As soon as I woke up on my last Sunday morning at Airlie, I jumped out of bed and checked my email. I had just a few hours before my flight to Berlin, and the editor at Financial Times Deutschland had still not replied to any of my messages and had given no indication that he expected me to be in his office in two days. But at last on that Sunday morning, my long weeks of email, some to his colleagues beseeching them intervene on my behalf, had finally paid off with a short note. Please come to the office at 9 a.m. on Monday morning— it said. This will be difficult-- I replied-- as I am not scheduled to arrive in Berlin until 3 p.m.

Not exactly an auspicious start, but not all that uncharacteristic, either. Although most German journalists that I met know of the Burns fellowship by reputation or have participated in an IJP program, German language publications are naturally ill-equipped to deal with what many American Burns fellows are— professional writers in their home country who are functionally illiterate in Germany. Illiteracy is really a difficult handicap for a journalist, but an unflagging good attitude, a desire to be helpful, and not thinking too much about it are the best tools. One could also, of course, learn German.

I spent Monday afternoon settling into my un-renovated DDR-era apartment in Mitte. It had grey concrete walls with holes covered in graffiti and with photographs - it bears a certain resemblance to the setting of the last scene of the Blair Witch Project. On Tuesday morning, I plotted my course to the office, but lost confidence and hopped on a random tram recommended by another commuter. After a long walk down Friedrichstrasse, I found the impressive glass towers that house the FTD Berlin office. I quickly learned that in Germany, national law mandates that every worker have access to natural sunlight and air. The ultra modern glass and steel building was also equipped with sophisticated energy efficient cooling system that involves air circulation, exterior window shades that raise and lower automatically, and no air conditioning. The first task I learned at work occurred in the kitchen. I felt like some sort of office primitive from a third world country, weaned on crude plastic urns of Deer Park and thus unaccustomed to making the choice between Volvic mineral water and heavy green glass bottles of bubbly Prinzenburger. And where I had expected to find a simple pot of weak coffee and a drawer of shelf stable creamers, there sat a large stainless steel espresso machine full of knobs and buttons. A kind colleague from The Economist, which shares offices with FTD, taught me for the first time how to make espresso and froth steamed milk—I suppose I am now prepared to get a job at Starbucks, at least.

The environment at FTD was certainly a refreshing change from what I was used to at my former magazine. There, writers holed up into their own (windowless) offices, wore sweaters against the air conditioning in the summer and tanktops against the heat in the winter, filled their shelves with books and toys, shut the door, and spent weeks, sometimes months, researching a single story. In contrast, FTD has an open desk plan with one entire long wall of floor to ceiling windows. The staff comes in for a 10 am meeting, followed by an 11 am editorial meeting, and then, because of the news cycle, often had little to do until 2 or 3 p.m. This leads to some VERY long subsidized lunches taken at sit down restaurants, where we paid 3 or 4 euros each. Around four in the afternoon, the newsroom rises a pitch and continues to progress in degrees until by 6 or 7 when things are really getting in full swing. I usually tried to stay until others left—around 8 p.m. or later. That was ok in the summertime when it stayed bright outside very late, but as the sun started setting earlier, it got a bit more difficult.

My editor was willing to be helpful, but being in charge of global news, which in Germany means more than just covering Iraq and the explosion/natural disaster of the moment, and thus kept him very, very busy. I don't think that there had been a Burns here before and his assumption was that he would make sure that I had a desk and computer every day and that

would be the extent of our interaction. I told him that I would like to contribute to the newspaper as far as I could and we discussed several story ideas. A few weeks into the program, he became ill and I didn't see him for several weeks. That caused some mix ups with my articles, unfortunately. The office is filled with people who come and go—reporters down from the main bureau in Hamburg, those on long and short internships. Everyone was either on half time, taking vacations, going on 2 week reporting trips to Uzbekistan, or out sick for an entire week. It was an odd mix of U.S. work hours (long and frenetic and inclusive of weekends), combined with really long breaks. Nobody ever came in with a cold.

I wrote two articles for the newspapers fifth anniversary September 11th coverage. Since my background is in cultural coverage, I wrote about the effects of 9/11 on American pop culture by making the point that the new sincerity that was supposed to occur post 9/11 never took and that pop culture has becoming increasingly fluffy and trite—perhaps in direct opposition to how serious and oppressive current events have become. I also covered what is being taught about 9/11 in American schools (very little), and what the documentary-style films about 9/11 say about Americans' ability to deal with the event. I mentioned Paris Hilton twice, which was a personal record for me in a single article. My second article was about the rise of 9/11 conspiracy theories. I enjoyed reporting on the European and German beliefs in 9/11 conspiracy theories, but in the end, the editor wanted information only from an American perspective. I had heard from other fellows that it's acceptable to be much more opinionated in an article for a German publication, so I wrote accordingly and found it very freeing. In the end, my articles went in completely unedited, which was another first for me, since I haven't worked at a daily before.

After the big anniversary coverage, I began working on an article about how American luxury consumers may hold the key to reforming American attitudes about environmental protection. And I also began work on an article linking American evangelical beliefs about the rapture and the second coming of Christ to their unflagging support for Israel.

While I was happy with the articles I wrote as a Burns Fellow, I would have liked to contribute more. I think because of our special positions as Burns Fellows, editors can be wary of assigning things with hard deadlines and will allow an open deadline thinking they are being lenient, and also possibly to avoid committing to your story. This is really a bad situation as a German colleague, who HAS a hard deadline and a slot, can then come in and do your story, forcing you to turn over all your notes. Insist on hard deadlines and if your editor disappears, make sure to find out who has replaced him.

Before the Burns Fellowship, I had a lot of unfounded anxiety about living in Germany. But after the initial confusion about which train to take and how to do laundry with a strange East German man yelling at you and handling your unmentionables, I've found living in Berlin to be far easier than living in Washington D.C. Once you've got a bike, a map, and a place to sleep, your problems (outside of work) are pretty much over. Almost everyone in Berlin, even the McDonald's cashier, seems to speak English, no doubt learned while reading for a PhD at Oxford. The advanced level of fluency in Berlin can make it difficult to practice saying even "Ein Dönerkebab, bitte," in German, but it's important to try and say even the simplest things. It's also a good idea to get a tandem partner, who you can find on Craigslist Berlin, and through university message boards. Tandem refers to language exchange and not to biking, doubles tennis, or any other activity done by two people—I was a bit worried at first. Because of the educational system here, it's easy to find an undergraduate your own age. A tandem partner can also be a great source of information about German culture and story ideas. If you find that your tandem partner is flaky or won't speak to you in German, it's perfectly alright

to find another tandem partner. My partner had several English partners, I later found out—and he flaked on all of them continuously.

We received two books while we were in Washington at the orientation. For the first few weeks in Berlin, I carried either *Father/Land: A Personal Search for the New Germany* or *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* with me everywhere. They were absolutely essential for me in getting a sense of the political context in which I was living in both Berlin and Europe. As a journalist and a voracious reader, I had imagined that I knew something about Europe, but I realized that like many Americans, I had little understanding about the enormous implications of the EU besides that it involved Brussels, Jean Monnet, and the euro. I would recommend that the program continue distributing these two books, perhaps several weeks before orientation. A voluntary reading list of more books like this, and especially books that explore women's and immigrant issues in Germany and Europe would also be a great addition. I believe this is particularly true since the lectures at Washington orientation do not deal much with the history and culture—areas that I think the American Burns fellows are more qualified and more likely to write about.

While I was so busy worrying about the logistics of living in Germany, and reading my books about the new Europe, life in Berlin kind of crept up on me. I absolutely did not foresee how much living here would change my life and open my mind. I've spent most of my time abroad, and most of my professional life thinking about Asia. I had always avoided Europe, seeing it as a land of colonialism and the past. Having a chance to live in Berlin has opened my eyes to the beauty of Europe, as preposterous as that might sound, and with where a culture as old and developed as Germany's can go. Largely because of the social support system, there is so much less anger on the streets and in the air here than there is in America, and maybe this opens up space for creative expression. Berlin is a city on the edge, pushing ahead in the arts and culture. It's interesting to see how Berlin design has incorporated the Japanese Kawaii (cute) aesthetic—despite the lack of a notable Japanese expat population. There is a great example of East, West, and Ost graffiti near my favourite Currywurst stand. This little place has been sitting under the Eberswalder U-bahn station in Prenzlauerberg for over 70 years and the surrounding walls of this former deep East train station are festooned with the graffiti. A commentary on communism features an kawaii anthropomorphized sharp fanged cat in a Fidel Castro fatigues and rifle and ammo lecturing three inquisitive house cats with the tag "Viva Fidel." I'm not quite sure what it means—communism is dead and irrelevant? We miss communism and think it's cute now? We like Ossie kitsch and the freedom to cover the whole city in graffiti? Whatever it means, it's just one of the tiny details of Berlin and part of the reason I fell in love with this city and plan to visit, and write about this part of the world in the future.