The Complex Value of Study Abroad
Antonie Boessenkool ’99 studied in Cairo, Egypt, and completed her year abroad with a two-month train tour of western Europe. Art and architecture came alive, as palpable as the varied languages and customs of each place she visited. Antonie viewed the Sistine Chapel, the excavated murals of Pompeii, the still-brilliant art in the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, and the Muslim architecture throughout Cairo. The Citadel, the monument represented here, was one of her favorite places.

Antonie left the Middle East and Europe for her senior year on campus, but the love of art rekindled by those far places never left her. The flame grew, and she enrolled in art history and studio art classes. Reflection on the study abroad experience found its way into her work. “The details of the scenes I saw in Egypt were more vivid in my mind than in the ‘accurate’ photographs I took,” she says. “I wanted to capture my impressions before they faded.

“The experience of study abroad itself was difficult to describe in words, so color gave me a way to express what I felt standing at the base of the huge columns in the oldest mosque in Cairo’s ancient city fortress, the Citadel. In order to capture the size and exotic beauty of the mosque, I took an unconventional approach in painting it. The primary colors highlight the Islamic design and architecture while the warm yellow represents the size of the columns and the enormous enclosed space of the foreground. Juxtaposing a warm color, which optically comes forward, with two cool colors, blue and a cool viridian red, which recede, further emphasizes the unreal size of the place itself by maximizing the optical depth of the painting. This color experiment captures space in a way that no photograph can because photography automatically flattens perspective.

“I’ve often heard Tom Rice [associate professor of art] say that art is a medium where anything is possible. The only limitations are the limits of the artist’s imagination.”
Dear Readers,

Our covers feature two sunsets—one in Mexico, the other at Kodiak Island. One recorded by a student on study abroad; the other by a faculty member on an arguably similar experience.

The focus of this issue is the complexity of the value of study abroad and, by association, other off-campus opportunities in the K-Plan. The two sunsets are distant yet connected. So too are the feature stories on Emily Crawford’s African study abroad experience and David Evans’ tenure as a “Renaissance man” (naturalist, newspaper columnist, historian, and radio personality) at Fort Ambercrombie Historical Park in Alaska.

Evans is a good writer, and the excerpts included in this issue from his Kodiak Daily Mirror column also attest to his excellence as a teacher in Margaret Mead’s sense of that word (see page 26). Study abroad reduces the time Kalamazoo students spend on campus and, potentially, their exposure to faculty like David Evans.

At that price, the value of study abroad should be great. And it is, in subtle and complex ways. Crawford’s excerpts suggest some.

LuxEsto makes much of the K-Plan. And well it should. The K-Plan is a remarkable educational program that distinguishes Kalamazoo College from its peers. But a program is only one of three elements that compose the value of an undergraduate learning experience. Those other elements include the student’s teacher in front of the class and the student’s fellow learners in the class. And related to the latter is the number of fellow learners. Is it small enough to engender meaningful conversations?

All Kalamazoo College graduates, regardless of their graduation date relative to the adoption of the K-Plan, share the excellence of these elements. The conception and continuation of the K-Plan is, after all, the result of the efforts of remarkable teachers.

This issue of LuxEsto features one of them: Billie Fischer, associate professor of art. It also outlines a change in the College’s admission calendar, which will enhance the institution’s selectivity and affect that other element of educational value—the caliber of one’s fellow students.

We welcome a new writer, Erin Rumery, who wrote the athlete spotlight pieces on seniors Alex Luttschyn and Melissa Hawley. Erin is a sophomore psychology major and the women’s softball team’s centerfielder.

Our graduate intern, Antonie Boessenkool ’99, wrote the article on Billie Fischer. She’s just returned from England, where she took a four-week course in teaching English as a second language. She will work for our office another four weeks, and then she’s off to Peru to teach English. We wish her well. She’s a fine writer and will be an excellent teacher.

Best regards,

Jim Van Sweden ’73
The Office of College Communication
STUDY ABROAD IN AFRICA: The Serengeti wildlife preserve in Tanzania. See page 19 for story.

Features

19 Complex Value: The African Journey of Emily Crawford

A Kalamazoo College professor once remarked about the noticeable difference in an individual before and after the study abroad experience. Might that change have something to do with a maturing comfort with ambiguity and a stronger connection to others much different than oneself?

26 Renaissance Man in Alaska

David Evans worked for room and board and a truck. In return he was a naturalist, a columnist, a historian, and a radio show educator. The ultimate beneficiaries: his students at Kalamazoo College.

31 Faculty Profile: Learning to See / Doorways

The gifted art historian Billie Fischer uses “old” works to open a new way of seeing.
...on William DeGrado

[The] Summer 1999 LuxEsto [included] lots of good [information] on alumni and students in science. The article about Cassandra Fraser’s PECASE award provided a nice spotlight on the possibilities provided by an eclectic “K” education.

Even more impressive, however, was the election of William DeGrado ’77 to the National Academy of Sciences…. The National Academy of Sciences elects 60 new members each year from the thousands of practicing scientists and mathematicians around the world, encompassing all disciplines. Its membership now totals a little over a thousand members.

Election to this body is one of the highest forms of recognition a scientist can achieve, surpassed only by the Nobel Prize and a handful of other stellar awards. I am not aware of any other “K” alumni who have been elected to the Academy, although there may be others. I hope you might be able to find out a little more on DeGrado’s research and career path.

Randy Morse ’76 PhD
Wadsworth Center, Albany, New York

EDITOR’S RESPONSE

LuxEsto thanks Randy Morse for calling our attention to the prestige of election to the National Academy of Sciences.

William F. DeGrado, PhD, is the George W. Raiziss Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia). He graduated from Kalamazoo College in 1977 and earned his PhD in biochemistry from the University of Chicago in 1981. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1999.

DeGrado’s research focuses on using molecular design as an approach to understanding macromolecule structure and function. He was the first scientist in the world to successfully design and construct a protein “from scratch” (de novo). The de novo design of proteins has proven to be a useful approach for understanding the features in a protein sequence that cause it to fold into its unique three-dimensional structure.

The importance of DeGrado’s research rests in the fact that all living things are assemblages of protein molecules. Structural proteins make up the framework of cells, and regulatory proteins guide the cell processes that collectively make life possible. Genes are protein blueprints. Each gene—a specific fragment of DNA—is responsible for a specific protein. Simply put, life is the proper functioning of proteins. Many diseases result from the improper functioning of proteins, and scientists often design potential medicines with specific protein targets in mind. (Interestingly, this year’s winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine received the honor for his work on protein signaling).

Proteins are exceedingly complex. The human body is composed of some 100 billion cells, and each cell contains about a billion proteins. Proteins are large (macro) molecules formed from smaller components (peptides) of still smaller parts (amino acids) in specific sequences. But a protein is much more than its component parts. Its three-dimensional shape, which scientists call its conformation or folding, is unique and determines its structure and function. DeGrado’s de novo design will help scientists unlock the secrets of protein conformation. In addition, his lab has designed proteins that carry out specific functions of interest to scientists, including metal-binding, DNA-binding, haem-binding, and channel formation.

DeGrado contacted LuxEsto and noted two recent Kalamazoo College connections in his scientific career. He gave the J.R. Piperno Memorial Lecture at Temple University (Jeanette Piperno was a 1962 graduate and chemistry major of Kalamazoo College). In that lecture DeGrado talked about the research effort of Ronald Blake Hill ’84. Hill works as a postdoc in DeGrado’s lab.

Recent publications representative of DeGrado’s research interests include the following.


DeGrado, et.al. A functionally defined model for the M2 proton channel of influenza: a virus suggests a mechanism for its selectivity. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 94: 11301-06.

DeGrado, et.al. The structure of the designed trimeric coiled coil-Va-Ld: implications for engineering crystals and supramolecular assemblies. Protein Science 6: 78-86.


Lux Esto Translation

The translation of lux esto—be light—was new to me. When I was at Kalamazoo College, it was translated “Let there be light.” I liked the old translation because it was about the light that learning brings into our lives and the way learning clears the darkness away and makes us free.

Charlotte Hauch Hall ’66
Managing Editor, Newsday

Correction

In its summer issue LuxEsto reported the connection between Brenda Turner ’71 and the World Bank career development internship in an incomplete manner. We apologize.

In 1996, Brenda established an endowment as a memorial for her late husband, Gilbert Brian Davis. Many friends and family of Brenda and Brian continue to contribute to the fund. Some proceeds from the memorial fund were used by the College’s career development office to support the World Bank internship. A future issue of LuxEsto will feature a story on the memorial fund in Gilbert Brian Davis’s name.
At 12:15 a.m. October 18, Neenef Odah, a junior from Seattle, Washington, shot and killed Margaret Wardle, a sophomore from Plainwell, Michigan. He then turned the shotgun on himself and took his own life. The murder and the suicide occurred in Odah’s room in DeWaters residence hall and, according to witnesses, followed a heated argument.

Wardle and Odah had dated during the previous year. That dating relationship had ended about a month prior to the shootings. According to police, Odah purchased the shotgun legally under Michigan law, which requires a background check and a 24-hour waiting period. He apparently did this with no one’s knowledge. He picked up his purchase on October 8. Police have concluded that no one in the living area was aware of the presence of a firearm. The College continues to investigate the chronology of these events.

The murder and the suicide closely followed a series of losses to the Kalamazoo College community. During the summer, junior Charles Tully died of leukemia, and senior Jessica Lowery died in an automobile accident. In late summer, Patrick Gallagher, a graduate who had returned to campus to earn his teaching certificate, died suddenly. And on September 27, assistant professor of physics Benjamin Davies died of a heart attack while playing tennis with faculty friends at Stowe Stadium. He was 32 years old.

The murder of Margaret Wardle and the suicide of Neenef Odah profoundly shocked the College family. The President cancelled classes and College events for October 18. Students, faculty, staff, and friends gathered to share their grief and to support one another.

In numb and inadequate words, the College immediately communicated the details of the tragedy to and expressed its support for community members off campus—students on study abroad, alumni, parents of students, trustees, and friends. An outpouring of shock, grief, and care followed from these persons.

The College’s counseling department enlisted trusted colleagues from the surrounding community, and together they sought out students and offered assistance. Our counselors and faculty remain attentive to students, some of whom may be unaware of their need for assistance.

What fellow members of this learning community did for one another in the wake of this murder and this suicide was remarkable. Shortly after William Sloane Coffin lost his 24-year-old son in an automobile accident, he said words to his New York City congregation that resonate for our Kalamazoo College family as we cope with this tragedy. “…[I]nmediately after such a tragedy people must come to your rescue, people who only want to hold your hand, not to quote anybody or even say anything, people who simply bring food and flowers—the basics of beauty and life—people who sign letters simply, ‘Your brokenhearted sister.’ …And that’s what hundreds of you understood so beautifully. You gave me what God gives all of us—minimum protection, maximum support. I swear to you, I wouldn’t be standing here were I not upheld.”

And so it was on our campus. The power of this small community to support one another may also carry a profound promise of the eventual transmutation of grief and anger into learning. In his sermon William Sloane Coffin said, “Another consolation, of course, will be the learning—which better be good, given the price.”

What are we supposed to learn? I don’t know. Perhaps what Emily Dickinson wrote to a grieving friend.

“...I knew not that we were to live, Nor when we are to die...
Our ignorance our cuirass is;
We wear mortality
As lightly as an option gown
Till asked to take it off.
By His intrusion God is known—
It is the same with life.”

What are we supposed to learn? I don’t know. Not yet. I do know this. When I heard of the death of Margaret Wardle and the death of Neenef Odah, neither of whom I knew, I did this: I called each of my four children. I wanted to hear their voices. I wanted them to hear mine and to know from my voice that I love them. I suspect many of us may have done something like this. Perhaps something learned precipitated my calling my kids. Perhaps during our short conversation a gift was exchanged. If either is the case, I am indebted.
In June 1998, Kalamazoo College received a generous $250,000 grant from the Charles Strosacker Foundation to purchase new equipment for the College’s science, math, and computer education programs. Most of the equipment purchases made possible by that grant have been finalized. But a plan to extend the grant’s reach continues through the efforts of a small army of Kalamazoo College science graduates.

“In order to leverage the original grant, the College sought a matching grant from the Kresge Foundation,” said Jan Block, the College’s director of capital and special projects. “We had no idea that simple request would set so many alumni volunteers into action.”

Through its Science Initiatives Program, the Kresge Foundation provided the College with a unique $250,000 challenge grant wherein half the dollars would be applied to the purchase of equipment and half invested into an endowment earmarked for future equipment maintenance and replacement.

And the entire $250,000 grant had to be matched two-for-one by the College and added to the endowment.

Enter the army of volunteers. Under the theme “Back to the Future: A Kresge Challenge,” some 50 Kalamazoo science major graduates from the ’70s and ’80s are contacting hundreds of other science majors from those years in an effort to raise the lion’s share of the challenge grant.

“Having run my own lab for ten years, I appreciate how important it is to have and maintain sophisticated instruments and equipment,” said Kresge Challenge volunteer Len Freedman ’80, PhD. “Scientists understand the importance of funding. This is the kind of effort we can get behind.”

Freedman is associate professor of cell biology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, a teaching hospital in New York City. He believes new equipment will mean a lot to the College and future science majors.

“Although fundamental concepts and great ideas are essential, so are the techniques that allow us to test them,” said Freedman. “This is simply not possible without the latest, most advanced equipment. In my field, a ten year old instrument is ancient.”

Equipment purchased through the Strosacker Foundation grant includes numerous balances, meters, motion detectors, as well as tectonic oscilloscopes, dissecting microscopes, gas chromatographic equipment, and high level computing stations devoted to mathematics and computer science.

Kalamazoo College students Gillian Hooker ’00, a biology major, and Vikrant “Vic” Virupannavar (right) and biology major Gillian Hooker. The microscope is an example of the sophisticated scientific equipment the College hopes to procure and maintain through a grant from the Kresge Foundation.
Virupannavar '00, a health sciences major, sees recent purchases such as a Zeiss axiohot compound fluorescent microscope adding great value to their academic and work careers.

“Even though I’m planning to go to medical school, I know I’ll have research projects to work on,” said Virupannavar. “Knowing my way around this piece of equipment and how to interpret its use will help me a lot.”

Hooker, who is contemplating a career in research science, agrees. “This fluorescent microscope is indicative of what a great time it is to be a biology major at Kalamazoo College. The facilities, instruction and opportunities are terrific.”

Although much of the Kresge Challenge effort involves biology, chemistry, physics, and math alumni from the ’70s and ’80s, Block encourages graduates of any era or academic discipline and any member of the College community to participate.

“Many graduates and friends of the College are in the midst of successful careers involving science,” said Block. “They know the value of a quality undergraduate education in the sciences and the added value of having hands-on experience with cutting edge equipment while still in college.”

The deadline for making a Kresge Challenge pledge is June 2000. Block reminds contributors to the College’s annual fund that they cannot earmark part of that gift for the Kresge Challenge. Rather, it must be a separate gift.

People interested in assisting the campaign or who want more information should contact Jan Block at 616.337.7297 / block@kzoo.edu / or visit www.kzoo.edu/develop/kresge.

Admission Evolution

Imagine a game show called College Admission Jeopardy.

The answer: Teachers, curriculum, classmates’ characteristics, class size.

The question: What are the critical elements of a valuable undergraduate education?

And finally, the implication for Kalamazoo College: a change in its admission process.

This year Kalamazoo College becomes the first in the state of Michigan to move from a modified rolling admission calendar to a modified traditional admission calendar.

In effect the College will move from a model in which admission decisions are based upon segments of the total applicant pool and communicated periodically, to a model in which admission decisions reflect evaluation of nearly the entire applicant pool. In the latter model, applicants may have to wait longer to hear about their admission status.

“The rolling admission model may fill seats quickly and assure we have reached a target number of students for a given year, but it is not the best strategy to build a class of the highest possible quality and optimal size,” said Joellen Silberman, dean of enrollment.

For the past two years Kalamazoo College has experienced an increase in applicant numbers. And a greater percentage of accepted applicants have enrolled and matriculated.

When the numbers of applicants and enrollment deposits exceeded projections based on previous history, the College needed to accommodate two consecutive large classes (446 matriculated in 1998; 370 in 1999).

In order to limit the class that matriculated last fall to 370, the College last spring had to close its enrollment period two weeks prior to its intended target.

“That was an extreme measure we wish to avoid in the future,” said Silberman.

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<tr>
<th>Admission Calendars</th>
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**MODIFIED ROLLING ADMISSION CALENDAR**

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<th>Notification</th>
<th>Commitment Deposit Due</th>
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<td>May 1, 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 1, 1998</td>
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<td>Dec 15, 1998</td>
<td>Jan 15, 1999</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1, 1999</td>
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**MODIFIED TRADITIONAL ADMISSION CALENDAR**

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<th>Notification</th>
<th>Commitment Deposit Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Decision</td>
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<td>Jan 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Action I</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Action II</td>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Decision</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An applicant to Kalamazoo College whose complete application arrives any time after January 1 will wait until April 1 to learn his or her acceptance status. For prospective students, that is the primary difference between these calendars. The traditional admission process allows the College more latitude in shaping the size and characteristics of any given class.
Nevertheless, early closure was a proper decision, she added. "The value of the Kalamazoo College learning experience depends upon a class size appropriate to the individual attention and experiential opportunities that distinguish our College from others."

According to Silberman, the recent trend in applicant and enrollment numbers means the College can be more selective. "And it should be. Our adoption of a new admission model is much more than a response to our recent popularity and to the increase in the demand for a Kalamazoo College education," said Silberman. "It is a step to enhance a key element of a valuable undergraduate learning experience: the selective composition of the student body."

The quality of teaching, the K-Plan, and class size are vital components of educational excellence, according to Silberman. "And so are the qualities of the students seated next to one in class."

The move to a traditional admission calendar carries risk, said Silberman. Prospective students have many choices, and the vast majority of our competitors will return an admission decision more promptly than we will under the new system. And this could prompt a bird-in-the-hand-versus-two-in-the-bush quandary.

"If we come up short in applications or deposits we could enroll a class or two which number less than the target we need to reach an operating budget goal," said Silberman. "And that’s a very serious situation for an institution as dependent as we are on tuition for our revenue stream."

A traditional admission calendar is not new. "In a way, it’s back to the future for the College." Kalamazoo used a traditional admission calendar from 1833 to 1966; a rolling admission from 1967 to 1997; and a modified rolling admission in 1998 and 1999.

The most selective schools in the country use the traditional calendar, according to Silberman. People perceive the learning experiences at these institutions as unmatched in value, and this ensures a robust national applicant pool, a high percentage of enrollment deposits, and a high matriculation rate.

Most of these same institutions enjoy significant revenue streams from large endowments, making them far less tuition dependent than Kalamazoo College. According to Silberman, this freedom confers two advantages. First, institutions can deal with the financial implications of a class or two that come in below projected target numbers. Second, such institutions can be innovative in the area of admission.

"We want to move into the ranks of those colleges, and so we are proceeding with this change," said Silberman. A little bit, she added, like a high wire act without a net.

"I would feel better if we had the safety net of a much healthier endowment, but the College is working on that. Making this move at this time will preserve and enhance the value of the Kalamazoo College learning experience, which is what attracts students in the first place."

New 1833 Society President

Growth is the one-word summation of Jim Robideau’s ‘76 tenure as president of The 1833 Society. And now it’s a tradition new president Jothy (Jonathan) Rosenberg ’78 intends to continue.

Unrestricted gifts of $1,000 or more to the Kalamazoo College Fund (formerly known as the Annual Fund) establish membership in The 1833 Society. 1833 Society donors are recognized at five levels of philanthropy: 1833 Society Scholars ($19,000); Bowen Society ($10,000-$18,999); Mandelle Society ($5,000-$9,999); Welles Society ($2,500-$4,999); and the Dewing Society ($1,000-$2,499).

“Annual support at these levels is a key part of the financial backbone of the College,” said Robideau.

The Society’s mission is three-fold: to cultivate wide awareness of the distinction and value of the Kalamazoo College learning experience; to continue the tradition of philanthropy as dependable support for the College; and to encourage benefactors to serve as College ambassadors, actively promoting the College and its goals.

During Robideau’s three-year term, society membership increased from 303 to 362, and 1833 Society contributions to the Kalamazoo College Fund grew from $759,970 to $1,125,461. The percentage of those gifts provided by alumni members grew from 56.9 percent to 64.1 percent.

“I appreciate the generosity and loyalty of all society members," said Robideau. "Serving as president allowed me the opportunity to get to know many extraordinary individuals.”

Jothy Rosenberg expects the pattern of growth to continue (see letter), and he brings some new ideas to help make that happen.

“I’d like to raise the visibility of the civic rationale for supporting the educational experience available only at independent liberal arts colleges," he said. "And I’d like to more prominently feature one of the great but

25 Years of Scholarly Work and Teaching

Three members of the Kalamazoo College academic community celebrated 25-year service anniversaries in October. David Strauss and David Barclay are professors in the department of history; and Sally Olexia is director of the health sciences program.
My wife, Carole, works for Boston Health Care for the Homeless, and we have two teen-aged kids, Joanna and Zachary. We only recently moved east. We’ve lived in the Boston area for three years. Before that we were in California—my native state—for a 10-year period that included the big northern California earthquake of ’89. Prior to California, I was a professor of computer science at Duke University, where I completed my PhD in that field. I entered Duke after graduating from Kalamazoo in 1978 with a degree in math.

We’ve ended up loving the move to Boston. We like the schools here. We don’t mind the weather—who would after all those winters in Michigan—and we love close access to...
focus on becoming a double black diamond amputee skier. I returned to Kalamazoo just in time to leave for my senior year abroad. Study abroad is another of the wonderful attributes of this school. I graduated on time, fought the cancer into complete remission, and excelled in my graduate school career.

My personal health experience turned me into somewhat of a maniac about exercise. I ride my bike about 30 miles and swim 5 miles a week. I recently completed my seventh Alcatraz swim and set a personal best time of 35:58.

Two years ago I was thinking of what I could donate to "K" for the Kalamazoo College Fund. I had contributed some amount every year since my days in graduate school. When I got the annual fund solicitation call from a student caller, I shocked that poor girl and made her day by agreeing to bump my donation above the threshold for 1833 Society membership. Soon after, I received a call from Lynn Jackson. She said my "sudden" decision took her by surprise because she usually worked very hard to recruit people to 1833. But I had slowly worked my way to that level, making sure I always gave just a little more than my brother, Michael '75, and I always remembered what "K" had done for me.

I wanted to do whatever I could to help the College remain strong, remain true to its principles, and remain a place where more students could have the incredible kind of start I had. So now what more can I do? Give the College a little of my time as well as money. I hope I can convince more people to bump their annual gifts over the threshold and join The 1833 Society. That will be my mission for my period of leadership of this group.

Sincerely,

Jothy Rosenberg
President, The 1833 Society
Doctor Frankenstein pushed the limits of 19th-century science and technology to create human life. But his man-made creation and its consequences were far more complex than a miracle.

Now, at Kalamazoo College, Doctor Frankenstein, the brainchild of novelist Mary Shelley, has a different role—helping English majors to envision and shape their future.

Implausible? Not in the seminar “Futuristic Fiction and Literary Criticism,” which is taught by Lisbeth Gant-Britton, assistant professor of English. Prior to the advent of the new millennium, Gant-Britton thought a great deal about a teacher’s millennial duties. “The responsibility of the teacher is to prepare students for the world they will live in,” she says. But how can students be taught about the future by using materials from the past and present?

Gant-Britton’s answer is to train students by using a different method of teaching. She and her class work in a laboratory—a “literary laboratory.” Students are active creators in a “science” of imagining futures. They examine a combination of fictional works that speculated on the future as well as theoretical arguments on future trends.

Like all good scientists, Gant-Britton’s students study early and current works that can serve as prototypes for their own. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is one such text. George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) are others. Although these works were written decades ago, they influenced the futures their authors imagined. Gant-Britton’s students analyze that influence and the way in which these works continue to inform our own future. Gant-Britton requires students to ask themselves questions about their future, as Mary Shelley did, and to formulate their own predictions using precedents from the past.

Groups of students focus on a topic of their choosing, such as population growth, genetic engineering, environmental degradation, a growing disparity between the rich and the poor, or global warming. They lead the class in a discussion of that issue and devise creative solutions to the problems they present. Texts like *Frankenstein* become pivotal because they allow students to discuss what it means for humans to create something new and what the risks of that creation may be.

Like Dr. Frankenstein, students in Gant-Britton’s seminar test the limits of what is known with their own ideas. “Students are sometimes surprised when I ask them for their own ideas about the future,” says Gant-Britton. “This is often the first time they’ve been asked to do something like this.”

“Frequently,” says Gant-Britton, “students feel they only have the right to read what others have written.”

The key to training students for the future is to give them confidence in their ability to find solutions. For that reason, Gant-Britton uses young authors, like Mary Shelley and T.S. Eliot, who wrote “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” while he was still in college.

“It may take us a while to give ourselves permission to express our own ideas,” says Gant-Britton. “But this is what employers will expect students to be able to do.”

And Gant-Britton expects Kalamazoo students to be at the forefront of the future. “We have an unusually high percentage of bright people here,” she says. “They will be the decision-makers in the years to come.”

“We have to train our students to make informed social, moral, and cultural decisions,” she says. “With these decisions, they will shape the world.”
College Appoints Karen Joshua New Assistant Dean of Students

Kalamazoo College has appointed Karen L. Joshua to the post of associate dean of students. Joshua has responsibilities consistent with those traditionally associated with multicultural affairs. She started in her new position September 20, taking over from Danny Sledge who was earlier named the College’s dean of students.

Joshua holds degrees from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She majored in family and individual relationships for her BA. Her MA had a dual emphasis: administration of student personnel services in post-secondary education, and community/agency counseling.

Joshua sees herself as a primary resource for students of color at Kalamazoo College.

“Interacting with students is very important,” she said. “They tend to tell you what’s really happening on campus, what they like and dislike, and if they are hearing any rumblings on campus that could potentially be of concern. As long as the lines of communications are open, you can head off many conflicts and soften the impact of those that do arise.”

She’ll also work closely with faculty, staff and students on diversity issues and projects such as the Martin Luther King birthday celebration in January, black history month in February, and the celebration of diverse cultures.

“I’ll help raise awareness of the need to keep building a diverse campus community.”

Prior to joining the College, Joshua held a similar position at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. Before that, she worked for the Detroit Public Schools as a career/college specialist. She was also an admissions counselor for Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., and a counselor and instructor at Lewis College of Business in Detroit.

In her spare time, Joshua enjoys reading, event planning, and playing shortstop on her softball team. She encourages people to drop by her office in the Hicks student center and raid her jar of licorice and Reese’s Pieces.

KAREN JOSHUA, assistant dean of students
Cross Country

Men’s
After finishing third at the MIAA jamboree earlier in the year, the men’s cross country team ran past Hope at the MIAA championship to secure a second-place finish in the MIAA.

Seniors Kory Kramer and Ian Schmidt set the pace for the Hornets all season. Both runners earned All-MIAA first team honors. They also qualified for the NCAA Division III championships, which was held November 20th at Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Kramer ran a team-best at the NCAA Great Lakes Regional at Ohio Northern University. The senior nearly excised an entire minute off the 25:30 time he ran on the same course a month earlier. His speedy 24:33 finish earned him second place in the region and qualified him for nationals.

Kramer finished third at the MIAA championships, sixth at the Michigan intercollegiate championships, and fourth at the MIAA jamboree and GLCA championships.

Schmidt had his best run of the year at the regional event with a time of 24:59. His ninth place finish qualified him for the national championships. Schmidt was instrumental in propelling the Hornets to their second place league finish. The senior finished second at the MIAA championships, much improving upon his eighth place finish at the MIAA jamboree earlier in the year.

Sophomore Andy Beights had quality runs at both MIAA events and earned All-MIAA second team honors.

Women’s
The women’s cross country team improved over the season. It finished fifth at the early season MIAA jamboree, but raced to fourth at the MIAA championships and secured a fourth-place tie in the final MIAA standings.

Vicky Fletcher paced the Hornet runners all season. The senior had her best time of the year (19:27) at the NCAA Great Lakes regional. She finished 22nd at the MIAA jamboree and improved to 15th at the MIAA championship meet. Fletcher earned All-MIAA second team honors.

Becky Bielang ’02 and Eve Khlyavich ’02 ran a close second and third all season. Each had their best times at the regional meet, finishing 73rd and 74th.

Emily Farrer ’02 ran a close fourth throughout the season and had her best time (20:10) at the regional meet as well.

Golf

Men’s
The men’s golf team completed a season of elastic finishes. The team placed in the range of second to eighth at the eight MIAA tournaments held this season.

The Hornets’ best round of the season was a second place finish at the second event of the year. Kalamazoo tallied 386 team points and trailed Hope College by only three points for the first place position. Three Hornets were in the top ten in that round: Alex Luttschyn ’00 finished second after shooting a season- and team-best 74; Jon Wood ’01 tied for third with his season-best 75; and Ben Tucker ’03 tied for eighth with a season-best 77.

Jon Wood tied for fifth in the next match with a 77. The Kalamazoo/Loy Norrix standout had the Hornets’ best average (79.8) through the first five matches before leaving for study abroad.

Junior B.J. Ford ranked 19th among MIAA leaders with an 81.9 average. Senior captain Alex Luttschyn closed out his college career ranking 20th in the MIAA with an 82.0 average.

Kalamazoo finished in fifth place in the MIAA with a team average of 410.0 per round.

Women’s
The women’s golf team saved their best for last. The Hornets delivered their best team finish of the year at the last MIAA tournament. They finished sixth at that outing and held on to a seventh place position in the...
league standings. Kalamazoo’s final team average was 417.4.

Heidi Fahrenbacher ’02 had a season-best 95 at the final tournament and finished the season ranked 25th in the MIAA with an average of 101.7. Nisse Olsen ’02 was the Hornets’ most consistent golfer, averaging 100.7 and ranking 21st in the league. Both Olsen and Fahrenbacher shot team-best 95’s during the season.

Football

Almost. That word was heard far too often this season when referring to Kalamazoo College football. The Hornets finished the 1999 campaign with a 3-6 overall record and a 2-4 mark (fifth) in the MIAA. Three of the Hornets’ four conference losses were by ten points or less. Kalamazoo lost its league opener to Defiance 10-0. The Hornets had a chance to beat Albion at homecoming but fell just short with a 16-14 loss. A week later, a Kalamazoo drive stalled with minutes remaining as the Hornets dropped another nailbiter to Alma, 12-7.

The Hornets returned to life with a convincing victory over Olivet. Kalamazoo then defeated Adrian with a last-second field goal before losing the final game of the season at Hope.

The Hornet defense and special teams were bright spots for the Hornet faithful all season. The Hornets held opponents to less than 300 yards of total offense per game and allowed only 168 points for the season, placing it second in that category in the school’s history. The defensive unit set a school record for fewest rushing yards allowed in a season with 969.

Senior Eric Gerwin moved up in the record books after making a team-high 88 tackles. He now has 316 career tackles, second highest in school history. Gerwin also moved into third position in career sacks, with teammate Nick Lachapelle ’00, with 10. Gerwin, Lachapelle, and Jeff Dillingham ’00 earned All-MIAA first defensive team honors. Gerwin was the MIAA’s Most Valuable Defensive Player and a GTE Academic All-District selection. Jamie Zorbo ’00 was named to the All-MIAA Second Defensive Team.

Dillingham also sparked the special teams. The senior ranked 12th in NCAA III with a
27.9 kick return yard average. He broke an 80-yard return for a touchdown in the last game of the season.

Leading the offense was quarterback T.J. Thayer. The freshman threw for 724 yards with a 50.4 completion percentage and led the team in rushing with 493 yards on 104 carries (4.7 avg. and four touchdowns). Junior Jason Barnett led all running backs with 424 yards on 112 carries (3.8 avg. and four touchdowns). Sophomore Jason Charnley led the receiving corp with 323 yards on 29 catches (11.1 avg. and two touchdowns).

Soccer

Men’s
The men’s soccer team had another solid season, earning a third place MIAA finish with a 10-4-0 league record (13-5-0 overall).

Kalamazoo put together a six-game winning streak that put the Hornets on top of the MIAA late in the season, but a 2-1 overtime loss to Calvin knocked the Hornets out of league title contention.

Kalamazoo was ranked regionally during much of the season, but no at-large bids went to MIAA schools.

Several Hornets earned All-MIAA honors. Freshman Ross Bower was third in the league in goals (11) and second in points (27). He led the league in both categories much of the season. David Dwaihy, a sophomore, ranked fourth with six assists. Both players were named to the All-MIAA first team.

All-MIAA second team selections included Geoff Alexander ’00, Aaron Thornburg ’02, John Evans ’02, and Dave Adamji ’00. Alexander ranked sixth in the league with eight goals and 18 total points. Thornburg was one of the league’s top midfielders and Evans was one of the top defenders. Adamji recorded six shutouts in 14 league contests.
The women’s soccer team won its second consecutive MIAA championship. The Hornets rolled through the league schedule and finished 8-0. Kalamazoo also won the MIAA tournament and secured the league's automatic bid to the NCAA tournament.

Although the team was ranked nationally as high as 19th, its national title hopes were erased in the semifinals of the NCAA regional tournament. The Hornets received a first-round bye and played Wheaton College in a semifinal game at Ohio Wesleyan University. The two teams played to a 1-1 tie through 90 minutes of regulation, and 15 minutes of the first overtime. A little over one minute into the second overtime period, Wheaton was awarded a penalty kick after an alleged foul inside the box. Wheaton’s offensive player converted and the Hornets’ stellar season was over.

All 11 of Kalamazoo’s starters were selected to the All-MIAA first and second teams. First team selections included Amy Burgardt ’00, Megan Faurot ’00, Sandi Poniatowski ’00, and Stacey Nastase ’02. Poniatowski was named league MVP after leading the MIAA in assists (8) and tying for the lead in total points (26). Faurot led the league with 11 goals and shared the total points title with Poniatowski. Burgardt was the league’s top keeper, allowing only three goals in eight regular season games and posting shutouts in both MIAA tournament games. Nastase earned first team honors for the second consecutive year as the league’s top defender.

**Volleyball**

The young women’s volleyball team gained a lot of experience during the 1999 campaign. The squad, which graduates only two seniors, tied for fifth in the MIAA with a record of 4-4. The Hornets always play a difficult non-league schedule and finished with an overall mark of 16-21.

Season highlights included a non-league win over Hope College, and two wins over John Carroll University.

Senior Lisa Herron was selected to the All-MIAA First Team after leading the Hornets in kills (416) for the second consecutive year. Herron also led the squad with 391 digs. Emily Trahan, a freshman setter, was selected to the All-MIAA Second Team. Trahan led Kalamazoo with an astonishing 1,351 assists. She also led the Hornets with 88 service aces and was second on the team with 353 digs.

Sophomore Jodi Pung earned honorable mention honors after leading Kalamazoo with 44 solo blocks and 97 block assists.
The Kalamazoo College Athletic Hall of Fame inducted three new members last fall, and tennis connects them all. George Acker, Jacqueline Aurelia ’94, and Lewis Miller ’93 joined the ranks of 62 distinguished athletes, coaches, and individuals associated with athletics at the College.

During Acker’s 35-year career at Kalamazoo he coached tennis and, at various times, wrestling, football, and cross-country. His accomplishments as a tennis coach are unmatched. His teams won seven NCAA Division III championships and 35 MIAA championships. He coached 38 All-Americans, 19 MIAA most valuable players, and 13 MIAA Stowe Sportsmanship Award winners. His teams amassed a 209-1 MIAA dual meet record and an overall 537-231 mark. Acker was named NCAA Division III Coach of the Year in 1982 and 1991 and NCAA Division III Coach of the Decade for the 1980s.

Aurelia was a member of the All-MIAA first team all four of her years at Kalamazoo; she played number one singles and doubles all four years and was team captain for three of them. In 1991 she was NCAA Division III Rookie of the Year, and in 1994 the Division III National Senior Player of the Year. She earned academic All-American honors in 1992/93 and 1993/94 and received a NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship in 1994. Aurelia expects to complete her medical degree in June.

Lewis Miller is the only player in Division III men’s tennis history to win consecutive NCAA Division III tennis national singles championships (1991, 1992). He was a four-time All-American in singles and two-time All-American in doubles. Miller was a member of Acker’s national championship teams in 1991, 1992, and 1993, and he captained the latter two. He was named GTE All-American of the Year in 1992 and 1993 and was named to the Rolex Collegiate All-Star Team in 1991, 1992, and 1993. In 1993 he received a NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship. He earned a master’s degree in public policy and a law degree from the University of Michigan. Miller now works as an Associate at the law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP in Denver, Colo.

Many current athletes and alumni honored the tennis trio. More than 160 people attended the induction ceremony and 130 attended the dinner, which was sold out.

Alex Luttschyn

People choose Kalamazoo College for many different reasons. Some say the deciding factor is small class size; others cite close interaction with professors; and some specify Kalamazoo’s challenging academics.

Alex Luttschyn liked Kalamazoo’s excellent academic reputation, but one specific aspect of the K-Plan clinched his decision.

“Study abroad was the reason I applied to Kalamazoo College,” Alex said, “and it definitely lived up to my expectation."

The senior economics major from Brighton, Mich., spent six months in Madrid, Spain, last year.

“I’ve never had the opportunity to learn so much about myself,” Alex said. “It’s definitely a good feeling to arrive somewhere, with no idea where anything is, and to later leave feeling like that place is home.”

While in Madrid, Luttschyn interned at Ford Espana for his individualized cultural research project. Having worked at the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn the previous summer, he compared and contrasted the two experiences. The internship benefited him in many ways.

“Getting up each morning, commuting, and then speaking only Spanish for six hours a day helped me to learn the language,” Alex said. “Study abroad was one of the things I enjoyed most at Kalamazoo College. That and the people.”

A significant component of the K-Plan are career internships. The summer before his senior year, Alex served as an intern sales program representative for Sun Microsystems. He identified new companies as possible customers of Sun and attracted the interest of those businesses. “It was a great opportunity,” Alex said.

Very often the internships give students opportunities for making great connections and provide a springboard for post-undergraduate possibilities. “This internship gives me a good chance for an excellent position with Sun Microsystems after graduation in June,” said Alex.

(continued next page)
Hidden Value of Kalamazoo Athletics
“The feeling of being a part of a team, a group of people attempting to reach a common goal.”

Post Graduation Secure a position in the Sun Microsystems sales division.

Melissa Hawley
The K-Plan allows students to individualize their collegiate education and makes them responsible for acquiring valuable post-graduate skills.

Melissa Hawley took advantage of this opportunity by obtaining an internship last summer with the Detroit Shock of the Women's National Basketball Association. She combined her love for basketball and her interest in working with youth by working for the Shock's community relations and youth program department.

Melissa organized Shock Jocks, a program devised by General Motors and the Detroit Shock, which provides home game tickets to underprivileged youth. Melissa contacted various youth organizations, distributed tickets, and managed logistical details. She also coordinated a charity auction of Shock memorabilia and administered autograph signings after home games. She also managed Shockfest, a pre-game program that allows the community to interact with the players, take part in shooting contests, and get their pictures taken wearing authentic Shock jerseys.

“This was one of the best jobs I could have found, especially with my involvement in sports,” Melissa said.

Her custom designed K-Plan also included three months of study in Madrid, Spain.

Melissa also is earning her Michigan teaching certificate and taught seventh grade science in the fall for her student teaching requirement.


College Athletic Career Basketball (3 years)

Hidden Value of Kalamazoo Athletics
“At an academically strong school like Kalamazoo, the fact that you have a team that you can rely on and who will support you through the tough times is vital.”

Post Graduation Obtain a position in community work with youth.
Consider this... Study abroad

may deprive Kalamazoo College students of one of the best learning values in higher education: six months (or three or nine) of engagement with excellent faculty in rigorous courses on campus.

Or think about this question: is a Kalamazoo College academic program major, in chemistry, for example, equivalent to its counterpart at a college where study abroad is not an option and, as a result, a student may have a greater number of chemistry courses in her undergraduate experience?

Is it sacrilegious to question the value of study abroad? Hardly. Kalamazoo College features some of the best professors in the world. But they and their students relinquish some academic opportunities with each other so that students may engage in study abroad.
“Our experiential opportunities require from our faculty a remarkable commitment and adroitness,” said Marilyn LaPlante, vice president for experiential education. “In effect, our professors must accomplish more academically with our students in a shorter period of time. That they meet and exceed this challenge is one of the most extraordinary but often overlooked aspects of the K-Plan.”

If time lost for excellent on-campus academic opportunities represents the “risk” of experiential programs like study abroad, then what are the trade-off “rewards”? And are the rewards worth the risks?

These are the questions indirectly explored in a collection of essays by Emily Crawford ’99, which are excerpted below, and in the short feature describing the effect of study abroad on subsequent academic study (see inside front cover).

Emily Crawford transferred to Kalamazoo College following her freshman year at Michigan State University. As a junior she studied for six months at the University of Nairobi. There her classes included required courses in Swahili and Kenyan culture and society as well as the country’s history, politics, and economic development. She elected to take classes in East African prose, oral literature, and African religions.

Academically, she was pushed, but not, she said, to the same extent to which she was accustomed at Kalamazoo College. “The semester system proceeded at a less hectic pace than Kalamazoo’s quarter system,” said Crawford. “In Africa, the professors required fewer papers and tests, but there was a far greater focus on the final exam.”

But study abroad vastly deepened her undergraduate learning experience and her English major, according to Crawford. The vivid complexity of her essays reflects that depth.

Her experiences, her reflections upon them, and the essays she made to articulate those reflections compose a journey. On this journey, Crawford explores a world much more vast and different than her own. And her focus on the larger world often provokes self-exploration as well. This balance between the world and the self, in which the self does not become a prison, is the heart of the value of study abroad.

Crawford’s images show the emergence of the capability to hold in mind ambiguity and contradiction. In her piece The Lion, the lion image begins as a metaphor of the strangeness

Invention sleeps within a skull
No longer quick with light…

His thought is tied, the curving prow
Of motion moored to rock…

—Theodore Roethke

Mombasa, Kenya
of the culture in which she finds herself, quickly shifts to metaphor for her own parochialism, and ends as a complex image powerful enough to hold contradiction.

Crawford uses the word “interference” in her poem of that title to describe the nighttime whisperings of her and her host-sister Wambui during a thunderstorm which interrupted the electrical power in their home. It is an ambiguous and mutable image in a poem about the complex relationship between technology, culture, and human understanding. The poem as a whole shows the burgeoning of a mind comfortable with probing gray areas.

In her fine essay, Frame (not excerpted here), Crawford compares her acceptance into her Kenyan host family to the long-past blending of her family in Detroit, a process that had occurred when Emily was a child and her mother remarried. She employs a remarkable image: she reads each letter from home outside in the Kenyan night, and a frame opens in the darkness through which she observes her family, particularly her mother, as persons in different stages of their lives and wholly separate from herself. The essay also explores, with surprising complexity, the interplay of individuality and community, in two different cultures. According to Crawford, that exploration occurred only because she had the opportunity to live and study in Kenya.

The essays show the growth of a voice that will accept, tolerate, and explore contradiction and ambiguity. The value of study abroad, suggests Crawford’s work, perhaps unachievable from any other experience, is its power of connection and complexity.

From The Lion

It was our first Monday in Nairobi. After a group meeting with Gracie, our housing director, at which she returned our valuables to us, we were free for the next three hours to explore the city that is dubbed both “The City of the Sun” by tourist bureaus and “Nairobi” by the residents. Cautiously, we ventured off the green campus of the University of Nairobi, aware of how vulnerable and lost we looked and were…. As it was lunchtime the streets of the city were filled with men and women walking to cafes or the city market, newspapers in hand. Hired hawkers pushed safari brochures into our chests, promising “great deals and terrific sights” as we wandered toward the central downtown district.

A friend and I were waiting outside a change bureau for another friend when I noticed that my companion was attracting more attention than any of us in her red and white tee shirt, blue soccer shorts, and matching running shoes. As a tall blonde American dressed in sport clothing, she was as noticeable to the Kenyans as the Statue of Liberty was to the incoming immigrants at the turn of the century. I attempted to blend in, following the orders of our guidebooks: “dress like a local—short-sleeved collar shirt or blouse, slacks or a skirt, and sunglasses.” I actually thought I was being culturally sensitive by wearing a long skirt and plain tee shirt. I did not know then that many of the Kenyan youth dressed more “American” than I or that long skirts only made me look like a missionary. My dismay at my friend’s seeming cultural insensitivity was really a feeling of embarrassment I felt for our unmistakable Americanness.

In the noon crowd we seemed to be the only ones with nothing to do; it was almost as if we were on vacation. We could actually afford to fly to another country halfway around the world to stand in the street and ponder which way to turn next. Secretly I was ashamed of our traveler’s checks. I wanted to hide my rich tourist status and was angry that someone else was blowing my cover and, in fact, calling attention to us with bright colors of our country’s flag. As a white woman in Africa I was searching for camouflage, but as a group of Americans, both black and white, we stood out. And nothing, I realized, was going to shield me from who I was.

After two hours of wandering aimlessly through the city, we decided to return to the university, though at that point we had no idea in which direction to proceed. The exhaust from the buses coated my throat, making me cough. The narrow and uneven streets between the avenues were crowded with kiosks, forcing me to duck and weave through a complex world of hanging baskets, ripe bananas, brightly dyed cloth, carvings for tourists, shoes, and convenience items like chewing gum, matches, and single cigarettes. Other pedestrians paid us no attention, accustomed to seeing wazungus (plural of mzungu, a person of European descent) lost in the city. The children, however, followed us wherever we went, one or two always in front or behind crying “Shillingi! Shillingi!” as they reached for our hands. My senses assaulted by the unfamiliar, I looked for a way out of the high towers of Nairobi, anxious to return to the relative safety of campus.
Eventually we stumbled up the five flights of stairs to the floor that housed our small computer room with its ancient Macintoshes, the classroom that would become “ours,” and the sociology office where the office of our program director was located. We were late for the afternoon meeting, and Allison and I were in need of a toilet. Urgently, we headed down the hall to the ladies’ toilets. As I opened one of the stall doors, Allison cautioned me about some excrement left behind that she had noticed on a visit to the toilet that morning. The restroom had no electricity. I was blinded from the hot sun and saw nothing but the small stool in the damp cement. Pulling up my long skirt that was supposed to be culturally sensitive, I proceeded to squat around the hole. Allison, ever prepared, had handed me a tissue before I entered the stall, and I used it gratefully, making a mental note to keep toilet paper a pocket companion. I emerged from the stall, my thighs shaking with the effort of squatting, and rinsed my hands in the sink. Drying our hands on our clothes we walked back to the classroom, laughing good-naturedly about the toilets…

Because we were late, Allison and I seated ourselves in the last pew on the right, away from the window. Dazed from our walk in the city, we barely paid attention to what our instructor was saying. But a pungent odor pulled me from my daydreams. Wrinkling my nose I searched for the potent smell that was quickly becoming unmistakable. I discovered a small piece of human waste on my lower calf. I calmly asked Allison for some tissue. I wet the paper with my water bottle and proceeded to wipe off my leg with rough strokes.

I leaned over and in a hoarse whisper explained the situation to Allison. She squeezed my thigh with her hand, pressing her lips together. I grabbed her hand and tried breathing through my mouth. I dared not look at her. My face burned and the smell remained. We sat there and shook, our knuckles turning white from our effort not to laugh. The instructor asked us if we were okay. Dumbly, we nodded in unison. Of course, everything was wonderful! How in the world could it not be, I asked myself. Our hysteria grew, along with the redness of our faces as we struggled to contain our laughter. The possibility that I had someone else’s diarrhea on my body was as unreal as the fact that I would be living in Africa for the next half-year.

I would not have reacted as I did if I had not just arrived in a foreign country. The current situation, however, unscrewed the cap I had placed on my confused emotions. Mercifully, the meeting came to a close, allowing Allison and me to burst into uncontrollable laughter, relieved to be free with our hilarity. I was as amazed as the others who were present when our laughter became edged with sharp sobs…. I remained in the empty classroom for some time afterwards, my limbs trembling, at a complete loss…

Culture shock occurs when new sights, sounds, and smells drill through your ideas of what is normal and natural. Out of your home culture you feel defenseless, open to any predatory creature in the area. A friend of mine joked that he was so scared on the walk to his home-stay, located on the outskirts of the city, that he was sure the lions in the Nairobi City Park could smell his adrenaline. With senses on alert and antennae overextended, instincts are at their sharpest. Like the gazelle in the open savanna, there is no stopping once the race is on. You run as fast as you can and hope the lion tires before you do. The lion is not the foreign culture, but your own self with its prejudices, history, experiences, religion, race, gender, and heritage chasing you. No matter how many defenses are built to protect the ego, they are useless against the assault another culture makes on who you are.

Eventually, I learned to tell time like a Kenyan, (always arrive and leave late), to eat like a Kenyan (heap large spoonfuls of stuff onto plate until plate is no longer visible) and drink tea like a Kenyan (would you like some tea in that cup of warm milk and sugar?). Life was good after awhile and I no longer worried about fitting in or standing out. Culture shock may have stained my leg, but it was temporary, and eventually, the smell went away.

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**Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!**
**Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!**
**You, strew’d with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never reach’d you.**
**Passage to more than India!**

_Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,_
_Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,_
_For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared go,_
_And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all._
_O my brave soul!_  
_O farther farther sail._

— Walt Whitman
From The Shamba (farm)

We were visiting my host father’s parents, Chuchu (grandmother in Kikuyu, pronounced shō-shō) and Grandpa. Married over sixty years, the couple survived Mau Mau, the anti-colonial resistance movement during which 13,000 men, women, and children, mainly Kikuyu, were killed by British troops. After independence was achieved 1963, much of the prized farmland of the highlands, previously advertised as “White Man’s Country” to British settlers, was slowly redistributed to its former inhabitants.

The couple, along with thousands of other Kikuyus and people from other ethnic groups, reestablished shambas and homes in the highland region, in the foothills of Mount Kenya, and on the mountain itself…

The grandparents’ house was made with large rectangular bricks of an earthy, sandy brown. A path led up to the door, green grass hovering on either side of the dry earth. A bright blue trim was painted around the entrance, windows, and roof of the house, giving it a welcoming presence. Stone tiles hung above the door and window that faced the clearing. From where I was standing, I could make out the tiles’ design, a small black cross centered in blue trim.

An old woman emerged from the dark doorway and following her from behind the house was a man I assumed was her husband. Dadi led me to the old man and woman, introducing me in English and Kikuyu. They both hugged me, my flesh seeming soft and malleable in their arms, the strength of their embrace surprising me.

Grandpa gestured to me, waving me closer. He stood under a giant tree that shaded the house from the noonday sun. I approached him shyly. He spoke to me, his eyes, hands, feet, and voice telling me more than his words, which I did not understand.

He took my hand in his, a hand that had tilled the earth for more than 75 years, a bony hand, but solid. My hand, small, smooth, and light, seemed lost in his, yet lost in the most comforting way.

He said something to Dadi and then led me down a gently sloping hill just behind the house, through rows of banana and mango trees. We walked hand in hand with Wambui trailing after us, holding the hand of a young cousin, a boy of four named Kamau. Ducking under branches, shading our eyes from the sun, and sighing again in the shade, we walked through the shamba.

As we progressed, Grandpa occasionally pointed out a specific tree or bush, perhaps a favorite or an especially fruitful specimen. When we passed a mango tree, he picked an overripe fruit from the plant, opened it, and placed it in my hand like a gift. In Kikuyu, Grandpa described the contents of the fruit, his voice rumbling in my ears. I smiled and nodded, understanding at least that the land was precious. We continued to walk, out of the shady grove and into the green rows of maize.

The stalks were a brilliant green, and I looked up through them at the diamond blue sky. The earth was reddish brown, and as I bent down to hold it in my palm, I glanced at Grandpa’s feet as he inspected a stalk. They were thick and unblemished by any shoe. The skin was wrinkled and cracked on the surface, reminding me of a parched stream bed. Lines like tributaries fanned out from the creases, filled with the dust and soil of the shamba. His nails were long and slightly curved toward the earth, like stones carved by an endless flow of water. We walked on, the soil in my palm sifting through my fingers and drifting back to the earth.

We walked on, the house behind us, fields of rice to our right and the steam that irrigated the rice fields on our left. Farther away cattle
and goats grazed in a pasture, also belonging to the shamba. The hills rolled on in the distance, each cut into a brilliant patchwork of cultivated fields.

We turned around and headed back toward the house for lunch. Dadi and Grandpa discussed the shamba, Grandpa mostly disagreeing with Dadi’s opinions. As we walked, Dadi occasionally paused to inspect a husk or point out other fruits or vegetables my inexperienced eye had failed to notice. Besides the maize, mango, rice, and beans, there were bananas, potatoes, cassava, squash, tomatoes, cabbages, carrots, coffee, and tea. I never dreamt so many varieties of fruits and vegetables could grow in one place. I began to understand why the land of the central highlands was so prized by the British and why the Kikuyu people gave up so much to take it back.

It was a relief to enter the shade of the house. Inside, the floor was cool against my feet as I slipped off my sandals, leaving them at the doorless entryway. I found Margaret and Chu Chu having tea on the couch in the common room near a large window that allowed shaded sunlight to enter the room. A whispery breeze flowed through the windows and the doorway, cooling the sweat on the back of my neck. On the far wall hung a print of the baby Jesus that was hugely popular with Christian Kenyans. A small crucifix hung on the opposite wall and I wondered if the grandparents had willingly given up their god, Ngai, for a Western one. Chu Chu patted the seat next to her, and I gladly sat between my host mother and her mother-in-law.

Chu Chu, much like Grandpa, took my hand in hers and squeezed it heartily. I smiled and squeezed back, greeting her in KiSwahili. She answered in Kikuyu, my mom translating for me. Chu Chu wanted to know why I was so skinny and asked Margaret if she was feeding me. We laughed and began talking, Chu Chu sharing news of the farm and stories of past mzungu visitors.

While she talked I looked into her face, the face of a woman who had, for most of her life, worked physically and would continue to do so until she died. She was very tiny by American standards. Her shoulders were sloped from working in the fields, and she walked bent slightly forward, toward the ground. I guessed she was about four-and-a-half feet tall. To demonstrate her points as she talked, Chu Chu squeezed my hand or slapped my thigh as she shook her finger, all the while laughing. Her hands were powerful, and I felt the strength in them as they touched my body. Her arms, floating in her short-sleeved blouse, were sinewy and much tougher than mine. Her scarf covered her head but tufts of gray hair poked out from the side, just above her ears. When she sat her feet did not touch the floor but hung down, crossed at the ankle.

When lunch was ready, everyone sat on the two couches and Dadi said a small prayer thanking God for the food and the opportunity to spend time with the family. After we all cleaned our hands with water from the small pitcher standing on the table, Wambui served the irio, a dish of mashed maize, beans, milk, and potatoes. Everyone ate heartily, and I, finding the maize kernels tough to chew, did the best that I could. Chu Chu and Margaret took turns dumping more food onto my plate, but I knew better than to protest. The conversation drifted on while I gazed around the circle of faces: Grandpa teasing Kamau; Wambui, talking to her grandma; Margaret and Dadi discussing the shamba. Wambui looked very happy, happier than I had seen her in several days.

Days earlier, while we prepared dinner one evening at home in the city, Wambui expressed her frustration at her position as a modern African woman. “I’m caught in the middle,” she said. She wished she could live at the shamba, wearing traditional Kikuyu dress instead of clothing from Western countries. We both knew, however, that she would not be happy farming.

That day at the shamba I saw a glimpse of what life was like out of the city, and I saw how Wambui craved it, how we all enjoyed the clear vitality of it. It seemed simple from the exterior: the rows of maize, the fields of rice, the pasture, the chickens providing fresh eggs every day. I knew farming was incredibly tough, with the earth, weather, and insects often working against every best effort. The shamba had magic to it, however, and it was this feeling that pulled me back into its dense foliage after the lunch dishes were washed and dried.

I walked alone, pushing leaves out of my way, hiding under a tree whose branches wrapped around me. I searched for a sign of the mountain but only saw blue sky and hills. Running through the corn, I knew that if Ngai was watching, he would only see the movement of the corn as it waved over my head. My hands brushed the plants as I ran, their leaves silky on my palms. At the bottom of the hill I stopped. Panting, I looked up to where I had begun. I saw a figure in the rows of maize and recognized Grandpa’s beige and brown shirt. He stood and waved, his face stretched into a smile. I waved back, laughing, my eyes moving up from his face, past the house, and to the sky. The sun glinted, and I thought I saw something shining in the clouds. Putting my hand over my eyes to shade them, I squinted...
and looked again. Rising above my grandfather and the shamba was a tall peak, far in the distance, its icy point a white swirl in the sky. I waved again, this time saluting the mountain.

Once again Grandpa and I walked through the mango trees, my hand comfortably in his. I heard the car door shut and assumed the family was preparing for our departure. The afternoon was fading, and I knew Margaret would be anxious to arrive at the house before dark. We said goodbye in the clearing, hugs shared all around. I whispered a thank-you to Chuchu, and I bent down to encircle her in my arms. She squeezed me tight and told Margaret to send me up for a weekend. Grandpa patted my hand, and I looked into his face. In his eyes I saw wisdom and secrets, secrets of the mountain and the earth, and how to make it grow. Holding my hand in his he bent toward me and whispered in my ear, his voice telling me everything.

INTERFERENCE

I

In Nairobi, the women watch four-season-old episodes of The Bold and the Beautiful. They watch while they cook or clean, not minding the characters are white, blonde, blue-eyed, rich, paper cutouts. They are bold and beautiful.

Wambui and I watched Days of Our Lives. Cidano and I watched the Discovery Channel and discussed the merit of the scorpion.

II

When El Niño murdered the television, Wambui and I cooked dinner by candlelight. Dancing along to the reggae station we swayed as we stirred, our voices golden and silver.

In bed for the night, we spoke in the soft darkness, our voice, the only interference between us.

Later I listened to her breathe and matched my breath to hers until, like the Mombasan tide, they rolled in and out together.
Limpets, P-40s, & nudibranches

have something in common: a David Evans byline. Last summer Kalamazoo College biology professor David Evans served as the volunteer naturalist for the Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park on Alaska’s Kodiak Island. For his services he received a subsistence stipend, a place to stay (what a place!), the use of, in his words, “an outstanding truck,” and, most importantly, an increase of his enthusiasm for biology and its fit with other disciplines.

As the park’s naturalist, his duties included developing its natural history programs, arranging speakers and field trips, learning and sharing the park’s military history, and launching tide pool expeditions. He also was responsible for a five-minute radio show that aired each week. And he wrote a weekly column, “The Naturalist,” for the Kodiak Daily Mirror (see excerpts next page).

All in all, a liberal arts kind of experience. A biologist had better know history, composition, geography, and literature.

“My columns often began with a local phenomenon and expanded to discuss a wider biological principle or the history of the island,” said Evans. A single column might connect limpets (a snail with...
It was a terrific summer, Evans said. One likely to pay dividends to students in his biology classes for a long time. And next summer Evans will return to Fort Abercrombie for his second stint as a naturalist, one with renaissance skills that could only come from a liberal arts background.

FROM “CHILDREN HAVE THE BEST EYES FOR TIDEPOOLING LOCAL SHORES,” 16 JULY

...Sea anemones, rock wrack, barnacles, coralline algae, clingfish, sculpins, whelks, limpets, starfish, mussels, sea urchins, bull kelp, chitons, sponges—the list is a catalog of major biological groups. People from the Midwest (myself included) are simply not accustomed to seeing this variety of life. Walking the Fort Abercrombie shore has given me a chance to rekindle that "Sense of Wonder" with which Rachel Carson characterized the study of natural history....

Blue mussels attach themselves to rocks seaward of the barnacle zone, are very successful for some distance toward the water's edge, and abruptly disappear. The disappearance point happens to correspond to that set of conditions under which starfish are able to survive—and starfish are the most important predators of blue mussels. In other seacoast situations where starfish are absent or populations have been reduced, the mussel population explodes, extending far down through the tidal zones, and out-competing all other species on the rocks. On Kodiak Island then, starfish act as "keystone predators," carnivorous preservers of the shore community's biodiversity. The keystone predator concept is important in biology. Shifting focus from Fort Abercrombie's tidepools to the Serengeti savanna in Tanzania demands some drastic mental transitions in habitat and geography, yet the action of keystone predators, whether they be starfish or lions, appears to be the driving force in preserving biodiversity among both systems. (I love this part of biology: even fragmentary observations can start shedding light on how the entire living world operates!)

While walking the Fort Abercrombie shore, I've found that tidepools are best experienced when shared with children, who have "tidepool eyes." There are no preconceived notions about what they expect to see or what should be there, and the kids turn out to be the best observers of all of us....

FROM “SMELL THE CHOCOLATE LILIES,” 2 JULY

...I was not quite prepared for the celebration of seasonal change that greeted me in the wildflower meadow at Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park. The wildflowers are putting on a tremendous show. This is serious business for them: they must attract insect pollinators in order to reproduce during the short growing season of these upper latitudes. They do it by producing flowers with different combinations of color and odor, but the result is an exhilarating one to the human senses and spirit.

We see the blues—Wild Geraniums, Nootka Lupines (not prime yet, but getting there), the occasional Wild Iris. We see the yellows—Large Leaf Avens. We see the purples—Shooting Stars, Rose Purple Orchids. We see the whites—Narcissus-flowered Anemones. And we see the deep maroon Chocolate Lilies. The Chocolate Lily is a beautiful flower, but it smells, well, not quite flower-like. It's as though the plant had mistakenly produced a blossom of old meat.

The Chocolate Lily, performing a brilliant bit of biological strategy in the meadow-wide competition for insect pollinators, has opted to attract carrion-seeking flies instead of the sweet nectar-loving insects that we usually associate with flower pollinating....

FROM “SPARROW’S CALL IS MORE THAN MUSIC,” 9 JULY

...“Oh, Dear Me!” is the call of the male Golden-crowned Sparrow, a smallish and brownish bird that carries a bright stripe of gold on the top of his head....

Males that hear “Oh, Dear Me!” get the message: “This is my place. Do NOT approach it unless you want big trouble.” Females, on the other hand, seem to hear something like: “I can hang on to this territory. Lots of insects here! I'll be a great help later on when we're raising baby birds. I'm a good provider!”....

In the case of the Golden-crowned Sparrow and most other birds, it is the male who does the singing (and who has the brightest coloration). It is the female, though, who listens to males in order to carefully compare the songs. She will inspect coloration and other advertisements of availability, and eventually she will make a decision about which lucky male is the one with whom she will mate and raise a brood.

The role of the female as the decision-maker makes great biological sense, so much so that we see the pattern repeated throughout most species in the animal kingdom.
The usual case is that the number of female reproductive cells (eggs) is very limited. They are large, and they require considerable energy to produce. Male reproductive cells (sperm) are small, numerous, and energetically very cheap to produce. This disparity means that consequences of associating with a “substandard” mate are much more critical biologically for the female than for the male.

The result is that powers of discrimination tend to be higher in females of most animal species, while the males are under pressure to develop signals that communicate to females their suitability as potential mates.

Do traces of this pattern of difference in male and female behavior extend to the human species? Is this why my wife tends to be far more intuitive and insightful than I am? Is this the biological reason behind my charm and good looks?

Suddenly our innocent studies of bird biology have us flirting with some of the ultimate and problematic questions about gender and human nature—questions that have been posed and unsuccessfully grappled with for hundreds of years by philosophers, psychologists, theologians, and poets. Oh, Dear Me!

FROM “PUSHKI CAN LEAVE YOU BURNT,” 23 JULY

Ow! I hate when this happens! There’s a red burn on my inside forearm that’s just turned into a nasty blister. I was attacked by my beloved Wildflower Meadow by a cow parsnip (known on the island as pushki)…

The plant certainly has its useful features. The Alutiiq use young, tender stems of pushki as food, peeling them to remove the irritating hairs, and eating the stems raw. The stems can also be dipped in oil and added to salads, or cooked with fish or in soups and stews. The cooked roots are said to taste like rutabaga. Roots have been used as a poultice for arthritis or boiled as tea for a sore throat medicine.

The burn on my arm resulted from a protective mechanism of the plant. Pushki and many other plants are able to synthesize chemicals that deter insects from feeding on them. A frequent response by the insects to this defense is the development of equally effective ways of detoxifying these chemicals. An evolutionary arms race results, in which plant protective chemicals become progressively more toxic and specialized, and insects become adapted to feeding on only those plants whose defenses they are physiologically equipped to overcome….

FROM “THE JOY OF KODIAK WHALE-WATCHING,” 6 AUGUST

The humpback whales have started their activity off Miller Point and in Monashka Bay, and I’m in the enviable position of being able to sit and eat a lunchtime sandwich while watching whales spout outside my cabin window…

…Look, and listen! You may be able to hear the whales as they exhale great volumes of air, the sound of the exhalation resonating from the cliffs. You’ll recognize it instantly. It’s a primordial sound and clearly biological—it couldn’t be anything but a whale….

Humpbacks are baleen whales, and feed by gulping huge amounts of water containing their prey—usually krill or small schooling fish. The several-hundred-gallon gulp is forced back out the mouth, and the contents are strained through plates of baleen, filtering strips of keratin (the same substance that makes up our fingernails), growing from the upper gumline.

To try to better visualize what this is like, imagine pouring a bowl of cereal for yourself, with lots of milk, gulping the entire contents into your mouth, discharging the milk through your teeth as forcefully as you can, then swallowing the cereal. This is very much the way the baleen whale feeds….

Watching and listening to the Miller Point humpbacks at Fort Abercrombie is transfixing. It always takes more time than I plan. I find myself staying for one last sight of flukes or one more loud exhalation.

FROM “ABERCROMBIE’S WWII GHOSTS,” 30 JULY

It’s been another afternoon of time-tripping at the Ready Amm o Bunker.…

A good part of the immediacy I get at the Ready Amm o Bunker comes from just wandering around that area and realizing what must have gone on at Fort Abercrombie in the first half of the 1940s. About 170 men were housed in quonset huts among the moss and Sitka spruces, along with everything needed to support them: mess halls, water towers, pump houses, generators, and shower and latrine (doors for officers; no doors for enlisted men) buildings. And, of course, the 8-inch guns and all the construction and hardware needed to support them….

Spend enough time out on Miller Point and the urgency of those days is evoked. Pearl Harbor had been attacked, and Japan’s goal was control of the entire Pacific Ocean. Why couldn’t [an attack] happen here? The Kodiak Mirror extra edition for December 7, 1941, posts a notice from the Police Chief that “right of way must be given to army trucks, equipment, and men. Any violation will bring full prosecution.” Announcement of a blackout for that night states that “all lights must be extinguished, including cars. Power will be shut off at the power house. Names will be taken of anyone not complying.”

The attack on Dutch Harbor and occupation of Kiska and Attu [in the nearby Aleutian Islands] further heightened fears. Attack on Kodiak with its strategically-located naval base could have seemed imminent. Kodiak residents who grew up in the 1940s remember hearing the Fort Abercrombie guns being fired and wondering whether it was another drill or whether it could be the real thing this time….
Coming Home

WELCOME "K" ALUMNI
Homecoming activities were a warm and wonderful hoot for the 570 Kalamazoo College alumni who came home to celebrate the enduring meaning of their Kalamazoo College experiences. Past graduates and their families gathered on campus to reunite with old friends and favorite professors and meet new faculty and students.

Saturday morning, alumni toured the Hodge House, home of the President and his family, and enjoyed a cider-and-doughnut breakfast. Later, alums reminisced with faculty and classmates in Hicks Center, sharing hugs, photographs, and stories. Marriott food services prepared a delicious buffet lunch for alumni, current students, and administration on the campus Quadrangle while prospective second- (and third-) generation “K” family members played nearby.

Rain threatened but never prevailed. By game time it was sun 7, rain 0, and the stands were filled with students, past and present. “Buzz,” the College’s newly-outfitted mascot roused the crowd to loud cheers during the exciting game. Unfortunately, the Hornets lost a heartbreaker against MIAA powerhouse (9 of the last 10 championships) Albion, 14-16, when a 44-yard field goal fell one foot short.

On Friday evening, Kalamazoo graduates Jacqueline Aurelia ’94 and Lewis Miller ’93 and former tennis coach George Acker were inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame. A capacity crowd turned out to honor the trio (see page 17).
WHEN THEY NEED ASSISTANCE OR JUST WANT TO TALK, students can almost always find Billie Fischer in her office in the Light Fine Arts Building. The room itself is big, but it doesn’t seem that way when you try to step around the stacks of art history books piled on the floor. You also have to squeeze past the fluorescent light table where she helps students choose slides of artwork for their class presentations. The slides seem to spill from a filing cabinet jam-packed with the square-inch reproductions. And barely an inch of wall shows in Fischer’s office: cutout comic strips about art line the door, reproductions of Dutch paintings and Italian monuments hang from the walls, and a huge bulletin board is tacked with pictures of her children as toddlers, now grown. Under the board and amid stacks of student papers on a desk sits a triptych, a three-paneled work of art. Its gold lettering reads: “It is said that good professors lecture, great ones listen, and exceptional ones inspire. Thank you for doing all three.”

The triptych is signed by 50 students. Yet Fischer, chair of the art department at Kalamazoo College and a professor of art history for the last 26 years, insists that it’s the works of art and not her teaching that make an impression on students.

“Who wouldn’t be interested in it?” she asks, smiling and surrounded by centuries-old images and books about them.
As the only full-time art history professor at the College, Fischer covers everything from prehistoric cave drawings to ancient Roman monuments to 20th century painting, but her specialty is art of the 14th to 17th centuries, especially the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Terms such as “Renaissance” and “Baroque” may deter some people, suggesting that understanding art requires knowledge of its various “-isms.” But for Fischer, the artifact—the painting, sculpture, or monument—is primary.

“Seeing the work itself—its dimensions, the texture of the paint on the canvas—is a form of time travel. There’s nothing like beholding the object someone created by hand hundreds of years ago,” Fischer says. And it’s this excitement that she passes on to her students.

A Different Way of Learning

“Hard, but fair,” is what students say about Billie Fischer’s classes. And it’s true; the amount of work involved is substantial. Fischer may show about 100 slides of different works during a class period.

Granted, some are cartoons of the Mona Lisa, which she throws in for fun, but Fischer requires that students learn the titles, dates, and artists of about 300 pieces each quarter. They also read background information about the artists, movements, and interpretations of different works.

Add to that the daunting task of describing the composition, the interaction of color and form or form and meaning, or the way a work fits into an artistic movement and you begin to understand what it means to take one of Fischer’s classes. Consider the difficulty differentiating a Monet from a Renoir when the scene they painted is identical. And how do you identify the artist and approximate year of 27 paintings you’ve never seen before exam time? How do you learn to do these things?

It may seem impossible to anyone sitting in one of Fischer’s art history classes for the first time. But Fischer teaches students a new way of learning—her students learn how to see.

In studying art, the effect of learning is more immediate, says Fischer. The viewer sees the entire image at once, which is not the case

Although her courses may be listed under “art,” Billie Fischer begins each with a lesson in history. The historical background, says the associate professor of art, shows students that no artist is working in isolation. “A work doesn’t come from the artist’s imagination alone,” Billie Fischer reminds students. “It’s always a reference to something else—a place, an event, or another work of art.”

This is why she often uses the comparison between ancient Egyptian art and Paul Gauguin’s “The Market” to introduce students to the intangible concepts of art they will need to know throughout her course. Egyptian forms are widely recognized, so even beginning art students can describe its features, says Fischer. And they can see the similarities between Gauguin’s piece and Egyptian art before they learn art terminology. In other words, this comparison becomes a way of teaching visual concepts.

Students see that Gauguin references other art. Students who have never taken an art class may feel intimidated when they volunteer a guess that Gauguin is borrowing the use and shape of profiles, the flat areas of color and lack of dimension, and the exotic surroundings directly from the art of ancient Egypt. But Fischer shows students that their visual instincts are correct. “We know that Gauguin took with him to Tahiti pictures of ancient Egyptian art, Greek monuments, and contemporaries’ work,” says Fischer. “Clearly, he is borrowing from ancient Egyptian work.”

Top: “Banquet” tomb painting in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt, ca.1448-1422 B.C.; Bottom: Paul Gauguin’s “Ta Matete (The Market)” painted in 1892

“The Market” was painted in 1892 when realism was the trend in art in Paris. Gauguin thought Parisian society was sophisticated and corrupt and saw Tahitian culture as primitive and unspoiled, an example of life as it once was.

When students see the similarities between the works and learn the facts of Gauguin’s views, Fischer insists that they intellectually explore further. How does Gauguin use style to fit meaning? And what better way for him to reject his perceived corruption of Parisian society than by departing from its current style of choice? Realism as a style was complex and therefore synonymous, for Gauguin, with sophisticated Parisian society. So he chose a simpler style, that of ancient Egypt which he considered primitive and pure, to depict a culture he perceived as simple. Instead of using the accuracy, shadows, and dimensions of realism, Gauguin borrowed the clear lines and large areas of bright color from ancient Egyptian art.

“Isn’t that plagiarism?” asks one student. Fischer answers that all artists borrow; the best transform what they see into something else.

But the discussion doesn’t end there. Gauguin was working through the lens of his own stereotypes and perceptions, Fischer points out. Perhaps ancient Egypt wasn’t the pure and primitive society Gauguin wanted it to be. Perhaps it, like all other societies throughout time, was also corrupt. And so from one comparison, students have learned about the artist’s mind and his work as well as his surroundings and inspiration.
in reading a novel or hearing a piece of music. “I think visual art appeals to our desire for instant gratification,” says Fischer. “Images are perhaps our most primitive form of communication,” she says. “Because of its immediacy, it is easy to get ideas across quickly and for students to see the connections between works of art.”

In Fischer’s class, students begin to learn anew. Rather than analyzing words on paper, students rely on their visual senses to understand the intangible concepts, such as balance and composition, that will allow them to put images into words. Teaching students to use their visual senses is not often an easy task and requires an uncommon approach.

Fischer shows the inferior works of famous artists alongside their masterpieces to teach students to look at the art critically. “Images in art history classes can be assessed and analyzed just like arguments in other disciplines can,” says Fischer. “And students learn that images can have impact without words. That’s what makes the process of learning about art different.”

“Teaching students to see lets them know there’s a different way of learning other than writing papers and reading books,” says Fischer. “And acquiring a new way of learning enhances our lives and enlarges our vision. We become more aware of our surroundings when we learn to look at the images around us.”

Language and Art

“The object itself, the actual piece an artist made, hooked me on art,” says Fischer. “And it’s the object I never want to get away from in my teaching.” At its core Fischer’s teaching is exploration of the work of art itself. She does not confine the artwork to one or two interpretations only—say its Marxist or feminist analysis—but instead provides a wide base for students’ own interpretations.

Fischer did not have many opportunities to see artwork when she was growing up. Her mother was an amateur painter, but her home state of Kansas was home to few art museums. Her first lasting contact with art was at the University of Kansas.

Originally, Fischer had planned on being a math major, but her real interest leaned toward languages, which led her to art. The common study of cultures through language and art intrigued her. So Fischer took an art history class, a survey course that covered everything—from prehistoric to 20th century art. The day before the first comprehensive exam, the professor’s wife had a baby, and the exam was postponed to the following Monday.

On the train ride home that weekend, Fischer read her art history book from cover to cover. “I was amazed at how much I had learned, and I did well on the exam,” says Fischer. “I sometimes say that Professor Bernstein’s wife having that baby affected my whole life,” she says.

The following summer Fischer went with classmates to study abroad in France. Seeing the works in person had a great effect on her, she says.

“There’s a physical excitement in experiencing the three-dimensional reality of a work you’ve previously known only from a textbook or projection on a screen,” says Fischer. “It’s like finally being in a place you’ve been longing to visit.”

And one day back on the KU campus, she realized she had learned a new way of seeing. When she looked across the street at the law building, she suddenly saw Ionic columns. “I realized then that art and architecture were all around me,” says Fischer. “There was so much more I wanted to learn.”

Gracious Living

Above a doorway on the southeast end of the Trowbridge residence hall, a stone engraving reads, “The end of learning is gracious living.” This is a quote always on the mind of Billie Fischer. It explains how learning about art can enrich everyone’s life. For Fischer, living graciously is having an awareness and appreciation for all the creative acts around us, not only in art, but in other disciplines as well. When driving in the country, you may be reminded of the intense blue sky and green grass of VanGogh’s “Fields Under a Stormy Sky.” A rainy walk down a city street may call to mind Caillebotte’s “Paris Street, A Rainy Day.” And maybe, when you know that the colors of a Michigan dusk match exactly those used in the sunsets painted by Caspar David Friedrich, you may realize what Fischer’s students know by the end of her courses. By exam time, those students have discovered their ability to name the artists of all 27 works they have never seen before. They have learned a new way of learning and of seeing. Or maybe they have remembered something they knew all along.
Art history books line the shelves and pile the floor of Billie Fischer’s office. Choosing three was no easy task. Fischer’s choices are clear and accessible for the beginning art history student and for “people who just want something good to read,” she says.

*Leonardo da Vinci*, by Kenneth Clark, traces the development of the artist and discusses his style and method and the influences of his environment on his art. Moreover, the biography depicts the personality of this influential artist. “Leonardo is one of those minds you want to enter,” says Fischer. “And Clark provides passage.”

*Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*, by Patricia Fortini Brown, features far more than art; it brings to life the artists’ surroundings as well. Brown recreates the scenery and atmosphere of Renaissance Venice when the city was at its artistic and cultural apogee. “It’s kind of a ‘you-are-there’ situation,” says Fischer. “Imagine seeing the church altar-pieces painted by Titian or Veronese’s paintings in the Palace of the Doge when these works were new. This book makes that easy to do.”

Fischer’s third choice, *Nothing if Not Critical*, is by Robert Hughes, considered one of the best art critics in the United States. The short essays, written for *Time* and other magazines, span centuries of artists from Caravaggio to Degas, Van Gogh to Warhol. Each analysis offers an introduction to a particular artist and his life as well as an insightful assessment of his work. “Hughes gets to the heart of the matter,” says Fischer. “He’s got a good eye and good sensibility. He’s also very opinionated, which I think readers will enjoy.”
“Kalamazoo College has to be one of the most beautifully landscaped colleges in the Midwest.”

Ashley Summersby, Conference Participant, 1998

AND WE AGREE! The magnificent atmosphere at Kalamazoo College is absolutely breathtaking. Our verdant quadrangle is located at the heart of the college grounds. Nestled atop a hill overlooking downtown Kalamazoo, this setting makes Kalamazoo College a special place to hold meetings, conferences, workshops, and camps. If you are interested in holding your summer meeting, workshop, or conference at Kalamazoo College, please call Alfrelynn Roberts, director of Kalamazoo College summer programs at 616.337.7183, extension 17, or e-mail her at summer@kzoo.edu.
Marlene Crandell Francis ’58 (left) and her father, Richard Crandell ’32, recently provided the final installment of an endowed gift that ensures a professorship in the humanities at Kalamazoo College in perpetuity. The first Marlene Crandell Francis Professor of English is Lisbeth Gant-Britton ’68, who is in her second year of teaching at the College (see story page 11). The Crandell family’s gift, through Gant-Britton, has already touched the lives of many Kalamazoo College students. The Crandell family’s roots are closely entwined with the history of Kalamazoo College. Richard’s father and Marlene’s grandfather, Stewart, graduated from Kalamazoo College in 1903. John Schleg, grandson of Richard and nephew to Marlene, graduated in 1984. Marlene served on the College’s Board of Trustees for 17 years. Marlene and Richard worked with John Heerspink, director of gift planning, to arrange for the endowment.
Alaskan sunset from the porch of David Evan’s Kodiak cabin. Evans, professor of biology at Kalamazoo College, fashioned his own K-Plan “study abroad” and “career development internship” experience when he worked this summer at Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park in Alaska. In the tradition of Kalamazoo College renaissance persons, Evans served as the park’s naturalist, educator, and historian. He also wrote a weekly column for the newspaper and produced a radio show. See story page 26.