



the

Aleph



4

a journal of global perspectives





Sadhu, India
Otto Foerster



Alleyway in Hanoi, Vietnam Patrick Allen

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Volume IV, 2005



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Letter from the Editors

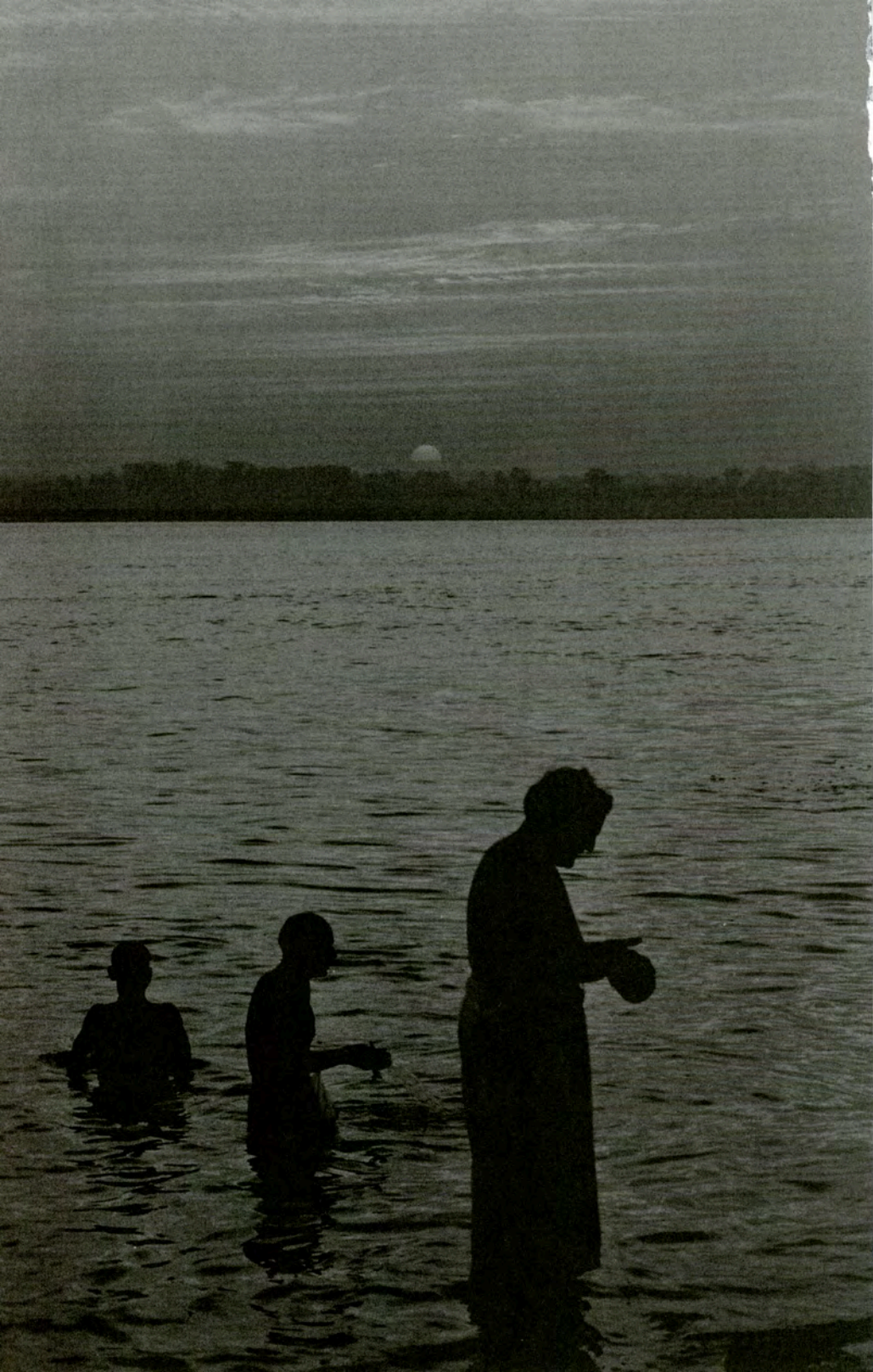
"I felt a shock of panic, which I tried to pin to my uncomfortable position...I shut my eyes — I opened them. Then I saw the Aleph."

This journal takes its name from the 1945 short story "The Aleph" by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. In the story, the main character finds "a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance" in which "without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist." Sixty years later, the story still resonates, particularly in regard to the experiences of students who have crossed cultural boundaries.

Borges' eponymous character has three reactions to his encounter with the Aleph. First, he feels a sense of panic not unlike that experienced by students who are overwhelmed by their new surroundings in a different country. Later, after the encounter, he doubts the *authenticity* of his experience. Finally, he fears that his inability to articulate what he saw would mean that its essence would be lost to the fickleness of memory.

This journal provides space for students to remain connected to their experiences and explore how their encounter with "the other" may have changed them. For the reader, it serves as a window into the lives of our students as they navigate different cultures. While the written pieces provide a sense of how students reflect on their experiences, the photographs capture specific moments. Through these words and images we learn about the people and places they encounter, we see how they change along the way, and we are exposed to "all the places of the world, seen from every angle..."

In the spirit of seeing places from multiple perspectives, the section *Center and Periphery* juxtaposes photos of life in mainland China and in Chinese-occupied Tibet, a Chinese-occupied territory on the Central Asian frontier. We also include two stories about Vietnam: one by an American student in Hanoi, the other by a Vietnamese student in the U.S. The elements of life in Hanoi that overwhelm the American (noise, traffic, smells) are the very things that the Vietnamese student misses; these become the poignant focus of her longing for home. Other pieces grapple with the very notion of home; one student reflects on his identity following a visit to his family's ancestral home, while another, having lived away from her native country for several years, misses "the *feeling* of home" and is uncertain where she belongs. These writings pose a question: is home the country in which you were born or one of the many places life ends up taking you?





Moments I

A Typical Morning in India

You wake up on a small mattress about an inch thick on a small bed that closely resembles a cot. You then open the door to your room and find a bucket of hot water that was boiled maybe thirty minutes prior, and drag it into the bathroom to take a bucket shower. This is your source for hot water, a bucket. You then brush your teeth with bottled water to ensure that you will not get any sort of disease from the tap water and then take a malaria pill because you are in the third world. It is pretty difficult to adjust, but you find a way.

When you are all cleaned up you head to breakfast. If you are early enough you are able to watch *Mataji*, your host mother, buy milk from the local *Dudhwalla*, the milk seller. Every morning the *Dudhwalla* comes to the house, *Mataji* brings out a large bowl into which the water buffalo milk is poured, and then she

You can't even get the food out of your bag before voices are saying, "*Khana, khana kahiye.*" Food, I want food.

stores it in the refrigerator. The leftover milk from the day before is used to make yogurt, which you've never had the stomach for. You then scarf down some *parathas* for breakfast, a kind of flour pancake, and toast with butter.

After breakfast you walk out of the neighborhood and catch an *auto-rickshaw*, which is basically a three-wheeled scooter with a cage on it to shield one from the elements. They generally seat

only two westerners but in most cases entire Indian families somehow squeeze in. The rickshaw ride is where your skills as an international bargainer come in handy. What is normally a 30 rupee ride to the University will cost you 60 rupees because you are from the West. The bargaining will usually start out at something like 150 rupees and then go down accordingly once the drivers find out you know where you are going and that you can speak enough Hindi to know that 150 rupees is the biggest rip-off ever. On a good day you can get a ride for 50 rupees, which is a little more than a dollar.

School usually goes pretty quickly and then you can do a number of things afterward, like eat lunch. Your host family has packed a small lunch of leftover *chappatis* from the night before but you usually give those to the beggars who frequent the area around the University. It comes to the point where almost every beggar in the area knows that around noon you will be emerging from campus. You can't even get the food out of your bag before voices are saying, "*Khana, khana kahiye.*" Food, I want food.

Whenever you walk from place to place someone is always trying to sell you something. It might be factory-rejected Nike shoes or designer clothes from United Colors of Benetton. You learn how to deal with it in your own way but it really does make you think about differences in Eastern and Western values.

After some time you learn to take nothing for granted and always be grateful for what you have. You've met people in India who have nothing – seriously have nothing, their clothes limited to what they are wearing. Yet they seem not to have a care in the world, which makes you think about the freedom people have when there is nothing to tie them down.

—Otto Foerster



Above: Boat Worker, India Otto Foerster
Below: Man on a Ferry, Greece Justin King





Angela's Kitchen, 3 a.m. Kristen Kehoe

Moments II

Still Life

I took a photograph of a three a.m. still-life, unarranged. The borders suggested the entire space outside it and my every Roman breakfast, from the misplaced chairs to the scattered silverware. Our landlady shared her home with us, and with it, her neglect of order and line. She was an architect. She was also a mess. But everything in her kitchen soothed me – things that never would at home. Her table amassed layers of pasta bowls, crumbs, wine corks, rum cake and dirty dishes from previous days. These things tiptoed their way around me, and each day I would find a new element of the architecture of her character in that room. It is not the paintings that I remember now, the colors of the walls or the size of the room. The sense of place was in the smallest details, the things unseen by those merely passing through, the details that became a mosaic of my three-month life in Rome.

Angela Lombardi was a mystery. In those early weekend hours, she came home when the sun just began to rise over the Vatican Wall. She walked softly through the heavy front door,

I knew both Rome and Angela from the things she left perfectly unarranged in that kitchen.

the one that I always cracked against the wall after opening it. She knew exactly where the light switch was – the one I could never find in the dark. She dropped her coat on the floor and sauntered on stilettoed feet into the kitchen. She bit into the left-over pizza and then rested it on the crumb-covered counter. She made tea and spilled some on the pizza. She washed her hands –not the plates– and left the dish towel draped over the tea and

pizza. And when she went to bed, I doubt she cleaned the heavy eye makeup off her face or took off her shoulder-length earrings.

On Mondays my roommates and I would wake up at eight o'clock and so would Angela. In her bathrobe she would sit and eat with us, her hair still glossed with hair spray from a Sunday night out. Then she would work all day, and sometimes all night, in her study. We couldn't see her there, tucked behind the corner, but I always felt like she could see us.

Visitors – usually other architects – would gather around Angela's study and line their laptops along the coffee table. If I needed something from the kitchen, I would close my eyes and pray that I wouldn't have to engage in any real Italian conversation with them. If I were lucky I would sneak quietly by on the tails of a mere *ciao*. I dodged Angela and her friends just as I dodged the landscape of the kitchen, fearful of making a mistake, of incorrectly conjugating a verb or shattering a glass bottle.

There were always bottles of half-finished Chianti that, during parties, would oxidize atop cupboards or spill onto the table between pink, flower-shaped placemats. Puddles of red would seep around the edges of the glass into a circular crowd and stray droplets would mingle with the speckled marble floor, speaking in the untranslatable whisper of strangers. It always reminded me of the tourists who walked from the Pantheon to *Campo de' Fiori* on the streets outside. The next day, uncleaned, the table would boast a sticky surface of deep maroon that latched onto shirt sleeves and left a residue like candy on my skin.

Somehow, Angela would find the time to bake for her co-workers. I never actually saw her bake, but there were always homemade sweets around. She loved sharing the scents of her home – old and new, fresh and rotting – rising up from the bowls and pans that seemed frozen in mid-topple. As I took the photograph, the full mixing bowl stayed miraculously still, tall and proud, forming part of the teapot, wine bottle, mixing bowl triad. To me, the bowl was an upside-down dome or cupola. A maze of chocolate frosting was its ceiling, decaying from the touch of curious fingers and stale air, like a fresco.

There were things that held true, constants, during my time abroad. The foamer for morning cappuccinos waited to make a sail of fluff and cream. The chairs, pulled out into the

narrow alley between table and cupboard, were inevitably pushed aside in the pre-school, pre-work whirlwind, where we scrambled for pastries and fruit. And the sink full of unwashed dishes waited to be attended to by the sponges and soaps that stared from afar. The dishes were a work in progress, needing restoration so the ceramic beneath the oils, dust, and congealment could be truly appreciated, like the Sistine ceiling.

When I walked out my apartment door to class every day, I walked down the streets of Rome, through the colonnades of *San Pietro*, over the *Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II* and past vendors and *gelateria*. There were always tourists, always the mad, small cars and *motociclette* and always the homeless men and women who hugged the walls. There were the ever-present cobblestones that tripped me if I didn't keep my eyes to the ground—with my head up, I crashed, always. When I walked out of the apartment, I didn't leave the unruliness of our kitchen, I just found it again on a grander scale.

The cakes in our kitchen became the churches that lined the piazzas. These cakes were concocted in the early hours of the morning, between architectural plans and blueprints. The churches were constructed centuries ago. When I awoke on my last morning in Rome, I found Angela Lombardi sitting at the table, pouring a bottle of rum over the glaze and spongy insides of the (for me, final) cake. I tripped across a rolling jar of spices and spun out of control. I caught myself, however, when I spotted the cake, which saved me with its attractiveness. Angela's cakes were always too big for the whole apartment to finish, and sometimes too ornate, like the politics and grandeur of the Vatican. There was frosting on the walls and cupboard handles and in places that would lead to footprints across the floor, mapping out a path like the one I navigated across the city, the path that always brought me home to this table.

I knew both Rome and Angela from the things she left perfectly unarranged in that kitchen. This photograph is the last pristine image I have of Rome: the cake, the Chianti, the tea and the foamer. Angela's secrets, and the secrets of the city, were whispered in the vapors the foods breathed to me. They seeped over the brim.

—Kristen Kehoe

Moments III

Locate the Fear

Studying abroad frightened me. I had been badly injured in a car accident some months previously and had come to rely heavily on my family, perhaps a bit too much. When my mother took me to the airport I stopped outside the security gate, clung to her, and cried.

I arrived in Japan sixteen hours later, jet-lagged and confused. I didn't understand the announcements in the airport, in spite of three years of Japanese. I was practically illiterate. I got on the bus and as we drove down the "wrong" side of the street I watched the bright lights flash by, and wondered what I had gotten myself into.

When I arrived at my new school, there were more frightening matters awaiting me—forty new faces, an earthquake, and pizza with fish on top. I wondered if this crazy place, with its beautiful, complex writing system and ancient culture would ever feel like home.

And now here I am, five months later, back in the United States. What do I fear now? That I'll never go back there and see my host family and friends. That I'll forget, and my four months abroad will become nothing more than a kimono in the closet and pictures on the wall. I'm afraid I'll forget that what I most fear may be the most valuable experience of all.

—Kate Delp



Sign on the Island of Capri, Italy Adam Kohnstamm



Rosenberg Castle, Denmark Alicia Pagan

Moments IV

Two Worlds Become One

It all started a month in advance with numerous emails and phone calls to the grocery store. We had to have everything. What would it be like to celebrate away from home?

I was surrounded by friends and family, and the smell of roasting turkey wafted through the air. The last guest had just arrived and the table was set. Thanksgiving in Denmark! Mom and Dad were here to visit and we had planned to cook Thanksgiving dinner for my host family. When word spread, the extended family was soon added to the guest list. I had also invited my friend Matt, who I knew was lonely and dreaming of turkey. There were thirteen people in all and I wondered where we would find a turkey big enough to feed everyone.

We arrived in Ishoj at 10 a.m. They had already set the table in anticipation. Lea, my host mom, had collected most of the ingredients; my mom brought some essentials from home, including the cranberry sauce. Dad took his usual place in the family room on the couch. At first he was dismayed to discover there was no Macy's Day Parade or (American) football, but after a while he seemed content enough. Mom and I set to work in the kitchen. She was beginning to feel nervous. There was a lot of work to be done by six o'clock that evening.

The night before we had planned meticulously the order of our tasks: pies, stuffing, turkey, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green beans, gravy and the relish tray. It was time to put the plan to work. While my mom familiarized herself with a stranger's kitchen, I set to work peeling apples. It was the one task I felt confident accomplishing and I didn't have to interrupt my mom's focus in order to complete it. As long as we got the two pies finished and the turkey in by 12:30, there would be no reason to panic. Before we could put the turkey in we had to get the stuffing

ready, so I set to work cutting celery. I wish there had been an outside observer there to witness our strangely chaotic yet structured teamwork.

Andreas was the first one home, and if having people literally take over your kitchen was not awkward enough for my eleven year-old host brother, he discovered that my mom was the only one home. Andreas had been a little nervous at first, but when my mom opened the oven door to show him the turkey and gave him a little piece to taste, he smiled.

Rasmus came home next and left just as abruptly as he had arrived. Apparently the situation was just as strange for an eight year-old. It was as though they had all been warned not to get in the way.

Lea and Flemming, her husband, came home from work just before the rest of the guests began to arrive. Grandma had brought me a present and I was attempting to open the present, make Matt feel comfortable, and help my mother in the kitchen, so the twenty minutes before six are now a blur. Somehow I managed to scoop the fruit salad, introduce everyone, find serving dishes for my mom and thoroughly enjoy every second.

By the time I sat down at the head of the table I was starving. Not only was I one of the chefs, the hostess and the translator, I was the one that brought these twelve other people together. As I pulled my chair out to sit down, I felt truly thankful—and exhausted.

Before we were able to enjoy the feast in front of us, my mom gave a brief explanation of the origin of this uniquely American holiday followed by a definition of what exactly we had placed on the table in front of them. As always, the first five minutes were spent passing dishes, with everyone eyeing the gravy bowl and reaching for the olives. Amidst the smiles I caught some skeptical looks.

Then it was silent. Everyone was examining their plates, exposing their taste buds to long-time favorites and startlingly new tastes. My mom especially seemed to be enjoying herself. The moment of truth had come and she had succeeded. I glowed with pride. For the rest of the evening I felt as though I were in a dream, drifting in and out of reality with a permanent smile fixed upon my face.

As we cleared the table and made room for the apple pies that we had made, without shortening, the atmosphere again became very animated. People traded seats and struck up conversations with their new neighbors while I made the tea, found dishes for dessert and cleared the table.

I think it was as I dipped into the vanilla ice cream for a second helping and glanced around the table that I finally relaxed. At that moment, I dropped my fork, took a deep breath and tried to imprint the moment into my memory. Never again would I experience something so surreal. Never again would these two separate worlds I am a part of come so close. For that instant they were one.

—Kathleen Bush



Worker in Central Market, Florence, Italy
Adam Kohnstamm



Verse and Vision I

Aural Thorns

Daybreak in the city
Signals the rising dissonance
Only a Westernized morning can bring,
As it finds a mechanized world
Waking in ignorance
To its walking slumber.

The modern-day Sisyphus
Falls prey to an infectious rhythm:
A world of sirens seduces him
With songs of cheap thrills—
Empty promises he'll push to no end
Upon nine-to-five treadmills.

Somewhere two lovers
Sing along with shouts of despair:
A requiem to time lost,
And a love they struggle to share;
Theirs is a song to hollow years,
An ode to dreams stifled and repressed,
A eulogy to faded years gone by,
Indistinguishable from all the rest.

The Lie continues unnoticed:
The t.v. does its job well,
Filling the voids in our lives
By always having something to sell;
The commercials hold our hands,
Tell us exactly what we need:

“We will save you from love,
And deliver you to greed.”

The fanatics join this rhythm
With ardent voices echoing
Through the churches, parliaments,
And out into the streets:
“This is the one truth!”
Voice after voice fervently repeats;
And the flag flutters in accord,
As the politicians cry to a rising cheer:
“We will save you from love,
And deliver you to fear.”

Living by this mantra of the blind,
Conforming to this anthem of the deceived,
Obeying this motto of the tyrants,
Carrying this emblem of the thieves;
Projecting our fear through brutality,
Driving it through our homes and across the seas,
Remaining deaf to those beyond our madness,
Conditioned to ignore their pleas.

The stillness of dawn
Has long given way
To the mounting sonic chaos
And the frantic bitterness
Of urban mornings:

Roars of motors crescendo
Above the rumble of the trains,
As squeals of tires answer
Angry reports of horns,
While the clatter of drills
Accent the ticking clocks,
And the persistent howls of dogs
Join the urgent screams of sirens,
As grating tones of countless mobile phones
Join the steady drone of banal mediocrity
Broadcast to the millions marching on concrete,
Synchronized to the violence of the city.

The bipedal rivers run their daily course
Regulated by the industrial beat;
The trilateral apparatus
Guards and herds
These waves of insistent feet.

The self-validating pretexts
Relentlessly goad on
The masses of humanity.

Sanity falters under constant strains,
And integrity bears the heavy cost;
Tranquility suffers where discord reigns,
And harmony is lost.

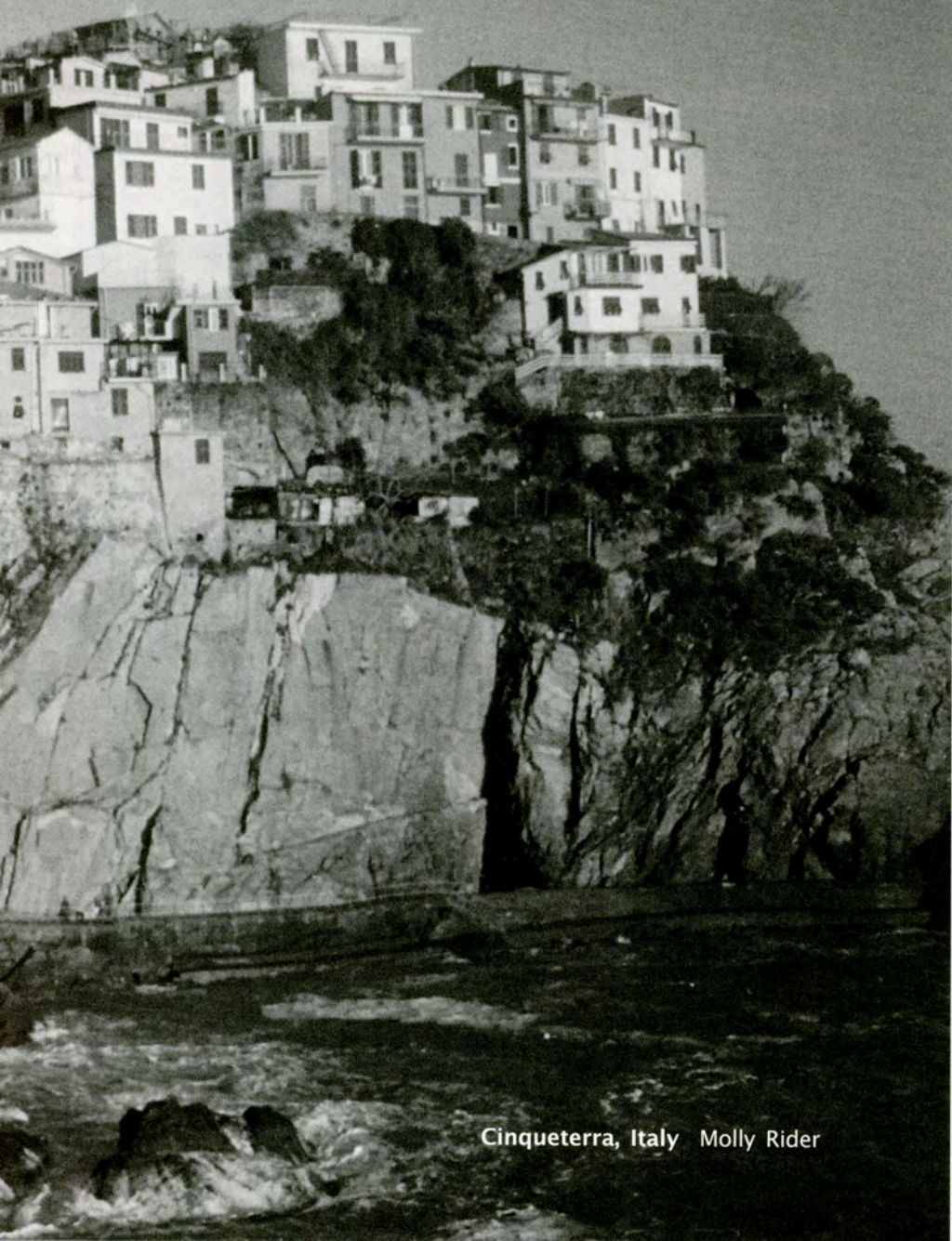
Constant aural thorns
Hinder the release
Of inner symphonies held silent for too long,
The dissonance masking the revelation
Of latent melodies within.

—Armand Buzantian

Night Falls on Bratislava, Slovakia Paul Fathallah







Cinquetera, Italy Molly Rider



Vietnam Folio



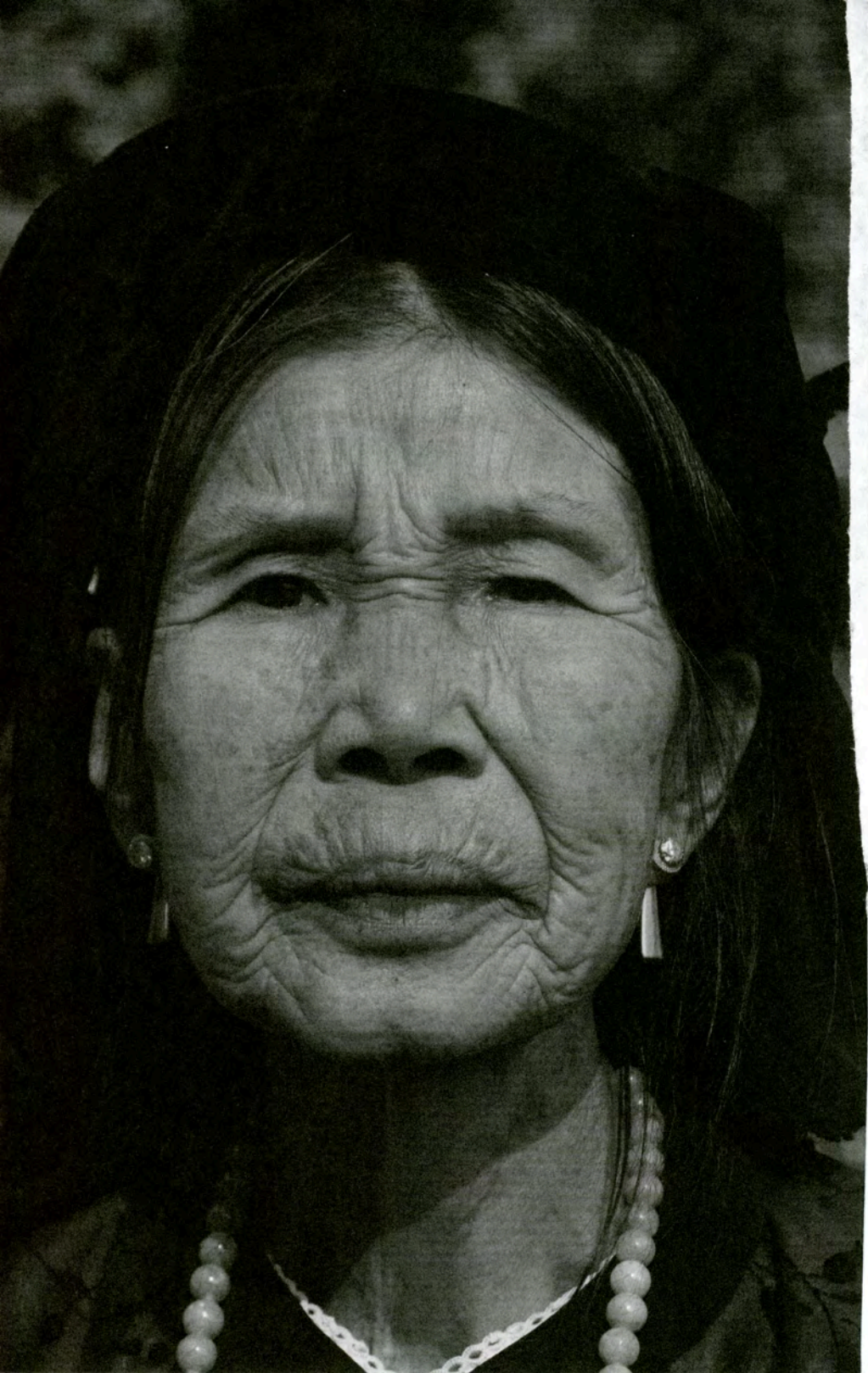
Above: Officers and Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum
Reflected in a Trash Can

Patrick Allen

Facing: Two Young Men in Hanoi

Jake Dewey







Above: A Stern Look Megan Scanlon
Facing: Bà Thuy in Formal Attire Jake Dewey

*Following, clockwise from top left: Crowds in Covered
Market; Man and Woman on a Hanoi Bridge;
Reflection in a Shop Window* Patrick Allen
Mekong Delta Boats Jake Dewey







Lessons I

In Living and in Death

A bus full of a couple dozen American college students, two professors and their guide bounces along uneven pavement outside Cu Chi, about 50 kilometers northwest of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The group rides past modest but comfortable houses painted in a rainbow of colors, settled at the edges of rice fields extending to the horizon. For the last half hour the landscape

The students take note of the location where, following a napalm strike, a war correspondent snapped a photo so poignant it came to alter Western public opinion about the conflict.

has appeared faultlessly pastoral and the students gaze out the windows as their professor gives an overview of the *airmobile* warfare that the Americans developed in this area during the war.

A mountain emerges out of the mist in the distance, soaring 1000 meters above the plain of the Saigon River, and the guide mentions its strategic significance nearly forty years prior. The students take note of the location where, following a napalm strike, a war correspondent snapped a photo so poignant it came to alter Western public opinion about the conflict. I was academically aware that the Vietnamese had a long history of defensive war. However, I soon learned that although they are conscious of this reality, most Vietnamese prefer to focus on future prosperity, preserving the strong spirit of their history without harboring animosity for some bygone transgression.

I notice that in the middle of nearly every farmer's field is a memorial which is ubiquitous throughout the countryside, from the rice fields around Ho Chi Minh City to the jungles of the Mekong. These memorials are too highly esteemed to be tucked into the margins of the landscape, though their often festive decoration makes them difficult to identify through American eyes. The guide says they are burial monuments, placed to mark the interment of loved ones and to celebrate the lives they once lived. They are often colored brightly, sparkling red and gold in the afternoon light, but sometimes they are a muted grey, standing proud yet worn from the events they have witnessed. From their vantage points in the fields, they have seen the success and failure of countless crop cycles and silently observed each generation of children come of age in a country whose relationship to the rest of the world has been constantly dynamic. These gravestones have stood dwarfed beneath the vastness of the Vietnamese sky. They have watched towering banks of evening clouds roll past and have felt many lifetimes worth of raindrops.

I noticed a pair of such memorials planted in the yard of a complex on the banks of the Mekong where rice paper for spring rolls is produced. These were not of the vibrantly-colored, highly-embellished style, but were rather plain, with a bit of mildew bringing out the texture of the concrete and the simple lettering chiseled into the headstone. They were being used to support woven bamboo frames on which sheets of rice paper were being dried. Because they were surrounded by this odd scaffolding it took me several minutes to notice them. When I realized what they actually were, it became all the more striking how the Vietnamese culture commemorated the lives of their relatives by making their monuments an integral part of daily life, not grouping them in any single area for occasional visits, as my home culture tends to do. Their custom is to immortalize their deceased by incorporating them into the constant industriousness which characterizes their living. To allow gravestones to stand in the way of productivity out of deference would be more likely to dishonor what they represent. These are not testaments to the past but instead embodiments of a spirit shared among the Vietnamese for the past, present and future.

Several days later my understanding of the Vietnamese relationship to death was further expanded. After a supper with three of my fellow travelers we found ourselves enchanted by



Above the Clouds, Vietnam Patrick Allen

the sound of an electric guitar. It was producing what sounded almost like American blues-based melodies—gritty and visceral—but played in a mode which made it distinctively Eastern. We sat down at a table on the sidewalk, across from the guitarist and a few men who would periodically chant or beat strange percussive instruments. We were ten feet from the chaos that is Saigon traffic and surrounded by tables full of enthusiastic conversations with people eating and drinking freely. We were impressed by the service, as we were immediately served tea and crackers. After several minutes of sitting, my friend turned across the table and, deadpan, asks,

“Do you realize what we’ve done?”

I didn’t understand. Of all the possible explanations that he might have given, I would have counted the following as the most far-fetched.

“We’ve sat down in a funeral!”

I was shocked. Fearing it would be rude to get up and leave in the middle of the music, we stayed where we were. It was not long before the family members of the deceased began to talk with us, telling us in rough English about the woman who had died that very morning. Drinks and salty snacks were passed around and in the name of cultural concord, we accepted both.

We spoke for a while with one man, and our conversation broadened to a discussion on the American War. He shared some painful memories of his childhood in Saigon during its occupation by American troops and later used piles of peanuts to illustrate the disparity in casualty rates between American troops and Vietnamese. Though he was opposed to the U.S. role in the war, he clearly stated his love for the U.S. and the west when it was not at war. Even on the day of his sister's death, this man was not fixated on the past, but took the time to celebrate her life by sharing it so warmly with foreigners like us. Just as the gravestones abutting work areas are a passive continuation of the spirit of the past, so too is this stage of the funeral an active celebration of the dead, not a paralyzing act of mourning.

Before leaving we were led through the ritual of contributing a few dollars to the memory of the deceased and lighting incense to carry our goodwill to the heavens. After expressing our sorrow to the family once more and thanking them for their hospitality, we slipped into the cool humidity of the early morning, our eyes forever opened to the progressive view of death held by many Vietnamese.

—Patrick Allen

Children Practice in a Christian Church, Vietnam
Patrick Allen





Lessons II

Painting Class with Consuelo

I don't know what I expected to find in Sevilla. Although I was nervous enough about the term before I left, I could never have imagined the everyday challenges of living in a foreign country. One thing I learned, however, was that the frustration of a situation is inversely related to its ultimate reward. One such experience was a painting class I attended twice a week. It was an unbelievable experience, not only for what I learned about art, but also for the independence it forced me to assume. I did not often take the opportunity to venture away from the comfort of at least one of my thirty American companions; this was a valuable exception.

Day One, there I was, suddenly (again) in foreign territory, in the city that I had just begun to call an ally. So I went on the defensive. I smiled my hardest and nodded that silly nod to everything anyone said to me, because I either couldn't understand

My classmates exemplified the Spaniards' tendency to constantly compliment and admire one another. I would blush and get embarrassed upon hearing Mercedes kindly overlook my scratching to flatter my choice of color.

what they had said to me, or I couldn't find the words to respond, or both. The instructor was very understanding. I am not sure if Consuelo had ever had a foreign student in her class before, but her patience and compassion kept tears of frustration from leaping to my eyes. She didn't laugh at me when I misunderstood her first instructions and painted the white ceramic jar a rainbow-like

explosion of random colors. She would just slightly furrow her brow and kindly explain for the third time what we were going for.

Little by little I caught on and began to feel like part of the class. I was greeted warmly by fellow students when I arrived. We would mutually admire each other's work while taking breaks from painting our own masterpieces. The variety of students in the class, ranging in age from ten to sixty, made me feel less of a minority. They worked in watercolor, colored pencils, and charcoal, as well as oil. Mercedes was a *pintora de olio* like me. She was about my mom's age and an English teacher at a high school just outside of Sevilla. Although trying to get my Andalusian accent just right was always exciting, it was a huge relief to be able to exchange a few sentences in my own native English with Mercedes. She had a charming British accent and a warm *Sevillana* smile.

The painting classes, and the entire term abroad, passed very quickly. My classmates exemplified the Spaniards' tendency to constantly compliment and admire one another. I would blush and get embarrassed upon hearing Mercedes kindly overlook my scratching to flatter my choice of color. To the Spaniards, it's natural to give and receive compliments freely and gracefully. The Spaniards must view Americans as very cold people. We tend to leave one another alone, observe strict rules of personal space, and give compliments quite reservedly.

Our small one-room studio was a microcosm of Sevilla in which I learned innumerable lessons about its people and customs. One thing the Spaniards do especially well is welcome outsiders. The other students spoke to me rapidly, as if I were a native speaker, making me feel like an insider. While daunting at first, it showed their willingness to treat me as an equal. On the last day of class when Mercedes and I exchanged addresses, I realized my great fortune to have found and become a part of Consuelo's class. I could not have found a better venue to experience the unique and wonderful camaraderie that is Spain.

—Alexandra Waibel



Above: Child in the Musée d'Orsay,
Paris, France Oliver Majer

Facing: Ceramic Artisan, Marginea, Romania
Alissandra Stoyan



Lessons III

The Layers of Rome

I've found the layers of Rome. I realized it one night as I was strolling through the dimly lit streets of *Trastevere*. Day after day I have walked through Rome feeling as though my surroundings were constant, static, ancient as the Roman Forum. Yet now I realize that nothing about this great city is the same to me as it was three months ago. Even the cobblestone, which used to trip me constantly, has adapted to the bottoms of my feet. My eyes, my ears, my heart have undergone a transformation, all because I have unknowingly been digging through these layers and am standing at the bottom of a deep hole - one which I'm glad I can't climb out of.

Top coat. The crust. The sugar-sweetened frosting with a cherry on top: my first instinctual reaction to this overwhelming city. Everything was a rush. Run here, dash there. I was an American tourist in Rome. Everything was new to me and I had no idea how to handle it all. It was too sweet. Coliseum. Commissioned by Vespasian in 72 AD; 55,000 spectators; Blood, gore...did they really battle to the death here? Questions flooded my mind and I was caught in a current of information that filled my brain to the brim...and then some.

I remember literally *running* into the Pantheon. After the initial amazement wore off, all I could think was, "When was it built again? I know I learned this in art history..." It happens to be 118 AD. And this is one of the first facts a tourist might learn about the magnificent structure when they first visit it. That and the fact that "The equilibrium of the Pantheon is so balanced that a single man can easily swing open the massive iron doors," as I happened to overhear a tour guide explain. But these facts are merely sprinkles on a parfait so deep and delicious, it boggles the mind.

Level two. A step deeper. The feeling you get when you sink your teeth into a solid chunk of milk chocolate only to discover that there's caramel inside. This is the layer where I decided I might actually start to belong to the city of Rome. I had moved out of the hotel, learned the transportation system and decided that my absolute favorite spot to bask in the Italian *sole* was on a bench at the far end of *Piazza Navona*.

I started to notice things about Rome that most tourists never get to learn in their short stay. I started comparing the cost of lunch from one pizzeria to another. I began hanging out with the locals on Sundays and found that I'm more of a sports fan than I ever expected I could be. I attended a soccer game live and stood among the *Roma* fans on the *curva sud*, listening to them unite in one single voice - chanting tunes I found stuck in my head long after the match was over.

Il centro became more than just ancient temple columns rising up from *Torre Argentina*. It is a place where the old meets the new. A place always bustling with activity which became, oddly, comforting.

I found and visited places that don't have pages dedicated to them inside guide books. Churches, parks, *piazzas*...whose names I can hardly keep track of. *Santa Maria di Vittorio*, *San Giovanni in Laterano*, *Piazza Trilluso*, *Sant'Ivo*, *Piazza di San Pietro in Montorio*... Some of these places I just happened to run into as I diverged from the beaten path and crossed the border between tourist and Roman resident, which introduces the next layer on my journey...

The third layer is the most difficult to capture and explain, because it is completely inhabited by emotions. I became comfortable with my surroundings - even with things that *should* have made me uncomfortable. At this moment, a montage of images floods my memory. Visions of a homeless woman begging me to buy milk for her children; a poor man playing a sad *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* on his beat-up violin for pocket change. I found myself indifferent to my surroundings - except for the occasional twang of guilt. And when I looked around me, I found the natives behaving the same way. I was never so ashamed to fit in.

And at the same time I *didn't* fit in, and I was ashamed for *them* and *their* city. I still had to deal with catcalls and men shoving roses into my arms every time I happened to be passing by the Trevi Fountain. On Tram 8 one day I caught a young Middle Eastern man trying to pick my pocket. I learned the reality of living in a big city along with all of the emotions it stirs up. This layer of Rome opened my eyes and closed up my heart a bit, and often made me wish I was back in America.

Which brings me, finally, to the *ultimo* layer - the place I'm standing at now. I've unwrapped most of my gifts and now I'm sitting amongst my treasures and all of the crumpled paper, knowing that I still have more surprises waiting, just no time to open them. This is *my* final layer and I couldn't be happier. I am at a place so incredibly different from where I started. I am truly living my *life* in Rome.

I notice the little things. I am no longer absorbed by the big picture and I can almost understand why everyone who lives here dislikes the *Vittoriana*. It's because it's not about the big flashy monuments or knowing all of the dates and the artists' middle names. It's about seeing a woman watering her pink and yellow blossoms through a second story window within the Jewish Ghetto. It's about getting on the tram and finding a 3-man band joyfully playing a medley of famous *musica italiana* all the way to your stop: a happy soundtrack for your commute. It's about the way *Campo de' Fiori* religiously changes its façade, day after day, turning from a colorfully intoxicating marketplace to a hopping night scene within hours, only to transform again the very next morning. It's about being blessed by the Pope and accepting it with grace. It's about hearing children singing at a mass where smiling parents are spilling onto the street as you pass by. It's about *gelato con panna* and snapping photos of a balcony you'll never stand on. It's about sighing and accepting that it could rain any second. And after learning the hard way, you instinctually carry your umbrella with you wherever you may "Rome"—the one you bought from a man on the street, back when you were still skimming across the top layer of this magnificent city.

—Maria Barbieri





Verse and Vision II

Light Hearts

In my travels in Rome,
I've imagined myself a Roman pigeon.
I miei amicizie con altri piggioni
are tied by an internal rhythm that synchronizes us
and scatters us in the wind.

We are freed of the indirect and obscure
ancient cobblestone streets
lined by i negozi e gli edifici monumentali
founded on histories we've no space to comprehend.

We drift as we please
Lungo piazze e monumenti e strade,
sometimes among the people,
other times much higher
than their bodies could reach.

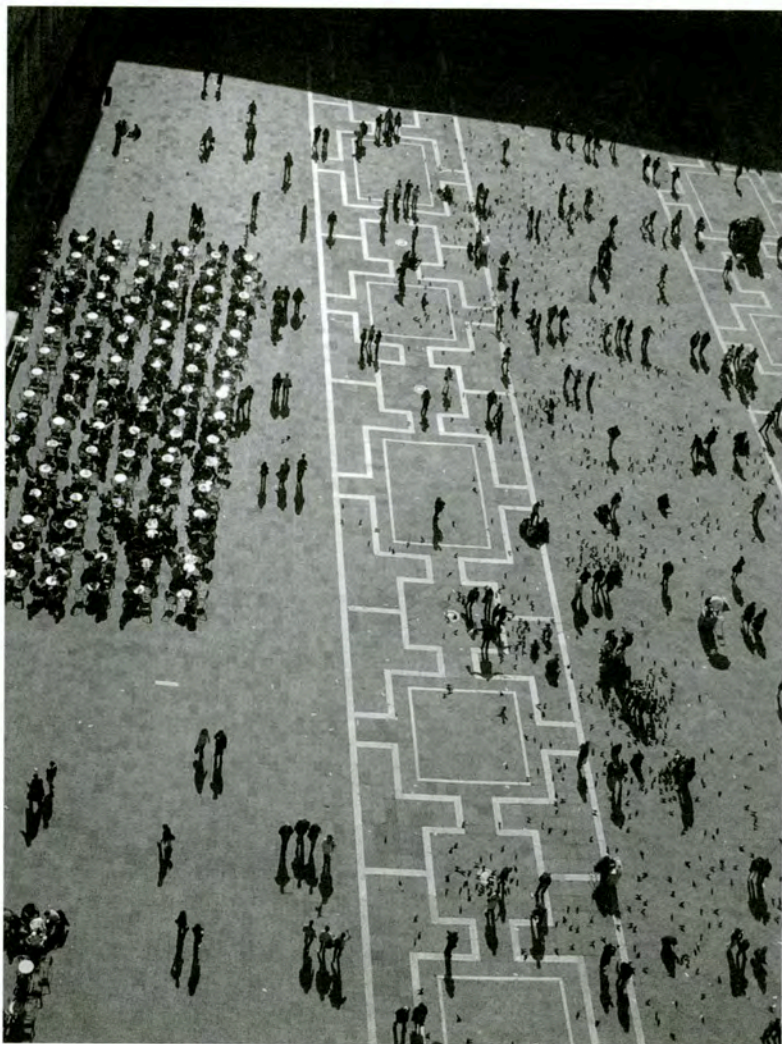
Our hearts,
each our own,
beat together when we flock closely,
our nearness felt from our insides.

Nel mie sogni,
we pigeons know the space of this city
from above the rooftops,
the edges of the balconies,
and the inner crevices of ancient sculptures of stone,
weighed heavy and still to the ground.

Their stillness alone
reminds us that their way of life

thrives on the slow-weathering,
sustained stone weight
that our light hearts couldn't know.

—Michelle Calabro



A Piazza: A Bird's Eye View Adam Kohnstamm



Temple on the Acropolis Justin King



La Cienaga Girls, Dominican Republic Hilda Castillo





Word and Image I

These are My Pictures

Oh, thanks, it's good to be back.

Yeah, I had a great time. Vietnam is a really neat place.

Really, you're interested? Well here, these are my pictures. Take a look.

Digitally enhanced, carefully previewed and selected, cropped, zoomed, formatted; my best shots. Snapshot, scrap-book, slideshow... take your pick.

But I should warn you.

You're just not going to get it. These 4" by 6" freeze-framed moments of reality: they can't possibly convey my whole story.

The pictures don't come in the scratch-and-sniff variety. You can't smell the body odor permeating the crowded buses, the urine in the streets, the awful durian fruit's feces-like stench wafting through the air, the fresh meat market, the choking exhaust fumes, the fermenting alcohol assaulting your nose as you pass a *Bia Hoi*, or yes, the fresh pineapple.

Listen closely. Can you hear it?

No, the pictures don't beep, shout or whistle with the noise of the city. Oh, the engulfing, never-ceasing honk of motorbikes. Honk, Honk, Beep, Beep, Beep-Beep-Honk-Honk! Beeps from all directions signaling turns, merges, passing, boredom, even a



musical substitute for the car radio. The revving of engines, the squealing of brakes.

Yes, my pictures show many Vietnamese mouths, but you don't hear any Vietnamese voices. What a language. The abrupt rising and falling sounds that seem incomprehensible to the human ear. The strings of mono-syllabic words, certain sounds that actually became familiar. "Chi oi!" "Khong, khong mua." "Rat dep." Words that meant so much when I spoke them to the surprised and enthusiastic Vietnamese person. Words that mean absolutely nothing now.

The voices are forever frozen in my pictures, no longer calling at me to buy their goods or ride their motorbikes, no longer telling me I am so big, or so beautiful. No longer greeting me on my morning jog, or shouting excitedly as I pass through a village off the beaten track. The voices are silenced, nothing but fading echoes in my ears.

Oh yeah, the traffic was crazy.

The pictures can't portray the chaos in which my Vietnamese life was lived. My loud, disorderly, foreign surroundings placed me in a state of constant chaos that elbowed its way deep within me, throwing my life into turbulence as I was removed



from my familiar anchors of boyfriend, family, culture, routine... The pictures don't reveal how confused and alone I'd often feel. How close I became to the other American students sharing my experience. How crazy the entire city felt; a city of people whizzing around on motorbikes, working from dawn 'til dusk doing anything to earn a couple thousand *dong*, awaking before daybreak to do Tai Chi in the park. No, pictures cannot reveal the energetic chaos within me and around me in the city of Hanoi.

My pictures reveal Vietnamese hands, but the viewer cannot feel the Vietnamese touch. The clasp of an old woman grasping my arm and saying how big and strong I was, not being able to get enough of me. (And this was a *compliment*?) In a culture where boys hold hands and grown women will commonly share a single



bus seat, my Vietnamese friends would be offended if I didn't hug them tight as we traveled around on motorbikes. Pictures don't convey the strength felt in an old man's wrinkly hands, hands that have been places my pale, smooth fingers would never touch. You can see the faces, but you can't feel the loving embraces with which my friends' excited mothers would welcome me into their homes.

You can see their smiles, but you can't feel their kindness or their eagerness to welcome you into their lives and share their world with you.



I can tell you what I learned in Vietnam, but I can't express the comic, confusing, often miscommunicated, and ever-poignant conversations and experiences through which this understanding came about.

You can see a picture of a Vietnamese home, but not know the feeling that overcomes you when you walk inside and realize that this one room you're standing in encompasses a family's



entire life; these are all their material possessions, here they carry out all their life's functions. No, there is no garage out back. No, they never leave this place to take a vacation.

But please, come take a look. They're the best I've got to offer. And, frighteningly, they are slowly becoming all that I remember.

—Carolyn Smith



Word and Image II

Prague

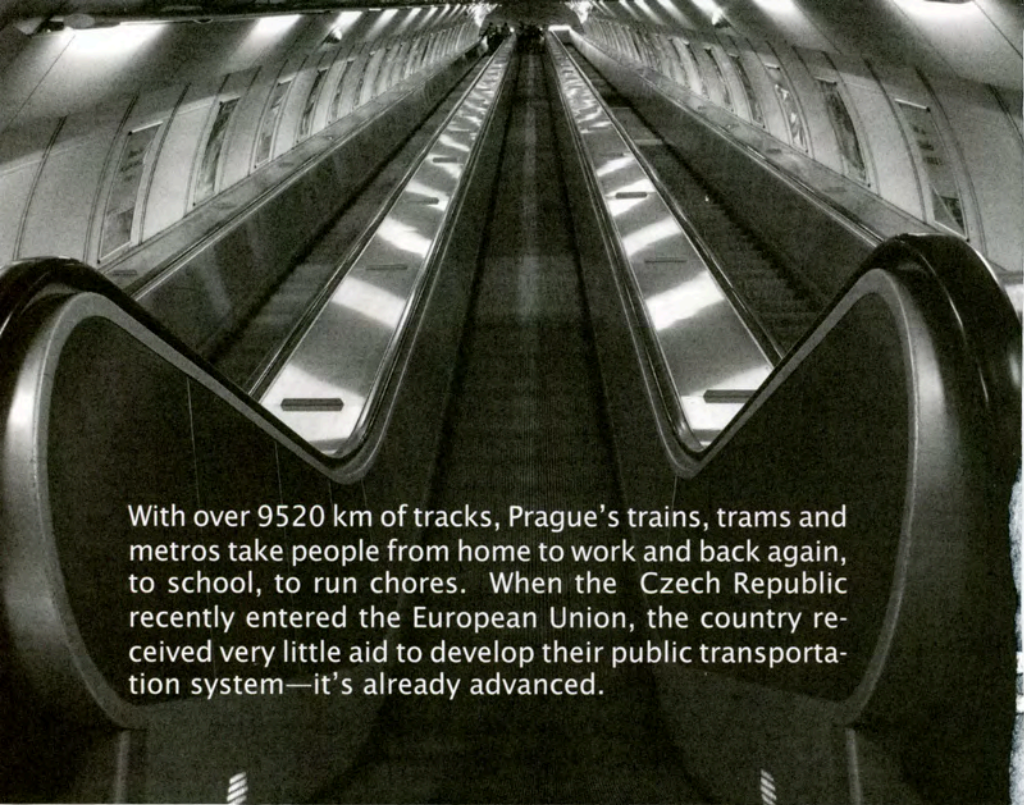
Leaving home for such a long time to a place so far away was something I was not used to. Among my siblings, I was the one that wanted to go to school relatively close to home. Ironically, while at Union I am further from home than either my brother or sister—and now I am thousands of miles from home, alone, in a country I knew almost nothing about.

At the airport my parents clenched me tight. My dad was teary-eyed; my mom cried a river. And in an attempt to ease her sadness, I told her that she was getting my shirt dirty. They went home to Marion, Massachusetts, and I went to Prague, Czech Republic.

One of the first things that I noticed here, aside from the language barrier, were the lonnnnnnnnnng,

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and fast-moving escalators. The public transportation system in Prague is one of the best in Europe, and it is something that most students from the U.S. are not used to. But after a while, it became something I didn't think twice about. I learned that running up a stopped escalator is not the best, but is sometimes the only way to the top. I also learned that if someone does not intend on walking up, he or she should stand on the right side and let others get by. Apparently, most of Prague's population can fit into the metro tunnels in the event of catastrophe.



With over 9520 km of tracks, Prague's trains, trams and metros take people from home to work and back again, to school, to run chores. When the Czech Republic recently entered the European Union, the country received very little aid to develop their public transportation system—it's already advanced.



After midnight, take the Tram. After five a.m., take the Metro. Right now it is after midnight.

Prague is known as 'The City of a Hundred Spires'.



Prague at night is, simply put, amazing. There are so many people out and about that it seems as busy as the day, and their luminosity lights up the city. In the U.S., it seems like everything is closed and people are asleep at two a.m. In Prague the nightlife stops at five a.m., when the workday begins.





The time just seems to go by so fast.



The first thing I noticed at Czech Technical University was the fact that the school had no defined campus—it was just part of Prague, seemingly one of the busiest cities in the world, and going to school right in the thick of it was a unique experience. Walking around this “campus,” you see new faces. From time to time you do see someone you know, and sometimes you meet a professor and can talk outside of the classroom.

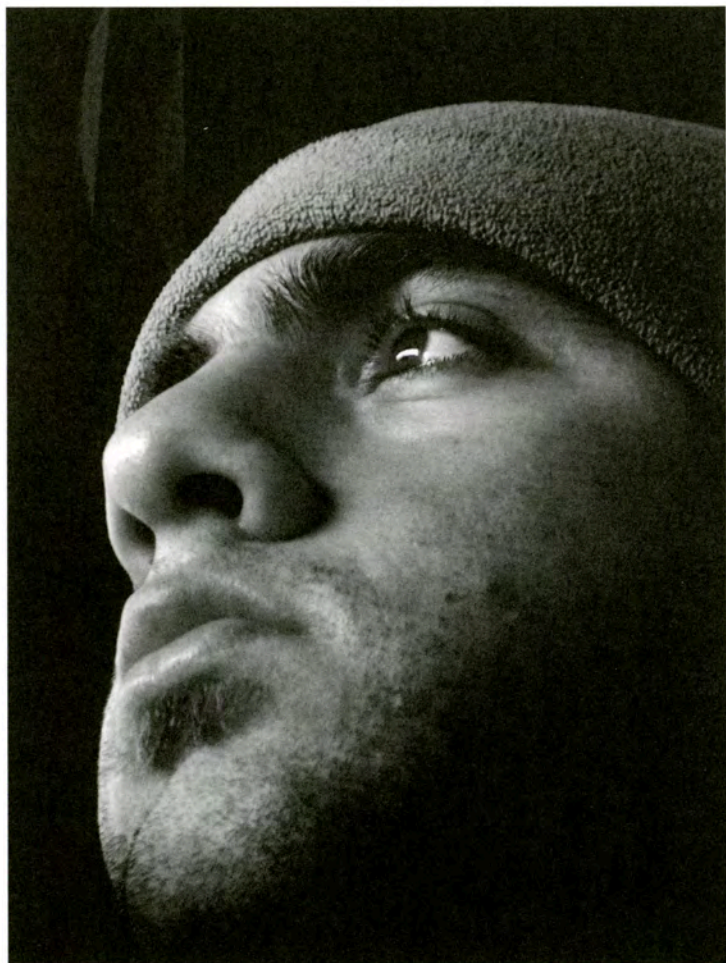
Architecture is something that has interested me, and it was one of the reasons I chose to study in the Czech Republic. At the University, I had the opportunity to observe many student architecture projects.

All the buildings along the Vltava River seemed to be filled with such color. Each one was unique, especially the famous “Fred and Ginger” building, which was designed by Frank Gehry, a noted American architect.



Memories. It's one of the first words that comes to mind when I think about my term abroad experience in Prague. My experience, if I had to summarize it into a single statement, would go something like this: study abroad is about the first-hand experience of being far away from home, in a place you have never been before, viewing the world through the eyes of a student, of an adult, and most importantly, the eyes of someone willing to see something different.

—Paul Fathallah





Verse and Vision III

The Seven Passed Months of My Life

I

Summer is a ripe period, the
summit of seasons. I mislaid my fortune in perilous ease.
I could see no reason for keeping myself around. My restraint
and my fertility were in exile – caught in Psyche's
 clandestine furnaces.
I called the cold a fool and ran to sticky orange heat
to sleep in it, to smile at my sorrows. I stuck your letter to
 the wall, one of my
irresponsible hairs caught in the tape,
now it stands to represent us.

II

Rain came on sudden in Carraroe. I had gone walking alone
 to see the Coral Beach.
Dia duit, the thin man leaned out his car window. *Dia's Muire*
duit. I replied.
I was strangeness in the dust rising from the narrow road. I
was lost quickly in Carraroe. Sky, aged sky, leaked like a fallen
knee with pebble holes. I was wet and forgotten in Carraroe.
Each four-corners bore the same misleading signs
(if you do not know your way in Carraroe you will not find it).
I was hurling my heaviness through thistle and over lace stone
 walls. I fell too close
to a slick rock. On looking up I saw a grey-speckled white
 horse with two bulbous eyes.
It wanted something from me; it was slight, without a
 bursting stallion chest.
There were no street lights to make the darkness a giver.

III

Only one house stood
across the overgrown field where the horse watched, and the
windows were shattered,

and the heart of the horse seemed vacant.

I rediscovered the book a woman of women gave to me;
she had singularly underlined: *& the Daughters of Memory shall
become the Daughters of Inspiration*. And I thought, I do not
deserve this.

Loneliness is a docile and violet ribboned word:
in a small black attic room, with two breezy windows,
on a grey day, a small white cast-iron heater
(when I am unmoving cold I lay my body across it,
like one would fall into their mother),
my lamenting Sinn Fein poster hanging in absurdity of
place.

Inadequate slivers of thought;
the only thing I am apt at is
being used up.

—Morgan Wentworth

A Gate in Grasmere, England Oliver Majer





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SILVERWARE MFG. CO.





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BELIRAM JAIN
SILVERWARE MFG.

Typical Indian Market
Otto Foerster



Center and Periphery

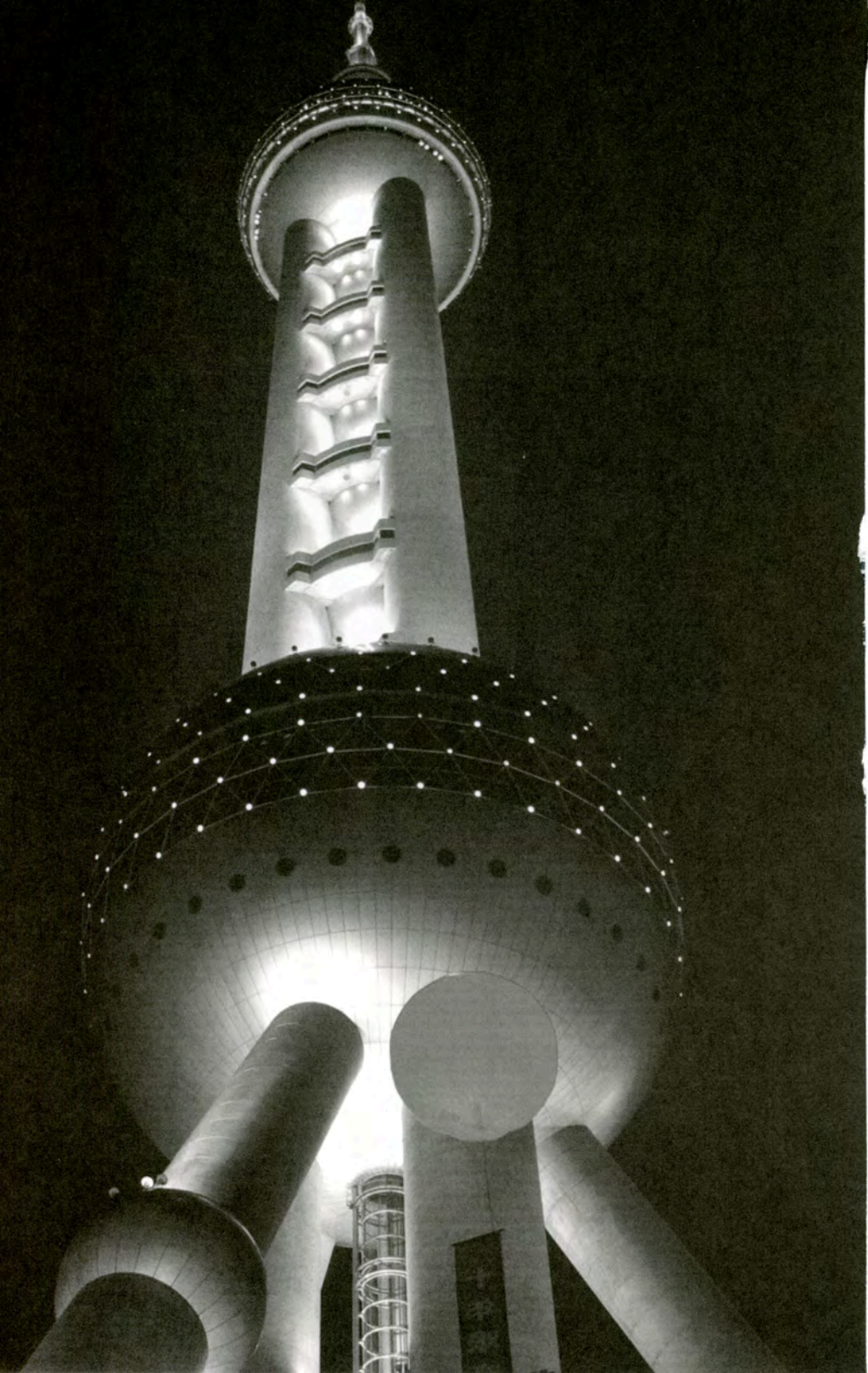
A Folio of Images from China and Tibet



Chinese Flag over the Potala in Lhasa
Tibetan Autonomous Region, China
Abe Holland



Busy Evening Promenade
Shanghai, China
Annemarie Mica





Above: Buddha Statues, China
Facing: Pearl Tower, Shanghai
Annemarie Mica

Below: Commuters in Shanghai Annemarie Mica
Right: Pilgrims in Barkhor Square, Lhasa Tenzing Gyatotsang





Following, clockwise from top left:
Playing Cards, Shanghai Jeff Roffman
Old Woman at Temple Gate, Lhasa Tenzing Gyatotsang
Portrait of a Woman, Shanghai Jeff Roffman
Little Girls in Lhasa Tenzing Gyatotsang







Passing Gate, China
Annemarie Mica



Pilgrims on the Road to Drepung Monastery, Tibet
Abe Holland



Crossings I

Tibetan in Tibet

I took my first trip to Tibet in December, 2004. I was there for two weeks. It was the first time in my life where I didn't feel the need to try to fit in. I didn't have to, because for once I was among others like me. It felt good not to stand out in a group, not to have to explain my Tibetan nationality and background.

In New York I constantly had to state my Tibetan identity to people who assumed I was Chinese or Japanese. I had to explain that I was born and raised in India because my grandparents fled Tibet to escape the Chinese invasion. While I enjoyed telling others about my country and ethnicity, I always felt like an outsider, wishing at times to just blend in.

The reality of finally being among the people in a land I only knew from my grandparents' stories exceeded anything I could have ever imagined. It didn't even matter to me that it was

I was the link finally connecting the two sides of my family after 46 years, those who stayed behind and those who escaped.

winter in Tibet (not the most ideal time to visit); I found beauty in the vast landscape of the hills and mountains of my ancestors that may seem ordinary or unappealing to someone else.

It was the experience of meeting relatives for the first time that was the highlight of my trip. Before leaving for Tibet, I had imagined the possibly-awkward situations, but my family welcomed me with immense affection, never making me feel out of place. I was the link finally connecting the two sides of my family after 46 years, those who stayed behind and those who escaped.

My uncle had not seen his father (my grandfather) since 1959. It saddened me to know that my uncle could not see for himself how he walks and smiles in the same way as his father, until I tell him of their strong resemblance. This separation is a reality for many Tibetan families.

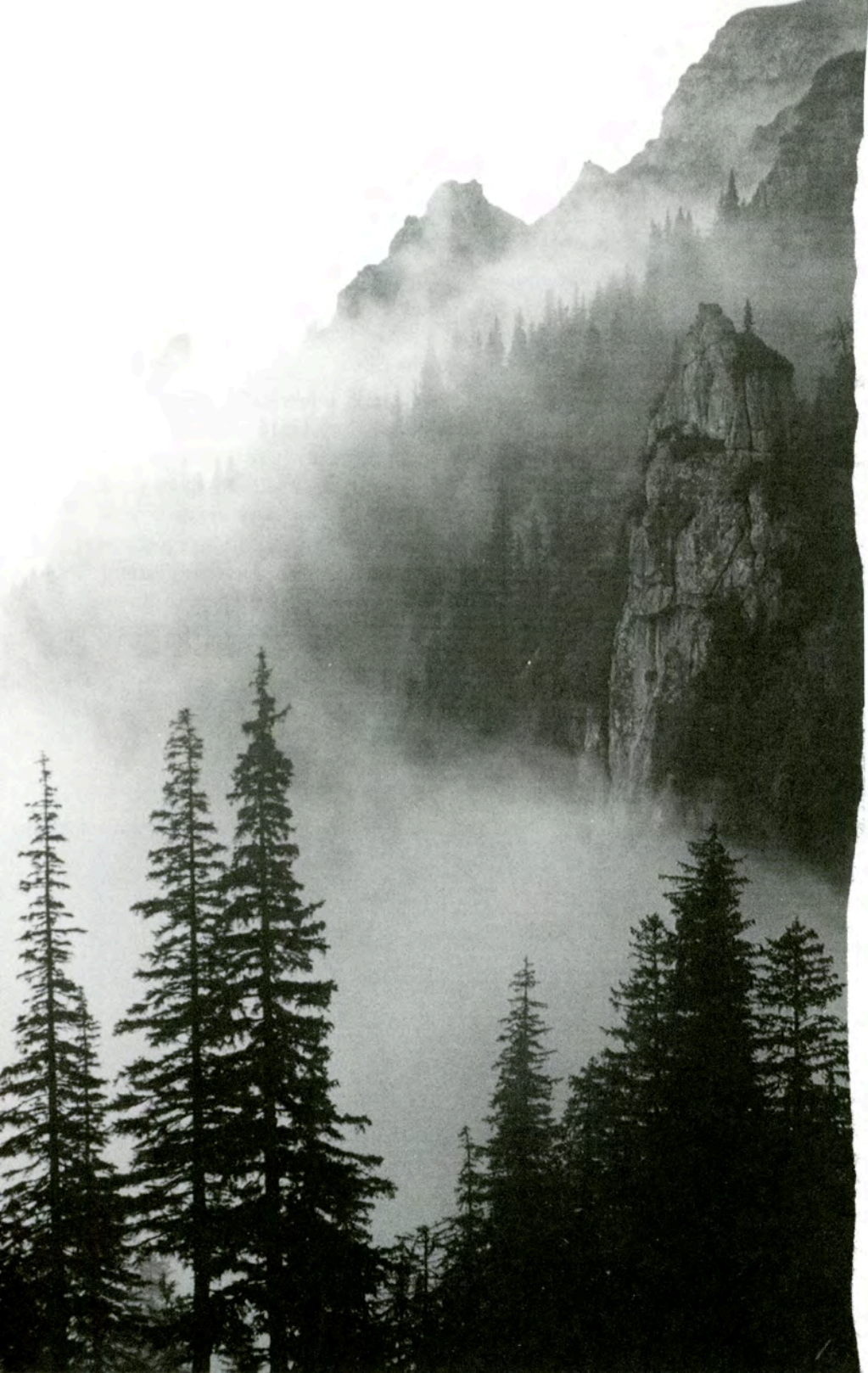
It is ironic that my *U.S.* passport is the only reason I am permitted to visit this place that defines me and connects me so strongly with the person I am today, that being American is the only reason I can be a Tibetan in Tibet.


I grew up speaking Tibetan and celebrating Tibetan customs and traditions, but this journey truly allowed me to understand those traditions in the context where they began. As a young Tibetan born in exile, I am lucky to have experienced such an incredible journey; others like me may never have a similar opportunity. My journey was an actualization of a country I could only imagine before. The experience left me grateful and inspired, yet humbled knowing that the dreams of many other Tibetans in exile of returning to their homeland remain unfulfilled.

—Tenzing Gyatotsang

Letters to God in a Mosque, India Otto Foerster







Crossings II

Song of Homesickness

Homesickness is a sickness with silent symptoms—missing, longing, feeling anxious and lonely. It is painful. Unfortunately, like cancer patients, only the sufferers know how painful it is. Other people may think they know but they can never really feel it.

My illness was very serious at first. I missed not just a family or a place, but a whole country—everything that I am comfortable with, the language that I speak, the culture that I know and love, my protection and community. How can I express my loneliness when I walk back to my room in the dark night, my loathing when I smell cheese and butter in every American dish, and my craving for the plain Vietnamese meals with rice? And what of my self-pity when I try to forget and ignore my own birthday? I know that I cried myself a Seneca Lake.

Geneva and Seneca Lake are now in fall. I see the yellow and brown leaves float down outside my window, and I think of Hanoi now at its best in autumn. There we sing, praising the beauty of Hanoi as the season turns.

I dream of you, somewhere far, far away. Hanoi is shining in the bright sun, shaking in the chilly fall wind. The serenade tonight, you alone, me alone. The sudden light sound of leaves falling outside the window. You alone, the room alone. In my strong craving, you ... slowly return to me.

The once noisy and polluted Hanoi comes closer and dearer. I think of my home, where my loved ones live, wondering what they are now doing. I wonder how my brother cooks his first

meals without me. They must be just eggs and vegetables. I wonder if my friends ride their motorcycles around the Sword Lake in the late afternoon. They may drop in on a shop to have ice cream or *che'*, the favorite drink of students. And my parents and neighbors who are living in my hometown...my imagination goes on and on until it passes everyone and returns me here to Seneca Lake. I feel both happiness and sadness lingering in my mind, like a strong aroma of coffee to the addict.

Hanoi in autumn, autumn in Hanoi. The yellow "old-rice" and the red-leafed trees standing together. The milky flower, in blossoming season, sends its fragrance through the winds. The green sticky rice sends its fragrance to the hands holding it, to the feet walking by. Hanoi in autumn, autumn in Hanoi. Missing one person to miss all people.

In my yearning, I realize that homesickness has a beauty and power. Then I sing my own song of homesickness.

Homesickness is a bitter melon. Some people never dare to try it, others give up after the first bite. But those who have the nerve become accustomed to bitter melon and find it scrumptiously sweet. Homesickness is like that – difficult and bitter at first, rewarding and sweet in the end.

Homesickness is the pain of a needle hidden inside my pocket. Normally, I do not see it or recognize its presence. Only when it hurts me, stabbing every now and then, do I realize that it is still there, hidden. It is a pain that comes suddenly, out of the blue, but that takes a while to go away. It is sharp, as sharp as the prick of a needle.

Homesickness is the aroma of the milky flower. It is an autumn flower that only blossoms at night and is renowned for its sweet scent. When I stand at a certain distance from it, the delicate fragrance surrounds me and makes me feel delight. But when I come too close, the scent is so strong that it makes me sick. Homesickness, from afar, gives me a heart to appreciate and enjoy the beauty of life. When it is too much, however, it is a sickness and I am the sufferer.


Homesickness makes a world for me: I become more sensitive to everything around me. I feel my world not only with the five senses but with my whole heart. The world I see is no more than the picture drawn by a painter – myself. I see the world the way I make it. Before, I drew it with my senses: what I smelled, tasted, saw, heard and touched. Now I draw with my soul and my heart and the world becomes more alive. Things that used to be common for me are now somehow new. I feel the coldness of fall colder, the chilliness of winds chillier, the darkness of nights darker. I admire the wild flower blossoming along Seneca Lake because I find it so bright and full of life. Before I was sick, I was indifferent to the world: I did not realize that I did not know the milky flower's look. Now I pay attention to everything I see. Whenever I walk in the early morning, I dreadfully listen to the sound of the crows, coldly feel how wet the grass is and freshly smell the morning air. The world is now a living thing for me to know and explore—it has a soul.

I love walking along Seneca Lake at noon when the sun is shining because the sun reminds me of my tropical country. Sometimes I just sit on the grass there, looking at the lake, realizing that it is so huge. It dawns on me that I am just a tiny creature in this vast world and so is my knowledge. My determination to learn then is the dying ember that suddenly flares up as a “wind of change” blows in. But just as suddenly, the fire of determination leaves and nothing is left but the feeble ash.

Homesickness is a furnace forging my will, making me stronger and more independent. It starts from the very small actions—wiping away the tears, trying to focus on a book, to forget, to take a deep breath, to transcend my shyness and to speak in class, or sticking an “I CAN DO IT” note on the wall right beside my desk—a solution for any conflict between YES and NO. So far so good. I am making an improvement, not fast but gradually.

Homesickness is a valuable gift given only to home-leavers. Its power and beauty are the perfect compensation for the “sickness” we experience. Perhaps it is one of a very few sicknesses that the patients themselves do not want to be cured of completely. Or at least, I never do. I want to sing the song of homesickness, and praise and feel its beauty, all my life.

—Linh Nguyen



Crossings III

Le Fabuleux Destin d'Aysegül Duru (January 22nd, 2005 Monte Carlo, Monaco)

Today was my birthday and it was a strange one. I felt a bit lonely, even though I was surrounded by students on the same voyage with me. I thought a lot, I observed a lot. Turning twenty-one was never big deal to me, like it is for American students. I've been following my heart wherever it takes me since, at seventeen, I left for Santa Fe, New Mexico, to be an exchange student. I celebrated my eighteenth birthday there. Eighteen is really the Turkish equivalent of twenty-one, in terms of significance. I remember people asking, *how does it feel to be eighteen?* And it felt no different than the day before, just like today doesn't feel different than yesterday either, other than the fact that I can legally gamble here in Monte Carlo now, or buy alcohol freely in the U.S. But for three years already I have fulfilled my porn magazine and cigarette wishes. Now what should I look forward to? We grow every day, so perhaps age, defined in years, is an illusion.

Much of my life between eighteen and twenty-one has been spent in the U.S. It's where (and when) I actually started to get to know myself and become more of an adult. These years, important for everyone, were more intense for me because I distanced myself from the places, people and culture I had previously defined myself with. I miss home now, I miss the *feeling* of home, but I'm no longer sure where exactly I belong. It's been a bit of a nomadic life, and my French telephone card proves my credentials, with its title: "*Nomad*". I miss my family, our house in Bodrum, the friends I grew up with, the familiar faces and places that were a part of my everyday life. That's why we have McDonald's everywhere, an island of the familiar; can there be a Turkey everywhere I go, too? Is that why meeting Turkish people excites me? I no longer know where home is; my life is split be-



Contemplating the Grand Canal, Venice, Italy
Adam Kohnstamm

tween two countries and two different groups of people. I no longer define myself through my past in Turkey solely, but my present life in the U.S. isn't enough, either.


I'm a special case, exacerbating the symptoms of my disease by coming to Aix-en-Provence, France to study. And in two months I will be living and working in Brussels. And then I'll go back to Turkey, and then go back to New York for the summer.

This is a self-inflicted disease, under the name of destiny; I didn't realize when I wrote my college application essays that my wish to become a world citizen would come true. I am solely responsible for this destiny, and I must admit that I secretly enjoy swimming in these international waters. I have even managed to find a few of my kind. There are six of us: from Pakistan, Ghana, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Canada and Turkey.

I will continue my journey as long as the only cost is the charge I pay for the overweight suitcase full of photographs I carry everywhere as my portable home, and the lie I tell when I say I have nothing to declare when really I carry hidden bricks of feta cheese and boxes of baklava to give as souvenirs to spread the Mediterranean taste.

All I can hope for is that once I anchor my boat somewhere, I have that special person with me who always makes me feel at home, and that I have aged as well as a Burgundy wine, with a rich bouquet of different languages, cities, friends, art and food.

—Aysegül Duru



Crossings IV

Prego

The trick to a dry walk to class is bringing your umbrella. If you have your umbrella the Italian gods will appreciate that they are inconveniencing you and they'll hold out on the rain. Stuffing an umbrella into my knock-off Prada bag has become another task of my getting-ready routine, along with putting a few coins in my front pocket, hiding my wallet under my books and wearing my keys around my wrist. Most of this is to appease Signora Concerto, my overprotective landlady.

As I leave the flat on this frigid January morning, I once again remember to position my bag tightly under my arm with the logo facing out so that I can walk while still holding the zipper tight. The gypsies have to work harder at robbing you if they can't get into your bag.

I've allotted myself thirty minutes to get to Scuola Leonardo da Vinci so that I can walk at a leisurely pace. Today I can walk past the back of the Pantheon, the part that shows a former pagan temple that many people ignore. Not only does this portion of the building represent the actual height and exterior structure of the monument, but by taking this path I can avoid the hundreds of tourists and street vendors that continually flood this piece of ancient Roman history.

As I walk along my preferred route, I'm unable to view the subtle side of the Pantheon because the Carabinieri are blocking off the roads. A couple with a camcorder is speaking in excited English to my right so I take the easy way out and ask them what's going on.

"Dick Cheney is here!" the woman explains with animation. "See all of the secret service men?"

Sure enough, a handful of well-dressed men stand before

me, with their walkie-talkies and Ray Ban sunglasses. "What's he here for?" I ask the Americans.

"It's a meeting on world poverty and hunger," the amateur movie maker replies.

Disgusted, I turn, now fully willing to walk past the front of the Pantheon. A yard to my left, a young, disheveled woman with a filthy child in her arms sits on the curb with a crumpled McDonald's cup at her feet. I stoop down and drop two Euros from my pocket into the mangled cup.

"*Grazie bella*," the woman mumbles softly.

"*Prego*," I reply back, lingering perhaps too long. I'd like to apologize for my fellow Americans ignoring her in their attempts to cure starvation, but the language barrier once again holds me back and I make my way to school, passing hundreds of tourists admiring the marble and gold of buildings common to this country of excess.

I take a shortcut through the alleyways leading to *Piazza Navona* in case Dick Cheney's entourage has made me late. As I walk, trapped between miniature high-rise apartment buildings, the window boxes and hanging laundry provide me with charming scenery and the sounds of Italian mothers greeting their school-aged children make a pleasant soundtrack for my journey.

"*Signorina!*" a little voice cries. "*Money per favore!*" I'm pulled from my serenity and look down to see a little girl, no more than seven years old, tugging at my red winter coat. It still surprises me when these scantily dressed children come out of nowhere with no companions and certainly no adults. The tugging becomes more and more forceful while I stand in the street, debating whether or not I should give this child money. In hopes of exposing the truth I search the alleyway for the manipulative parent watching on, but no such luck.

"*Basta!*" I yell at the girl, and give her a little shove. I have learned that the parents of these children train them in such a

flawless way, so as she waits expectantly, I reach into my pocket, sure to still keep one hand on my bag. One wrong move and I'm without money, credit card and my umbrella.

I drop one Euro into her dirty palm and wait for the expected response.

"No," the gypsy child says to me with an annoyed look. "Two money," she demands of me in her obscure English.

I look down into her brainwashed eyes and in a moment of sadness consider giving more. But the money isn't for her anyway, and I can't give her neglectful parents the satisfaction. "No," I tell her with a sigh. "*Dice grazie.*" I tell her to thank me without real expectation of hearing the word.

"M-th-rf-ck-r," she shoots back, not missing a beat, and runs off to her next victim. There's no time to feel hurt or sorry for myself; I am late.

I head directly to school without stopping to admire Bernini's fountains or to window shop. *Via Vittorio Emanuele* is flooded with Italians ready to take their much needed siesta time. Men shove by, smoking cigarettes, and women dressed completely in black and wearing ridiculous stilettos fly by me while I concentrate on not tripping over the cobblestones. As I stare at the ground before me, I notice an elderly man on his knees in the middle of the sidewalk, hunched over a small basket full of prayer cards and rosaries. People pass by, obviously avoiding him, as they step up to the entrance of the *Chiesa di Santa Maria*. His hands are formed in prayer, and as he rocks slowly a businesswoman on a mission kicks over his small collection basket. Without a thought I am on my knees now, helping this man collect his possessions.

The man avoids my gaze, ashamed of his position in this high-culture Italian world. I reach into my pocket and pull out my last two Euros. As I drop my money into his basket, his hands once again form for prayer and the word "*grazie*" slowly escapes his lips. I pause, realizing this is the center of Catholicism, and that perhaps I should pray with him, but instead, I get up, brush my knees off and head to school.

As I enter the ancient building, I hear chattering American voices coming down the stairs – music to my ears after my lengthy walk through this busy Italian world. I am quickly greeted by my classmates, all smiles and good news.

“Stefania cancelled class for today,” Lisa quickly tells me.
“Wanna come get a *café latte*?”

I immediately think of the fact that I gave away my budgeted five Euros for the day but I decide to go anyway. “Sure.”

Back on the street on our way to *Café Fresco* a raindrop hits my nose. Then another, and another. Almost instantly the sky opens up and my group sprints towards the *Café*’s entrance. “*Grazie*,” I mumble to myself as I open my bag and pull out my umbrella.

—Elizabeth Figura

Girl at Lake Titicaca, Peru Caroline McAuliffe

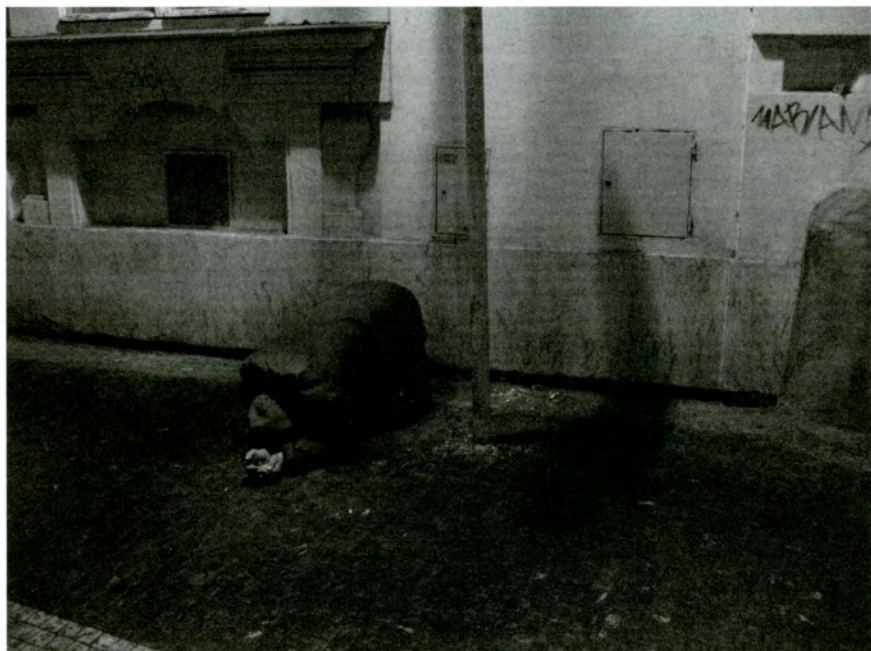


Verse and Vision IV


Trolley Street

neck bent,
back hunched,
one arch in a sea of columns.
tattered hat,
pile of rags,
one timidly outstretched arm.
holding a coin,
supported on a cane,
one single person saw your pain?
seeing the hand,
hesitation, at first,
one brief moment of empathy.
walking on,
forgetting, but no -
one image for eternity.

—Elizabeth Figura



On a Street in Prague Paul Fathallah



From My Journal

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

So this is it - my last entry. I don't know what to feel, think or say, just that this has been an incredible journey. Before I wrap up this experience, I just have to mention my day, which has been great. I went to the center to do some work and left at 5:00 to go shopping with the girls. I ended up getting these sandals that I've been wanting! We walked and shopped until 7:00. I am obsessed with the fashion here. It is crazy to see the Spaniards always mobbing the stores; they just never stop! Once I got home, I showered and hung out with my roommate and 10-year-old host sister, Ana. We talked for a while and eventually made it into the living room to dance a Sevillana together. I was awful, but it was so much fun. Dinner was ready by 10:00. We had omelettes and some of those delicious chicken and cheese toasted sandwiches I love!

Well, my time here is pretty much over. I've already received the classes I will be taking in the spring, as well as my living situation in Tridelt. I am living in the same room with the same roommate, as if nothing had ever happened. It is incredible to see where I am now, at this point in my life. I have always appreciated all that I have, especially now. I am Colombian and have found love from a country so beautiful in culture...just like the Colombian culture I was raised in. All I wanted in high school was to find a college that offered a program like this, where I could grow and learn to respect my background. Here I am, reflecting on an experience that I've been so thirsty for. I don't regret a thing, or wish for anything more. From the beginning, I knew that I needed to experience all that is possible, and in my opinion... I have. I have a new family here in Spain, my Spanish

has improved, and I have found confidence in myself and in being Spanish. These three months have been short, yet complete.

I have a week left and all I can do is take it one day at a time. Finals are a bit overwhelming, but who said we couldn't go out for tapas and wine or go to a Spanish club! As for going home, I am not ready. I'm too comfortable and happy to change my lifestyle again. I do miss and love my family, so I guess that's the only thing that I am happy to go home to. So here I am, on the sunroof, tanning in the sun, waiting for lunch. It's beautiful. From here I can see the Cathedral, *Torre del Oro*, the amazing church right next to us and the lights overlooking the bridge I walk on every day.

All in all, I've followed my desire for happiness and find myself in a culture that is similar to what I've been raised in. I've been enriched in this beautiful culture, traveled to 14 cities, met up with a cousin I haven't seen in eight years and stood in the Mediterranean Sea to watch the sunrise. I'm at a point in my life that I've always wanted to be. I've always appreciated my family and my culture...but now I'm grateful that I can go home and continue being Spanish. I just can't wait for the day when I return.

It has been a year since I lived in Seville, and as I reach for the dusty journal sitting on the shelf, I think back on my experience. After reading each page with a smile, especially my last entry, I take a moment. Today, I understand what Spain means to me: the completion of my identity. Raised in a Spanish culture, my Colombian family always reminded me of its beautiful values, customs and even nagged me to never lose the language. Unfortunately, the more I was surrounded by my English-speaking classmates year after year, I lost my fluency, though I suspected it was hiding within me. Growing up, I would act, speak and look like an American outside of the home, yet when I was with the family, I was immersed in my culture. Sadly, it came to the point that my parents would speak to me in Spanish, and I would respond in English.

Day in and day out, I would live two lives, trying to satisfy both, yet I felt the only way for me to succeed in this country was by following society's expectations. By the time I got to college I was completely separated from my culture. I believed that I let myself down by letting something I loved and cherished slip away. Then I learned about the Spain term abroad. That was what I needed—a chance to connect with a culture so similar to that which I had lost touch with, and not feel any pressure from anyone. I applied without hesitation and was accepted.

After three months of living with an incredible family in Seville, Spain, and communicating with the locals, I found myself in the most comfortable position I have ever been in. I enjoyed interacting with people, connecting with my host family, eating delicious food and regaining my Spanish skills. More importantly, what I learned in Spain - and what to this day I have kept with me - is to take life slowly and appreciate what I have. Spaniards are not like Americans. Spaniards relax, take naps every day, spend time with their families, take regular walks and sit down for wine before a late dinner. Money is not their motivation, rather it is their love for their families and friends. Unlike the American model, Spaniards make money to live, not live to make money.

Since then, back in this chaotic country, I have learned to slow down, and importantly, to be grateful for a family that loves me and makes me want to live each day appreciating all that I have. I am an American on the outside, yet on the inside, I am Colombian. The culture I was raised in, and the country that I lived in for three months, is what I connect to and refer to when I think of myself as an individual. Today, I am a strong person, with the drive to succeed, yet I balance myself out with love and appreciation for my family, friends and everything else that has gotten me to this point in life.

—Andrea Posada







Snapshot



Above: Poverty and Wealth in São Paulo, Brazil
Kelvin Martinez

Facing: Schoolboy in Barbados
Noelle Beach

the
Aleph
a journal of global perspectives

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The Editors would like to thank the Provost's Office at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the Office of Academic Affairs at Union College. Our appreciation and admiration goes out to those students who contributed to this volume, sharing their worldviews so eloquently in the form of poetry, prose, photography and art.

To submit your work for the next issue of *The Aleph*, please contact the Editors at the address below.

The Aleph is set in Gentium, designed by Victor Gaultney in 2002 and adopted by SIL International, an NGO working to document and preserve thousands of dying ethnic languages. Many of these languages are now written in Latin script, adapted with diacritics and special letters. Unfortunately, computers offer little support for these extended alphabets and therefore millions of people are shut out of the publishing community. Gentium is an attempt to meet this challenge. The name is Latin for *belonging to the nations*.

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Statue of Lenin, Vietnam
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