Progressive Education, May-June, 2014
To educators who value diversity in learning and seek to foster the development of critical, socially engaged citizens
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The Frontiers of Democracy, almost

Thursday, May 01, 2014

The *Social Frontier* was a radical journal, which saw the school as an agent of social change. It was published at Teachers College for six years, starting in 1934. After that it was sponsored by the Progressive Education Association and changed its title to *Frontiers of Democracy*. The final issue was published in 1943.

The writers and editors for *Social Frontier / Frontiers of Democracy (SF/FD)* were dedicated to creating a more open society, one in which democratic participation was not simply a slogan, but a living reality. That meant expanding educational opportunities, increasing access, developing critical, socially-engaged citizens (where “citizen” means any resident), and involving all in what Dewey called the *process of authority*.

I’m sure the *SF/FD* writers would be pleased to know that the *Teachers College Record* and the Gottesman Libraries are “re-releasing the journal both because of its historical importance and because of its continued relevance to educators today." The collection has been digitized and presented on a well-designed web page.

*SF/FD* writers would applaud the recognition of its continuing value. They would quickly understand the web as a new means for increasing access and accomplishing more of the democratic mission that they had undertaken. They would envision that teachers, parents, administrators, politicians, and the ordinary citizen as well, would certainly have some means for convenient access.

Along with that they would of course recognize the need to recover costs and to value the labor required to publish and distribute texts. But it’s hard to imagine that they would be pleased to know that the very journal they had established “to lead educators in the building of an enlightened America" (Harold Rugg) is effectively off limits to most of the people they hoped to reach, despite the new technological affordances.

How many individuals will choose to subscribe to *TCRecord* simply in order to access *SF/FD*? Even people at other universities willing to pay the appropriate costs, and current subscribers to *TCRecord*, are excluded since the institutional subscription does not include *SF/FD*. In the midst of information overload, the apparently modest terms can be off-putting: “The introductory rate of $20 is available for a limited time...Your membership will automatically renew every 365 days...No refunds are offered for early cancellation.” I suspect that at best many will decide to look at the print version if and when it’s available to them, and resign themselves to being unable to share any findings more widely with the very audience that the journal envisions.

Rugg’s books and the progressive education movement in general suffered from rightwing attacks through the late 1930’s into the McCarthy era. Today the movement suffers more from indifference and a lack of understanding of the issues involved. A paywall for a relatively obscure journal that ceased publication over 70 years ago does little to help. I assume that TC or *TCRecord* has full copyright, but it’s worth noting that the journal was sponsored for half its life by the Progressive Education Association (as *Frontiers of Democracy*), and as such only in part by TC.

In the final issue, Rugg says, “Our treasured American way of life is in great danger, not only from menacing fascists and false patrioteers, but primarily because our people,
standing baffled and bewildered on the threshold of abundance are unable to bring about such a life." Much the same could be said today; it's a pity that the opportunity to further dialogue on these issues has been lost. As too often happens, a good project with a noble purpose undermines its own agenda, for apparently petty reasons.

Héloïse and Abélard

Saturday, May 03, 2014

Tutoring

In 1971, I was fortunate to see an excellent play at Wyndham’s Theatre in London. It was *Abelard and Heloise*, by Ronald Millar. Keith Mitchell and Diana Rigg(I) had the title roles. The play was moving and the acting was superb. I can still visualize scenes, not so much from the stage setting, which was fine, but because the story caught my imagination.

Under the pretext of study we spent our hours in the happiness of love, and learning held out to us the secret opportunities that our passion craved. Our speech was more of love than of the books which lay open before us; our kisses far outnumbered our reasoned words. —Abélard
Père Lachaise Cemetery from apartment

Over the years I would read whatever I could find by or about Héloïse d'Argenteuil and Peter Abélard, including biographies, fictionalized accounts, children's stories, poetry, song, and of course the letters themselves. I saw several movie versions, some better than others. I began to learn how the story had inspired copies, re-mediations, satires, and endless allusions in a wide variety of artforms.

Héloïse had seen this coming, with her own perceptive reflections on pictures, letters, talk, and physical presence. For example,

If a picture, which is but a mute representation of an object, can give such pleasure, what cannot letters inspire? They have souls; they can speak; they have in them all that force which expresses the transports of the heart; they have all the fire of our passions, they can raise them as much as if the persons themselves were present; they have all the tenderness and the delicacy of speech, and sometimes even a boldness of expression beyond it. –Héloïse

My obsession with the topic became worse in 2004, when we lived not far from Notre-Dame de Paris, where Abélard had studied and taught. I found an English translation of Régine Pernoud's book in a used book store. Pernoud lists Héloïse first, which makes sense. Abélard was a great orator and writer, one we might revere even more if most of his works hadn't been destroyed for his heresies. Yet, Héloïse (a great scholar herself) is the one who makes their story come alive, whether you interpret it as a love story, a theological debate, an example of 12th C patriarchy, or an invention of later writers. His letters are fascinating to read, but hers leap to the heights of the written art, even in translation from the original Latin.
Monument to Ablard & Héloïse

One thing that comes through in every retelling is the tragedy of it all. There is of course the castration and the subsequent separation of Héloïse and Abélard. But there is also the tangible agony of struggles between possibility and reality, spirituality and desire, trust and betrayal. Their love always entailed suffering with happy moments that became recollections before they were fully realized. Even their son Astrolabe appears as a shadow of a world they imagined, but never had.

Later, when their connection was only through letters, Héloïse seeks a way to share the loss, to find meaning in the emptiness:

Let me have a faithful account of all that concerns you; I would know everything, be it ever so unfortunate. Perhaps by mingling my sighs with yours I may make your sufferings less, for it is said that all sorrows divided are made lighter. –Héloïse

You can read one version of this in Alexander Pope’s poem, Eloisa to Abelard. Eloisa is in anguish over her powerful feelings for Abélard, especially as manifested in her dreams:

Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

She realizes that Abélard, now as a eunuch who is free from the “contagion of carnal impurity” cannot return her feelings even if he wants to. And so she begs, not for forgiveness, but for forgetfulness.

How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd;
Today, one can walk near Père Lachaise cemetery on rue Pierre-Bayle. Bayle was a 17C philosopher. Where Abélard committed the heresy of seeing reason as a path to faith, Bayle advocated a separation between the spheres of faith and reason. He wrote about Héloïse and Abélard in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, a forerunner of the encyclopedias. One can also walk on the rue du Repos, which, were it not for the cemetery wall, would lead directly to where they lie in "repose" at their monument.

Cynics will point out that the monument was placed there in 1817 simply as a marketing ploy to convince Parisians to be buried among the famous; that the bones of the famous lovers are probably at the Oratory of the Paraclete, or the church of Nogent-sur-Seine, or most likely, just lost; that their love, if it existed at all, was no more than an expression of medieval structures of religious oppression, patriarchy, abuse of position, class, and power; and that the famous letters themselves were a literary concoction made long after the actual events.

Héloïse d'Argenteuil

Abélard would disdain these worldly concerns, and urge the cynics, along with Héloïse to

Strive now to unite in yourself all the virtues of these different examples. Have the purity of virgins, the austerity of anchorites, the zeal of pastors and bishops, and the constancy of martyrs.

But Héloïse would know that “the truth is more important than the facts." She’d recognize that the Père Lachaise monument shows their eternal love, which endured politics, religion, castration, and even Abélard’s pomposity and coldness. She’d also see that just like Keats’s youth, they can never touch, so encased in granite, their suffering also endures forever.

References

Pleyel in Paris

Tuesday, May 06, 2014

Ignace Pleyel, composer & piano builder

It was nearly two centuries ago (1830) that Frédéric Chopin came to Paris. There, he met Franz Liszt and other musicians; he also began his famous relationship with George Sand.

In Paris, he discovered the Pleyel piano, his lifetime favorite, and performed his first and last concerts at Salle Pleyel, which remains a major, active concert hall.

Chopin’s waltz on a Pleyel

It’s beyond presumptuous to put myself in that tradition, but still, there’s something very pleasant about playing one of Chopin’s a minor waltzes on a Pleyel in Paris. The piano is new; it’s so shiny that you can see the reflection of the Père Lachaise cemetery (where Chopin is buried) in it.
This apartment has a good collection of Chopin, Bach, Debussy, and other classical composers. There's a late 19C edition of Beethoven's Sonatas, as well as Monty Python, Frank Sinatra, and Jacques Brel. There's even a guest book, specifically for musicians, which was provided by a previous guest in the apartment.

Inquiry-based learning through CeRe

Thursday, May 08, 2014

New alley

CeRe, the Resource Centre for public participation in Bucharest says,

...to have a better Romania, the governance must be closer to the citizens and their needs. And because "all politics is local", we need empowered citizens and strong NGOs to get involved, to get mobilized, to write petitions, to participate at public meetings, to contribute to the policy making or even to protest in the streets.

I was fortunate to meet on Tuesday with CeRe staff and to see some of their community projects in action. CeRe employs an interesting and highly effective community organizing methodology. Although it is based on the specific situations of Bucharest today, its work is a model for community action anywhere.

Favorit Cinema
CeRe’s process well. Portions of a neighborhood were separated by a dangerous alleyway, with broken pavement, trash, poor lighting, and unpredictable traffic. Children had to traverse this to get to school.

In an initial phase, community organizers from CeRe went door-to-door in the neighborhood. Some citizens identified one or more problems in addition to the alley, others none at all. A consensus emerged that repair of the alley was a high priority that appeared amenable to solution.

Citizens organized to specify the problem, to propose concrete solutions, and pressure city officials for action. CeRe advised and facilitated, but was deliberately not the primary actor. The goal was to address the immediate problem, but more importantly, to nurture long-term participation in civic processes.

Playground 1

Eventually, the alley was cleaned and paved. Bollards were installed to restrict traffic, lighting was added, and what turned out to be a final obstacle, two trash bins were added. You can see the alley as it exists today in the photo. It’s a safe place to play or to move between sections of the neighborhood.

In another project, citizens designated Favorit, an abandoned cinema, as a blighted site that could become a neighborhood cultural center. They have secured the abandoned building and devised plans for redevelopment. The local council has allocated money for the center and is working with the neighborhood to make it a reality. In this case, the cultural center is still a vision, one that requires continued discussion within the community and with officials to specify its shape and goals.

Playground 2
One of the most impressive projects I saw was a playground, which obviously meets major needs for people of all ages. Citizen action demonstrated both those needs and how a broken down park could be used. Young people marked equipment there with green ribbons for good condition, yellow for needs repair, and red for needs disposal.

The community managed to get city officials to visit the site in person. Children played a role: They jumped up and down, creating dust, thus making evident the need for a cleaner, safer playground surface.

Inquiry cycle

CeRe has come to recognize that learning is a key aspect of what they do. Although they didn’t conceive it as inquiry-based learning, they (and I) now consider it to be an excellent example of that. The process involves the initial ask (a cere) by the door knockers and then the citizens, the investigation of the community issues (a investiga), the creation of potential solutions (a crea), discussions in the community and with city officials (a discuta), and reflection on the results and the process (a reflecta).

The process isn’t linear, and often entails stepping back, moving sideways, or redirecting energies to achieve the goals. Along the way, citizens learn not only about the specific problem, but also about working together, listening to each other, making decisions together, being a team, compromising, negotiating, discussing issues productively, and understanding the laws and municipal government.

References

Publications (in English) about CeRe’s work.

Performing at the National Conservatory

Saturday, May 10, 2014

The piano

On Thursday, I was able to practice piano at the National University of Music Bucharest (UNMB).
On the wall was a poster advertising the George Enescu annual international music festival. As one of the world’s best modern composers, Enescu was also an outstanding violinist, pianist, and conductor. The poster displayed his image looking directly at my seat at the piano.

I decided to start with Beethoven’s Sonata No. 31 in A ½ Opus 110. I’ve been working on this one for a long time. It’s very challenging for me, although there are moments when I can play it well enough to get lost in the beauty of the music.

![Image of a building]

Universitatea Naională de Muzică din Bucureți

When I started I couldn’t help but notice Enescu’s stare. According to Wikipedia/Vincent d’Indy, if Beethoven’s works were destroyed, Enescu could reconstruct them all from memory. Would he approve of my feeble efforts? Was it an insult to his memory to be playing that beautiful sonata in front of him?

As I began to play, these thoughts disturbed me. Then I heard Enescu say, “why are you paying attention to me? You should focus on Beethoven, even more on this particular piece.” I turned back to the music, but other thoughts interfered. The score was backlit by the sunlight through the windows; the bench didn’t seem to be adjusted right; I wondered whether I should have had coffee first. Enescu spoke up again: “Yes it’s a wonderful spring day in Bucharest, but you want to play this sonata. Forget the light, the bench, the coffee. Leave it behind and feel the music.”

I knew that he knew I was missing notes, stretching the rhythm, and phrasing in ways Beethoven never imagined. It must have pained his musical ear, if not his musical soul. But he knew, as I’m beginning to learn, that with practice those things can improve. What mattered was to bring my full attention to the music.

I plodded along, trying to ignore all the distractions. Then it happened.
Enescu helped me, just for a moment, to go from struggling to experiencing. I think of his lifelong passion of music, and what it must have meant to him to feel that kind of loss of self and immersion in music as he both traversed and added to the repertoire.

We don’t have any further performances scheduled at the Conservatory on this trip. I’m sorry if you missed it!

The video clip (1978) is of Enescu’s Romanian Rhapsody No. 1 Op 11, with Sergiu Celibidache conducting the Bucharest George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra at the Romanian Athenaeum.

A diet of worms

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

It’s fun to visit the famous sites when traveling, even if only to see all the diverse people coming to see those same sites. But what I tend to remember and value most are the unplanned, mundane, and more local adventures.

On Friday in Bucharest, there was one such involving worms. I was speaking at the aptly named “Friday meeting” at the university. The topic of planning in teaching (exploring the important sites?) came up and I had to share a story that Jack Easley, a math and science educator, had told.

Discovering worms

Jack had been working in a second grade class, guiding a six week long unit on weather. Pupils learned about clouds, precipitation, storms, weather measurement, agriculture, and other such important topics, taught, I’m sure in a creative and engaging way. On the last day, it was raining outside until just before the class ended. Jack knew that there might be a rainbow. Viewing that could be an exciting culmination for the unit.

He took the class outside, preparing to discuss the visible light spectrum, refraction, moisture in air, and others such topics. But the pupils weren’t interested. While Jack was looking up, they were looking down at the closer and and more ordinary. They observed the worms, leading them to ask, ”Why do worms come out of the ground after a rain?”.
Soil, plants, worms

Jack started to answer, then realized that he didn’t really know. So he asked the students to write down their question for scientists at the university. It turned out they had many ideas, but didn’t really know, either. A few days later a long article came out in the New York Times, saying that this was an important question for science and for agriculture, but the answer wasn’t simple. Even today, there is a lot to say about why earthworms surface after rain? Jack saw that the pupils became most excited about their own question, which in turn was more like the science that scientists do.

Catalina Ulrich, a professor at the University of Bucharest, and my host, appeared to be quite excited by this little story. She pulled out her smartphone to show photos (shown here). Just the day before she had been observing in a crèche (preschool), where the children had been fighting over a bike. But then, one of them discovered a worm. Like Jack’s students, these even younger ones saw that soil and worms were more interesting and more attractive than whatever else they had been doing, and than many people might think.

That evening, we had dinner at the home of Claudia erbănuǎ. I needed a toilet break, and as is my habit, couldn’t avoid looking at the reading material there. Right on top was Doreen Cronin’s Diary of a Worm.

The book describes the world from a worm’s point of view. For example, in the beginning, it tells you the three rules about worms that you must never forget. The third rule is “Never bother Daddy when he’s eating the newspaper.” When I came out, I asked Claudia’s children about the book. Could they tell me the three things we must always remember?

They grew quite excited and shouted out the third rule in unison. When I asked about the others they weren’t so sure. The other two have something to do with how worms live, the making of soil, the interdependence of life, or global food supply. I couldn’t remember them either.
Kachru’s three circles of English

The concept of World Englishes has been much studied by groups such as the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE), including my own colleagues at the University of Illinois. They consider localized English in global contexts, how it’s spoken and written, along with pragmatic factors such as appropriate use and intelligibility.

When traveling, I notice these issues frequently on a very personal level. For example, one day we were waiting for the elevator (i.e., lift) in a hotel in Istanbul. A couple of people from Munich came up to us to ask about the hotel. We described our room, and then began to talk more generally. They then asked where we were from and were surprised to hear that it was the US. They had judged by our accent that we were from the UK.

Norwegian Star

In this case, I don’t think the confusion was due to our having British accents. Instead, it was from having enough interactions with speakers of various World Englishes that we had unconsciously muted our marked US accents, especially my Texas talk. That possibly more subdued and more clearly articulated dialect has proved necessary in travel and work with international colleagues.

Another example arose later the same day. A different couple approached us on a sidewalk, with one saying in a strong Arkansas accent, “Are y’all cruise people?” What
sidewalk, with one saying in a strong Arkansas accent, "Are y'all cruise people?" What was interesting then is that we were marked by appearance as possible cruise people without having said a word, an example of non-verbal language. Moreover, Susan couldn't understand them, but I, who had grown up in a neighboring country, could.

We had to confess that we weren't cruise people, but we were able to tell them where their ship was docked. It was a 2000 passenger Norwegian cruise ship about three blocks away. I’m not sure that it was the Norwegian Star, but it was one that looked similar to the one shown here. In any case it was hard to miss, but we were happy to help them find their way home.

Living history in İstanbul

Saturday, May 17, 2014

Kılıç Ali Paşa Külliyesi

İstanbul is a city of contradictions—part Europe and part Asia, part ancient empire and part modern democracy, part bustling metropolis and part quiet byways. It's hurtling toward the future with modern buildings, massive construction projects, and crushing traffic, but it's also a city filled with its history, which is to a large extent the history of much of the world.

Today we saw some of the latter. We visited the Kılıç Ali Paşa complex, including a camii (mosque), a medrese (seminary), a hamam (bath), a türbe (tomb), and a çeşme (fountain). It's in Tophane, which is part of the Beyoğlu district, on the shore of the Bosphorus. It was built by Kılıç Ali Paşa, following the design of the great architect Mimar Sinan. Sinan was 90 when he began the project and 98 when he finished.
Kılıç Ali Paşa Camii dome

It’s beautiful inside and out. It shows one of Sinan’s specialties, a massive structure, which is surprisingly delicate and full of light. There are 247 windows including 24 for the central dome. Try the virtual tour.

Virtual tour

One legend about the site is that when Kılıç Ali Paşa decided to endow a mosque, he applied for a grant of land. The Grand Vezier said: “Since he is the admiral, let him build his mosque on the sea.” Kılıç Ali Paşa brought in rocks and built the mosque on an artificial island connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway. The complex is now well inland, since the sea was filled during the construction of a modern port.

Another legend is that Miguel de Cervantes was a forced worker at the construction of the complex during his enslavement, like the character in Don Quixote.

The Museum of Innocence, 83 cabinets, one for each chapter

We also saw The Museum of Innocence. Orhan Pamuk created it, based on the museum in his novel of the same name. He calls it “a declaration of love to the city of Istanbul.”
Tarihi Cumhuriyet Meyhanesi

Tonight we had dinner at Tarihi Cumhuriyet Meyhanesi, where Atatürk used to eat. It feels like eating in a restaurant from the 1920’s. The walls are covered with photos and news articles from its 150 year existence.

The trafik chess game

Monday, May 19, 2014

Kâmil Koç

I’ve been impressed by the public transport in Turkey.

Turkish Airlines was named the Best Airline in Europe for the third year in a row by customers in the 2013 World Airline Awards. That’s not surprising. The first thing I noticed was that I could fit my knees in.
Don't be a traffic monster

If you're not 6’4” you may not appreciate the difference between having 90% of the space you need and 100+%, but believe me, not having room for 10% of your thighs is a problem. In addition to that 10%, the airline offered drinks, snacks, and a good meal, even on the short flight from Bucharest to İstanbul.

Chessboard

The buses are also very good. City buses run frequently, are clean and comfortable. We've been using a bus to the suburban area which takes about 40 minutes. It's always on schedule and easy to use. The long-distance bus from İstanbul to Çanakkale includes a ferry ride. It has snack service, comfortable seating, even wifi and on-demand movies.
A line of black pawns

Two white rooks, standing guard

However, I’m not a fan of the street *trafik* (traffic), especially not as a pedestrian. Motorcycles are a special nuisance, going without regard for walkers or cars, or even the street/sidewalk distinction. There are signs telling people, “Don’t be a ‘traffic monster,’” but the monsters are illiterate, so that doesn’t help much.
A commercialized bishop

There may be a solution. The key was seeing the giant chess boards outside our apartment in Dardanos. They're tiled spaces big enough for a person on each square. Then, I saw the bollards, which discourage at least the larger cars and trucks from driving on the sidewalks.

I began to study the bollards first as a survival skill. Before long, I realized they were all chess pieces and that I was immersed in a giant chess game. There were the familiar pieces, such as pawns, bishops, and rooks, but in addition, the traffic monsters, and the targets, otherwise known as people.

Kordon horse, from the movie

Çanakkale is not far from Troy. So, one of its attractions is a Trojan horse, which stands guard along along the kordon (beach front). The Çanakkale horse is all the more famous because it was the one used in the movie Troy. Brad Pitt, a lead actor, donated it to the town after the movie was filmed. Perhaps my chess game against the trafik could be aided by a knight on that horse.

The goal of this game is to stay alive, fighting the odds for this technique of population control. This means relying whenever possible on the chess pieces. Unfortunately in Çanakkale, it also means being careful about where and when to stop to view the beautiful Dardanelles, the flowers, and the fascinating life on the kordon.
Shops along the *kordon*

Enjoying the *kordon*

**Personal questions**

**Wednesday, May 21, 2014**

Lonely Planet publishes a good Turkish phrasebook, which has been handy in many situations. It provides some basic information about the language, the country, and the culture. I’d recommend carrying a copy, unless you’re fluent in Turkish.

But like any guidebook, the advice about social interactions is necessarily simplified, often essentializing differences. For example, the book advises:

Avoid asking questions about someone’s age, religion, or sexual preference, as the Turkish prefer not to discuss these topics openly. They love talking about politics, but exercise a little caution when expressing your opinion – some Turks verge on the fanatical when it comes to the ‘p’ word.

Phrases such as “the Turkish” or “They” are red flags, which can never be universally valid. I accept the advice to avoid personal questions on a first meeting, but I’ve found that at least some of the “They” actually like to talk about these topics. I’ve been asked: How old are you? Where do you live? What religion are you? How tall are you? What do you think about Obama? What do you think of Turkey?

When in an *eczane* (drugstore), I took advantage of the free scale to weigh myself. A druggist peered at the scale to check my number and then gave his approval. That may have been professional monitoring, but I sensed simple curiosity at work as well.

I’m sure that some of the *They* “love talking about politics,” but we were cautioned not to bring up politics with two men, who despite being friends and colleagues, had radically different political views. On the other hand, in the US, I know many people who “verge on the fanatical when it comes to the ‘p’ word.” Maybe they all have Turkish heritage.

The phrasebook also suggests,
When you meet someone of the opposite sex who has strong religious beliefs, avoid shaking hands or kissing them. Instead, greet them with the Arabic words *selamin alekküm*. (p. 105)

Again, broadly useful advice, but off in so many particulars. Turkish people we have met seem to vary widely in terms of talk and gestures. Some women initiate the double cheek kiss. Moreover, in a city, especially in university communities, there are people from all over the world with diverse habits. "The Turkish" vary a lot in terms of their international experiences and customs. And I haven't heard *selamin alekküm* used in greetings.

One might also ask how to know whether someone has strong religious beliefs if that topic hasn't come up. You can guess by clothing styles, but that's far from infallible. I have a friend here who is deeply religious, but dresses in a modern style and drinks alcohol. Some women dress very conservatively, but for reasons of family or personal choice, not religion.

At another point, the phrasebook suggests,

When talking with people you've just met, or those you're talking to in the polite *siz* (you) form, it's considered rude to cross your arms or place your hands in your pockets. (p. 108)

This reminds me of a different guidebook that warns "the Chinese" do not like it when you point a finger at them. In my experience, most people sense that crossed arms, hands in pockets, pointing at people, and so on, are at best informal, and usually off-putting. I might just as well suggest to a Turk, "when meeting someone in the US for the first time, especially in a formal situation, don't stand there with your arms crossed or point your finger at them. *The American* doesn't like that."

**Personal geography: Walking**

**Saturday, May 24, 2014**

Progressive Education, May-June, 2014
Lake Silvaplana

In *Die Götzen-Dämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)*, Friedrich Nietzsche writes that his best ideas come from walking:

*On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis* [One cannot think and write except when seated] (G. Flaubert). There I have caught you, nihilist! The sedentary life is the very sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts reached by walking have value.

An important example of this for Nietzsche was his concept of the eternal recurrence of the same events. It occurred to him while he was walking in Switzerland in the woods around Lake Silvaplana, when he was inspired by the sight of a large, pyramidal rock. His inner life as writer and philosopher could not be separated from his embodied life as a person who spent hours walking in beautiful spots in Europe.

Why does it require the direct connection reached through walking to embrace an idea like eternal recurrence? Why not just use a map? Reading a book, map, diagram, photo, movie, etc. can be a powerful experience. Why can't we have the same insights without being there? And what is the relation between reading a text about a phenomenon and experiencing it more directly?

John Dewey addresses this dichotomy in *The Child and the Curriculum*:

The map is not a substitute for a personal experience. The map does not take the place of an actual journey...But the map, a summary, an arranged and orderly view of previous experiences, serves as a guide to future experience; it gives direction; it facilitates control; it economizes effort, preventing useless wandering, and pointing out the paths which lead most quickly and most certainly to a desired result. Through the map every new traveler may get for his own journey the benefits of the results of others’ explorations without the waste of energy and loss of time involved in their wanderings—wanderings which he himself would be obliged to repeat were it not for just the assistance of the objective and generalized record of their performances.
Sunset on the Dardanelles

I've been thinking along these lines while reading, A Philosophy of Walking, by Frédéric Gros. The book is a pleasure to read (though not while walking). It intersperses Gros's observations with accounts of other great walkers such as Rimbaud and Nietzsche. Gros writes,

By walking, you escape from the very idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history ... The freedom in walking lies in not being anyone; for the walking body has no history, it is just an eddy in the stream of Immemorial life.

Curiously, the anemia and ahistory of walking, its “freedom,” is what allows the walker to connect to a greater degree with history, geography, and ideas in general. This has become even more evident to me during our stay in Turkey.

To be continued...

Living archaeology

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

Alexandria Troas restoration

In many localities there are ancient sites one can visit. But often, these are removed from contemporary life, not only by time, but also by place. They seem to stand apart.

For example, in Illinois, Cahokia Mounds is a fascinating site to visit. It tells the story of people who settled Illinois over 1000 years ago, and created one of the great cities of the world. However, the threads connecting Cahokia to 21st C Illinois seem very thin. The site is interesting in large part because it seems like it's from another world. Most of the links from the Mississippian and other cultures to present-day life in Illinois have been erased or forgotten.

In Turkey, however, archaeological sites seem to merge with current life. There are more here than anyone could ever visit, or even count. Ruins spill out of the official ticketed sites into the village and countryside. Modern houses are built of the same stone, and embedded in the same rocks that influenced the ancient structures. Farmers plant and harvest in the same fields, often on top of buried ruins from two or three millennia ago.
Apollon Smintheion

More importantly, there are ties in language and culture to the earlier Cretan, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and other cultures. Places have names revealing their history, and sometimes multiple names, e.g., Assos / Behramkale / Behram, for their different ties. Customs in food and dress have strong connections that are understood by locals, in a way that one would have trouble finding between Mississippian and modern-day Illinoisans.

An implication of this for the traveler is that archaeological sites exist in an array of states, but all with tangible links to the present. Some are fully excavated and interpreted, while others are submerged into the landscape. Some are outside of present-day settlements, but many are embedded within or under the present day town. Many manifest not just a single culture, but a series, for example an early settlement that became a Hellenistic temple, then later Roman baths and administrative center, then a Byzantine development, with continuing use to the present. This makes the sites seem alive and connected to our life today in a way that sites elsewhere are often fascinating, but removed as in a science fiction story about a strange foreign world.
European stinging nettle

The site for Alexandria Troas is one of the largest in Turkey, nearly 1000 acres. But it's still being excavated and most of it appears first just as some strange rocks sticking up among the vallonea oaks. The site spreads nearby, but partly within and underneath today's town of Dalyan, Çanakkale. It's not hard to imagine that some of the farming practices of today in that region were common two millennia ago.

Walking and clambering about the site in my sandals, I found the *isargan ötu* (stinging nettle) that undoubtedly plagued early walkers in sandals. They probably enjoyed eating them as much as other modern diners and I do.

About 23 miles south by road is Appollon Smintesionin, which was built in the 2nd C BC city of Khrysa (present-day Gülpinar, Çanakkale). When Cretan colonists came to the area, they consulted an oracle regarding where to settle. The oracle told them to settle where 'the sons of the earth' attacked them. One morning they awoke and found mice chewing their equipment. They decided to stay there and built a temple dedicated to Smintesion, Lord of the Mice and to Apollo.

Sminthean Apollo is mentioned in the *Iliad, Book 1*:

*Agamemnon had dishonoured the god's priest, Chryses, who'd come to the ships to find his daughter, Chryseis, bringing with him a huge ransom.*

... Displeased, Agamemnon dismissed Chryses roughly

*Chryses then prayed to Appollon Smintheonin:*

"God with the silver bow,
protector of Chryse, sacred Cilla,
mighty lord of Tenedos, Sminthean Apollo,
hear my prayer: If I've ever pleased you
with a holy shrine, or burned bones for you—
bulls and goats well wrapped in fat—
grant me my prayer. Force the Danaans

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to pay full price for my tears with your arrows."
Assos Temple of Athena

There is a walkway at the Appollon Smintheion site, which may have connected it with Alexandria Troas, just as the modern towns link today. There are no wheel ruts in the stone, which suggests that ancient people walked to and from the site.

Not much further on, Assos is one of the most impressive, and surely most photographed, of the many sites in the area. I cringe to think of how many people will fall off the edge seeking the perfect selfie.

Assos is a site that exemplifies the idea of continuous settlement and sedimentation of cultures. Modern boutique hotels and shops are built into the rocks and with rocks just as the ancient structures were. There is an old, though not as old as Assos, cami (mosque) built of stone and standing at the entrance. Although the fenced area of the site is huge, structures and rock piles spill over the edges such that it's not clear which are archaeological treasures, which are functional structures for today, and which are construction debris.

The Assos habitation traces back to the Bronze Age, with city life from 7C BC onwards without interruption. Aristotle wrote his Politics during his three-year stay here. The missionary, St. Paul, would walk to here from Troas, 20 miles away. Its easy to envision shepherd throughout this time guiding their sheep and goats among the rock strewn hillsides, much as they do today.

Beyond the physical though, what's most telling about the connection to the past is the way people talk. For example, many say that local foods, dress, personal names, and even ways of socializing on Turkey's Aegean coast can be traced directly to its Hellenistic heritage. The many other civilizations in its story have similarly shaped the rich culture.

**Personal geography: Dardanelles**

**Wednesday, May 28, 2014**
Broom and petunias

Observing the world while walking is paradoxical. It's slower even than riding a bicycle or a horse, so the total distance covered seems puny. There's little chance to see a Michelin *** "worth the trip," a ** "worth a detour," or even a * "of interest." If you were to see a Michelin *, there would most likely be just one in several days of walking.

Yet I find that when I travel fast just to see a *, it often fails to live up to its rank. It's often overrated, overly crowded, or less accessible than I imagined. But beyond that, if I got there in a blur, I don't have a sense of what it means to be that * in just that place or how it relates to the things around it. But those relations are usually part of what gives it * status—the most of this or the best of that.

Çanakkale Martyrs' Memorial

In contrast, when I walk I have plenty of time to observe and to think about what I see. Just this week, we walked from ÇOMU Dardanos, through Dardanos Village, past Kepez Limanı, to Kepez center. The place names aren't important if you don't know the area. What's worth noting is that this was a distance of over five miles each way, following the coastline. We could look at the hillsides to the east and across the Dardanelles to the Gallipoli peninsula to the west. With some stops and detours, plus lunch in Kepez, the return trip consumed much of the day.

Walking along the Dardanelles in this way we observed the bustling ship traffic. Some carried Russian oil from the Black Sea, traversing the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, the Dardanelles, then into the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean. Some northbound traffic contained goods from China bound for Istanbul, then on to various destinations in Europe. There are weapons, radioactive materials, household items, clothes, industrial equipment, paper items, and who knows what else, probably 60,000 ships a year. Most of what I see is ships with cargoes mysterious to me, though I could spin fanciful tales about their purposes.
Fishing

The Dardanelles is a narrow, winding strait about 40 miles long. Making things worse, there's a current of up to four knots flowing toward the Aegean, with a countercurrent underneath. The current changes as the strait narrows and widens, something I could examine in detail while walking. Ships pass port to port, so walkers on our path would most clearly see the northbound ships.

The bumper to bumper and two-way ship traffic and uncertain current makes it a difficult and dangerous waterway. Pilots must slow down and speed up their engines to maintain the 15 knot speed limit. Nevertheless, in 2005 over 55,000 ships, including almost 6,000 oil tankers passed through Marmara, most carrying Russian oil. (By the way, "bumper to bumper" may not be the correct nautical terminology.)

As I observed the straits on this and other walks, including a long one to Güzelyali, I became intrigued by the shape of the straits and what that meant both for walking and shipping. I could see about a third of its length, from the Aegean Sea, where ships waited their turn to enter all the way to Çanakkale, where there's a 90° turn at the narrowest point.

The narrowing and widening, the shape of the bays, and the strong prevailing winds off the water define the character of the walking, just as they constrain the ship traffic. The visibility changes with the winds; a good indicator being the Çanakkale Martyrs' Memorial at the tip of Gallipoli. It's clearly visible and sharp, with the Turkish flag flying above when the air is clear.

The walking and leisurely viewing made me think about the geography I was experiencing and want to read more about it. Gazing across to the Gallipoli peninsula, I couldn't help being aware that I was in Asia, looking at Europe. About 50 miles to the south, is Cape Baba, in Babakale (Papa's Castle), the westernmost point of Asia.

One could have these thoughts while riding in a car or sitting in an armchair at home. But I find that being outdoors, seeing the details of the landscape, and feeling the effects of sun, wind, tide, and time, I become more directly connected to the world and learn geography in a way I could never do with a map or book alone, and absolutely not while locked into a faster mode of transit.

To be continued...
Diyarbakırlı Tahsin Bey, Sinking of Battleship Bouvet

Walking on the east shore of the Dardanelles allows me time to see, and then to feel, more of what is going on around me, even though that walking may seem aimless and slow. I become aware of the Gallipoli battle, even though it happened over 99 years ago. I can begin to imagine the fighting that resulted in over 100,000 deaths and even more wounded.

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi (ÇOMÜ) is named for March 18, 1915, when three battleships were sunk during a failed naval attack on the Dardanelles. Russia’s allies Britain and France had the aim of capturing the Ottoman capital of what is now Istanbul. That was only the first part of a major Allied failure in WWI and one of the greatest Ottoman victories during the war, which set the stage for modern Turkey.

After the failed assault on the Dardanelles, the Allies launched an amphibious landing on the Gallipoli peninsula. The beginning of that campaign, April 25, 1915 is now celebrated in Çanakkale as Anzac Day (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Day). After eight months of fighting, with many casualties on both sides, the land campaign also failed (January 9, 1916). When you look across the Dardanelles today, you can see Çanakkale Şehitleri Anıtı (the Çanakkale Martyrs Memorial), but otherwise the peninsula looks much as it must have in 1915. Walking alongside, one can sense the strategic importance of the straits and the peninsula, and also the challenge of conquering it.
I don’t think about Gallipoli very much in my day to day life. And even when I rode the inter-city bus from Istanbul along the Sea of Marmara, then onto the peninsula, I didn’t think much about its history. To the extent that I did it was more of a brief, “Oh! We’re coming to the great Gallipoli battlefield!” kind of response.

However, as a walker, I have time to ponder how that land and the sea around it shaped our history. I feel free to imagine events without having them delivered in a pre-packaged tour guide or video. I experience the same sun, wind, tides, rocks, hills, plants, and birds that the Ottomans and the Allies encountered. I feel that I get to know the territory in a deeper and more personal way.

To be continued…

Music in the garden

Monday, June 02, 2014

Garden notes

Given the many enticements, meetings, and demands of travel, I’ve found it difficult to play piano as much as I’d like. But the universities have been very accommodating with their practice rooms. And I’ve even found pianos in unexpected places.

One was in the garden of the lovely hotel, Assos Alarga. With only three rooms, it’s billed as “the smallest hotel.” The grounds of Assos Alarga were an ancient stone quarry, providing material for the development of Assos, where Aristotle taught biology (my major subject in college). The hotel building is made of stone, which seems to blend into the ruins of Assos.
Rachmaninoff Prelude in c#

Our hosts had a small collection of sheet music. I couldn’t believe at first the piece I saw on top. It was one I have on my list to learn, Rachmaninoff’s Prelude in c#.

That prelude has a long history for me. My father sold pianos. When a customer asked to see a piano, especially a grand piano, but was too shy to play it, he would play the first two lines of the piece. Even if you can’t read music, you can see from the score the dramatic contrasts between the thundering ff (fortissimo) chords and the ppp (piano pianissimo) echoes. You may also appreciate the large chords and jumps from low to high notes.

Dad could play those first two lines very well. Then, he’d invite the customer to try the piano themselves. He was lucky that they didn’t ask him to play more, because he couldn’t play it and had just memorized that one section. As a child I learned a transcription of the piece into d, but never the original. Seeing the music in this unexpected location, I felt that I’d been given a message that it was time for me to really learn to play it.

I only had a brief time to play in the garden, and mostly stumbled through some Chopin waltzes I had worked on before. But just being there was magical. I felt connected to the long history of Assos and to the music of Turkey. There are the many ethnic traditions of music within Turkey, but also a strong tradition of Western classical music.

Thinking about music in Turkey, I began to listen more to Fazil Say, a genius composer/performer, who crosses many musical boundaries. You can see much of his work online, including performances of his own compositions, classical renditions (exquisite performances of Bach), Gershwin, and hybrid pieces such as his jazz version of Mozart’s Rondo all Turca.

To me, Say’s gestures occasionally seem overly dramatic and his interpretations equally so, but he’s always fascinating to listen to. He’s clearly one of the most talented modern composers and performers anywhere, someone that Turkey may justly celebrate as part of their contribution to world music.

I like many of his works, but Kara Toprak (Black Earth) is especially haunting:

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Personal geography: East Thrace

Wednesday, June 04, 2014
Ship traffic on the Dardanelles

When I look at the Gallipoli peninsula from our apartment, or better, view it while walking along the coast, I become aware that I’m seeing a large land mass that is only a peninsula jutting out of Doğu Trakya (East Thrace), a part of Turkey that’s in Europe.

Trakya, as it’s known within Turkey, is just a small part of the country. But if Trakya were a separate country its population would make it one of the larger ones in Europe. To put it another way, based on my musings about the Gallipoli campaign, if the Ottoman empire had dismembered in a different way, I might be looking at a sizeable European country.

East Thrace

In particular, it’s larger than many of its European neighbors, such as Serbia, Slovakia, Georgia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Albania, Macedonia, Slovenia, Kosovo, or Montenegro. It’s also larger than most of the US states. One reason is that it contains two thirds of the population of Istanbul, a huge, cosmopolitan city. Of course with time, Turkey in its entirety will become more a part of Europe politically and economically. That will further confuse all of us who never fully understood why Eurasia was considered to be two continents in the first place.

Trakya borders the Black Sea as well as the Aegean Sea, the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosphorus. When I walk I see only a tiny fraction of the region, but I “see” its shape and history in a way I never come close to doing otherwise. I see Russia’s annexation of Crimea to the northeast, a fact that makes Romania and Russia now neighbors. I understand more of what it means for Turkey to join the EU. And I appreciate more how a substantial portion of the world’s commerce steams up and down the corridor joining the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea.

To be continued…

Global understanding

Friday, June 06, 2014
Finding Turkey

It makes sense that global understanding starts with understanding the globe. At least that’s what some children and I think.

It was a Monday in the *Multipurpose Unit Early Classroom Intervention Program (MUECIP)* in Çanakkale, Turkey. This program is an innovative approach for 4-5 year-olds from low-SES families, which integrates music and arts. The student teacher, Dilsad Korkmaz, did an excellent job of keeping the children engaged and allowing for the inevitable individual differences.

The program draws from approaches such as Orff, Babies with Identity, and High-Scope. There is ample use of graphic displays on class size, seasons, daily activities, birthdays, responsibilities, etc. Family participation is encouraged through interviews with the families and home visits to observe children in their natural lives. Parents rotate in providing breakfasts, which also gives them an opportunity to observe the class and engage in the activities.

Finding Cape Cod

Research by Ozlem Çelebioglu Morkoç and Ebru Aktan Acar at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University has shown that the program supports overall development, including cognitive and psychomotor skills, self-care, language, and personal-social skills.

It was more compelling to me that the children seemed so engaged in learning. They were excited to talk and share, to dance, and to investigate everything. I had to remove my electronic fitness bracelet when it became too great a distraction. Besides, it was embarrassing that they figured out how to operate it in about 1/10 of the time I had taken.

At one point we drew upon a globe for some collaborative map work. Using many fingers, we first found Turkey, then Cape Cod. I’m not sure how much they comprehended about the globe versus how much they just wanted to interact with each other and their American "uncle."
As I watch the Russian oil tankers going through the Dardanelles, I'm reminded that Turkey has little oil, but does have large coal reserves. Looking away from the straits, I see the hills towards Soma, just 100 miles away, where over 300 coal miners died in a disaster that should never have happened.

Despite the callous response from the mine owners and the government, most people I see want to say “Soma, adencisi yalnız değil” (Soma miners are not alone). On campus, students sell pastries to raise funds for the victims’ families. In town, people march and spray graffiti to protest the government’s policies before, and the response afterwards. In the countryside, I see people whom I can imagine as not so different from the villagers whose family members worked in the mine.

Trying not to think about Soma, I walk to the Dardanos Tümulüsü (tumulus). This is a burial hill not far from our apartment, with artifacts dating from the second century BC, possibly earlier. The Çingene (also called Gypsy) people in Çanakkale say that they have been there for six centuries, possibly before the Ottoman rulers. But long before they arrived, who were the people who built the tumulus? I wonder about their walking on the same hills and coastlines, which they did when there was no choice to take the bus or...
Dardanos Tümülüsü

My wanderings lead to wonderings about how we as humans, or any life, will survive the growth-at-all-costs ethos, dominant around the world. Fifty years ago, in the month I graduated from high school, Lyndon Johnson asked:

whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth...expansion is eroding the precious and time-honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature.

At least, here at Dardanos, there is some respite, if only within an hour’s walk. I see children in the large playground. There’s a vineyard. In the scrub forest there is a maquis ecology, with small pines, fir, cedar, holly, cyprus, and other evergreen trees, as well as some nut and fruit trees, such as valonia oaks, almond, fig, apple, and olive. The underbrush includes flowering broom, sage, oleander, and many interesting grasses. Most striking are the wildflowers–poppy, petunia, aster, and rose, plus many I can’t name. There are butterflies everywhere, birds, frogs, and lizards, all mocking the many wild cats.

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The ocean seems full of life, with octopus and squid, many kinds of fish and seaweeds, in spite of the heavy ship traffic.
Poppy field

Alongside the Dardanos, these life forms seem in tune with the beautiful setting and oblivious to the massive commerce steaming past and the construction boom on land. Let’s hope they can continue for a long time.

I’m afraid that my generation hasn’t done much to manifest Johnson’s call for “the wisdom to use...wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization.” We have more nuclear weapons, greater destruction of the environment, abuse of workers, and precious little understanding of neighbors at home or abroad. All too often, our “old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth.”

Petunias

In that 1964 speech, Johnson said,

The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.

I can’t say that I’ve learned very much in the fifty years since Johnson’s speech, but one thing is that the leisure he spoke about is not lost time, but a central aspect of being. Walking becomes for me a way to ensure that it happens. Otherwise I too often feel compelled to check the computer, go to a meeting, or accomplish some task. Or, I seek escape as a spectator, rather than participant in life.

That leisure is a necessary means to build connections and become one with the plants and animals nearby, the people, the land and sea, and the history that ties them all together. It’s both an essential part of life and means to understanding it better.

Community school in Yeniceköy

Tuesday, June 10, 2014
Yeniceköy primary school

The *Multipurpose* class, which I wrote about earlier, is in a small urban setting, but it has a sister class in the village of Yeniceköy, about 24 miles away. I had met the class for the first time when the class and I both visited the village. The school there was inaugurating a wonderful new early childhood space; their sister class students clearly approved.

The primary school in Yeniceköy has only 14 children in a multigrade classroom (grades 1 to 4). This structure was once common throughout much of the world, but is less and less so today. There is a tendency to see efficiency in ever larger schools. Many point out that one can offer more specialized classes, computers, better facilities, address special needs, etc. in the larger school. The larger school enables a greater focus on teaching only measurable skills, the unfortunate trend of the day.
Parents

However, much is lost in the move to larger, more impersonal schools. The challenge of teaching multiple ages seems daunting, but it's less so when you realize that children of exactly the same age also vary greatly in terms of ability, interests, and learning styles. Moreover, children may learn even more as they become teachers of others.

The small school is not always a community school, but it has the possibility to become so. Writing in the journal, *Progressive Education* in 1933 about the Arthurdale, WV school, Elsie Ripley Clapp says,

The school is, therefore an experiment in democratic living...it is influential because it belongs to its people. They share its ideas and ideals and its work. It takes from them as it gives to them. There are no bounds so far as I can see to what it could accomplish in social reconstruction if it had enough wisdom and insight and devotion and energy.

New preschool space

Yenicekőy seems to be a community school. Parents have an involvement with the school and the learning there, which is rare in consolidated schools. Learning activities and village life are connected. It will be interesting to watch how the school develops. There is a wealth of energy and good will going into it, not limited to the preschool space alone. At the same time, larger societal pressures and values may push the school in other directions.

As Clapp showed in the Arthurdale community, the school can become a social center, a means for coordinating shared interests and skills to benefit the entire community. In her case, local Appalachian culture operated through the school to support self-identity and understanding. The community school then becomes, in John Dewey's terms, the starting point for democratic life.

Smile for the camera

Thursday, June 12, 2014
EAB attendees: Mustafa et al.

Turkey has an incredible number of archaeological sites, 52 in Ankara alone according to a display at the outstanding Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Museum of Anatolian Civilizations).

The museum was selected as the first “European Museum of the Year” in 1997. It has examples from Paleolithic, Neolithic, Early Bronze, Assyrian, Hittite, Phrygian, Urartian, Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuq and Ottoman periods.

More EAB: Fatih, Ömer, Fettah

But whether in the museum or at an actual site, whether the people are Turkish or foreign, whether it’s a recreational event or a conference on educational research, the event of the day is the photo op, often in the form of a selfie.

Our civilization adds the latest sediment on top of layers of complex and beautiful artifacts. This is the digital photo, often destined to reside forever within the memory of a smart phone, and occasionally to be shared on a social media site.

Everywhere there are people taking photos or asking to have theirs taken. I hear “one, two, three, cheese” spoken with a variety of accents. But there are many other ways to alert people to the click of the camera and to get them to smile. In Turkey, I’ve heard “one, two, three, peynir,” or “bir, iki, üç, peynir,” substituting the Turkish for “cheese,” just as an Italian might say “uno, due, tre, formaggio.”

People in China sometimes say “Qiázi (茄子),” which sounds a bit like a three-syllable version of “cheese.” Continuing the food theme, many Korean speakers say “kimchi.” In Norwegian, some say “smil,” both requesting a smile and making one happen. One of the more interesting ones I’ve heard is the Turkish, “uç yuz otul uç,” a tongue-twister meaning “333.” However, there are always some spoil sports, including some who say that “cheese” and expressions like that are not good for photos anyway:

Andrea Bianco

Saturday, June 14, 2014
Zhong He’s map, 1418

I’ve always been interested in maps, and that interest has grown rather than diminished as I began to learn about them as rhetorical devices. Mark Monmonier discusses this in his *How to Lie with Maps*.

As faithful representations of reality, maps are endlessly fascinating and useful as tools for many purposes, not just finding one’s way. But as constructed artifacts, they embody a mix of physical reality and human passion—becoming devices for power, greed, delusion, hope, art, and more.

Recently, I read *The Mapmaker: A Novel of a Great Navigator who Sailed Fifty Years Before Columbus* by Frank G. Slaughter. It’s a fictionalized account of Bianco’s life, but one done with an attempt to represent accurately what is known about Bianco, while filling in the gaps with a plausible story.

Portugal’s ruler Prince Henry the Navigator, sent various expeditions into the western Atlantic and along the African coast, beginning in 1418. These voyages were secret. There was a real interest in adding to the knowledge of the world, but that was coupled with a desire to use that knowledge for private gain. Not all of the discoveries were shown on published maps, and some were designed to mislead commercial rivals by concealing the existence of new lands and resources.

Antilles within the Caribbean

The Portuguese had probably reached the Antilles archipelago at the Eastern edge of the Caribbean by 1430. Between 1436 and 1448, Andrea Bianco made, but did not publish, maps showing the locations of Newfoundland, Florida, and Brazil. Later
Portuguese maps, published in 1459 and 1489, show Asia with something like Florida, conveniently omit South America.

Bianco developed the "Tondo e Quadro" ("circle and square") method for seeing and measuring a return course. This was invaluable for repeat voyages to secure foreign resources. He collaborated with Fra Mauro, who made other detailed world maps and estimated the world's circumference within 10% of modern figures. See The Ancient Americas: Migrations, Contacts, and Atlantis, by David Pratt.

Prior to the Portuguese voyages, the famous Chinese admiral Zheng He (a Muslim) had circumnavigated the earth. A world map was published in China during the Ming dynasty in 1418. It shows that the Ming navy had a rough knowledge of Baja California, the west coast of South America, as well as Labrador, Florida, and the Gulf of Mexico. The Chinese maps probably contributed to the Europeans’ knowledge.

The Europeans also learned from Arab science and technology. Arabs put south at the top of maps. When you face the sun in the morning, south is on the right, and right has positive associations. Also, with the sea to the south their land was then on the top of the map. Europeans flipped the map to put north and themselves on top.
These points are supported by other historical accounts, which in sum show that 15 C Europeans knew that the world was a sphere roughly 24,000 miles in circumference and that there were large land masses between Europe and East Asia. The issue was not to “discover” America nor to prove the word was round, but to map the details and determine who should control it.

To me, this all suggests that what I had learned about voyages of discovery was mostly wrong, and much less interesting than the fuller, more objective accounts available today. School textbooks tended to minimize or omit entirely any non-European contribution. That left out crucial parts of the story, including the cultural aspects of geography.

The textbooks also represented the discovery era as one of courageous, individualized pursuit of knowledge. Instead, the voyages were an essential aspect of empire building based on already extensive knowledge. Rather than enlightening an ignorant world, they were used to acquire knowledge, then deliberately mislead competitors.

The Black Citadel of Opium

Monday, June 16, 2014

Ağrı Citadel

Ağrı, Turkey is a cool name for a town.

To start, it’s seven syllables. How many towns can claim that? In the US, Philadelphia has five, Indianapolis has six. The full name for Llanfairpwllgwyngyll (Wales) has around 15 syllables, and there’s a town in Thailand with even more. However, among towns that people regularly say and name on signs, Ağrı must be in a select group.
The meaning of Afyonkarahisar is striking, too. “Hesar” means citadel or fortress, and refers to the stunning rock/castle in the center. It’s 570 steps up, which should convey a sense of its height.

“Kara” means black and “Afyon” means opium, which is widely grown in the area. So, Afyonkarahisar is the Black Citadel of Opium.

Ottoman era houses

You can see poppy growing in many places around Afyonkarahisar. This is essential for one of the regional specialities, Kaymak, a creamy dairy product, made from the milk of water buffalos. The water buffalo are fed the residue of poppy seeds (haşhaş) after it has been pressed for oil. Kaymak is often traditionally eaten with honey as a supplement to breakfast.

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Opium seed paste

Haşhaş (or opium seed paste) itself is sometimes served at breakfast. I learned that it is given to children to calm their stomachs and to help them sleep through the night (much like the nightly tradition of a pre-bedtime glass of milk in the US).
Down at the bottom of the citadel is an old town, with many houses from the Ottoman era. We stayed in one that’s been converted into a charming hotel: Şehitoğlu Konağı. Other than bumping my head, which seems to be a problem everywhere I go, I enjoyed the step into the past, with elaborate woodwork, long sofas, and many pots, pitchers, and plates made of copper or silver.

The Way of the Lycians

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Our neighbor

If I could rank civilizations in terms of how important and interesting they are divided by how much I know about them, Lycia would be near the top. Of course, that works only if I leave out the many I know nothing about.

Lycia is a region along Turkey’s Mediterranean coast between Antalya and Koycegiz. Its rivers, including Xanthos and Alakır drain the Anatolian plateau and are among the largest in the country. The entire region is mountainous, with some peaks rising over 10,000 feet. The mountain ranges encroach on the sea, pausing only enough to allow for beautiful beaches.

Barley in the Bezirgan yayla

Our B&B is in a yayla (summer pasture) about 3000 feet above the sea. Nearby, the
It's at the base of Kaputaş canyon, a narrow cleft at the foot of the Taurus mountains. The beach is 200' wide and 70' deep, with a scarp rising 80' straight up behind. You can reach the beach by boat or by a staircase with 187 steps (seemed like more to me). Off its eastern end the sea has eroded the Blue Cave, nearly 200' across, and a favorite of small tour boats and inner tube riders.

Kaputaş beach at the base of the canyon

The Lycian civilization developed within this region. They probably came from Crete around 1400 BC. They had their own language and unique script, still not fully understood. They had unique customs and funerary architecture.

Even though they lived in mountainous terrain with seemingly inaccessible villages, the Lycians formed a union while the rest of the Greek world was warring city states. They had representative government when Greek cities still had rule of the whole body of citizens. In the later Lycian League, they had a bicameral legislature, panels of judges, and other complex civic structures.

Lycians used matrilineal lineage: People identify themselves by their mother and their mother’s mother, not the father. Moreover, offspring of a Lycian woman are automatically legitimate, whereas those born to a Lycian man and a foreigner are illegitimate. Herodotus thought that this was unique, but many other cultures employ a similar system. Our B&B host cites it as evidence that the Celts derive from Lycia.

Xanthos

The Lycians resisted domination, being the last in Asia Minor to become a province of the Roman Empire. The remains are of the latter period, with a few ancient sites nearby, and it's a good example of the topography.
In 540 BC, the Persian commander Harpagos attacked Xanthos, the largest and most prominent city. Finally succumbing to a blockade, the Xanthians gathered all the women, children, slaves, and household goods and set fire to them, then fought on until every Xanthian had been killed or committed suicide. Every item of value had thus been destroyed. Later, 80 Xanthian families who had been elsewhere during the fighting returned and rebuilt the city. The poem below, found at the Xanthos site, describes this event:

We made our houses graves
And our graves are homes to us
Our houses burned down
And our graves were looted
We climbed to the summits
We went deep into the earth
We were drenched in water
They came and got us
They burned and destroyed us
They plundered us
And we,
For the sake of our mothers,
Our women,
And for the sake of our dead,
And we,
In the name of our honor,
And our freedom,
We, the people of this land,
Who sought mass suicide
We left a fire behind us,

Never to die out...

Poem found on a tablet in the Xanthos excavations, translated by Azra Erhat

Keçiler (goats) on Lycian Way

This scene was repeated when Brutus sacked the city in 42 BC. He offered a reward to any Roman soldier who could save a Xanthosian by preventing his suicide. But only 150 survived.
Despite these tragedies, in most cases the Xanthians succeeded against plunderers, until their artifacts were finally conquered by the British Museum in 1858.

Much evidence of the Lycian civilization still remains, as do, I suppose, descendants of those early peoples. The 300 mile long Lycian Way, which runs through our village, near Kapuataş beach and Xanthos, is Turkey’s first long-distance, waymarked path. Along the way one can see endless structures from the Lycian era and imagine its history stretching back 3400 years.

Kemal Hakki Tor’s Lycia is a good introduction to the area.

Ottoman fortification

Friday, June 20, 2014

Theodosian Walls at the Selymbria Gate, showing outer walls, inner walls, & moat wall

Last Monday I walked along the Walls of Constantinople, then returned along the Sea of Marmara. It was a beautiful day, with great views in every direction.

The stone walls were built in 324–336 to protect the city of Constantinople (née Byzantium) after its founding as the new capital of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great. It was the last and one of the most complex fortification systems built in antiquity. Gunpowder began their demise, but it was the large number of Ottoman invaders that caused the city to fall to a siege on May 29, 1453.
Nevertheless, the walls had protected the city for over 1100 years, making them the most successful ever built. Even after the fall of Constantinople, Ottomans under Sultan Mehmed II added to the fortifications by building the Yedikule Hisari (Seven Towers Fortress) at the Golden Gate.

The walls have suffered from wars, earthquakes, and urban development, but still stand as an impressive monument and a marker of inner and outer Istanbul. Restoration began in the 1980s.

It’s not possible to walk on top of the walls the entire 4.5 km length. There are heavily damaged sections and major roads now pass through most of the original gates. Several times I climbed up steep stone stairs overgrown with weeds and broken in many places. I’d walk a while, then find that I needed to retrace my steps. At other times, I had to walk away from the wall to circle through some neighborhood before returning to it. As a consequence, I had to walk at least twice the length of the wall itself.

Ottoman Empire, 1683

The route is part of the Sultan’s Trail, a project to build a long-distance path from Vienna to Istanbul. That project appears stalled, but you can still see blazes for it. You can also see many aspects of Istanbul: beautiful vistas and trash piles, new and ancient constructions, carefully planned development and urban sprawl. In Turkish, I’d say güzel ve çirkin, yeni ve eski, iyı ve kötü.
There are many interesting sights along the wall. My favorite is the Mihrimah Sultan Camii (mosque) at Edirnekapi (the Edirne Gate). It was designed by Mimar Sinan (“Sinan the Architect”) for the favorite daughter of Suleiman the Magnificent, Princess Mihrimah. It’s filled with light due to the extraordinary number of windows, a speciality of Sinan’s. Although it’s a large cami, it has only one minaret, symbolizing the loneliness of Mihrimah and Sinan due to their forbidden love. Edirnekapi itself is where Sultan Mehmed II entered the city after its defeat in 1453.

Ottoman furniture today

As I walked, I imagined what it would take to make something like the Promenade Plantée in Paris or the High Line in New York City. With some repairs to the wall, a little new construction, and handrails for people like me, Istanbul could have the best of these new urban walkways.

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Walking back through a park along the Sea of Marmara made this into a strenuous, but rewarding day. I was personally fortified with a traditional Ottoman dinner in the Sultanahmet area at Pasazade and appreciated the Ottoman-style furniture in our hotel. The day after, we ate at Asitane, which claims to have done six months of research on the details of fine Ottoman court cuisine in order to recreate that food culture.

Center of the World

Saturday, June 28, 2014
Milyon column, İstanbul

The Milyon column in İstanbul (left) is one of many “centers of the world.” These centers seem to be everywhere, each signifying by its presence the yearning for a stable ground, but by their proliferation, undermining any notion of centeredness.

The column is all that’s left of a monument that was the starting point for measurement of distances for all the roads leading to the cities of the Byzantine Empire. It lasted for over a thousand years, but disappeared at the start of the 16th C. During modern excavations, some partial fragments of it were discovered and erected again.

It served the same function as the Miliarium Aureum of Rome, another center of the world, which was displaced when Emperor Constantine I the Great remade Byzantium into his new imperial capital.

Directions to the world

Today, the Milyon column stands near the Basilica cistern, another ancient monument, which was covered up, then rediscovered in the 16th C. The cistern is a huge underground room to hold water. It’s 453’ x 212’, which is larger than a World Cup field, if you’d like a topical comparison.
It was built in the 6th C during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. During his era, and for centuries to follow, the cistern held fresh water for the citizens of Constantinople and the Milyon dome resting on four pylons marked the center of their world. As you explore the cistern’s eerily lit walkways, it’s easy to imagine that you’re in some mystical center of the earth.

Basilica cistern, İstanbul

The cistern was unknown in the Western world until P. Gyllius discovered it while doing research on İstanbul’s Byzantine remains. He was surprised to see people getting water with buckets from well holes, some within their own homes, and even catching fish.

There are many more such “centers” (click here).

Some manage to calculate the geographic center as being the same location as the Geza pyramid, which would be a coincidence supporting many mystical accounts. But more commonly, it’s calculated as being in the eastern Mediterranean Sea about halfway between Athens and Alexandria. Other methods locate it in north-east Turkey.

In either case, I like the way that it’s not too far from İstanbul. That fabulous city straddles Europe and Asia, and through its ports and the Bosporos serves as a bridge to Africa. Its layers of civilization locate it between old and new, encompassing many religious traditions. If you had to choose one center, Istanbul and its Milyon column wouldn't be a bad choice.

Is Blanc the center?

Monday, June 30, 2014
Hamlet of Blanc

In my last post, I speculated that İstanbul was a good candidate for the center of the world.

But now, I'm sitting in İstanbul's antithesis, the hamlet of Blanc sur Sanctus, France, wondering whether the center might instead be here. Where İstanbul is large and hyperactive, Blanc barely hangs on and wonders about its future.

Moss near Blanc

Blanc sits above the valley of the river Sanctus, whose early traces form a boundary between departments of Aveyron and Tarn. It's in the Languedoc region, where names still resonate in Occitan. It's also in the Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses, a lush region of limestone plateaus, cascading mountain streams, beech and pine forests, and family-scale agriculture.
Blanc was settled at least a millennium ago. A chateau was built in the 10th C. The place changed over the years, growing and prospering, especially in the 17th C. But by the mid 19th C, there were only 54 inhabitants, and the last two left in 1960. The combination of a the general rural exodus and WWI were too much for it. Today, it and its environs are protected by an association, Sauvegarde du Rouergue, and by two men who operate a set of guesthouses on the site.

Forest primeval?

We’re staying in what used to be the school and post office. It’s restored to protect it and to provide modern conveniences, but with the perfect weather we had, we could have lived outdoors.

Some would say that Blanc represents well the past for France, and the world. Small-scale agriculture is uncompetitive and too difficult. People are drawn to the cities—the good jobs, shopping, culture and night life, automobiles, new technologies and modern

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conveniences. Wherever the center may be, it certainly can’t be in Blanc.

Cascades

And yet, in Blanc you can take long walks through forests and meadows to reconnect with nature and your own body. You can drink pure water from mountain streams. You can feel how rocks were carried to form walls and houses, rather than to read about them or see them in a museum. You can understand how water and topography have always shaped human lives and continue to this day.
Enfant Sauvage

Moreover, you can see that the life in Blanc is not so different from that in similar places in Turkey, the US, China, or elsewhere in the world. Few people would choose to re-enter that rural lifestyle, but many people seek the kind of peace and wholeness that it promises. There's a solidity to life here that is more than merely the fact everything seems to be built out of rock. Nearby, the “wild child” of Aveyron perplexed early 19th C villagers with his back to nature existence.

Blanc affords an opportunity to find one’s individual center in a way that the intensely social world of Istanbul does not.

Lee M. Hollander

Wednesday, July 02, 2014

Icelanders

I thought about Lee Hollander while returning to the US via Reykjavik.

Professor Hollander lived across the street from the house that three law students and I
rented for a year while attending the University of Texas in Austin. He was 88 years old then, but still very fit and active. He would walk to campus every day, a distance of a mile and a half, when many younger residences insisted on driving.

He received many honors for his translations and studies of Scandinavian literature, including being made Knight of the Order of the Icelandic Falcon. One book I treasure is his translation of the the Poetic Edda, a collection of Old Norse poems, which were preserved in the Icelandic 13 C manuscript Codex Regius.

![The Poetic Edda](image)

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The Poetic Edda

Hollander lost his academic job during WWI because he was a German teacher. In 1920, after the war, he came to the University of Texas, and contributed there for the rest of his life.

Hollander was forced to retire officially because of old age during the year that I was born, but he continued his research and teaching of Germanic studies, publishing many works on Old Norse and translations of sagas. His work continued until after I had received my PhD and left the University.

He died on his way home from the campus on October 19, 1972.
Critical and socially engaged