please see Appendix D.

What's Up, Terrorist?

A central feature of the IB course Language and Literature is a constant preoccupation with the relationship between text and context. Appropriate to a school of this nature, the course allows teachers like myself to fold aspects of this unique environment into the lessons. Our class texts include titles that address identity construction, such as Amin Maalouf's *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. We have also done units on slang, insider discourse, and code-switching.

Because it is Friday and we have just finished our last unit before IB trials begin, today's free-write is intentionally provocative: "Why is it ok to tell racist jokes at the UWC USA?" Usually sleepy on a Friday morning, the students grin at the board and begin writing with energy.

As they write, I walk slowly around the room behind their chairs, contemplating how humor works here and wondering what I am going to get as responses. UWC USA students are often quite celebratory of "their" style of humor, seeing it as a unique feature of the school, and publicly satirizing the fact that "the UWC is so racist" while also being such a tolerant place. By "racist" in this particular context, the students mean "playful with transgressive humor," though they would never use such an awkward phrase.

The students finish their free writes and we begin our discussion. I start by defining "transgressive humor" for them as a joke or set of jokes that intentionally includes potentially insulting, demeaning, or otherwise dangerous elements as part of the humor of the joke." I then ask them to give me a couple examples of those that are common at the UWC USA. Hands shoot up immediately.

“There’s the joke that Latins are always late for, well, everything.” The room laughs, and everyone looks at the girl from Guatemala, who grins and shakes her head, disagreeing.

“Africans, too!” The room chuckles. The boys from Uganda and Zimbabwe smile, also shaking their heads, but it seems like they actually disagree.

“What do you think?” I ask Solomon from Uganda to my immediate right, a particularly articulate and careful student. He is wearing a yellow AND t-shirt. Solomon smiles carefully and then says, “it may be true that sometimes Africans are late.” At this point he is interrupted by other students laughing and vociferously agreeing with the statement, all while knowing Solomon has more to say. He waits patiently, and when the noise dies down he turns to me and says, “but you will never hear Africans making that same joke.”

The room goes quiet as they think about that one. Eventually other students in the room disagree with Solomon, insisting they have heard plenty of Africans claim that lateness is ok because of “African time.” Solomon’s point sticks with me though, and after that moment in class I am much more attentive to how transgressive humor plays out at the UWC USA and who is making jokes that target other demographics.

The conversation continues like this, with the students happily exposing the many repeated and predictable jokes that are so common as to become cultural memes at the UWC USA. This meme-ification often balloons to full-blown cliché, and then the joke no longer is funny at all, its newness and shock value diminished by use. In this way there is an entire category of transgressive humor that is eventually shelved by the student body, having been worn into irrelevance.

Running along the side of our classroom is an interior hallway with doorways to the outdoors at either end. Along this interior hallway are a series of three-foot windows between the hallway and my classroom. If I neglect to shut the blinds, which I always do, any passing foot traffic can be seen from my classroom. From that interior hallway into my classroom are two doors: one near the outside door, and one over by my desk toward the “front” of the computer lab.

Right in the middle of our lively Friday morning discussion about transgressive humor, the door to the outside at the far end of the interior hallway opens and the same boy from Jordan, Yazan, who acted in the TSA skit, enters the hallway. As Yazan passes the first doorway to the classroom, an Indian-American boy from Florida, “Karna,” who is a close friend of Yazan’s, leans back in his chair and says in a loud voice, “What’s up terrorist?”

The room buzzes immediately with “ooooooh” and “daaaamn”. Everyone looks back and forth from me to Karna, who, still grinning, is watching Yazan to see what he will do. Yazan walks down the line of windows, looking in. Everyone is shaking their head and laughing. Transgressive humor just happened right in front of us! As Yazan reaches the second door, a strange look comes over his face. He turns right all at once and runs into the room. I take a few steps back, not sure what will happen next. Yazan takes three or four steps into the room and opens his jacket, pretending to be wearing a bomb vest. He puts out his two thumbs and pushes down on them while making a bomb-exploding noise. The room goes mad. Students are laughing, cheering, and leaning away from their desks. Karna has leapt out of his chair and puts his hands on his head. No one can believe that Yazan just did this. The attention in the room quickly redirects to me.

I can see myself in their eyes: I am frozen with my mouth agape and my eyebrows up. I can't believe that just happened either. And yet here I am, laughing with my mouth wide open. Everyone is laughing. The only one who is not laughing is Yazan, who looks stunned. He turns to me and says, "I'm sorry?" He repeats his apology and then vanishes, leaving us to pick up the pieces.

Corrosive and/or Healing: Transgressive Humor at the UWC USA

A monolithic understanding of transgressive humor at the UWC USA (such as it being "always bad") is imprecise in the same way as any monolithic understanding of identity construction might be. This is because most transgressive humor, at least at the UWC USA, is essentially identity-based.

The practice of such humor lays bare the entire set of contexts of identity construction that Holland et al. identify (figured worlds, positionality, spaces of authoring, and the making of worlds), and therefore that same framework serves a ready tool with which to parse this dangerous topic. By this I mean that a transgressive joke first relies on a complicated common frame: the figured world of the joke itself. The joke almost certainly deals with positionality, either making fun of a positionality directly (like being a hard-studying Asian), or using the latent tension in respective positionalities to generate humor. This reliance on positionality is loaded. This explosive potential is why the joke is transgressive in the first place. It has the power to insult, wound, bully, or otherwise destroy. And yet this transgression can contain within it the power of self-authoring. As we shall see below, when Dvora and Rami share transgressive humor, they are stepping out against the cultural fields of social propriety, the same fields that might work to make them enemies.

Finally, for good or evil, transgressive humor does make new worlds. Depending on the intent, machinery, audience, positionality, delivery, and reception of the joke, this new world can be one borne from irreverent improvisation in the face of constricting social paradigms (such as the Arab-Israeli conflict), or it can be a devastating reification of power structures, dominance, and bigoted stereotypes. Transgressive humor, at least at the UWC USA, can corrode the social fabric. Yet it can also work to heal it.

It is obvious that the following section will be read in a context that does not happen to be a singular, isolated, hyper-diverse international school full of idealistic teenagers. An essential frame to place around the shocking examples of humor below is that the default setting in nearly every social interaction at the UWC USA is one of kindness and tolerance. Without that as a context, I believe the following passages read inaccurately. This kindness, curiosity and tolerance, the particular warmth of the UWC USA, softens the edge of much of this species of humor, but it also deadens the response of audiences to it. It is a warmth that cuts both ways.

The broad spectrum of transgressive humor at the UWC USA takes place on many scales and at many levels, but it is absolutely a feature of life here. It is present at meals, on wilderness trips, and in hundreds of conversations each day. For the sake of argument, I have separated the phenomenon into two large categories: what I am calling *playful micro-transgressions* and *performance in self-face*. The first category consists of tiny units of transgressive humor that transgress over social mores and propriety in order to be funny, which has at least two possible results: humor that is healing and humor that is corrosive. The second category, performance in self-face, is a more public, and therefore more dangerous cousin to the first. It is possible for

performance in self-face to be either healing or corrosive, but those results are much harder to gauge than with playful micro-transgressions because performance in self-face is theatrical and public, a casting of transgressive transmissions into unknown cultural fields.

A definition of terms here is essential, given the complicated nature of this subject. For the purposes of my analysis, a transgressive joke is seen to be “healing” when it contributes positively to an alliance, and/or pokes holes in a set of stereotypes or reductive assumptions, especially across any degree of cultural distance factor. Such humor is especially healing and powerful if it threatens power structures. Conversely, a joke that “corrodes” confirms power dominance through the closing of dialogue and the reaffirmation of norms such as stereotypes.

Playful Micro-Transgressions

I have named the first sub-type of transgressive humor *playful micro-transgressions* in an intentional riff on the term “micro-aggression,” which itself refers to tiny conscious or subconscious discriminatory or bigoted actions operating on any number of axes (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity) that accumulate and contribute to a prejudiced social landscape.⁶³⁹ Micro-aggressions are often executed along a power dynamic, sometimes going unnoticed by the perpetrator. An example of this would be the heedless question to a non-white American person, “Where are you from?” implying to the target of the question that if they are non-white they couldn’t possibly be American.

I use the term “playful” as a modifier for micro-transgression because it denotes a play frame and also, therefore, in contrast to many micro-aggressions, intent. This usage of the

⁶³⁹ Derald Wing Sue, *Macroaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 3.

modifier “playful” is not meant to imply that such micro-transgressions are always positive: far from it. Play can wound. I use the term “micro-transgression” to point to the fact that a main mechanism of this species of humor is to cross the line between what is generally acceptable and what is not. Indeed, it is from this crossing that the humor in question receives much of its humorous charge. “Micro,” of course, refers to the unit of humor being small, pedestrian, and ephemeral. The lines that are crossed in this style of humor are of course derived from the relative positionalities of the speaker, audience, and subject of the humor, and the multiple axis of power relationships between these three loci.

By way of real-life UWC USA example, a short time after both MAAD and the Palestine Report, a group of students were goofing around in the Acon day room. One of them, an American named “Benjamin,” jokingly shoved Rahma from Syria. Dvora immediately shoved Benjamin back, saying, “Stay away from my Acon girl.” Rami from Palestine stepped into the fray, pretending to be serious, and separated everyone. “Look at us,” he admonished, “the conflict!” The students all chuckled happily. An Arab-Israeli joke! That was dangerous territory! For that joke to land, the relationship between Dvora and Rami must be secure. In fact, this sort of playful micro-transgression bloomed between the two of them after the Palestine report and the Arab-Israeli dance off, as the twin experiences of MAAD and the Palestine report opened up new space for friendship. Had Rami attempted such a joke earlier, it might have had the potential for healing, but it also may have missed badly. Such a miss would have had corrosive consequences for both Dvora and Rami, but then by extension, all Arabs and Israelis at the UWC USA. These are dangerous waters.

The seductive aspect of this phenomenon for these students, and perhaps a reason that such playful micro-transgressions are so common is that although these are dangerous waters, they can also be healing waters. Each time a playful micro-transgression such as the “Look at us, the conflict!” joke lands well between Rami and Dvora, their alliance has the opportunity to grow. It becomes a way to point at the tragedy of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a way that puts two potential belligerents in a collaborative space. Through this kind of improvisation, playful micro-transgressions can elicit a temporary triumph of the personal over the historical. Joining someone equally in the shared frame of a joke, provided the occupants of that frame (in this case Rami and Dvora) have equal power and understand the frame’s limits, is a moment of mutual *being-seen-ness*, of two or more people saying “we share this observation, we share this ephemeral territory.” And it’s funny. After a few successful executions of a playful micro-transgression, a student can begin to feel that they have discovered a utopian form of humor: healing in its irreverence.

The problem is that the overall institutional culture in which all of this layered humor is being deployed is populated almost entirely by teenagers. Restraint and forethought, though far more common in this student body than in most others of its size, is still something many students are learning about. As a result, more common at the UWC USA (but also very tolerated) is the *corrosive* playful micro-transgression. A playful micro-transgressive joke that “corrodes” often does so because the “teller” fails to recognize (or deliberately ignores) how their positionality does or does not align with that of their audience (or subject, if the two are different).

Audience and reception are of course central in determining the effect of any attempt at humor. This is even more the case with transgressive humor. Any playful micro-transgression that aims at healing must account for the positionality of anyone else who is included in the frame of the joke (meaning anyone who witnesses it firsthand, but also anyone who later will hear about it out of context or somehow read a script of it). In this way, a “Look at us, the conflict!” joke between Rami and Dvora in the noise and bustle of the Acon day room may be safe, provided someone who wouldn’t understand the full context of the joke, including the hard-won personal alliance between Dvora and Rami, cannot hear it, and that the other two members of the joke frame, Rahma and Benjamin, also align with the playful micro-transgression in terms of positionality, peer status, and the understanding of the joke frame. Each new audience member means a new accounting in terms of the joke’s status as healing or corrosive. Of course the same is true if the joke is re-told by a speaker with a different positionality.⁶⁴⁰ This re-telling is often disastrous.

Tellers of corrosive playful micro-transgressions, on the other hand, often care little for the curation of an audience. Collaboration is not their goal. This heedlessness, whether intentional or unintentional, can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes by failing to account for the humanity of the audience or the subject. An example of a corrosive playful micro-transgression would be the knowing wink that is sometimes exchanged when a Latin boy seeks out the romantic affections of a Nordic girl. “They love the blondes because they are exotic” is a

⁶⁴⁰ This phenomenon of recycling the joke with a new context plays out endlessly in the United States when white joke-tellers recycle the transgressive humor of black comedians making fun of black people. The joke is the same, but all the positionalities have all changed, thereby changing the DNA of the joke from precise send-up to cringe-worthy and insulting regurgitation, often with the black-facing of voice thrown in.

phrase that is used. Such a joke sneers at “predictable” behavior while closing down discussion: Latin boys prefer white blond Euro girls, everyone knows that. Such is the implication of the corrosive micro-transgression.

In contrast, the playful micro-transgression that *heals* does so by operating across social fields in a way that does honor to, indeed continues to develop, an existing alliance or friendship, all while using the transgression and surprise of the joke to insist upon, to carve out, a small space of authoring and, in rare cases, hint toward the making of a “new world.”

For example, it is a demographic fact that during this ethnography there were but a few students who were not members of the MAAD region, or simply “Asians” in the brutal shorthand of the UWC USA, in the Math Higher class. Conversely there are few Asians at all in the easiest math class, Math Studies. This obvious demographic reality was easy fodder for students during my time at the UWC USA. Veronica from Maryland retells a common joke that follows this line of thought. When asked which math class she is in, she remembers saying: “I am in Math Higher, and they [the questioners] are like ‘Oh you’re Asian’ and I’m like ‘yes of course, my parents wouldn’t let me take [Math] Standard.’ I mean, everyone knows it’s a joke.”⁶⁴¹ The joke heals because the positionality lines up.

Veronica is more free to make Asian jokes because she identifies as (and reads as) Asian. “I think everyone here does use racial humor and does make jokes about their own race,” she offers. “I make Asian jokes all the time... especially with grades, like a 6+ is like ‘Oh! Bad grade!’” Veronica’s playful micro-transgression works to heal here by pointing out with deft irony the

⁶⁴¹ The ‘joke’ to which Veronica is referring here is the use of race, not the class itself. Veronica does not think Math Standard is a joke.

possibly unfair pressures to which Asian students are exposed to from home, made obvious by the overwhelming population of Asians in the most difficult math class at the international school. Academic pressure on Asians, Veronica's joke winkingly suggests, is a global phenomenon.

Performance in Self-Face

This sort of shared joke looks similar to, but is vastly different from, another important species of transgressive humor at the UWC USA, which I call performance in self-face. Yazan's interruption of my classroom was an especially surprising version of this.

Here I borrow from the lengthy scholarship around cultural appropriation and power, most notably Eric Lott's *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*.⁶⁴² Lott upended the accepted historical understanding of blackface minstrelsy in the 19th Century: that white actors blacked their faces and performed in minstrel shows as a performative consolidation of racial norms. He did so by showing that blackface minstrelsy was actually a process of "love and theft" – of a tenuous, envious cross-racial "envy" between the black and white working classes, but also theft – the stealing and essentializing of aspects of black culture to help a poor white working class feel superior and different. This nuance was possible at least in part because blackface minstrelsy was performative. This meant that established racial narratives and also theatrical choices were always at play, tools that could open up all manner of transmission and reception. Lott argues that this transmission was inspired and driven by an impulse that was only partially conscious: "Minstrelsy brought to

⁶⁴² Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 20th Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

public form racialized elements of thought and feeling, tone and impulse, residing at the very edge of semantic availability, which Americans only dimly realized they felt, let alone understood.⁶⁴³

Instead of one ethnic group using racial essentialism to appreciate and ultimately distinguish themselves from another, my phrase performance in self-face refers to a moment of performance where the machinery of a joke or skit is reliant on the “teller” performing a warped stereotype of their *own* positionality. Yazan intentionally performing one of the most politically-charged and corrosive stereotypes associated with modern-day Arabs and Muslims, the suicide bomber, is an example of this. In this case, Yazan was performing “grotesque Arab-face”: an intentional distillation and simultaneous lampooning of a horrific stereotype. I suggest that the delivery and reception of performance in self-face happens at the UWC USA for similar reasons as Lott reveals in the case of blackface minstrelsy: a “public form of racialized thoughts and feelings, tone and impulse.”

Put another way, performance in self-face is a common practice at the UWC USA. I believe this is in part a result of an impulse among the students to resist and subvert the process of nationalization they experience upon arriving. In a similar vein, its often-grotesque manifestation implies an emotional violence, a hurling: there is anger in Yazan’s joke. I therefore also see performance in self-face as a form of semi-conscious revenge enacted by students against the frames of identity thrust upon them by others in the UWC USA community, peers, faculty, and administration: “I will play the part of the Danish international student,” they say,

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 6.

“but at some point you are going to have to deal with an inappropriate skit about Vikings that will make fun of *your* expectations of *me*.”

Powered by this subversive impulse, performance in self-face is a far more dangerous species of transgressive humor than the more garden-variety playful micro-transgression because it is often performed in mixed or unknown company. It is an ‘acting out’ on more than one level. The actor is never certain of the true membership in the joke frame. Such territory is not under control, nor does performance in self-face benefit from the ephemerality of so many playful micro-transgressions, especially in the digital age. These days, if you are in front of a crowd, you are probably being recorded.

Performance in self-face is a common phenomenon at cultural shows. During the AND cultural show, a small handful of African boys, Xolani included, performed a curious kind of nostalgic grotesquery by executing a skit where four “village elders” of a nameless African village sexualized passing women while comparing them to livestock. The dramatic irony was that “everyone” knew these “elders” did nothing but sit around and gab all day. The larger point of the skit was to highlight a system of social hierarchy that is steadily becoming outdated. To get there, however, the African boys used transgressive humor: they performed in self-face. In a similar pattern, during the AND cultural show a run-on skit consisted of a Jewish-American boy playing a Jewish “yenta,” or old lady, replete with flowery hat, an obsession with the doctor’s office and giving unsolicited advice. It is unclear whether this performance was anything more than comic relief. It bears note that his partner in the skit, also playing a yenta, was a Bahaman boy with no Jewish heritage. His particular performance was uncritical “Jewish-face.”

One of the most vivid examples during my ethnography of performing in face consisted of a UWC USA second-year whom I shall call “Johnny,” who played a character during the MAAD cultural show. The character’s name was also “Johnny,” and a version of his character showed up in the “Confucius Say” skit, as well as in the “Butterfly Lovers” skit. “Real” Johnny from Singapore was energetically “performing in face,” clad in a brilliant iridescent blue *changpao* (a traditional long silken tunic) adorned with a mandarin collar, running around from place to place on stage as if he were terribly busy, dropping his articles (the real Johnny does not have these challenges with spoken English), and, any time he agreed with his counterpart on stage, nodding his head emphatically and saying, “Ooooooooooh!”

The audience loved it, especially the students. Real Johnny has excellent comic timing, and the yellow-face version of himself was a loud, riotous cartoon, simultaneously invoking and then spearing as many Asian stereotypes as Real Johnny could fit into the character. Everyone from the UWC USA was in on the joke, to the point where Joke Johnny would appear onstage and the audience would begin laughing before he said anything. And yet cultural shows are open to the public. Real Johnny’s successful performance in self-face sent a complicated transmission into cultural fields that he did not completely control, quite different from Rami’s playful micro-transgression with Dvora. On the other hand, Real Johnny was also on a large stage being witnessed by a large crowd. The jokes were landing. His virtuoso performance successfully invoked and then exploded the stereotypes that so many associate with Asians.

Later, Real Johnny remembered the event well. “I chose Confucius because I knew the western audience would know that guy,” Johnny said, smiling. As for the stereotype, it started out with Johnny knowing that “my strength in the skit was my accent.” So he amplified that

accent. “It just came naturally.” As he thought about the performance, Johnny reflected on the context for such transgressive humor: “That’s the thing about the UWC. We were oblivious to the concept of being judged.” His last comment is accurate, except that it doesn’t take into account Johnny’s own positionality as someone who clearly reads as Asian. Those steps into the dangerous waters of transgressive humor were his to take. It did not always work out so successfully.

The Seduction of Shock: The Café that Nobody Forgot

Open Mics at the UWC USA are called cafés. They are held on Friday evenings in the student center, and because they are student spaces, they are sparsely attended by adults. Karl and his friend Tobias, spurred by a sense that they had, through months and months of transgressive humor, accidentally curated on-campus personas of themselves that people expected to be offensive. They decided to address this by performing a skit at the Friday café.

The original premise of the skit was to point at and make fun of their own personas as provocateurs. This attempt would have powerfully negative consequences, and these consequences distract from the fact that, however poorly-conceived the attempt might have been, Karl and Tobias were performing in face too. This time, the “face” they were performing was the grotesque white racist face, a face that so many students had to deal with as a matter of course in their daily lives that the performance of the transgressive humor completely exploded the frame of the jokes. In service of performing the racist personas they intended to lampoon, Karl and Tobias chose to light off some seriously transgressive humor, having looked up “offensive jokes” online while planning to deliver them in the ‘safe’ guise of their ‘offensive personas’ on stage at the café.

The jokes they chose targeted the continent of Africa, and at least one of the jokes used the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a punchline. Another of their jokes directly made fun of drought and starvation. In a series of beats that remains controversial to this day, as Karl and Tobias continued their act, the laughter of the room and the lights shining on the stage hid from them the fact that every African student had quietly gotten up and filed out of the student center.

Upon leaving the stage himself, Karl was confronted by a taciturn co-year of his from Zimbabwe, his eyes filled with tears of disbelief and anger. It was immediately clear that Karl and Tobias' act had gone horribly awry. They had attempted to perform face, to enact their own belligerent whiteness as a meta-joke, but every one of the positionality prerequisites for this to work was out of alignment. Quite unlike Yazan's or Johnny's performance-in-face, Karl and Tobias did not have the tacit permission to joke from behind their own in-face mask. Furthermore, Yazan and Johnny's only aggressive acts were to playfully turn the gaze of the viewer back upon itself, highlighting the preposterousness of the stereotypes that were being acted out. Not so with Karl and Tobias, whose humor directly targeted others. The performance grew into a debacle. As the event was told and retold, a salient fact remained: two white western boys from privilege had gotten on stage and unleashed a series of deeply offensive racist jokes in a public forum. This was transgressive humor at its most corrosive. Karl and Tobias fled to Karl's room, unsure of what to do next. They had alienated the entire African population of the UWC USA. Most of the student population, even if they were laughing in the moment of the joke-telling, now stood firmly outside the frame of the joke. How could they come back from this?

Karl had begun to sense that the injuries he had caused with his words were not something for which someone could simply apologize. "There was no recourse," Karl remembers. "I mean, what do you say?" A friend of his from South Africa approached Karl and told him about someone who was close to him who died of AIDS. There were tears and some resolution in that instance, but that was only one student of many. "When you have family members who were stolen from you by this disease that this random kid is now making fun of... well, then that whole experience is getting made fun of," Karl remembers, sadly.

The administration was immediately involved and Karl and Tobias were suspended for two days as Oden deliberated about consequences. Naomi Swinton, the director of CEC, facilitated a session between Karl, Tobias, and the many offended students. "I don't think either party left feeling satisfied," Karl remembers. He and Tobias were assigned to do service in an AIDS clinic.

It was clear to Karl that for some of the other students, his offensive-jester persona had been conflated with him as an actual person. "There was an impression of me that I was genuinely racist" Karl remembers, his eyes going wide in dismay. And there was little he could do at that point. Years later, he is still humbled by his mistake. "I was 100% wrong in that situation. I should have tried to reconcile better." In retrospect, Karl wishes his penalty had been more severe, feeling like he permanently wounded his relationships with many students right before the year drew to a close, and that, counterintuitively, a more severe punishment might have allowed full re-entry.

The café happened very close to the beginning of IB exams. Soon enough everyone was fixated on the stress of the looming tests as well as contending with the reality of the pending departure from campus. Eventually Karl and Tobias quietly returned to the student population. Like many other firsties, Karl spent the first weeks and months of his time at the UWC USA responding to and in some cases fleeing from the hurricane of identities, processes of nationalization, and the stress of acclimating to school. Instead of retracting toward a region or a table, he accelerated *toward* the brutal cultural shorthand that is so much a part of the first semester and year at the UWC USA. He became a shock jock, cultivating an on-campus persona that gleefully invoked one playful micro-transgression after another.

The seductive power of a widespread cultural norm around transgressive humor is that it seems to promise that everything, even the explosive subject, is available fodder for jokes. This is, of course, not true. But it is not hard to imagine how a boy who had staked his particular identity to a court-jester-esque persona could end up on a café stage and uttering unforgivable things. Transgressive humor is indeed dangerous water. And memories are long.

Friday Soccer Game and the “End of School”

It is Friday afternoon and the only sports team that the UWC USA fields, soccer, is playing a friendly match against the much-older New Mexico Highlands University Club Soccer team. School is over for the second-years, with classes having concluded for them a day ago. It is a gorgeous day: the green in the trees down by the Gallinas river bright against the dark piñons, the soccer field itself a bright green. Soon the heat of late May and June will brown the field again as the yearly forest fires fill the air with smoke. But this afternoon everything is warm and green.

It seems like winter was yesterday, and the students have not missed the indication that it is time for a wardrobe change. T-shirts, tank tops, shorts and dresses are everywhere. There are no bleachers for the UWC USA soccer field, so the students simply lounge on the sidelines, laying near each other on blankets or just the patchy grass of the field itself. The students flirt and laugh as the game begins, the UWC USA players sharp in their bright blue uniforms against the more rag-tag black and white of Highlands. The relaxed air of the gaggle of students and faculty sitting and watching the game contrasts sharply with the soccer team itself, crowded around their coaches. There are few opportunities to play sports in front of a crowd at the UWC USA. The athletes on the soccer team glow at such an opportunity, and the players who are not starters hover near the coaches, anxious for a chance to get in. The game is close, but most of the crowd is only idly watching. They are simply delighted to be out in the sunshine.

The phrase “finished with school” is uttered over and over with many high-fives and hugs. Occasionally a ball flies into the loose crowd. Everyone laughs. One of the faculty children chases it down. On the other field a stray dog runs between three students playing Frisbee. More faculty children play on a set of playground equipment in the shape of a geodesic dome. A roar goes up from the soccer field: UWC USA has just scored. For the few hours during the game, the UWC USA seems like a “regular” American high school.

The IB exams begin next week, so not all the students are down at the soccer game. For 22 days the campus will be dominated by the external IB exams, high-stakes tests in most if not all of a student’s six classes.⁶⁴⁴ For students with test anxiety it is a nightmare scenario: many

⁶⁴⁴ Students with classes such as theater, studio art, or music will not have an external examination in a conventional form. They do, however, experience the external judging of their art and performance in a non-test format.

desks all in a row in the auditorium and the basketball gym. Booklets. Time limits. Familiar teachers reading unfamiliar and mandatory text boxes before each exam begins. The students have organized themselves into IB-buddies, firsties who make signs, give hugs, and leave random gifts for their designated second-year as they wade through the stress of exams. If the second-year is known to occasionally sleep through an alarm, the IB-buddy sets theirs and appears at their dorm room door before the exam. Missing one of these exams could have massive consequences. The IB is famously unforgiving in regards to retakes, and any allowances will still garner massive time-delays in receiving retake scores. Miss a test and you won't be going to college or university next year, even if you are granted a retake.⁶⁴⁵

Check-ins for a Friday in Late April

As he approaches the graduation of his second-years, **Sohrab from Iran** is pensive. “This place kills a lot of your dreams and gives rise to some new ones. It makes you more realistic about life.” And by life, Sohrab here means ‘life at the UWC USA.’ Sohrab is coming to terms with the limits of idealism in this school context “You kinda come here with the dream of changing the world and influencing the society and cultures and all of this stuff and you really understand that it takes 30 years, 40 years to change one thing in a small city.” He laughs, but his tone turns serious as he thinks about the stasis and apathy that exists even here. “I have to say that I am disappointed in some things here. I expected things to be much better. Like

⁶⁴⁵ In my second year at the UWC USA, a Canadian student of mine underwent an emergency appendectomy a few days before the IB English exam. She was granted no quarter in terms of being able to take the test a few days later. She could choose: take the test while unable to stand or walk properly, or wait a full year to get into university as her official IB grades waited for her English retake. With the help of her RT, Shirleen Lanham and the Registrar, Codou Dioff, we got her as ready as we could, helping her study from her bedside. On the day of the test she walked into the room leaning heavily on my arm, bent in half, her face white with pain. She did well, and attended McGill in the fall.

students. Conversations with people here are just daily conversations. You get those conversations if you just go to a barber shop to cut your hair. I kind of expected... more debates, more challenging conversations, more important conversations rather than talking about everyday life like everyone else around the world.”

For **Anne from Minnesota**, the coming precipice of graduation is a welcome one. Last year when she heard her second-years saying they were looking forward to graduating, she remembers thinking ‘how could you ever want to leave this place?’ Now she understands, especially regarding the onset of institutional fatigue. “I do feel like I'm ready to move out into a place where I feel like I have more control of how my day goes and the place where I feel like I'm treated more as an adult than I am here.” And yet, Anne is not looking forward to the dislocation that will follow graduation; it's going to be hard, and the IB exams conclude one day before graduation. “I feel like I have to talk with as many people as possible and provide as many flags and all these sorts of things. I never really had the coordination to be elegant about it. I'm so dead tired and frustrated with the whole situation, so I don't know. It's not an easy way to close UWC.” She is proud of her second year and feels deeply connected to many firsties, such as Lavinia from Brazil. Anne wishes there was time to say goodbye properly. During college visits, Anne found it a little alarming that she identified with the international students more than the Americans.

Xolani from Swaziland feels that leaving the UWC USA is “messed up,” and that everyone is depressed. Sadness is everywhere. At the same time, he has had a repeated vision of a “huge, white page that is turning over,” blank and full of possibility. Xolani is looking forward to his university with hungry eyes. With no sense of irony, he quotes Jay-Z to me: “They

couldn't keep me in the kitchen. Too much ambition." When he looks back on his time at the UWC USA, he marvels at how different his perspectives have become from his grandparents' apartheid-era suspicions, especially of white people. He thinks back to his orientation trip two years earlier and the amount of miscommunication, confirmation of stereotypes, and awkwardness that took place then in the New Mexican desert above Ghost Ranch. And then he thinks about where all those friendships now stand, including his deep friendship with Anne, who happened to be in his wilderness group on that trip. "It all comes down to what makes human beings come together," he concludes. Two years earlier he had departed to the UWC USA with only the IB diploma in mind. "I came here to get my family out of poverty. I was so tired of living in poverty." This goal has now changed in scope. After a full engagement with the social entrepreneurship CAS, as well as the bonding that has happened at the UWC USA, Xolani's focus has widened. "I have learned what it means to love someone from a different context and to love them with their whole heart. When someone can love a homo sapiens who looks, talks, and acts different than you, you know something fundamental has changed." This widened view now inspires him to help not just his family, but the nation of Swaziland.

Mathias from Michigan has already met other UWC students at the colleges he toured. It was a relief for him to know that there would be college students who understood what the last two years have meant for him. He feels changed and is worried that this will make it hard for him to connect with "regular" college students after he leaves New Mexico. "You can't just rip off UWC like a Band-Aid or a piece of duct tape and hope that you won't bleed in a sense," he says with a wry grin, implying that re-entry to "regular" American college culture is going to be painful. Mathias is unapologetic about how powerful this experience has been and what that

means for the status of UWC graduates in general. He expects UWC graduates to have roles of leadership and change in their college institutions. UWC graduates, himself included, are destined to be set apart from those students that did not have this experience.

Brenda from Costa Rica has started to notice that “everything is the last thing.” Each institutional element is approaching its last instance: the last class, the last assembly, the last CAS, the last test. She has no idea how she will pack, expressing complete mystification at her second-year roomie last year who was neatly packed and ready to go well ahead of graduation. She is sad to go, but she is also ready. Despite her tremendous difficulties with English and therefore with schoolwork for the entirety of her first year, Brenda sees the UWC USA experience as a privilege. It is extremely valuable territory, and she now believes that it is time for her co-years and herself to leave that territory and make room for others. Brenda feels very strongly that one of the advantages of the UWC USA is that passionate teachers like Gillock and Willms and Farrell are not constrained to the classroom. They are heavily involved with students in all aspects of the co-curricular program. As an example, Brenda points to the collaboration between Gillock and Anne in the creation of the Practical Activism CAS: “they [the students] get motivated, for example [Anne], you start all this sustainability thing [sustainability CAS] because Ben believes in what she wanted to do and then he helped her.” As her fourth semester draws to a close, all the concerns around “homework, school, rules” fall away. In the end, she says, “I think about people, teachers, students, staff. They made the change.”

Grace from Washington credits the institutional requirements for much of her change. She feels that the insistence upon service in CAS exposed her to the power of service. “Being forced to do service made me eventually like doing service. I did service before here, but maybe

for other people who didn't do much community service, or weren't fond of it, having to do it more here, the more you're exposed to different ways of serving others, the more you can begin to like it." For Grace it was the daily and weekly commitment of CAS, the practice of it, that led to change. She is getting ready for a painful separation from her loved ones here, even though she is ready for university. It's time to go, but "still, the fact that we'll never all be together, in the same place, with the same experience that impacted us all so profoundly, I guess is what kind of stings, is bittersweet."

When reflecting on how he has changed while at the UWC USA, **Ismael from Tanzania** focuses on the new perspectives he formed in the last two years. As a young man raised in a devout faith system, Ismael is glad of these new perspectives. "For example like I never knew of gays or lesbians before I came to UWC," he explains. When he did encounter such students the first time, he immediately called his 87-year-old grandmother. "I asked my grandmother if she has ever heard of [gays and lesbians], she told me no." Ismael had encountered something for which he simply had no referent. Over time, he simply adjusted "I kind of broke some of the other stereotypes I always had and I think that is like a very important thing to me." For his part in responding to this same dynamic, the intensely-personal nature of the UWC USA leads Ismael to a place where he can easily dismiss a single offensive action or comment by a single person as a perspective that is uniquely their own. "It makes me think like, these types of, you know, racism. I take them easy, you know? I'm like whatever happened, that's what they think. Maybe it's because they are not exposed to an African person." For Ismael, the engine of change was only ever the triumph of the personal.

Notes on a Friday in April

The tradition of a café on Friday night is meant to allow students some free play, some time for group improvisation without the overpowering influence of faculty or other adults. Students at the UWC USA enjoy a great deal of freedom, but very little of it is in a group setting. Assemblies, cultural shows, and the daily meals are all well-attended by adults. It is not surprising, therefore, that the tension surrounding transgressive humor finally burst at a student café, and toward the end of the fourth semester. The café is simply a wilder, student-centered space. Whatever rules might govern other gatherings are loosened there.

Often missing from the telling and re-telling of Karl and Tobias' disastrous skit was that, though many students, and certainly all of the African students found the skit deeply offensive, other students remained in their seats. There was laughing. Some of this can be written off to nervous laughter about a heavily-charged moment, but not all. Some of Karl and Tobias' jokes managed to land, if only partially. This awkward fact points to the troubled space transgressive humor occupies at the UWC USA. Possibly helpful and possibly hurtful, such humor intersects so profoundly with identity and positionality that in certain instances the three are hard to disentangle.

Another complicating factor in this equation is that some, if not most, of the transgressive humor I refer to as performance in self-face contains within it an angry note, an impulsive striking back against the forces that shape a student's process of identity construction. It is unlikely that this was the case with Karl and Tobias, but it certainly was in the instance of Yazan and Johnny. As we saw in Chapter 3 in my discussion with Sohrab about his participation in this ethnography, some students arrive at the UWC USA with the idea that they will be able to

effortlessly transcend their national identity, a calculus that leaves out the social context from which so much of one's identity springs, and into which it is then performed. This reality is one of limited agency, and I think this leads to a subterranean anger. This, in turn, leads to the grotesque performance in self-face. "Here is your stereotype," such humor says, "here is what you wanted from me." Yazan's "suicide bombing" of my classroom was executed in a moment of impulse, but the joke came out fully formed. This is the same boy who played in a skit where his character tried to board a plane and found himself in Guantanamo Bay. Sick of being stopped every single time he tried to board a plane, Yazan manifested a "racialized element of thought and feeling, tone and impulse, residing at the very edge of semantic availability," to use Eric Lott's phrasing.

It is understandable that an explosive misstep in the students' use of transgressive humor happened during one of the last cafés of the semester. Late spring is a charged, electric time on the UWC USA campus. Since the breaking of the weather, the energy on campus had been thickening. Second-years had begun to not only reach out to others in an 11th-hour attempt to get to know other students they'd always been curious about, but also along the way tell others about it. A vague social countdown to Grad had begun. The stress of trials and then IB examinations a few weeks after loom on the calendar. Most importantly, the second major traumatic dislocation in ten months is about to take place. The social order of the UWC USA is about to be reset once more.

DAY 7 – Saturday, Grad – Dislocation Again

In Anne’s words, “The day of grad is just an emotional wrecking ball. It is insane.” Part of the reason Grad hits everyone so hard is that the inertia of the institution, the grounded place-ness of the UWC USA, is in effect right up until the moment when the school is suddenly empty. Even when students can intellectually conceive of the pending departure of the second-years, emotionally registering that same departure is much more difficult. This is because all the tacit signs of institutional consistency persist. The UWC USA is a residential school. It has a powerful sense of permanency and rhythm. One can easily slip into feeling that how things are now is how they shall always be. Of course, this is not the case.

The Green Room During Blue Moon

It is the night before graduation, and I am in the green room attached to the auditorium stage, where performers prepare for their acts. The green room looks something like a gymnasium changing-room with the addition of makeup tables with the lights that go around the mirrors. It is a medium-large space, with plenty of room for many students to change at once. The noise from the stage is coming through the walls. There are perhaps eight or nine students in here, all waiting for their chance to perform. One girl is stretching her hamstrings against one of the benches. Every so often the stage manager will come through the green room, her headset crackling, to announce which acts need to assemble in the wings of the stage. It is quiet in here, even though one can hear the cheering and laughter from the show. It smells of makeup, sharpie pen, and hot lights in small spaces. A monitor shows a live feed of the on-stage action. No one is watching it.

The Blue Moon Café is the final performance of the year. It is a *mélange* of all the “best” acts of the year’s performances, from student cafés to the greatest hits from the cultural show. This means the mix of costumes that the performers are wearing back here in the green room is even more unusual than normal. Here again is Johnny from MAAD getting ready to perform “Confucius Say” once more. Here again is an entire dance troupe from MAAD. Here again are the three African boys getting ready to do their Old African Men skit. But what makes this scene stand out are the flags.

Backpacks, handbags and laundry bags are piled in corners and leaned against benches, containers for street clothes or costume changes. Spilling out of these containers are flags. Some are splayed on benches or pressed out flat in a corner. Some have sharpie markers still laying on them, the writer pulled from their note-writing to go perform an act on stage. Here and there a student in costume is writing, pulling the fabric of the flag taut under one hand and writing with the other.

The second-years leave tomorrow. This means that all of their flags must be delivered. The departing students have identified anywhere from 5-20 co-years and firsties to whom they want to gift their national or state flag. The firsties have done the same in regards to the second-years. Each of these flags must be written upon. Often, the notes are not short.

For the second-years, these flags function in a similar way as signing a yearbook might work in a conventional American high school. It is a final signifier, an etching. The departing second-year knows that these flags will be displayed on university dorm walls, a testament to the personal connections forged at the UWC USA, as well as a visible analog of the diversity of

the school. This note is for the recipient of the flag, but it is also for anyone curious enough to unfurl the fabric and read.



Figure 10: Personal flag displays at university. Left to top to bottom: Kiel, Germany; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Northfield, Minnesota.

For the firsties, the flags function as an artifact of friendship and frequently also one of grief. In many cases firstie flag-notes reference how different the campus will be next year without the second-year, and how much of an impact that second-year has made upon them. The notes are often messages of loss.

Grad

It is a bright spring morning in Montezuma, New Mexico. There is a strong breeze coming across the soccer field closest to the classrooms and the theater. Here many white folding chairs now face the stage, and national flags are arrayed behind it, looking very much like the grainy images of similar ceremonies from the 1980s. The stage is empty as I walk by it.

There is a sadness to its similarity to other stages in previous graduations, a sense that all of the boundless specificity of the year can be capped by another graduation on this stage, a similar ceremony of speeches and costumes, of flags and ambassadorial rhetoric. There is something about the flags, unwritten-upon, aloof in their stanchions, that homogenizes what has happened here. They stand in sharp contrast to the flags now packed carefully into baggage bound for Melbourne, Sao Paulo, Tel-Aviv and Minneapolis. Those flags are smudged with errant sharpie and makeup, edged with coffee and sweat. They are precious artifacts of the personal.

A few hours later, Zwartjes and I walk down the 131 steps to the ceremony. The students are in full bloom, wearing a blend of national costume and formal wear. The ambassadorial rhetoric has been dialed down, with many students choosing formality over representation. Punchline costumes are completely absent. There is still the occasional kimono or a set of traditional billowing pants under a suit jacket, but smart, simple suits and tasteful spring dresses are more common. Perfume and cologne fly away from the students on the stiff breeze. Students are steadily circling, taking photo after photo of each other in threes and fours, squinting into the New Mexican sun. After a few minutes of this quiet chaos, Tom Oden and Linda Curtis arrange the second-years into a line for the procession onto the soccer field.

There is a strange quietness about the students. Far from the electricity that precedes a party or a cultural day show, or even that inflects the careful packing of a van for a wilderness trip, there is settled-ness about them, smiling at each other in their finery. Part of this is because they are exhausted; the last three days having been characterized by high emotional stakes and little sleep: there has been a sense of packing it in, of making hours count. And yet another part of it is perhaps a realization that this entire project was unsustainable, that having burned

brightly, it is now time to depart. Of course one cannot stay here. But perhaps one would not want to.

The faculty, staff, parents, and firsties are all seated and a drum sounds out in the breeze. The second-years file into the graduation area. They sit on raised bleachers on either side of the stage. The African Chorus performs, Xolani's voice lifting up as the lead in a call-and-answer, the breeze popping in the microphones as the students execute dance steps in the bright sun. Perhaps it is the outdoor environment, but the chorus seems quieter too. And yet the crowd still dances happily in their seats.

The chairman of the UWC USA board, Tom Dickerson, gives a short speech about how UWC USA students are especially well suited to handle the messiness of life. Lisa Darling's speech is longer: a thank you to the departing faculty (seven are retiring, including Tom Lamberth and Linda and Tom Curtis) using a quick allegory to the *Velveteen Rabbit*. Following the student speech by an American girl from Washington State, it is time for the second-years to graduate.⁶⁴⁶ The students are called forward by Oden, doing his best to pronounce long formal names across linguistic traditions that stretch the globe. He has practiced. As the students cross the stage they dance, hold their diploma aloft and cheer, bow, or curtsy. Loud cheers go up for many American students, as their families were able to travel to New Mexico for the event. Other students' crossings are met with the hoots and cheers of only their classmates, their families far away.

⁶⁴⁶ The student speaker is selected in a blind competition for the Sally Martin prize: a small cash prize and the honor of delivering the student address. The competition is open to all students, and receives many entrants each year. The year following, the prize was won by a girl from Japan.

It is over suddenly. The last name is read and all at once the second-years are amongst us, hugging and crying. The hugs last much longer than normal, perfumed hair getting stuck in the buttons and clips of formal wear and national costume. There is much makeup smeared on shoulders, mascara running above bewildered smiles. It is really over. The real world is a bus ride away.

Notes on Grad

Grad at the UWC USA is an unusual ceremony in that it is simultaneously a celebration of the accomplishments of the students and also a ritual of grief. Exhausted by IB exams, the Blue Moon Café, the writing and giving of flags, and then by graduation itself, the students seem dazed after the short ceremony has concluded, as if to say “something that hard and profound should have had a longer graduation.” Some of this disorientation stems from the reality that they are all about to scatter. It is a fact that some of them will never see each other again. They can’t conceive of this yet, but one of the coming challenges is that after such intense cohabitation, some of them will hear about each other’s triumphs and failures only infrequently and from a great distance. Modern media will help them stay connected, but no computer application will be able to simulate the proximity of a roomie, or the tradition of physical contact that is enough of a cultural norm at the UWC USA to be its own cliché.

The suddenness of Grad surprises most of the students, rendering them vulnerable to the semi-permanence of the departure. Anne remembers Grad as a firstie in this way. At first she was able to stay strong. “But then with just a few of the really special second years, I just broke down, knowing that I wasn't going to be able to spend time with them anymore and I

might not see them for several years. It's not a normal high school where you'll all return home from college and see each other at winter break.”

This is dislocation yet again. A cousin, perhaps, to the dislocation a firstie feels upon arriving at the UWC USA, with second-years pounding on the bus, and then stepping out into a strange international environment with its own rules, humor, and norms. It is certainly a cousin to the dislocation students feel when they travel home for the summer or for winter break, finding either that their home worlds appear to be in stasis, such as during Elena’s return to Denmark, or changing so fast as to be alienating, such as Rahma’s return to Syria. The dislocation of Grad is different to the others, however. It is deeper and it will last much longer.

This is because these graduating second-years have spent the last two years constructing a new identity. The process of this identity construction has traversed the four contexts Holland et al. identified: figured worlds, positionality, spaces of authoring, and the making of worlds. These second-years have negotiated the figured worlds of their own expectations, but also those they have collaboratively constructed for the UWC USA itself. Constantly wrestling with their own positionality, they have lived a life both freer from the constraints and expectations of home, and yet instantly constrained and confused by the bewildering array of expectations the adults and their peers had of them here: the process of their own nationalization. But there was room at the edges of these expectations, and when they found this room, they began the process of self-authoring. Much of this room for self-authoring was found in the co-curricular program of the UWC USA, with its opportunities for skill-building and the practice of leadership, but far more powerfully, the opportunity to contribute to the communities of the school and of Las Vegas in ways that mattered. What was

once contextual information, “you are a Danish girl that works at a homeless shelter sometimes,”

By joining a cause, the students here felt needed. Because they felt needed, they took greater risks, carving out more space for self-authoring. They pushed back against the process of nationalization, which they themselves had executed and continued to execute on themselves and on others, by forging individual connections through self-effacement in common causes. They also pushed back with humor, tossing playful micro-transgressions around for their own amusement, but also to find common ground with others in a humor frame. Less frequently but more powerfully, they blasted stereotypes by performing them *in face*, acting out some facet of their own nationalization to insist the viewer be embarrassed for themselves, turning the gaze of the nationalizer back whence it came. Finally, they were able to build new worlds. These were often humble worlds, but no less profound for their humbleness. A Palestinian became the ally of an Israeli.

And yet the buses have left. These new worlds, precious in their uniqueness, have been sundered, scattered across the United States and the world. They will perhaps re-gather in different configurations wherever the Davis Scholarship program sends up a beacon, but this particular space-time has collapsed. This is a problem for these second-years because they are now very different. They have rhythms, expectations, and transgressive jokes that only work here. What if the outside world doesn't care about the two years they spent working together to 'unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future'?

The Midnight Bus

Kris Wilson and I have been asked by Linda Curtis to “help” get students on the midnight bus. When she asks us, I get the sense by the finality of her request that this is going to be intense. Wilson was himself once a student. I have a dim memory of him telling me that graduation was one of the saddest days of his life up to that point. After today’s ceremony, I am beginning to understand what he meant.

We hang out at my house until about 11:30 pm before walking down the stairs toward the fieldhouse and the series of concrete terraces between the four lower campus dorms: MB, Chum, Kili and Denali. Wilson tells me again what it was like for him at 18. “You knew you would never see some of these people ever again,” he says, an air of wonderment in his voice. “I know it’s cliché to say, but your heart is totally breaking.”

We walk through the night, and as we descend the stairs we can hear the sound of many voices and the insistent beeping of a large vehicle backing up. We pass through the terrace between MB and Chum. A few students burst out of the day room doors and run down ahead of us toward the waiting bus.

Between the bottom of MB and Chum and the terraces of Denali and Kili, there is a larger earth-and-grass area with a few laundry lines and, every so often, a car delivering equipment or a school van picking up students. At the end of this yard is the main road leading up to the castle. Parked pointing downhill and mobbed by students is the midnight bus, its engine muttering in the dry night, its interior lights on. The luggage bays are open. It is total chaos outside the bus.

There is a lot of hugging and crying going on. To my left as we walk through the yard toward the bus are two roomies from Kozzy, hugging and promising emphatically to stay in touch. There are a lot of red eyes on both boys and girls. Some students are hanging back, stunned by the sheer emotional surge of it all. I pass a pair of girls locked in a hug, both profoundly weeping. Here a couple is saying goodbye. A kiss right here in front of everyone. Here a boy saying goodbye to another boy, holding him by the shoulders. His words falter and he gathers his friend up in an embrace. The friend is smiling in the way some people do at goodbyes.

Linda is at the accordion door of the bus, ushering students on board. She is slowly separating hugging students and gently pushing them toward the waiting vehicle. She makes eye contact with us and nods toward the bus, saying silently, "Let's go. Get em' on there." Linda knows that the longer this goes on, the worse it gets. Wilson and I begin moving toward the groups of students furthest from the bus. Are you leaving on this bus? Hey. Look at me. Are you leaving on this bus? Ok, let's go, time to start getting on the bus. You're not leaving? Ok, then let her go. She has to go. Wilson splits off from me and begins to untangle an especially intertwined group hug of four or five Latins. The ones who look up at him at all completely ignore him.

One student remembers something important and suddenly breaks from the crowd at the bus, sprinting around the corner and up the stairs. Linda sees the fleeing figure and sighs, turning back toward the groups around her. I continue separating students. I find more than one pair of which neither student is leaving; they are simply sad. As I put my hands on the students and pry them apart, they often do not even look at me, they simply separate limply or hold on

fiercely, but they do not contend with me: I am not part of their reality. My hands are functioning only as circumstance. They must leave. They do not want to leave.

I glance up at the bus. Linda is forcing students in the stairway of the bus back on board. "No, you can't come off," she is saying in repetition. The bus windows ratchet down, and hands of all colors come out, waving. Faces are pressed to the long sideways rectangles of the bus windows. Long minutes go by. Eventually, painfully, most of the departing students are on board.

The remaining students, some of whom will leave on their own late-night bus two hours from now, stand in witness of the bus as it slowly pulls out. They are holding each other as they watch the taillights of the bus turn the corner and head down the road beyond security. They look defeated, as if their goal had been to prevent the bus from leaving.

Post-Script: The Israeli Defense Force

Early November, 2012. Six Months After Grad

Dvora sits in front of me at the same table at which hundreds of interviews have now taken place. It is the fall of 2013, two full years after our first interview. She is now enlisted in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). She has used some military leave to fly back to the UWC USA because she needed to reconnect to the place that had meant so much to her. I meet her at Ben Gillock's house, just down the hill from my apartment. She smiled softly and gave me a huge hug. She said little at first. In a happy accident, two other American "third years" are visiting at the same time. The three young women lounge and chat in Gillock's kitchen with the easy patterns of old friends.⁶⁴⁷ Already there is a different cast to all three of them, a sense of them seeing the UWC USA differently, even though it has only been half a year since they graduated. Despite the easy conversation, I can tell from a few glances that Dvora has something to say. I'd heard there had been difficulty in the army. She's asked over Facebook if we can do another interview.

"Ready to go?" I asked during a lull in the conversation. Dvora nods. Her two friends smile, knowing this was coming. The sun is now shining through the window onto the table. Dvora does not want tea. She just wants to tell me what happened. It has not been an easy year. She starts talking in her calm, even way.

With the same plan in mind as she had told Rahma about directly after the Palestine Report in January of 2012, Dvora entered the IDF with the intention of becoming a drill

⁶⁴⁷ I learned later that the three girls had not been especially close while at school. The experience of accidentally visiting the school post-graduation together brought them closer.

instructor. The first many phases to enlisting were no problem. She is a strong, athletic young woman and so the physical challenges were simply an amusing challenge. So were the head games. She treated it like any other kind of game and was able to stay above the yelling and the plentitude of rules and large punishments for small infractions.

Dvora's incoming cohort of recruits was all about the same age. But Dvora was older in other ways. She left home at age 16 to travel to New Mexico. There she was a major contributor to campus life: she served as an orientation leader, negotiated being an Israeli at the liberal international school so far from home, co-led the MAAD cultural show and served as an RA. What was a little yelling, a few head games?

Dvora heard crying at night. Many of the younger girls had never been away from home, and certainly never done anything as scary as the military. They were just as homesick as Dvora had been two years ago when she first arrived at the UWC USA. And yet even though she was more mature and above the games, the fact that she had to be in the game started to annoy her.

It's so stupid. I have a list of all the stupid things they made us do. If you have a water bottle, it needs to be at the tip of your left leg when you talk to them. And there's an official wording before you start a phrase and you need to answer... I mean, it's the military. And I always thought I could handle it because it's a game. But it was – I don't know. It's just this stupid game that I didn't feel like I should be playing.

The trouble started with weapons training. At first Dvora simply did her best to ignore the assault rifle that she was issued. "We got our weapons and I walked around with it for a day and it was just a toy. It was just something on my neck. It's this big weapon, M16." The recruits had to study the weapon, learning how to take it apart and how to reassemble it. It's very broken down. It's nothing. It's just a toy," Dvora remembers telling herself. "It's just something

that's constructed of different parts that you need to study for a test." They were never allowed to be away from the weapon. The drill instructors called it their "boyfriend." For a while even that was ok.

But then we have what's called a situation class. I'm translating it horribly, but we learn how to shoot a weapon without actual bullets. So you learn all kinds of different positions. You have standing up, lying down on your knees and things like that. So we hold our guns up, we clean them and things like that.

And then they were given clips. When she slid the first clip into her weapon everything permanently changed.

I put it and then the gun became super heavy, I couldn't hold it. I couldn't breathe. Basically, it was like a panic attack. It was hard. I couldn't breathe. I was hyperventilating. I felt like I was going to faint. I just thought maybe I'm just weak because I can't hold it, but it became like carrying a car. It's really heavy. At this point Dvora stops speaking as she composes herself. I get her tissues. She

continues.

So I had to sit on the side with the gun on me. You have to hold it. That's the proper way of doing it. So I just sat on the side and held it like this [she shows me with her hands, miming a rifle diagonally down across her chest]. It was on a strap. I don't know. Then I look up and we have about 10 people in each group. I see this 18-year-old girl just learning how to shoot and it was really disgusting for several reasons. First of all, a minute before, I realized how right-wing a lot of them are, the values that are leading them are something that disgusts me to the core. I just don't belong... all I could think about was Rahma and Yazan. I don't know, just everything Rahma stands for. Holding a gun, it gave me the feeling of losing my values much, much stronger and it was horrible. [For] thirty minutes I was just having to sit there. And what's going through my mind is 'Ok. Eighteen-year-old girls learning to shoot and me holding a gun. Rahma. Yazan. 18-year-old girls.' It was just terrible.

The IDF instructors, recognizing the beginnings of something serious, pulled Dvora aside. They tried being nurturing, then shifted to intimidation when that failed. The days wore on. She got in trouble for leaving her assault rifle in her room. She felt much happier without it. Soon it is time for Krav Maga training, the famous Israeli style of hand-to-hand combat. Dvora was

excited. “Yeah, Krav Maga, I can try to be a true Israeli.” That’s something I can tell my friends and be like, “Yeah, I learned Krav Maga. It was cool.” I’m a violent person, that’s obvious, but good violent, funny violent, but not this violent.” As soon as she saw the instructors demonstrate the vicious attacking motions of a special version of Krav Maga where the rifle is used as a melee weapon, it happened again. She couldn’t breathe and she couldn’t stop seeing her Arab friends on the receiving end of the brutal movements. She had another panic attack.

After some difficulty, Dvora succeeded in seeking out a military psychologist and then a civilian psychiatrist, both of whom signed off on her psychological inability to carry or use a weapon.⁶⁴⁸ However, in order to transfer out of the drill instructor training unit, she had to complete her training. With the help of a series of officers, she painstakingly finished rifle qualification and tactical maneuvering. She had a series of panic attacks along the way, especially when exposed to the sound and the kick of live ammunition. Eventually she won a clerical spot in an office that serves the drill instructing unit.

Dvora’s emotional response to her own refusal to hold a weapon was complicated by the intense exchange of attacks that erupted between Hamas and the IDF during November of 2012. The IDF cleared the base where Dvora worked due to rocket attacks from Palestine. It was not a vacation. “it was a terrifying week off because my brother was on the front line, but they didn’t go in. They were prepared to go in. And I remember going back and just looking down and seeing green pants and being so ashamed at wearing Israeli uniform when this is happening. It was terrible.” Dvora reached out to Rami online, writing, “It feels weird if I don’t write to you during this time, I love you and I hope everything is okay.” He responded quickly, Dvora

⁶⁴⁸ The mental health professionals diagnosed Dvora with something they called “weapon phobia.”

remembered. “He wrote that he hopes that my family is okay and that he hates that this is the situation, that he wanted to write to me as well but he didn’t really know what to say. But it was really good.” That moment in the Chemistry room during the Palestine Report was still alive, even though they were on opposite sides of a shooting war. ⁶⁴⁹

Suddenly, connection to her friends at the UWC USA, both those still there and those that had graduated, was crucial. Dvora found herself looking intensely for the little green circle next a friend’s name that would mean they were online and could chat on G-Chat or Facebook. Dvora didn’t want to be a burden to her friends, but she needed them, too. She began to struggle with depression, becoming angry and bitter with her family and loved ones. This was because for the first time in her life, Dvora was not engaged in something aspirational. “It hit me that there’s nothing I can do with my service to make it meaningful. It sucks so much. It’s like another year and a half of this.” Soon she will transfer positions to a “boring office job where all I do is translate documents.” The name of her new unit is “international relations.”

Conclusion - The Engine of Change, Phase III: The Triumph of the Personal

Before Dvora’s struggles in the IDF and before Grad at the UWC USA, she and I had a conversation about what I have come to call the *triumph of the personal*. Dvora was explaining

⁶⁴⁹ At exactly this period in time, one of Dvora’s firstie Israeli friends, “Yuli,” was experiencing this same war back at the UWC USA. It was a tense time for Arabs and Israelis on campus. Here is what “Yuli” remembers: “I wanted to say that my best example of being less involved in a nationality was during my second year. When a war started in Israel, a family member of mine that worked in intel told me that I shouldn’t be worried because bombs are not gonna land in Tel Aviv. I trusted him because he works in this area. Next morning, I woke up for brunch on Saturday, and opened my phone and see so many notifications about bombs landing in Tel Aviv. And I just freaked out. I didn’t know who I could talk to. I looked for Louis, and went to look for him at the cafeteria, and the first person I saw on the stairs was Rahma that saw me crying, and she didn’t even have to ask what happened. She knew, and hugged me and said she’s also sorry for the horrible situation.”

how the UWC USA had impacted her, and she kept circling back to her new-found ability to connect with and relate to those who were much different than herself: she was describing a form of deep bonding. Though she wasn't naming it as such, she was talking about self-effacement for the common cause. Best of all, Dvora pointed out, this bonding "wasn't achieved through something as horrific as war (even though I know that being in a war area, that connection can be formed) ... thinking that I am able to identify to people from all around the world, sharing this community, it's really amazing." It was instead formed in the common causes of CAS, cultural shows, and wilderness trips, as well as in the constant, daily exposure to difference.

For Dvora, this ability to identify with others had everything to do with constructing an identity with them, sometimes in argument with them. It was following crisis of identity that drove her nationalization in her first semester at the UWC USA, that Dvora opened up to connection with others. "Coming here, it doesn't mean that you have to have your identity formulated already. Actually, for me, [coming here] was what formulated my identity. But it's a place that makes you doubt. I think that doubt in everything just makes you really think about it yourself."

Ultimately Dvora wouldn't load, aim, or even hold the assault rifle at boot camp because she couldn't touch the weapon without thinking of Rahma and Yazan. It was an amplified version of the moment in the Palestine Report, when Rami began to identify with Dvora as she fielded question after question. It is a phase of identity construction when one realizes that "they wouldn't be themselves" if they continued. It is a new threshold, realized in a moment of truth. The old understandings about oneself - at least about the topic at hand - no longer apply.

Here we see the 'moral courage' that Hahn so desperately sought in his students emerging in the actions of Dvora and Rami. But this courage to act did not derive from some top-down moral training. It came instead from loyalty across dislocation: a steadfastness born of the triumph of the personal through previous self-effacement in the common cause.

For Dvora this change, though obviously profound, was incremental. "It's living in the same hallway as a girl from Syria, who's going to challenge everything that my world is about, what the conflict is all about," as well as the hundreds of shared transgressive jokes they share and the camaraderie formed in the stress and triumph of a cultural show that features an Arab-Israeli dance off.

Veronica from Maryland thinks that this is best signified by the flag exchange. For all the initial ambassadorial rhetoric that surrounds the idea of nations in the beginning of each year, Veronica thinks that such rhetoric is successfully altered during the course of a year. "We turn that around and when someone gives you a flag you don't think of those things. It's exactly the opposite; you think of all the valuable times spent with that individual."

EPILOGUE

Moria "Hotspot" Near Lesbos, Greece, February 2016

It was two am and it was cold down by the water. Fiachra MacFadden (Fiki) never worked the shore. His job was up away from the beach where the refugees arrived. This was a special assignment. He had been one of many staff pulled off their normal duties to help a large group of refugees up the beach toward the barbed wire and huts of the camp.

Fiki represented Singapore at the UWC USA from 2011-2013, though his family is all from Ireland. All Singaporean young men must join the military after high school. So instead of heading off to university like so many of his classmates, Fiki became a soldier. When that commitment ended, he found himself with a few months before university would begin.

And now he was standing with his mouth open, watching people get out of the rubber boats and come streaming up toward him. "There were kids, just really soaking kids and I was just standing there and didn't know what to do," he remembers later. He can only assume he had his mouth open, like all the new volunteers do during their first time, staring at the cold, soaking wet refugees coming off the boats from Turkey. A man shouted at him for help. He looked over to see he was being beckoned over to a group of volunteers gathered by the water's edge around a group of children, wet and cold.

His firstie roomie when he was a second-year at the UWC USA is from Homs, Syria, a city that is now in the epicenter of the Syrian civil war. During the time of this ethnography, he was going through hell as his city absorbed wave after wave of violence. He spoke to Fiki about the horrors happening back home, though to almost nobody else. Fiki's ensuing personal connection to the situation in Syria was further buttressed by his close friendship with Rahma.

In the fall and winter of 2016, after his release from the military, Fiki watched the international news covering the boatloads of Syrian refugees disembarking in Lesvos with dismay. He watched them not with the distant muted sadness that so many other westerners did, but with the shock of someone who might know someone in those boats. He knew what he would do next. He traveled to Greece from Singapore and managed to get brought on by the volunteer group I AM YOU, offering aid, shelter, and registration to the refugees right as they reach Greece.

Now, down by the boats in the dark, he was pulling a child off the beach. "I picked her up, this toddler. Yeah. there was 5, 6 other guys who also picked up a bunch of kids and we knew that we needed to get them straight into a house or a dorm as they call them and get them wrapped up in blankets." Fiki knew from many wilderness trips at the UWC USA that the children were in immediate danger from hypothermia.

What we did is I was carrying this kid and 6 other guys were carrying a kid and we started running up this giant hill to get to the dorms and what was very interesting to me is the kid that I was holding, she was shivering, and you would think that a kid who is really shivering in this brand-new place that's ... There's barbed wire everywhere and fences everywhere would be crying and or at least would be shouting and I was carrying this kid and she was just looking around, left to right, like a deer in the headlights as well, just shivering, just looking around, left to right, and I was here breathing my hot air on her head, right on her temple, and as I was running up the hill and I was holding back tears because this kid was just so cold... We wrapped them up in clean clothes and all the parents are just sitting around and just everyone... no one was saying anything. You would expect in a situation like this, there'd be a lot of talk and a lot of questions and everything but all the parents are sitting on the benches there, just looking around the room in absolute shock.

I AM YOU was operating near the town of Mytilini, Greece. For four weeks Fiki had been bunked with other volunteers from all over the world. I asked him whether the kids recovered after their dangerous trip across the water. He was delighted to say they were fine.

I saw them the next day. The kids just running around playing with basketballs. They somehow found this big board and they clipped that onto the fence and then they broke the bottom of a rubbish bin and they made that a basketball hoop and they somehow managed to tie that up to the board on top of the fence and now we have this basketball hoop up there and they're playing on that pretty much every day. All the new kids that come play with that.

As Fiki continued to work for I AM YOU, he noticed that the bonds he was forming at the refugee intake center were reminding him of somewhere else.

It feels a lot like UWC here as well because the volunteers are from all over the world. They're very loving of each other. Every time they greet each other, they hug each other, and when people leave, there's always cheers and there's always a big dinner. It's an interesting dichotomy. There's the most caring and loving and amazing people you'll ever meet in your entire life here volunteering but the reason that we're here is because of the most fucked-up people that we have in this world.

In another connection to the UWC movement, alumni from the UWC-AC, where the RIB was first invented, and where sea rescue sat at the center of school culture for decades, arranged to bring a RIB used in rescues in the Bristol Firth into action in the eastern Mediterranean. Staffed by UWC alumni and other volunteers, the UWC rescue boat now escorts the overloaded incoming refugee boats so that the boats are safe from the fate that befell Aylan, Galip and hundreds of other refugees as they attempted to execute the final leg of their escape to the European Union.

CONCLUSION – TIMES OF DANGER AND TIMES OF HOPE

Kurt Hahn only ever produced educational innovations to solve the problems he saw before him: a Germany on its knees after the First World War, a Britain with its back against the North Atlantic during the Second World War, and an entire world shuddering before the nuclear specter of the Cold War. His innovations were always contingent on their context. They were also often shaped by Hahn's own preoccupation with the nation-state as a concept, always referencing the "national character" of Germany, or referring to Britain as a strong-but-besieged heroine in a grim novel. But there was a system. Hahn referred to it by that name. It was a system born from war, and Hahn made no secret about absorbing lessons from war, seeking what William James called its moral equivalent.

In the closing pages of his excellent history of the First World War, John Keegan, having just chronicled the industrial carnage of the Great War, seems to be reaching for something along the same lines.

Comradeship flourished in the earthwork cities of the Western and Eastern Fronts, bound strangers into the closest brotherhood, elevated the loyalties created within the ethos of temporary regimentality to the status of life-and-death blood ties. Men whom the trenches cast into intimacy entered into bonds of mutual dependency and sacrifice of self stronger than any of the friendships made in peace and in better times. That is the ultimate mystery of the First World War. If we could understand its loves, as well as its hates, we would be nearer understanding the mystery of human life.⁶⁵⁰

Hahn did this. He came to "understand [war's] loves." This dissertation has shown that he channeled and then innovated upon the progressive educational impulses abroad in Europe and the United States in the period before the First World War that had gathered and distilled

⁶⁵⁰ Keegan, *The First World War*, 426.

into the utopian school projects of Hermann Lietz and Cecil Reddie. Responding to the war and then to post-war conditions of his beloved Germany during the period from 1914-1933, Hahn created the Salem school to save Germany from itself. Despite Hahn's losing of the race for the soul of Germany's youth to Hitler in the 1930s, he managed to accidentally initiate what would become whole swaths of the international experiential education movement, a cultural and educational phenomenon that continues to expand and evolve as I write.

In the process of doing so, Hahn identified and deployed a series of techniques for altering a student's identity, and for helping them identify with others. He used the phrase "grow into what you are" but "grow into what I want you to be" would have been more accurate. Thankfully for his charges, what Hahn wanted them to be was stronger, more resilient, more capable, more ethical versions of themselves. He hoped his charges would strike out into Germany, spreading the effects he had incubated at Salem.

Also at work in Germany during this chaotic, fecund time was a different intelligence; one that wanted very much for its subjects to grow into what *it* wanted them to be. As we all know now, it was this latter force that won out, at least in the short term. Its subjects were sometimes hard to distinguish from Hahn's, with their focus on teamwork, physical health, skill building, and dedication to one's community. As Hahn himself noted at the time, the crucial (and only) difference was the primacy of morality at Salem, of "doing what one knows to be right."

With this in mind, the fact that the same Volkish utopian educational impulse that eventually led the educator Hermann Lietz into proto-fascism but Kurt Hahn into anti-fascism is not as mysterious as it might seem at first. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 we watched identity

construction, the engine of change, do its work at the UWC USA. During the phase of *nationalization* many of the students, confronted with the wonderful and confusing trauma of arrival at the UWC USA seized upon their own faintly -conceived national identities. They performed them in the pageantry and ambassadorial rhetoric of the welcome ceremony, as well as in their daily lives, even though most of them didn't fully understand these identities at first. Later, these same students re-formed into one of the five cultural regions, either around the common project and performance of a cultural day, or around some external stimuli: a suicide bomb going off in a middle class neighborhood in Damascus, or a misguided barrage of racist jokes. Identifying is a constant process at the UWC USA, made more intense by the charged atmosphere of the place. When one senses adversity, confusion or threat, even culturally, one tends to team up with others.

Though the ethnographic chapters of this dissertation revealed a staged process of identity construction, it also showed that almost none of it is explicitly driven by the faculty and administration at the school. There was a social pattern at work at the UWC USA, and it wasn't there because the intelligent, capable, and hardworking adults that work there intentionally installed it. Linda Darling, Tom Oden and Linda Curtis did not sit up late at night and obsess about whether the mission statement was being manifested in the minutiae of each day. In this, they are quite a bit more reasonable than their progressive utopian predecessors like Reddie, Lietz, and Hahn.

Yet despite lacking an overmind-like integration of the mission statement into each and every beat of the school day, the pattern of identity construction I witnessed was clear. To me this reinforces the notion that, at deep psychological and emotional levels, we all seek the

comfort of identification. Importantly, this need can be intensified by external stimuli, internal void, or by the anxiety that can accompany either. The identity hurricane that firsties encountered in Montezuma, New Mexico can constitute such a void and set off such anxiety. Perhaps the same could be said for the cultural crisis of economic failure, defeat in war, and the threats of modernism gnawing away at the social fabric of 1920s Germany. Perhaps also the global crises of the Second World War in Scotland in the 1930s and 40s; or the existential nuclear crisis of the Cold War in Wales in the 1950s and 60s.

I humbly suggest here that the same forces that drive us to know ourselves as members of families and towns, ethnicities and races can be mobilized by external forces (and, thankfully, ourselves too) to cause us to know ourselves as members of other groups as well: political parties, cultural regions, rescue boat crews, fascist youth groups, tent groups, and cook groups.

While these groups, especially at a total institution like the UWC USA, one's own identity is altered through phenomena such as skill acquisition, successful response to adversity, increased resilience, and increased self-confidence, one bonds to others in that small group. Often one begins to put the group before oneself. One begins to self-efface in pursuit of the common cause. This identity construction often results in identification with others who are different than oneself. Whether it is other members of a cultural show, other African students at the African Table, other CAS members at the homeless shelter, or other sailors in your rescue boat in the Bristol Firth, what was once "they" becomes "we."

In the above vignette, Fiki experienced the same impulse that the Maltese boat driver, Mimmo, experienced in the opening pages of this dissertation. Mimmo looked at the soaking wet children exposed in a dangerous situation and saw his own children. He piloted the rescue

boat *Aylan* for MOAS because he felt the injustice of his children being safe at home in a warm house while these children clutched their parents and the cold rubber of a shabby boat afloat in the wintry Mediterranean. For Fiki it was watching the news and seeing not faceless Syrian refugees, dirty and scared, but both Rahma and his roomie from the UWC USA. The moment she slammed the clip home on her M-16 assault rifle, Dvora from Israel imagined not keffiyah-clad terrorists through her gun sights, but Rami from Palestine, Yazan from Jordan and Rahma as well. As a result of this imagining, the rifle became too heavy to carry and Dvora couldn't breathe. In all of these instances, it was the profound moment of identification with others that led to what Hahn would call a moment of "physical courage." The basis for this identification is symbolized by the national flags hanging on the walls of UWC graduates everywhere, ambassadorial rhetoric transmuted into precious artifacts of the personal.

It is not for me to say whether such profound identification can, properly scaled, serve as an antidote to the brutality and dislocation caused by neoliberal economic policies, religious fundamentalism, and most alarmingly, climate change. But these profound triumphs of the personal do tempt the optimist. It is certain that Fiki, Dvora, Rami, Rahma, Anne, and the others that we have met in the course of this study did not have the full, generous orientation to the world before they arrived at the UWC USA as they do now.

It is important to keep in mind that the original UWC was derived from the experiences of professional soldiers at the newly-formed NATO Defense college. There, former sworn enemies found surprising common ground, even camaraderie, in their collaborative work to defeat a new common enemy: the Soviets. The hot hatreds of the Second World War gave way quickly enough to self-effacement in the new common cause. This remarkable phenomenon

deserves a second glance. Thanks to this pattern surviving until it was experienced by Dvora and Rami and all the others, we have that second glance.

On its own, the UWC USA project's impact might "only" be to release wonderful human beings back into the world, having permanently changed them into young men and women for whom daily newscasts are a constant problem; far too easily now do they identify with the human beings in the coverage of terrorist attacks in Ankara, earthquakes in Kathmandu, or hypothermic children on the shores of Lesvos.

But the UWC USA project does offer more to the world than the 100 graduates who vector out into the world each year after a sunny day of heartbreak at graduation and a midnight bus trip to the Albuquerque airport. As this project has shown, it offers the realization that the answer to a seemingly intransigent dislocation factor is self-effacement in a common cause. This is no small thing, and does not require the rare air of a UWC to execute. Though the project of a UWC might not scale-able, this phenomenon most certainly is.

It is certain that we shall have plenty of opportunity for self-effacement in the common cause, the precursor to the triumphs of the personal I mention above. James Hansen, formerly Director of the NASA Institute for Space Studies and a Professor at Columbia University's Earth Institute, released a controversial new study in the Journal of Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics in March of 2016. In this Hansen and his 18 co-authors warn that a feasible scenario for climate change's effect on the globe may take place at a much faster timeline than has been expected.⁶⁵¹ This scenario would involve, among other things, "non-linearly growing sea level

⁶⁵¹ James Hansen et al., "Ice Melt, Sea Level Rise and Superstorms: Evidence from Paleoclimate Data, Climate Modeling, and Modern Observations That 2 C Global Warming Could Be Dangerous" (Copernicus Publications on behalf of the European Geosciences Union, March 22, 2016), <http://www.atmos-chem-phys.net/16/3761/2016/acp-16-3761-2016.pdf>. The article makes for grim reading: "high fossil fuel

rise, reaching several meters over a timescale of 50–150 years.” In this scenario, most of the cities from which my informants originated would be destroyed or drastically altered, possibly during their lifetimes. It is a doomsday scenario of the highest order. And yet so was the Nazi threat and so was the Cold War. Times of danger and times of hope, indeed.

emissions this century are predicted to yield (1) cooling of the Southern Ocean, especially in the Western Hemisphere; (2) slowing of the Southern Ocean overturning circulation, warming of the ice shelves, and growing ice sheet mass loss; (3) slowdown and eventual shutdown of the Atlantic overturning circulation with cooling of the North Atlantic region; (4) increasingly powerful storms; and (5) non-linearly growing sea level rise, reaching several meters over a timescale of 50–150 years

Appendix A – List of Partner Institutions to the UWC Davis Scholar Program, Sorted Alphabetically

1	Agnes Scott College	Decatur, GA
2	Amherst College	Amherst, MA
3	Bard College	Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
4	Barnard College	New York, NY
5	Bates College	Lewiston, ME
6	Bennington College	Bennington, VT
7	Boston Conservatory	Boston, MA
8	Bowdoin College	Brunswick, ME
9	Brandeis University	Waltham, MA
10	Brown University	Providence, RI
11	Bryn Mawr College	Bryn Mawr, PA
12	Bucknell University	Lewisburg, PA
13	Carleton College	Northfield, MN
14	Claremont McKenna College	Claremont, CA
15	Clark University	Worcester, MA
16	Colby College	Waterville, ME
17	Colgate University	Hamilton, NY
18	College of the Atlantic	Bar Harbor, ME
19	Colorado College	Colorado Springs, CO
20	Columbia University	New York, NY
21	Connecticut College	New London, CT
22	Cornell University	Ithaca, NY
23	Dartmouth College	Hanover, NH
24	Davidson College	Davidson, NC
25	Denison University	Granville, OH
26	Duke University	Durham, NC
27	Earlham College	Richmond, IN
28	Franklin & Marshall College	Lancaster, PA
29	Georgetown University	Washington, DC
30	Gettysburg College	Gettysburg, PA
31	Grinnell College	Grinnell, IA
32	Harvard College	Cambridge, MA
33	Hood College	Frederick, MD
34	Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore, MD
35	Kalamazoo College	Kalamazoo, MI
36	Kenyon College	Gambier, OH

37	Lake Forest College	Lake Forest, IL
38	Lehigh University	Bethlehem, PA
39	Lewis & Clark College	Portland, OR
40	Luther College	Decorah, IA
41	Macalester College	Saint Paul, MN
42	Methodist University	Fayetteville, NC
43	Middlebury College	Middlebury, VT
44	MIT	Cambridge, MA
45	Mount Holyoke College	South Hadley, MA
46	New York University	New York, NY
47	Northwestern University	Evanston, IL
48	Notre Dame of Maryland University	Baltimore, MD
49	Oberlin College	Oberlin, OH
50	Occidental College	Los Angeles, CA
51	Pitzer College	Claremont, CA
52	Pomona College	Claremont, CA
53	Princeton University	Princeton, NJ
54	Randolph-Macon College	Ashland, VA
55	Reed College	Portland, OR
56	Ringling College of Art & Design	Sarasota, FL
57	Sarah Lawrence College	Bronxville, NY
58	Savannah College of Art & Design	Savannah, GA
59	School of the Art Institute of Chicago	Chicago, IL
60	Scripps College	Claremont, CA
61	Skidmore College	Saratoga Springs, NY
62	Smith College	Northampton, MA
63	St. John's College	Annapolis, MD & Santa Fe, NM
64	St. Lawrence University	Canton, NY
65	St. Olaf College	Northfield, MN
66	Stanford University	Stanford, CA
67	Swarthmore College	Swarthmore, PA
68	The College of Idaho	Caldwell, ID
69	Trinity College	Hartford, CT
70	Tufts University	Medford, MA
71	Union College	Schenectady, NY
72	University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, CA
73	University of Chicago	Chicago, IL
74	University of Florida	Gainesville, FL
75	University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI

76	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill, NC
77	University of Oklahoma	Norman, OK
78	University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, PA
79	University of Richmond	Richmond, VA
80	University of Rochester	Rochester, NY
81	University of Virginia	Charlottesville, VA
82	Vassar College	Poughkeepsie, NY
83	Wartburg College	Waverly, IA
84	Washington & Lee University	Lexington, VA
85	Wellesley College	Wellesley, MA
86	Wesleyan University	Middletown, CT
87	Westminster College	Fulton, MO
88	Wheaton College	Norton, MA
89	Whitman College	Walla Walla, WA
90	Williams College	Williamstown, MA
91	Yale University	New Haven, CT

**Appendix B – Top 30 Colleges or Universities Which UWC USA Graduates
Attended, from Graduating Years 2005-2012**

Rank in number of UWC USA students	University or College	Total Number of Students
1	Earlham College	43
2	Dartmouth College	30
3	University of Florida	27
4	Brown University	26
5	Macalester College	24
6	Princeton University	23
7	Middlebury College	22
8	Wellesley College	18
9	Harvard University	17
10	Jacobs International University	15
11	Johns Hopkins University	14
12	Colorado College	11
13	Trinity College	11
14	Westminster College	11
15	Duke University	10
16	Lake Forest College	10
17	McGill University	10
18	Connecticut College	9
19	Tufts University	9
20	Colby College	8
21	College of Notre Dame of Maryland	8
22	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	8
23	Methodist College	8
24	Wheaton College	8
25	Amherst College	7
26	College of Idaho	7
27	Smith College	7
28	Vassar College	7
29	College of the Atlantic	6
30	New York University	6

Appendix C – CAS Offerings for the 2011-2012 School Year, UWC USA

<i>Service or Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
Admissions Intern	Recruit U.S. students for the UWCs. Work on our recruiting plan and explore new ways to recruit. Correspond with prospective students via email, Facebook and relevant online forums. Join Tim on a recruiting trip to a school in Santa Fe and participate in admission/school information sessions.
African Cultural Day	Prepare for African Cultural Day on Nov 19! Participants must be a citizen of an African country or invited as a guest AND be in good academic standing and have participated in only one other cultural day. Meetings on Sunday Oct 30, Nov 6, and Nov 13
Afro-Haitian Drumming & Dance	High energy dancing and drumming in the West African and Haitian traditions.
Alta Vista Hospital Internship	Work in a department in the regional hospital in a variety of clerical and support capacities. Learn more about hospitals and what it is like to work in a hospital environment.
Amnesty International	We will engage the school community in human rights issues by writing letters of urgent action, preparing presentations for assembly for increasing awareness of int'l human rights issues, and organizing school and community events.
Animal Welfare Education & Service	Help to socialize animals at the local shelter. Present programs on animal welfare in local afterschool programs. Weekend trips to animal shelters. Fundraising for local shelter. Awareness on campus.
Art of Tea	We will teach you various ways of serving tea in different cultures, and then you will design an entire tea setting. Another important aspect of tea settings is food pairings. Participants will experiment with different types of teas and food and then come up with their own pairings.
Arts, Crafts & Fun in Local Schools - 21st Century	Develop and provide an international arts and crafts and enrichment activities program to elementary school students in the 21st Century program.
Badminton	Learn the basics of badminton as well as play in a variety of contexts (singles, doubles, mixed doubles).
Basketball	Basketball fundamentals for individuals of all skill levels. Play recreational basketball emphasizing playing in a safe manner, sportsmanship and deemphasizing bravado.

Blacksmithing	Work with a professional smith to learn basic, traditional blacksmithing techniques to produce esthetically pleasing, functional objects. COST: \$50/semester for this activity
Campus Activities	Students set up, publicize, do and run tech for all-school parties.
Campus Store	Staff the campus store, learning people skills, working with cash, and monitoring inventory.
CARE Unit	Students plan activities for and spend time with about 15 juvenile sex offenders at the state hospital. This program gives inmates exposure to 'normal' life boundaries to help them learn to adapt to the outside.
Casa de Samaritan Shelter	Casa de Samaritan is a shelter that serves transient and homeless individuals by providing them with food, a place to sleep and other services. Students work evening shifts and help to keep the shelter operating.
Castle Tours	Lead public tours of the castle on some Saturdays and provide special tours upon request.
CEC Practical Activism & Cross-Cultural Educational Events	CEC retreat, interfaith dialogue, coffee tables, global issues in town, etc. Help develop and staff activities at the Old Mission such as evening cafes and global dialogues, after-school programming.
CEC Challenge Course	Lead small group initiatives and challenge course activities.
CEC Facilitation, Peer Mediation & Restorative Justice	Plan events, explore CEC principles, hone cross-cultural communication skills, and learn to lead restorative justice processes, peer mediation and dialogue.
CEC Internship	Work with Naomi on CEC activities and event planning.
Children of the World (formerly UNICEF)	Educate students and others about the situation of children around the world. Participants plan and carry out informational and fund-raising projects in support of UNICEF. Plans for this year include fund raising, having a day of fasting each semester, working with LV schools to educate students about other countries and regions, and presenting at least once each semester at school assemblies.

Children's Chorus	Help local children develop music skills & perform in public. Seeking two first years 1) a pianist/accompanist (good sight-reading skills); and 2) a director with a good voice, and experience singing in a choir. Good English language skills req.
Chorus	Sing choral music together and perform publicly. No experience is necessary. The ability to read music is helpful but not required. We will be performing off-campus as well as on-campus.
Community Art	Join local artists and community members of all ages for art activities and reflection.
Community Work crew	Students plan and assist Las Vegas and nearby communities' residents, particularly community groups that need help with a variety of construction and manual tasks. Examples include Habitat for Humanity, Samaritan House, and Mission Church.
Cooking and Eating	Students will learn kitchen safety and culinary techniques, prepare food from around the world, and learn to bake bread and pastries.
Development Office Internship	Get involved with the UWC cause: thank donors through letters or phone calls, provide help with mailings and copying, write for the website & publications, help with photography & video, record and produce stories train others on how to do this.
Economics Tutoring	Assist fellow students in Economics as needed.
English Conversation Partners	On Wednesdays 1- 2 pm, a study of applied linguistics and second language learning. On Fridays 10:30-11:30 a.m., tutoring one-on-one with a first year English B student. You will learn a skill that is valuable in the job market while helping your peers.
European Cultural Day	Prepare for END on Oct 29. Participants must be a citizen of a European country or invited as a guest AND be in good academic standing and have participated in only one other cultural day.
Fieldhouse Activities	Student will oversee campus-based physical activity resources like the weight room, gym, community bike program, climbing wall and sports equipment.
Filmmaking	Work on film projects, learning filming and editing shorts and episodes.
Floor Ball	Great exercise, fast speed, new experiences and lots of fun! You'll get all this in our new Nordic sport similar to ice hockey but played indoors.

Grand Canyon Preparation	Prepare to go on SW Studies expedition to the Grand Canyon. Emphasis on physical conditioning with some educational sessions.
HIV/AIDS Peer Educators	In conjunction with the NM Dept. of Health, students will prepare and facilitate workshops on HIV/AIDS/STDs to youth in Las Vegas.
Horse Adventures	Explore our connection with horses, both on the ground and in the saddle. Qualities such as body language, focus, assertiveness and self-awareness are explored and developed.
Horse Adventures	Explore our connection with horses, both on the ground and in the saddle. Qualities such as body language, focus, assertiveness and self-awareness are explored and developed.
Internships: Faculty & Administrative	Assist faculty with administrative, evaluative and planning tasks.
IT Internship	Manage IT in dorms, assist IT dept., mentor users. Learn on the job. Work on special projects incl. evaluation, testing, and implementation of new software. Special projects include rebuilding old systems and GIS-related projects.
Jewelry Making	Learn the skills for making silver, nickel, copper, brass (and other metals) jewelry. Skills include design and planning for projects, safety, sawing, cutting, soldering, polishing, stone setting and other related techniques. There is a cost of \$20.00 for this activity
Jewelry Making	Learn the skills for making silver, nickel, copper, brass (and other metals) jewelry. Skills include design and planning for projects, safety, sawing, cutting, soldering, polishing, stone setting and other related techniques. There is a cost of \$20.00 for this activity
Knitting & Crocheting	Learn basic knitting and crocheting from the experts!
Las Vegas Peace and Justice Center Internships	Students will intern with the Las Vegas Peace and Justice Center, a local non-profit community organization dedicated to fostering a peaceful and just Las Vegas. The Center works to address concerns of citizens, with the agenda being formed by citizens for citizens.
Lego League	Mentor 9 - 14 year olds in building robots out of Lego. Two teams, supporting Rio Gallinas School and the 21st Century program at Paul D Henry ES. Possible participation in the Lego League competition in Albuquerque.
Library Service	Learn how a library works. Shelve books and work to make the library clean and orderly. Assist librarians with special projects.

Red Cross Lifeguard Training	This 33-hour course teaches you lifeguard skills. Completion results in a certification from the Red Cross.
Martial Arts	Learn a combination of martial arts to build skill, physical endurance, and an understanding of the uses of these arts.
Math Games for Children	Work with elementary kids at various elementary schools to bring math alive through games and activities. Create curriculum first weeks, begin on Sept 20th.
Math SL/HL Tutoring	Math tutoring by students for those needing extra help.
Math Studies Tutoring	Math Studies tutoring by students for those needing extra help.
Model UN	Debate current issues in MUN forum; prepare for the New Mexico MUN conference.
Modern Dance - Beg/Interim	This class is a modern technique class. We will emphasize stretching and core strength-building in the beginning floor exercises that build in length over the semester. We will learn a series of center and across the floor combinations that link to form longer dance sequences.
Mountain Biking	Enjoy speeding around beautiful places while learning basic bike safety and maintenance. Beginners through advanced bikers welcome.
Music Improvisation	This activity involves actual improvisation in an informal class setting, with emphasis on learning improvisational techniques. Various musical styles will be explored. Private coaching with the instructor is possible for special projects.
Music Theory Tutor	Tutors will help students with music theory.
NM Behavioral Health Institute Support Team	NMBHI Support takes place in several of the Psychiatric Wards of NM Behavioral Health Institute. Students work with the elderly and assist staff with activities. Students plan and conduct activities with input from staff. The main objective of this service is to provide companionship to the residents.
NM Behavioral Health Institute Support Team	NMBHI Support takes place in several of the Psychiatric Wards of NM Behavioral Health Institute. Students work with the elderly and assist staff with activities. Students plan and conduct activities with input from staff. The main objective of this service is to provide companionship to the residents.
NM Behavioral Health Institute - Internship in the Compliance Dept.	The job duties would entail administrative tasks and learning about quality of care indicators, regulatory compliance, clinical aspects of care, patient satisfaction looking at the quality management side of healthcare.

Phenomenal Women	Work in local school as mentors for girls ages 11-15 yrs. on issues of concern.
Physical Fitness	An opportunity to exercise in a variety of ways including cardio, body-weight training, stretching and weights. One-on-one instruction available. All skill levels welcome.
Physics Tutoring	To provide assistance to physics students.
Pool Crew	Help with supervision of pool to ensure student access to this facility. Option to teach students to swim. Participants will organize one community activity. CPR training required and provided.
Pottery	Learn basics of both hand built and thrown pottery. Option to participate in the community fundraiser making bowls to raise money for Samaritan House.
Recording Studio	Learn the skills and art of recording. We record IB music submissions, UWC radio programs, interviews with Global Issues speakers, and musical performances of students and faculty.
Red Cross Emergency Response Course	Certified through the American Red Cross, this 45-hour course includes CPR, use of oxygen, blood pressure, patient assessment, traumatic & medical injury. Participants earn three int'l certifications. Will only be offered in first semester.
Residence Advisors	Peer mentors in the dorms who assist residence staff with dorm-related issues.
Rock-climbing - Beg/intern.	UWC climbing caters to individuals of all skill levels. From beginner to experienced climbers, this program has something to offer each participant. Weather permitting, climbing will be held on the UWC climbing crag.
Samaritan House Thrift Store	Samaritan House coordinates programs that serves those in need of shelter, food or services. Students will work in the thrift store and assist in various programs, providing direct and support services.
School Newspaper (Literati)	The school newspaper takes submissions from the community, edits them and inputs them into Windows Publisher. The purpose is to keep the student body informed and to learn the demands of journalism.
Search and Rescue	This CAS will work with the New Mexico Dept. of Public Safety Search and Rescue and the San Miguel County Search and Rescue to provide emergency rescue services in the immediate area. Students will be trained and certified by the State of New Mexico as a Field Member.

Soccer	Play recreational soccer, develop personal skills, or learn a new sport. Occasional matches with other schools will be organized. There will be opportunities for coed, men's, and women's games.
Soup Kitchen	Prepare and serve a free meal at the Methodist Church. Assist with raising support for the Soup Kitchen.
Spectrum	Spectrum is a gay-straight alliance, providing a safe space for the queer community on campus, including allies. We hold open meetings and organize panels and discussions about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. We seek to educate the campus about queer issues through events such as Coming Out Day and Day of Silence.
Squash	This activity is for beginning and more experienced players and coaching will be available.
Student Council	Work with the VP as representatives of the student body to address issues of common concern and to work to improve community life.
Student Wellness	Wellness Interns will develop and facilitate a wellness program on campus. The group will develop a wellness survey and use that to organize wellness topics for the year. They will also design a monthly newsletter. Outside and internal facilitators will be invited to lead specific topics.
Sustainability: Chickens	Chicken Keepers - Learn about chicken care and supply the community with fresh organic eggs.
Sustainability: Gardeners	Hands on work for a sustainable future! Maintain the greenhouse. Grow food & flowers for the UWC community.
Sustainability: Recycling on Campus	Hands on work for a sustainable future! Help to minimize solid waste on campus.
Sustainability: Recycling in Las Vegas	Hands on work for a sustainable future! Help minimize solid waste in Las Vegas and work at the LV recycling center.
Sustainability: Detritivores (Compost)	Hands on work for a sustainable future! Detritivores turn our organic waste into rich soil (compost).
Swimming	Learn to swim or become a more confident swimmer. Beginning to intermediate swimmers.
Swing Dance	Learn basic to intermediate Swing dance moves. Learn the Lindy, Charleston, and East Coast (jitterbug) swing dance. Requires little experience, but much enthusiasm.

Theater Craft: Lighting	Be part of the Lighting Team and learn the fundamentals of our ETC lighting system. Learn to select color, place equipment, and use our ETC lighting board. Inventory, repair and build equipment and with a CAD lighting program. Provide lighting for productions and special events.
Theater Craft: Set & Prop Design	Learn the basics of set design and the construction of sets and props used in our theater productions. This will involve the use of power tools, painting techniques, selection of materials, and problem solving.
Theater Craft: Sound	The Sound service will work with all sound equipment (Mackie TT24 mixer, amps, CD recorder, microphones, etc.). We will learn to repair, inventory, and set up equipment and the elements of sound design to support campus events.
Theater Craft: Stage Management	Work with all aspects of Theater work, including lighting, sound, props, front of house and backstage. This includes working with directors, designers, and actors in all types of productions.
Tutoring at Los Ninos Elementary School in Spanish	Spanish-speaking students will help to enrich literacy, math & science learning at Los Ninos Elementary School.
Tutoring at Rio Gallinas School	Learn how to teach math, literacy skills, science, and Spanish. Provide one-on-one help to elementary and middle school students at Rio Gallinas School.
Tutoring at West Las Vegas High School	Students will help to enrich literacy, math & science learning by working within classrooms and with individual students.
Volleyball	This activity is for those familiar with the sport and for beginners. Each session involves an aerobic warm-up, technique drills, practice drills and games.
Wilderness Student Guide	Lead expeditions for other students.
World Dance	In this CAS we will practice a mixture of dances from ballet to contemporary, to jazz, to belly dancing and other types of expressive movement. We will choreograph pieces. There will be lots of movement, sweat and power. If you are serious about dance this CAS is for you. Females only.
Yearbook	This semester, we will produce all of the pages for the yearbook. Knowledge of Photoshop is preferred.

Yoga	The Ashtanga method of yoga involves synchronizing the breath with a progressive series of postures—a process producing intense internal heat and a profuse, purifying sweat that detoxifies muscles and organs. The result is improved circulation, a light and strong body, and a calm mind. It is a great way to learn staying calm during times of stress. Ashtanga yoga is a wonderful way of enjoying life.
Yoga Intensive	The Ashtanga method of yoga involves synchronizing the breath with a progressive series of postures—a process producing intense internal heat and a profuse, purifying sweat that detoxifies muscles and organs. The result is improved circulation, a light and strong body, and a calm mind. It is a great way to learn staying calm during times of stress. Ashtanga yoga is a wonderful way of enjoying life.
Youth Media Project	The Youth Media Project works on producing radio pieces. This involves writing a personal narrative, learning how to use recording equipment, developing oral and interviewing skills, and learning to use audio editing software.

Appendix D – Weekly Timetable – UWC USA – School Year 2011-2012

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-9:25 (85)	A	D	B	F	8:00-8:45 G 8:55-9:40 B
9:25-9:45	Break	Break	Break	Break	9:40-10:00 Break
9:45-11:10 (85)	C	F	A	D	10:00-11:10 Collaborative Professional Development
11:20-12:05 (45)	M-code	Assembly	C	E	F
12:15-2:15 (85 + 35)	B & lunch	E & lunch	12:05- 3:30 CAS	G & lunch	C & lunch
2:25-3:10 (45)	E	G	3:30 – 5:30 Meetings	A	D
3:20-6:00	3:20-4:10 TOK/Self-Taught Wellness CAS	CAS		CAS	CAS
6:00-7:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner

7:00-9:00	CAS	Special Events Planning/ Voluntary Study Hall	Group 6 Time/ CAS	Group 6/CAS	Global Issues/Special Events / STUDY HALL
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