



the



7 Aleph

a journal of global perspectives





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Dan Observes the Sunrise Over
Heron Island Jordan Siletti

the
Aleph

a journal of global perspectives

Volume VII, 2008

About 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 author 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.” The story still resonates today, particularly in regard to the experiences of students who have crossed cultural borders. *The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives* 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 students as they navigate different cultures. Through their words and images and the juxtapositions formed between them in the journal, we learn about the people and the places they encounter, we see how they change along the way, and we are challenged to join them in trying to comprehend “all the places of the world, seen from every angle.”

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Verse and Vision I

9144 meters
deep into evening
Cartesian airplanes

Even if we learned to
fly,
I doubt
anyone
would evolve so far as to
grow wings—
at least not in my lifetime.

Tonight
everything's double-decker
and gleaming
like marble,
white as a feather—
I'm supposed to be jetted
over the ocean
tonight,
supposed to be
excited
for
Your New Home number 3,
but I'm thinking about
Cartesian Planes.

It must be nice
to have
lines
that expand
forever.

Someone should design a
Cartesian airplane
with an endless
gleaming
fuselage
and wings that embrace the globe.

9,144 meters high
deep into evening
forced-air cold
and monitor-bright
I woke up thinking
for a moment
of the
outdoors,
thinking of light spilling
out the windows
aching for another
summer night
of storytelling and folk songs
except here,
my body moves but my mind doesn't.

Even if Descartes
knew how to fly,
he never discovered
how to grow wings.

It's deceptively
simple,
the way we
complicate things.

—Ben Michelak



Afternoon at the Spanish Steps, Rome Amanda Fritz
Irrigation Fields of the Incas in Moray, Peru Courtney Apple



Moments I

Accounting

So many graves. I look out and count one section: 25 by 30. 750 dead. This is approximately one-quarter of the area we are looking around in. At the far end of the area, there is a very primitive construction job under way. Whatever it is, or was, crooked poles are holding up the hut's roof and foundation. Workers, male and female, are hammering and working on pieces of wood on the side. Between the thirty-year-old graves and the work on the hut, I see an appropriate balance of creation and destruction, development and remembrance.

But then we go to the next area. Twice as many graves, in stretching rows, face two contrasting prayer areas. One is more traditional: pastel colors and tile decorations, with a site for burning incense (although there is also a small pile of rocks on each

I've been so spiritually affected by all these lives lost, yet I don't understand why these people were killed.

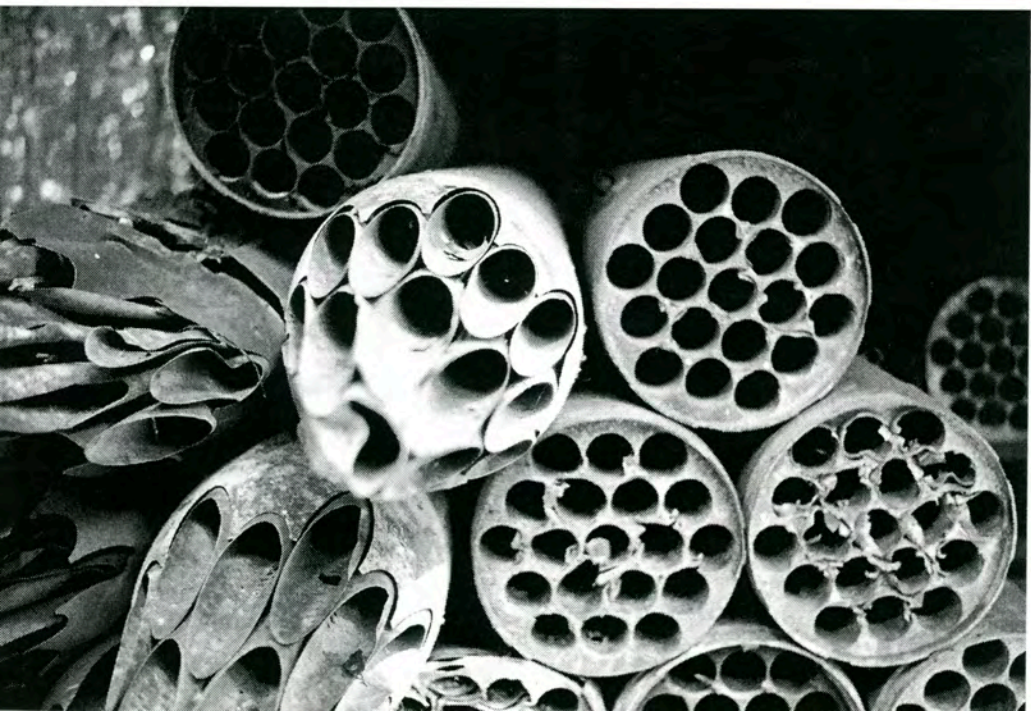
tombstone for the same purpose). The other is strikingly modern: a red, warped hood bearing a golden star that covers relics from the war and photos. Past the hood there are more graves.

I ask Professor Jewell if the first title of each tombstone, *Lei si*, means "soldier" or marks some sort of rank. "These are all non-combatants," he replies. "These are all people who were working on the trail or were carrying supplies." Embarrassment strikes me awkwardly; I've been so spiritually affected by all these lives lost, yet I don't understand why these people were killed.

These men and women, ages 15-45, are dead. Each of these deaths devastated a family, a village, a nation, a lover, a child, a church, a mother. I've seen dead people lined up in ditches, shot



Watching Protest Fires in Copenhagen, Denmark James Wilby
Empty American Rocket Pods, Cu Chi, Vietnam Bryan Harris



point blank in the head, ripped apart from an explosion, but only in photo exhibits. I've seen and heard numbers, such as three million, or 504, and I compare it to 2,497, or one. Now, I look at one grave—and the next—and the row they're a part of—and the twelve rows in the section—and the other half of the area—and then I walk to the next section, where there are hundreds more. I realize that comparison is the gateway to true morbidity.

The rest of the group is gathering by a granite tower. They're all done with it, slacking back into their relationships with each other, no longer alone with the graves. But I'm not finished. I pass through the red hood and see the largest section of graves yet.

I try to use the red hood as a comparison point as I shoot footage on my video camera, thinking that I would review it later to get a sense of just how big this cemetery is. But maybe there's no point in comparing one section of graves to another. They're all dead, and it's a painfully massive number of graves, no matter how close they are to each other. Viewers might not realize I'm in the same place if they don't see a recognizable figure, but death should be recognizable enough to get the point.

I sit down for a second to take a break from all this. Professor Jewell will later tell me that what we saw today was 20% of Truong Son National Cemetery.

—Jonah Levy





Moments II

Blogging DK

Sunday, September 23, 2007

The day after a glorious night of homemade pizza and *Pride and Prejudice*, the new movie version, there was a pancake feast. My host dad had been asking me to make some “true American food.” So, Louisa, Katie and I thought pancakes, apples, maple syrup and bacon would do the trick.

However, it’s one thing to make a breakfast smörgåsbord in the US and another to make it in Denmark. First—measurements. The night before, Jan handed me a piece of paper with a pancake recipe he found on the Internet. It looked great, until the next morning, when we realized we had to convert from cups to grams. Not a problem; we just used the incredible power of the Internet and were saved. We only hit a few other snags—the lack of Pam cooking spray, using an oven in Danish, and searching for extra sugar in another person’s kitchen. Thank goodness for the Vermont Grade A maple syrup I gave to them as a gift! Maple syrup can make or break a delicious brunch.

Jan was pleased with the outcome. He was amazed by the size of the pancakes and the addition of baking powder to the recipe. It makes sense—he usually makes crepes the size of the frying pan that don’t need to rise, so there’s no need for baking powder. I think we were pretty successful.

Sunday, December 2, 2007

Christmas is here in Denmark! Actually, it’s been here since early November. The Danes are all about Christmas cheer. Seriously. There is a radio station called *100% Jul* that plays Christmas music around the clock. Yesterday, I was lucky enough to catch Celine Dion’s version of “O Holy Night.” Tivoli, the amusement park, is entirely lit up. It must have cost them a couple million to prepare for the Christmas season. Christmas markets and stands with hot coals line the streets of Nyhavn and other areas. Beautiful.

The first Christmas party of the season was on December 1st. My host family and I made Christmas decorations with glitter, pine cones, bells and berries.

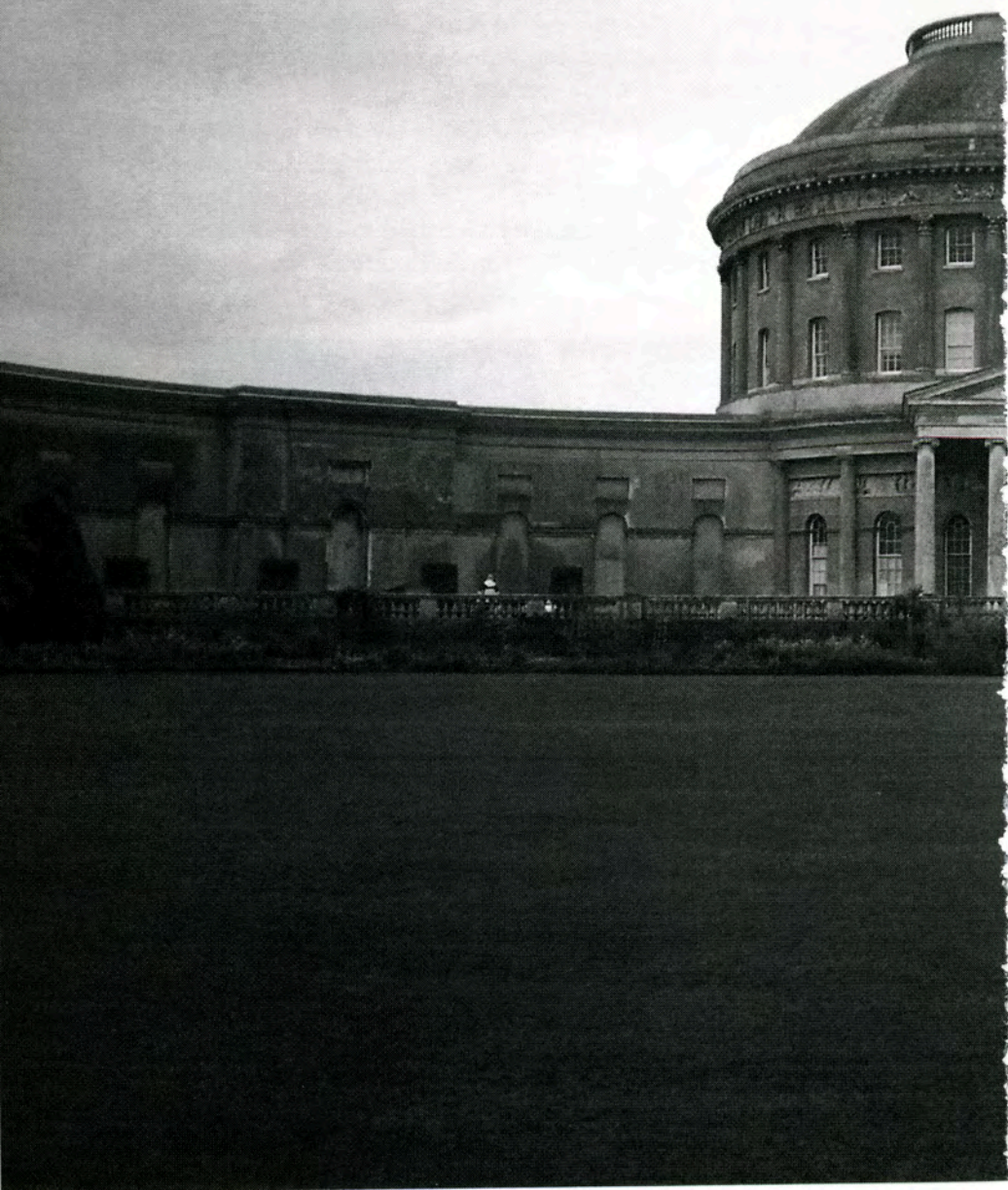
The other night I made homemade *aebleskiver* (apple slices)—pancake-like balls, served with jam, powdered sugar and *glogg* (spiced, warm, red wine.) *Glogg* is pronounced “glug”. Appropriate, no? I guess most Danes buy the frozen kind of *aebleskiver*, but I wanted to cook an authentic Danish dish. I’m planning on buying a pan to bring home so I can bring Danish homestyle cooking to the States. Be prepared to try them out if you stop by the Rosen residence!

I’m off to Christmas party #2 today at my host grandmother’s house. Apparently, she’s been making *aebleskiver* for days in preparation for the masses. Unfortunately, I have to skip out early to attend a football match between the two biggest rivals in Copenhagen. Think Red Sox vs. Yankees.

—Lela Rosen



Making Aebleskiver in Denmark Lela Rosen





Moments III

The Crane, Galway

Around a mysterious corner of what I would refer to as the darker part of Galway City, there is an authentic Irish pub called The Crane. On a nightly basis, this enclosure of Irish excellence explodes with the lilt of Irish music and laughter. Rhythm and pitch are true entities of this sanctuary. Native Irish men and women are drawn to The Crane to share their much-appreciated talents. Every experience I was lucky enough to have at this pub created a special memory. However, one memory surpasses the rest: my magical Irish moment.

I began my standard Tuesday night with a casual stroll down the enclosed cobblestone Shop Street, ready for wherever the night might take me. I began by filling my pint with Guinness and taking a rest to watch the citizens of Galway perform their weekly Irish step-dancing session. Men and women partnered up to jointly create a fast paced, leg-kicking, hand-clapping, body-swirling, mesmerizing dance that can only be truly appreciated among the Irish. Every time I expected legs to entangle and heads to bonk, I was presented with a surprisingly simple flow that left the audience in awe. Even at this point in the night the magic was yet to come.

After parting with the dance that molds every American girl into an inspired dancer, I was ready to go to The Crane for some traditional music. I crept around the stone buildings, making my way by listening to the sweet sounds of the accordion, fiddle, flute and *bodhran* (hand-held drum) that filled the street. Trying to keep up with my friends at the rapid pace of anticipation, I entered the pub. Making our way up the steps towards total bliss, we managed to find a tiny table for the three of us. After filling our pints with Guinness, and watching the color transform from tan to a deep black as the creamy stout settled, we absorbed the sounds surrounding us. Astounded by the wide variety of instruments being played at once, I watched the band of five as if trying to lock the memory into my mind

forever. Unfortunately, after a short time, the band decided to take a break.

The pub instantly filled with belly-aching Irish laughter and friendly discussion. I turned to my friends for a giddy recap of the musicians' performance. To my welcome surprise, an exquisite song unexpectedly resumed. However, as I looked to the stage, it remained empty of performers. The music was coming from an elderly male customer sitting on a pub stool. Immediately, the entire pub fell into total silence. The only sound was the perfect voice of this brave gentleman. He sang through the silence in a beautiful Irish voice that sent me into a trance. This was it! Finally, the Irish moment I had been waiting for. I was beginning to believe that it was a fabricated myth that the Irish sing impulsively in pubs. But no, it was true, and I was there to witness it. For the entire length of the song I felt as if I were floating above the crowd, experiencing my surreal Irish fantasy. What began as a typically grand Tuesday night ended somewhere in the dreamland of cloud nine. This moment filled my heart with Irish gladness that will surely stay with me forever.

—Heidi Bamatter

Bassist at Minh's Jazz Club in Hanoi, Vietnam Bryan Harris





SLOW

**PENGUINS
CROSSING**





**Elderly
people**



1. Tourist Season in Barcelona, Spain
Madalyn Lucier
2. Yankees Go Home, Prague, Czech
Republic Leah Dittrick
3. Attention, France Madalyn Lucier
4. Backroads Behind Prague Castle, Czech
Republic Leah Dittrick



· STOP PRASATUM V POLICEJNICH UNIFORMACH!
· YANKES & RADAR GO HOME!⁴

AC

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3

Au delà de cette limite, vous vous engagez,
à vos risques et périls,
sur un espace accidenté qui
présente de réelles difficultés de progression.

Beyond this point, you proceed,
at your own risk,
over uneven land where
your progress will prove extremely difficult.

Diaes tre mont dreist.



Thanksgiving in Morocco Amber Drumm
Adrian's Backflip, Heron Island, Australia Amanda Bucci



Moments IV

My First Real Encounter with Sheep (an excerpt from my service learning journal)

To date, I have completed twelve hours for CROI, the Heart Association for the West of Ireland, my service organization. I already feel right at home. CROI is the Gaelic word for heart, and the organization raises money for patients with heart disease and for the hospitals that treat them. At first it seemed strange to me that a charity organization is responsible for providing defibrillators to ambulances (don't those come standard...?), but I suppose our medical system is far from perfect as well, and nobody disagrees that these services must be provided so—I'll get to it, then. I'm not a legislator, I'm a college student. I don't write laws; it's my job to ask for money. I think I'm overqualified for this job.

At any rate, my first serious project was a full eight-hour work day. I was picked up at 8 a.m. and driven to Connemara, a beautiful region just north of Galway. I can't even begin to explain to you how beautiful the landscape is there. It is literally God's country. This holy landscape was to be the backdrop of CROI's Amble for Charity, a nine-mile trek that you could either walk or run.

My assignment, as a CROI volunteer and not a walker (even though we walked the whole feckin' thing), was to stand at the top of the mountain trail where I could see down both sides of the mountain and watch the amblers as they climbed up and then down the mountain, just in case they should trip and injure themselves. I had a walkie-talkie so I could radio the civil guards that were on duty on each side of the mountain base. Unfortunately, I couldn't really stand at any spot to see the complete trail, so hikers were out of sight coming up the mountain, and my walkie-talkie didn't really work. But nobody knew that until we

were at the top of the mountain, so I suppose there was nothing to do except pray that nothing happened. I told my supervisor about this later, and he said that's how it works in Ireland, which makes me a little concerned. My partner in crime, I mean duty, was my supervisor's father, also a volunteer. He had one of the thickest Irish accents I've ever heard, and to be quite honest, he seemed just a little bit short of senile. We donned very official neon yellow volunteer vests, rain jackets, and backpacks containing sandwiches, apples, water bottles and an umbrella.

We started ahead of the charitable amblers to take our positions in a timely fashion. The first three miles of the nine-

At first I thought I had white toothpaste spots on my glasses, but after cleaning them three times I realized the white dots were sheep...

mile trek were a narrow, barely paved road that we travelled in the back of an ambulance that I noticed did *not* have a defibrillator. To our left were very tall mountain peaks with small valleys between them. They were just grooves carved by the glaciers, but they were beautiful. At first I thought I had white toothpaste spots on my glasses, but after cleaning them three times I realized the white dots were sheep, confined to such enormous pieces of mountainside that fences seemed to go nowhere and serve no real purpose. Eventually, the road led to a wrought-iron gate in the middle of one such fence, facing the mountains. I had a very surreal experience at this gate. As we approached it, Mr. Healy Sr. opened it with a slow *creeaaakkk*. Silence. I walked through the gate onto a barely discernable trail, followed by the old man and preceded by four sheep, already on the trail, that seemed completely unsurprised that we were intruding, but completely annoyed anyway. The gate *creeaaakkked* behind us, and there I was on the trail following some sheep with an old man.

The next three miles went up, up, up into the countryside, and eventually we reached the crest of the mountain. It was beautiful. I was given the CROI camera, so I took pictures of the old man and the sheep like a real tourist, and he even managed to capture me in a picture as well. Next, we sat at the top of the

mountain, ate sandwiches and apples, and talked about sheep and medical care and pretty mountains and American tourists and his children and my sister. Well, I talked about all of those things, and I guess he was participating, although I'm not sure what he said most of the time. He laughed at me a lot, so it's quite possible he didn't understand much of what I was saying, either.

When the amblers showed up, I took pictures of them. I was given thumbs up and smiles, as well as bitter comments like: "The feckin' paparazzi are everywhere," but I know they were secretly glad I was making them famous.

All in all, the trek was a great success. The charity amblers raised 10,000 euro for CROI, which was close to its goal. At the reception that followed the walk, I shared with the CROI staff my third attempt at American brownies baked in an Irish oven. This batch resembled chocolate meatloaf. They think I'm a silly American, but I know they're glad for the help. In this way, I have seen no real difference in Irish and American charities, except maybe that in Ireland it's not uncommon to break for an occasional cup of tea. They are just as eager to have young people help them do the important (but tedious and time consuming) jobs as American service organizations.

All in all, I'm enjoying my time at CROI. I know that stuffing envelopes, stamping invitations, and taking pictures are not very meaningful tasks in themselves, but I am fortunate in that my supervisors are openly grateful for my help. I feel that I have benefited just as much: I am absorbing culture, meeting new people, getting tips on baking, helping (indirectly) to promote healthy hearts, seeing beautiful Irish countryside, and most importantly, there is the occasional free pint or biscuit to look forward to. Cheers!

—Meaghan McCarthy

Moments V

Kombi Ride

My last journey into Cape Town begins with anxiety. Since the University of the Western Cape is on a main road, all I have to do to get on a *kombi* is venture to the campus limits. As the cars whiz by, every minute or so an oncoming *kombi* targets potential customers and screeches to a halt as the *gauchi* (male fare-collector) hollers “Beeeyellville?” As I stand on the sidewalk with my friends, we make some sort of movement that informs the *gauchi* that we do, in fact, want to go to “Beeeyellville.” During these three seconds of reluctant agreement, I stand hesitantly, looking at the overpacked *kombi*, wondering how I will fit in that metal box of confinement with all of my friends. One way or another, we squeeze in. I swear, the *gauchis* took lessons from sardines, the way they convince passengers to manipulate their bodies to double the maximum capacity of the vehicle.

The first to cram into the vehicle (because I’m the smallest of my friends), I duck into the *kombi* and make my way to the last of the five rows where I meet the unpleasant smells of urine, horse manure and exhaust. In addition to the stench, there are three other passengers occupying my row who are just as happy to accommodate me as I was to settle into this mode of death-by-asphyxiation next to them. My friends pile in after me, sitting on each others’ laps. They are barely settled in before the driver goads the transmission into first gear, triggering the *gauchi* to finally slam the thin metal door. As second and then third gear are accepted by the finicky transmission, and we merge off of



the breakdown lane into traffic, I take a deep breath of relief. Though my mind is eased because we somehow all fit into the *kombi* and are alive to tell the story of the past ten seconds, my nose is disgusted as the exhaust starts to stream through the loose hatch door in the back.

The driver continually slams on the brakes and pulls over to the left side of the road to pick up more passengers. I've been in this country for four and a half months, and have taken the *kombis* on multiple occasions. Each time I decide that the *gauchi* couldn't possibly fit another soul on, and like all those other times, I am proven wrong— three more people are added to the mix. We continue on and stop to drop someone off. The sliding door has complained the entire ride and has probably gotten progressively worse since the 90s. It finally refuses to take any more slack. It will not open. The passengers fall into a further state of unhappiness; they all know what this means. The woman to my left opens a window that is a little bigger than the size of a notebook. The driver points to the passenger who needs to exit and motions for him to leave via the window. With a few grunts from the locals and stifled giggles from my friends and me, the wiry fellow maneuvers his way through the window like a pro; his pleather jacket doesn't even get ripped. Something tells me it isn't his first time.

I size up the remaining twelve passengers to see if they can escape the *kombi* in a similar fashion. My friends and I could fit through the small opening. I am not going to be trapped on this vehicle for eternity. However, there is one extremely large man who, let's face it, is not going to fit through that window. Curious to see how this will work out, I sit back and forget about how light-headed the exhaust fumes are making me. The driver continues to urge his rickety *kombi* along its route of doom, and at the large man's stop, the driver makes some accommodation. We are forced to further invade each other's personal space in

A Kombi Stops in Belleville, Cape Town, South Africa Marisa Athas



order to allow this man to squeeze his way to the front, climb over the seats, and jump out of the vehicle with a sigh of relief. As we continue on our journey, the disgruntled but unfazed South Africans quickly adopt this new method of exiting. In the next few kilometers, each passenger leaves, one by one, until only my friends and I remain. And, just when I think I can't take another exhaust-filled breath, our destination comes into view. I eagerly climb over the seats in order to conclude the eventful but unpleasant experience. Sadly, this is my last time being entertained by the public transportation system of Cape Town.

Though I certainly would never want my daily mode of transportation to be the *kombis*, they do provide an interesting experience. I'm not sure if I would go as far to say that I will miss them, but I will definitely remember the experiences I've had on them. I am, however, excited to come home and drive my own car.

Every time I smell exhaust, I'll always be reminded of my adventures on the *kombis* in Cape Town. And when I travel to Maine next week to return to my beloved ocean, I'm sure it will be surprising to see an eternity of blue that isn't being hugged by mountains. It will be quite bizarre to be without the same group of friends I've had within fifteen meters at all times for the past four months.

All in all, I've learned an incredible amount since I've been in Cape Town. Though I'm aware of many things I've learned, such as what privileged lifestyles we all lead back in America, I know there are a thousand things yet to unravel in my upcoming days of adjustment in New England. I won't say that I've loved every minute of my experience in Cape Town, because I'm human and there have been times when I've wanted the comfort of my friends from home and HWS, or to curl up for *Grey's Anatomy* on the couch with my mom. There are times when I've felt fed up with this place and have wanted to leave. But that is part of the experience of going abroad, and I embraced it. I love how much I've learned here, and South Africa will always have a special place in my heart.

—Marisa Athas

Moments VI

Conquering the Pelle

Had I not been a wreck with the flu when I arrived in Florence, I would have noticed the skin. In Italian, *pelle* means skin. It can also mean leather or hide. After I awoke from my medicine-induced stupor, I realized that skin was being prostituted throughout the city. The street where our hotel was located was lined on both sides with booths selling men's and women's jackets, purses, wallets, key chains, skirts, gloves and briefcases. Italians with an array of skin colors called, "My friend!" and held up an impressive number of jackets in the few seconds I passed by. Peddling furiously, like Lance Armstrong in the *Tour de France*, these vendors would do anything to secure a sale. As I explored, I discovered that this chain of leather vendors wove and branched out so much that I couldn't have been more lost if I were in a corridor of mirrors in a fun house.

I was convinced that there was no end to the leather market, that it just circled back on itself again and again, confusing more people than just me. But when I did finally find a spot to break out (they line both sides of the streets, remember), I was even more intimidated. Designers like Gucci and Prada dominated the streets, displaying their leather goods almost as much as their clothing. Of course, there were cafés and *gelaterias* as well. I almost expected to find some type of leather on the menus there. It was clear that leather dominated commercial sales in Florence.

My boyfriend Dan and I decided to get lost in the maze of vendors on the second day of our stay. Our mission: to find a purse for his mother. We browsed and haggled, but nothing caught our eye. An eager salesman stopped us just a few vendors down the street from our hotel. "My friend," he said, as he flashed a brown leather jacket at Dan. The bait was successful. We followed the man into the store behind the booth and found ourselves in a room of leather. I wasn't sure exactly what was holding up the

roof, the walls or the leather jackets that covered them like tacky wallpaper. Dan had no intention of buying a jacket, but he tried on a few anyway.

At one point, I asked one of the salesmen why he wasn't wearing a leather jacket. I said he wasn't a very good advertisement. He laughed as if he actually thought my joke was funny and told me he only wears his jacket on special occasions, for example at night when he goes out. Then he proceeded to take a lighter out of his pocket and hold the flame to the arm of the jacket. Dan joked that he didn't want him to burn the jacket because he might buy it. Again, the salesman laughed like we were a regular comedy act.

When it came time to make the sale, though, we weren't having it. The jackets weren't that nice. The 150-euro discount wasn't an incentive, but a dead giveaway that the jacket wasn't even worth the final 100-euro price. Dan cleverly declared that he had to go back to his hotel room to get his money, hoping we could escape. But before we knew it, the jacket was in a plastic bag and the salesman was telling us he would go with us to the hotel. Everything funny was over now. We started to leave as Dan told the man not to follow us. But he did, saying that we wasted half an hour of his time and that we now owed him 100 euro for it. We left the store as the man cursed us out the door. Later that day we passed the same vendor about three times, and each time the man said in rough English, "You are not my friend. You are my enemy!"

Leather, apparently, is quite a big deal. It's a big enough deal to make everyone your friend when your wallet is open and make you an enemy to everyone when it's not. At many Italian restaurants, to refuse or to be unsatisfied with the meal is an insult. Things seem to work similarly in the leather business. Leather has been an industry in Tuscany's capital since the Middle Ages when wool, silk, gold and leather were the most popular products. Today, the city of 400,000 people centers its economy on tourism, wine, finance and fashion (including leather). Salvatore Ferragamo has its headquarter here, and many other luxury designer stores reside along Florence's streets. It's even home to a leather school, *Scuola del Cuoio*, established just after WWII. Tourists walk the streets wearing their freshly-purchased leather.

Italians see you without some kind of leather and try to convince you that you need to buy it because it's fireproof, waterproof, silk-lined, fashionable and a really great deal.

Later that same day, our group of students was on its way to a museum. Our professor, a veritable professional shopper in her free time, took us to a leather glove shop called Madova. She and a few students went inside while everyone else stood on the sidewalk and waited. I'll admit I was a little hesitant, afraid that I would disappoint people if I didn't make a purchase. It would have been too much pressure. And, if I had to, I could convince myself that my hands would be just as warm shoved into my pockets as they would be in fancy leather gloves. But as I surveyed the beautiful gloves in the window, I decided to give it a try.

Instead of being pushed, I was encouraged to make the best decision. As the saleswoman slid the first glove onto my hand, I knew I was in the right place to buy leather. The cashmere lining felt amazing on my skin. The leather had just the right amount of sheen. I could choose from the traditional blacks and browns or the array of colors as vibrant as a box of Crayolas. There were cashmere and silk linings, piping, weaving, buttons and stitching. Finally, I chose a deep purple pair with dark orange and fuchsia. The detail was classic. The fit was excellent. The leather had won me over. I purchased the pair, developed an addiction, and went back for more the next morning before we left. I bought a black pair with intricate braiding detail for my mother and another fuchsia pair with a gold button and piping for myself.

It took some looking, a little getting lost, a bad experience, and the guidance of a shopping goddess to find leather worth buying. Florence might be at the risk of developing a bad reputation for leather sales if all the street vendors are like the one Dan and I encountered. However, Florence really knows good leather. And stores like Madova know the key to selling leather. It's not the haggling, the variety, the faux friendliness, or the dramatic price reductions. In fact, it's quite simple: if the leather's good enough, the sale will follow suit.

—Danielle Ryan

Verse and Vision II

Cape Town

The time blooms outwards, still. Slipping slowly into my breakfast one morning is the pickpocket's hand grazing my hip. At mile fifteen on the parkway is the twitch of my horse's mane as we ride the sandy trails of Noordhoek Beach. Sitting between Gates 2 and 3, Table Mountain's wind whips my hair and I am again cowering on the cliff, peering out and over the edge of an entire continent. Mid-conversation on a Wednesday, I'm suddenly swallowing beans and bread on a wooden stool in Zambia, hoping I will remember the leafy pattern of the sunlight on the table forever.

The time is not wrapped neatly or boxed tight. It is not filed away for reference. It is alive and booming with a will of its own. My back tickles with the vibrations of the safari truck, bumping over the dusty ground while I am brushing my teeth—a snowy Monday morning. In night's silence, the high pitched purr of drag racing VWs speed out from memory—my five-month lullaby. The time is never *remember when*, because it is here, tangible and teasing.

Late for the 1 Train, the machine spits out my subway ticket and I am hit with the sensation of soggy hiking shoes and the buzz of my cell phone through my backpack—my father calling as I stand in the middle of a waterfall on the side of a mountain, an ocean and a continent between us. In glimpses and teases I remember the time. The first rain. Muizenberg's damp lightening storm. The swoosh of a *Kombi's* door. Liquor on the breath of a jewelry vendor at Green Market. Slipping on Stellenbosch's wet cobblestones in May.

The time dances and meanders in and out of my days. The time is in everything.

—Alicia Gregory





Repeating Paris Andrea Rosenthal



The Sphinx, Cairo, Egypt Kaitlin Pickett
A Cyclo Full of Bottles, Vietnam Natalie Bernardi









Sunrise Worship at the Golden Temple in Punjab, India Katy Goodrich
Devotional Candles in a Barcelona Cathedral Lela Rosen



Lessons I

Questioning in India

I've learned to think of India not as an entity to be catalogued as an experience, but as a jigsaw of identities, each of which presents you with a test. In a similar manner, I can no longer think of knowledge as a static body with a singular definition. At no moment can you be sure of yourself until you grow comfortable with your ignorance, at which point your only alternative is to ask questions. And then, how is one to recognize the right answer? Well, I won't spoil the journey for you, but don't forget that in finding the end to the means, no means has to be identical.

—Norah Scheinman

Lessons II

(Re)Considering Rome

A man named Jon May studied the politics of place in a section of London called Stoke Newington. He interviewed residents from varying economic classes to gauge their feelings about the area. Some saw the recent increase in ethnic diversity there as a problem and longed for the days when the neighborhood was predominantly white. Others thought Stoke Newington was a “picturesque” representation of England. One resident, named Amanda, appreciated the diversity around her because she felt she “learned things there,” and because she felt humbled by it. She recognized herself as part of a rather elite society that, compared to the Africans and West Indians around her, had lost itself. She was an outsider looking in on the lives of others; she saw them all as part of a backdrop to her own life. The Africans and West Indians added character to her surroundings, and she enjoyed them as one would enjoy pleasant scenery.

The point of all this is that Amanda didn’t really see Stoke Newington. She saw what she thought that place was: a quaint, cultural area that was interesting for her in its idealized picturesque qualities. She was removed from it. She appreciated it like someone who didn’t really know much about art would appreciate a lovely painting.

I have never been to Stoke Newington, or London, but when I read about this other Amanda I could see myself in her. I went to Rome for a semester last year. I had spent years directly and indirectly preparing myself for it. I took Latin in high school and studied the Ancient Romans extensively. I felt moved by the mere idea of being in that city and walking down such old streets, strolling along over the cobblestones past ruins and churches in all their glorious grandeur. The idea of living in Rome made me feel almost like I was gaining entry into some sort of exclusive club that was full of all the great Western artists and writers from the last thousand years or so.

This sentiment stayed with me for quite a while after I arrived in Italy. Everything about Rome was precious and amazing—the cobbled streets, the graffiti on the sides of apartment buildings, the fruit stands in the Campo de' Fiori. I valued my first sightings of the Pantheon and the Colosseum as though the moments were measurable in gold. Everything was saturated in sentiment for me then; everything possessed a sort of poetic luminosity.

I thought I was above tourists because I had a decent understanding of the things I was looking at. When I pictured tourists in Rome, I imagined them with guidebooks and maps, gaping at buildings and temples and artwork without knowing anything about any of it. I was not like that, I told myself. I was better. I was informed.

Now, back in my bedroom at school, I wonder about myself and the first month, or maybe two, of my time in Rome. Informed or not, I was still an outsider. I wonder if I really was any better than a tourist. I wonder if I saw the real Rome or if I am just another Amanda who only saw what she wanted to see, what she was expecting to be there.

* * *

When I think about Rome now, I see a collage of moments.

I see myself wearing a new pair of high heels and walking home from class. The heel of my shoe kept getting caught between the stones in the street and I walked out of it four times. All the Italian women wore beautiful shoes; I think I was trying to fit in.

I see myself in a bookstore, purchasing a journal for someone at home. Afterwards, I got lost trying to find my way back to school. It started to rain and I had no umbrella. I held my bag over my head, wandering down the streets trying to ask for directions. A man with a red umbrella offered to walk with me to class so I could stay dry. His name was Daniel; he was a slightly deaf translator. He pointed out where he ate breakfast every morning. He walked me up to the door of my school, shook my hand and left.

I see myself with all of my friends, trying to catch a bus to Testaccio where all the *discotecas* are. Some of us were drunk. We turned a corner and I looked ahead down the street; the Colosseum was lit up in the dark in front of us. It was the first time I saw it.

I see myself getting ready to go out at night in my bedroom with the television blasting MTV in Italian.

I see the Pantheon. I see Blue Ice. I see umbrella pines. I see construction workers whistling at me in the middle of the afternoon. I see St. Peter's on my bus ride to school. I see juicebox-sized containers of cheap wine at the grocery store. I see people speaking Italian and I want to know what they're saying, I want to be a part of it, I want to be like them.

* * *

Some of the best time I spent in Rome was time spent alone. I liked the feeling of walking by myself, going wherever I wanted, getting lost in a crowd of people who had no idea who I was.

I wanted to blend in. I saw something in Rome that I wanted to have for myself. Part of that image was constructed from a picture I had before I ever entered the city; part of the Rome I saw was already built in my mind before I even got there. It was full of temples and marble and writers at outdoor cafes and narrow, sepia-toned alleys with flowers in the windows. It was what I was hoping to find when I got off the plane.

My memories of Rome are all tinted with the perspective of someone who is not really inside. I remember streets and food and shops, I remember some churches and I remember the feeling of standing in an expansive field when I stood in the middle of St. Peter's Square—all elements of a backdrop. I think of Rome and I feel a sort of desperation to remember it all, to be there again, and I imagine that somewhere in time I am in Rome, running after a bus or carrying groceries home. But mixed in with the nostalgia I also notice some things I didn't see there.

A family lived across the hall from me in my apartment building. The children's bedroom must have been on the other side of my bedroom wall because I could hear their voices every morning and feel them pounding against the wall behind my head. I never saw what they looked like.



Tuscan Hilltown Amanda Bartlett

Several deformed beggars slowly moved around the square in front of the Pantheon every day, sitting on skateboards and pushing themselves along the bumpy stones, unable to stand or walk. I paid more attention to the buildings around them than to those people. I never saw where they went at night. I never knew if they had enough to eat or had anyone to help take care of them.

I hoped to experience Rome as fully as I could when I was there. By loving everything I saw, I thought I was doing just that. By valuing the sights and the sounds and the feelings that surrounded me when I walked around, I thought I was truly embracing the city. But I think I embraced it, in part, in the same way as Amanda in Stoke Newington. I knew what I was looking for when I went to Rome, and I found it: I found food and art and beautiful streets and scenes from the Roman Empire. And that's what I valued; those are the memories I've taken away from that place. A picture-perfect dream of a city: a city that exists to foreigners, to outsiders, to me.

—Amanda Bartlett





Bakery in China Xiao Lin

Lessons III

The Beauty of Tuscany

I had never heard of, let alone tasted, unsalted bread before visiting Southern Tuscany. Uncomplicated yet distinct, the flavor of this Tuscan food staple remained in my mouth well after I finished my final piece. Throughout my weekend in Tuscany, I remembered this taste and realized that the bread holds the region's secret: simplicity creates character.

I got my first glimpse of Tuscany through the bus window. What initially struck me was the landscape. Everywhere I looked there were rolling hills covered in Emerald City green, glowing in the bright sunlight. Every so often a rustic cottage seated on the crest of a hill and fronted by a winding yellow road interrupted the carpet of grass. I called one of these cottages, an *agriturismo* (a farmhouse that accepts guests) named Cretaiole, my home for the weekend.

The fourteenth-century farmhouse, situated in the hills outside of Pienza, was the first of its kind to be developed here. There was nothing lavish about this place, but it had such a defined and unique character that visitors could not help but be drawn to it. After spending just one hour at Cretaiole, I realized that life there was so much simpler than it was in Rome, and that this simplicity was what made it so interesting.

The Moricciani family owned Cretaiole and the surrounding land. Nothing was overdone there; instead, simplicity was used to create a warm environment. This simplicity was the result of the farm's reliance on nature. After tearing my gaze away from the picture-perfect view of the surrounding hills, I noticed the large, grassy yard full of flowers, bushes and trees. Next to the wooden swing set was an olive tree grove and a garden stocked with all the essentials (lettuce, onions, garlic, etc.). Three lively cats wandered around the yard, scoping out the new arrivals. These simple, all-natural elements could be found almost anywhere, but because they were together in Cretaiole, they created



Sunset Behind a Florentine Church Rachel MacElhenney
Morning Newspaper, Villa Borghese, Rome Katherine Masters



a unique first view and gave the farmhouse an appeal that made me want to see more.

The farmhouse's vine-covered walls were a welcoming prelude. When I entered the apartment that I was sharing with six other students, all I could see was wood. Everything was made from dark, old-looking wood: the tables, the benches, the chairs, the cabinets, the dressers and the window frames. And there was a real fireplace, not one of the fake gas kinds that turn on with the flick of a switch. After looking around some more, I noticed flowers resting in corners and the occasional bug flying around. The cats even came in to join us. This apartment wasn't a house—it was an extension of the yard outside. And the Moriccianis had purposely used this type of decoration to build Cretaiole's character around unadorned products of nature.

Simplicity was also found in the products made from Cretaiole's garden and grove. At their farm only a few minutes from the *agriturismo*, the Moriccianis created all-natural food and wine directly from what is grown on their land. The homemade extra virgin olive oil emanated a thick, fresh scent that could not be found in any store-bought oil, and the Chianti wine was a refreshing change from the three-euro jug of wine I would buy at the *supermercato* in Rome. Also, guests were free to take whatever they wanted from the garden as long as it was used. The Moriccianis also let guests help harvest the olives and grapes and show them how wine and oil are made. Lessons on how to make Tuscany's signature pasta, *pici*, are also given by the women of the family. They want their guests to experience living as a Tuscan, and will do anything to help them integrate into the culture. Eating and living as a Tuscan is a return to the natural. There were no additives or preservatives there, and my body came away refreshed and cleansed. The simple food relieved my body of the constant stress created by eating processed, unhealthy food that is the main diet of Americans.

Through using simple products found in nature, Cretaiole has created its own unique character that is inviting to all who visit. The simplicity of nature is its main focus, and calls everyone to sit back, relax and look at everything that a slower life, and one lived closer to the earth, has to offer.

—Katherine Masters



Street In



1



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1. North Island Sand, New Zealand Deana Stuart
2. Ha Long Bay, Vietnam Bryan Harris
3. View of Mt. Cook, New Zealand Brandon McArdle
4. Edge of the Japanese Sea Nola Rudolph



Lessons IV

Learning Vietnam

Upon landing in Vietnam, my group of 19 students looked very haggard. Walking out into the sweltering heat from the eighteen-hour plane ride filled with stale, cool air was like walking into a brick wall of humidity. Within minutes we were all ushered out of the airport and were standing on a curb having our first glimpse of Vietnam and the city we would call our home for the next three weeks—Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), what used to be called Saigon. The first Vietnamese person to approach me was a driver of a *Xe Om* (a type of motorbike taxi), asking me where I was going, trying to persuade me to deviate from my group and let him give me a tour around the city. I did not take him up on his offer, but those first moments of interaction foreshadowed the next three weeks. Every step was met with a blank stare and a hand outstretched, countered with a plea of a purchase. However, negativity is not what I am trying to convey. There is eagerness in Vietnam, to speak with you, to sell you something, to help you, or just to look at or touch you. Everything is done with a particular zeal that I have never truly encountered before.

To help get our bearings in our new surroundings we were thrown directly into a daily four-hour language class the morning after our arrival. There, I was introduced to my charismatic but stern Vietnamese teachers: Co Twey An and Co Binh. Both had wonderful personalities and put up with our jokes and our need for constant repetition. They would greet our desire to know slang words with the nervous laughter often found in face-saving cultures and always gave the response, “You need not know that, it is not proper. First you need to know how to say American.” This is true because, as soon as you say the word for American, everyone around you laughs and opens up to us just because we are making an effort. I have never before been thanked (in English) for saying “thank you” in another language.

That first week we took turns venturing further and fur-

ther away from our comfortable guesthouse, which sat in the middle of the sheltered tourist center of HCMC. After each failed or enriching experience, we would sit around in an impromptu group and report on our findings. Where were the best noodles, the best market, the cheapest Internet, or the best club? Slowly we mastered the city, along with all of its eccentricities.

Pushing the limits of our freshly-acquired language, we became regulars of the egg lady for breakfast, the *ca-pe sua da* lady for iced coffee often multiple times a day, and at our favored nightspots. They knew our orders as they saw us approaching, this gang of Americans tripping on the sidewalk, and threw together our meals within seconds, making us the Vietnamese version of an Egg McSandwich with an efficiency that would have made any US fast food chain check their performance level. While we were warned of the effects that street food could possibly have on us, it was what we lived on. Rarely sitting down in a restaurant except for dinner, we were just as fast-paced as those around us.

Intermittently, we were taken on group excursions, mostly to tourist hot spots. What we learned about in places like the Cao Dai Temple was amazingly rewarding, and we started to express a distaste for the other American tour groups, who travelled in huge buses and who just screamed in English when not understood. We were not only getting our planned lesson for the day, we also were learning about the underlying cultural clash of which we were all a part, and from which we were trying to separate ourselves.

During our second week in HCMC, we visited the tunnels where the village of Cu Chi took refuge with the Viet Cong. We sat in a small grass hut made specifically for tourists and watched a propaganda movie about the tunnels and the medals of valor given to many of Cu Chi's inhabitants, which they referred to as the American Killer Hero Awards. Before that point I had been able to block out the details of the war that had been fought where we were standing, only sometimes thinking how lucky we were to be let back into this beautiful country. But at that moment, it was a little overwhelming to picture the men of my father's generation (although he narrowly escaped that fate) hunting the Vietnamese through this maze of booby-trapped

tunnels. As our park tour guide waved for us to follow, those were the thoughts that filled my head.

Rarely were we reminded of this troubled past between the US and this country which we were increasingly coming to love. Our days were filled with new words, horrible smells and adventurous food. There is no better way to acclimate yourself in a culture than to sit down in a restaurant, close your eyes, and point at the menu in another language and experience something that will be nothing but surprising. For the first few weeks, every meal was like Christmas or a birthday—you ask for something and you may get it, or maybe it would be something different, but there was no returning it. On my fourth or fifth night in HCMC I ordered a fish head. The waitress looked at me as I tried my best to figure out how exactly to eat it, laughed and brought her friend over. I was a show and they were my audience. It was pretty ridiculous how much attention this group of seven American girls was getting in this hip and trendy restaurant.

We have found that you just have to play the game as well as them. Make simple jokes in their language. Point at something they are doing that is equally odd, such as trying to screw the legs onto mannequins in the middle of the street or trying to sell a dying flower to you for about five blocks until you clearly show them you have no money. It is the little things like these that bond you to the people around you. You strike up interesting relationships with the locals just by walking past them on your way to school. A wave every morning, sometimes a “How are you today?” is always greeted with a smile.

The greatest lesson I have learned thus far is how to adjust to any situation. How am I going to return to the United States? How could people there fathom whole families on motorbikes, public urination, open displays of drug use, practicing English with someone while they are butchering a pig and making the promise to see them again to practice my Vietnamese? It is easy to see why there are so many Americans who have chosen to make their lives here instead of in the US. If you make an effort, Vietnam is nothing but rewarding.

—Leah Finigan



Tokyo Never Sleeps Mathew Ketchum
Walking Through Osaka Jacqueline Ostrofsky



Verse and Vision III

Everything I've Learned About Leaving

I have visited the misty cliffs
green as new money
Drunk boys leaning
over the edge
of the world
I have seen
the street cracks filled
with spilled Guinness
under *claddagh* awnings
where girls turn their own ring out
Un-owned hearts at night
and in the day they
reign it back
toward themselves
Mostly, I have watched
the butterflies that slip
in through office doors
and wham their wings
against the walls
The love dogs roam
with no owner
and I
have known their name
So far the animals
are the easiest friends
I can afford to make
and freer than I
could ever hope to be

—Galina Mukomolova





Dracula's Castle, Romania Anne Wirts





Vietnam Airlines



1



4



1. Children in Vietnam
Oliver Meeker
2. Hanoi Bicyclist Bryan
Harris
3. Diptych: Stroll
Through Ceramic
Village and Portrait of
a Girl from Sa Pa
Jenna Berman
4. En Route to the
Market, Vietnam
Bui Duy Thanh Mai

2



3




5/5



SHAM HUY
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Quận Hoàn Kiếm, Hà Nội
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CONDENSED MILK
CONDENSED MILK
CONDENSED MILK



Antecedents I

Journeys with Dad

This morning we are traveling through Phu Tai, which is where my dad was stationed. I am really excited to see where he spent a very influential year of his life. It is also interesting for me because before I decided to come to Vietnam, my dad didn't talk that much about his experiences here, but after I was accepted into the program, he opened up a lot more about it. He started pulling out his dog tags, name patches, pictures and his lieutenant bars. It is really amazing to be able to share this experience with him; I just wish that we could travel together. Although he had a "good" experience as far as war goes, I think that no matter what, memories will resurface and I feel extremely lucky that I get to be a part of this process. As a side note, I got an email from Dad. He's in Saigon, and he said that this place is just bringing back so many memories and mixed emotions. I'm interested to see in a few days what his reaction will be when he returns to Phu Tai.

I took lots of pictures of the valley where he was stationed, the water tower and some army trucks where his base was set up. I would have liked to explore a little bit more but I didn't want to hold anyone up. Viet, our tour guide, said that I was acting like a Veteran, but I was excited to be able to send my family some pictures. It meant a lot to me and I'm thankful that we had Viet to show us around. I am not sure if I was at the right place where Dad was stationed but I know that he will find it when he gets here, and it still means a lot to even be in the town. The foliage has grown back and it once again looks peaceful.

I can't wait to share my pictures with him.

—Rebecca Damberg-Mausser

Antecedents II

Windows: A Short Memoir

"Do you want brown or white? When I was in Iran, they put these in their mouths and drank the tea over them. Look, like this." Ali, a young Pakistani economist, placed a sugar cube on his tongue, slowly drawing a whisker of the hot tea over it. "You get more sugar that way."

"White," I replied.

"Cream?"

"A little."

"Have you ever had Yorkshire tea?" Ali asked. He reached over the glossy table and poured a trickle of thick cream into the mug that rested before me. A cloud of milky brown billowed in the bottom of my steaming cup.

"No. Have you?"

"Yes, once. In Pakistan."

Old timbers cut through the freshly painted yellow walls that surrounded me. A dormant fireplace filled with dried wildflowers occupied the corner of the room. The sturdy table where Ali and I sat rested against a large window.

"I think I am going to write my parents a postcard from here. What do you think?"

"Do what you've got to do," I replied.

"Ok, I will. Can I have your pen?"

I handed Ali the thick pen that I had been holding.

Behind the white-paned window, a steady stream of passers-by shuffled down the cobblestone streets, oblivious to our candid observation. The Minster's large towers shifted back and forth in the rippled glass as if they were tall oaks in a distant New England pond.



“Can you ‘share’ stories?” Ali looked up from his postcard, questioning his English.

“Yeah.”

“So I could say, ‘Can’t wait to share stories in December?’”

“Yeah, of course you can,” I replied, slowly taking my first sip of tea.

A short, double-spaced paragraph on the back of the tea room’s laminated menu recapped the building’s history in terse sentences. Six-hundred years ago it had been the home of a sea captain. Like many of its neighbors, the house lacked a foundation—hence the odd angles of the doorframe and the charming slanted floor. If one were to place a round ball underneath the mantel of the fireplace, it would roll across the room and bounce off the far wall, against which I was currently resting the heels of my leather shoes. Antiquity.

“I think I am going to have brown this time.” Ali dropped a small square of brown sugar into his tea cup.

“Do you drink tea often?”

“In Pakistan, six or eight times a day. Four cups at Union. If you want to become a writer, you should come to Pakistan. It is much easier to become a writer in Pakistan than America.”

To become a writer. I thought of my grandfather. In the last years of his life, my grandfather became a writer. Instead of spending his final years in a sunny Florida condo, he sat in his drafty farmhouse recapping the tall tales of his childhood.

He held the pen firmly, commanding unwilling words onto vacant pages. Battle proven, he wrote with the strong hand of a warrior. He wrote from his heart. Tales of walking trout, mangy black bears and bountiful harvests took form in his notebooks. Passed down from his father, these stories were bred into my grandfather. They echoed every firm-footed step he had taken on his thickly-wooded farm. After months of grinding work, these stories came to rest in the stiff binding of a blue hardcover book that now lies dusty on my father’s bookshelf. I still remember my grandfather scribbling his name onto the white of the book’s title page.

The colonial settlement that housed the book signing seemed to mirror my grandfather's tales. A stone well stood in the front lawn and the house's split timber clapboards were blackened from uncountable harsh winters. In the gravel driveway, a thin row of cars were parked and a handful of tweed-clad gentlemen had formed at the front door. My father led my sister and me inside.

It was on this day that I received my first lesson in windows. My father hoisted me onto his broad shoulders, taut from years of manual labor, and let me peer through the glass panes of the dwelling. Outside, the summer foliage appeared rippled, as if I were looking at the reflections of the tall oaks in a deep pond. My father told me that this was because this building was very old—rippled windows were a sign of antiquity.

As I grew older, I found that these windows were few and far between. From my place-setting at our family's dining table, the gentle roll of our lawn appeared vivid through the glass slider. Later, as I sat cross-legged in my third-grade classroom, my eyes wandered from the dull math equations before me and fixated on the fluffy snowflakes falling outside. They appeared crisp through the room's small window. If I could only reach out and touch them. The story that these buildings had to tell was not a very long one; their clear, double-paned windows told me this.

The years passed and I continued to visit my grandfather, watching his iron spirit fight against a dying body. My father would spend patient afternoons sitting across from the man, working to coax stories out of his fleeting mind. During these meetings, my mind would wander, memorizing the collection of antiques and junk that cluttered the dark parlor. I clearly remember the smooth curves of a blue velvet couch, a line of faded hunting decoys and a dormant piano covered in pictures of smiling grandchildren. I remember the stale smell of a house that had watched two generations of crying infants grow into busy, opinionated adults. However, just as the evening's conversation inevitably grew thin, my mind would ultimately fixate on the large, dusty window which hung directly in front of my young, restless eyes.

Though unrippled, this window was far from being translucent. Behind it, the undaunting wild of my grandfather's massive

farm unfolded. My father's calming pentameter, sporadically interrupted by the deep, monosyllabic utterances of my grandfather, soothed my eardrums. I remained silent during these evenings, quietly observing in the comfort of a blue rocking chair—isolation: catalyst of the thoughtful. Before the end of these meetings, my dormant mind would slip into kaleidoscoping daydreams.

My mind jolted back to reality. "I think I like Earl Grey better than this," Ali proclaimed. "Earl Grey is the best tea."

A waitress wearing a high-cut black skirt entered, placing a porcelain saucer with a bill resting upon it on our table.

"I'll leave this for when you are ready," she said, leaving as quickly as she had entered.

Pouring himself a fresh cup of tea, Ali looked around the room, frowning slightly. "I wish this building was as it used to be," he said in a soft voice.

Although the tea room was clearly old, it had been renovated several times throughout its long life. The large window was trimmed with a snaking plastic garland. The business's name was fitting, The Teddy Bear Tearoom: chintzy, yet inviting.

My mind returned to the colonial settlement which had housed my grandfather's book signing. It was a museum of sorts. Only after paying a small entrance fee was one able to move freely from room to room, observing a spread of polished antique furniture from behind a thick velvet rope. It was as if its colonial family had abandoned the house many years ago, locking the thick front door behind them as they left.

The small sign placed at the entrance of each room broke my young heart. In thick block letters it read "Please Do Not Touch."

I emptied the remaining contents of the teapot into my cup and looked around the room. Yes, it would have been nice if the room looked as it did when that stuffy old ship captain owned it. There was no doubting that. But the tearoom emit-

ted a certain warmth that the colonial settlement lacked. The world was full of old, preserved buildings—I had visited many on field trips—but none breathed quite like this one did. It all made sense: the green garlands that you couldn't help but want to rip off the walls, the bustling street behind the old window and the tilted fireplace were all perfectly brought together by the warm Yorkshire tea.

The waitress entered, seating a young couple at a vacant table behind us.

"Do you need change?" she said.

"I think we're all set," I said, sliding on my coat. "Thank you, though."

I looked at Ali. He fumbled with his shirt collar, pulling it up through his sweater's v-neck. I took a final look from the third floor of the ship captain's old house—maybe it had been his bedroom. A crowd of people shuffled by, rippling in the large window. The looming towers of the Minster bobbed in time. Perfect antiquity.

—Wesley Raymond Whitaker

4am at the Night Market in Hanoi, Vietnam Catherine Griffin



Pinwheels on a Bicycle in Nha Trang, Vietnam Bryan Harris





Beer and Conversation, Vietnam Bryan Harris
90 Mile Beach, New Zealand Ben Michelak





Cubic Houses in Rotterdam, The Netherlands Cindy Bors
Siesta Time at Bac Kan, Vietnam Bui Duy Thanh Mai





Worshipper in Cao Dai Temple, Vietnam Jillian LaCroix
Bee in a Flower, Vietnam Michael McAndrew



Verse & Vision IV

A Taxi Ride Back From Cape Town

Wrappers, dust, and debris
fly about the misshapen curbs and sidewalks
at the Cape Town taxi station.

Vendors clutch tightly to the tarps covering their stands
while thin scarves for sale and plastic bags
wrestle to free themselves and join the other
pieces of clutter
Floating aimlessly about the streets.

A young boy, no more than ten,
crouches among the waiting taxis
throwing dice onto the sidewalk.

He is wearing a pair of oxfords two sizes too big,
playing craps with a young man ten years his senior.

While holding a cigarette stub he likely found
on the sidewalk,
the young boy relinquishes the few coins he has in defeat.

As the sun sets, the streets empty out
and the last taxi leaving the station boards
yet a few more people, shopping bags in hand.

Arms and faces are pressed against the taxi windows;
the *gouchi* screams, "Bya-ville!" one last time.
Passengers are packed like sardines as the taxi rolls away
from the curb,
and gradually, in the distance, the young boy is swallowed in
the gray pavement.

—Kathleen Kohl

Reflections of Resistance I

The Struggle of the Roma

I was initially intrigued by the Roma situation because it is an issue that so many Romanians ignore. There are, as I discovered, organizations that promote Roma interests and defend their human rights, but for the most part addressing this matter doesn't seem to be a priority in Romania. I understand that a lot of focus is directed to other aspects of Romanian society; infrastructure improvements and political reforms are of the utmost importance in any developing nation, but by disregarding the needs of a large minority group, no society will ever reach its full potential. Nevertheless, it seems that Europeans as a whole resent the Roma and want nothing to do with them. Clearly this needs to change. The question is: what is being done to facilitate this change? The disparity in the quality of life between Romas and the other Europeans continues to plague this continent, and though it is a sensitive topic, I was compelled to learn more. I decided the best way to go about doing this was to speak directly with Roma leaders and representatives here in Cluj.

I started by visiting the Resource Center for Roma Communities. This non-governmental organization (NGO) was established in 1999 and serves to promote Roma interests as well as to help the Roma adapt to current economic and political realities. The main purpose of my visit was to learn how Roma advocacy groups address problems facing their communities. Radu Lacatus, the Resource Center's program coordinator, kindly agreed to an interview.

While speaking with him I learned that one major obstacle the Center faces is that each Roma community is different. There is no single approach, because each community requires a specific strategy. In some places the roadways need repair, while in others people need help obtaining legal paperwork like birth certificates and marriage licenses.

Some things are common, however. Political representation is of the utmost importance for any minority group, and, as I learned from Radu, the European Parliament holds the greatest stake in deciding which issues are important to Europe as a whole. But he is frustrated that the parliamentarians tend to concentrate on minor problems, and ignore bigger issues like discrimination against minority groups such as the Roma. The fact is that the European Parliament pays little mind to the Roma whatsoever, even though there are approximately 10 million of them in Europe. The 2.5 million Roma living in Romania make them the largest minority group in the country. For this reason, Radu says the lack of political representation is inexcusable.

The discrimination facing the Roma is undeniable. Want ads exclude them from applying for certain jobs, and in the schools the parents of non-Roma often refuse to send their children to integrated schools. Addressing education, says Radu, is a top priority. Improving the conditions in Roma schools and providing the students with well-qualified teachers is a must. But there are signs of promise in this respect. Private donors and the Romanian government have provided funds for projects. The World Bank and the European Union have also sent money, although much more is needed. Radu sees this as a big step in the right direction. There are currently 5,000 Roma students enrolled in universities across Europe, and certain slots are held for Roma each year.

I told Radu that I would be interested in getting the perspective of one of these students, and he pointed across the desk to his assistant, Robert Matie. Robert studies journalism and sociology. He speaks English quite well and clearly had to overcome many obstacles in order to get to where he is today. He did not grow up in a traditional Roma community, but comes from a predominantly Hungarian neighborhood, where anti-Roma prejudice is very prevalent. Since coming to work for Radu he has helped with many Roma projects, including the construction of roadways and the repair of school buildings in several Roma communities. He also participated in a campaign aimed at overcoming anti-Roma prejudice. He told me he has faith that more Roma students will soon follow in his footsteps, but that it would be a long process. Most Roma are never provided the opportunity to attend school, and for many of them, their community is a dead-end.

Though I learned a lot from this NGO about some of the specific projects developed to improve the life of the Roma, the big picture was still unclear. I know that grassroots organizations and advocacy groups are essential if a minority group wants to overcome adversity, but without governmental representation, real change is impossible.

Acknowledging this reality, I scheduled an appointment with a Roma political representative, Aurel Rosian, the President of the Roma Party of Cluj County. He was incredibly open and explained many of the difficulties that plague Roma politics. The biggest problem today, and one they are aiming to fix, is that most Roma do not know how to properly vote. On November 25th elections will be held to vote new representatives into parliament, so the party is visiting as many Roma communities as possible in order to instruct them on how to appropriately cast their ballots. In the past, many Roma accidentally voted for the wrong candidates, but Mr. Rosian is optimistic that this year there will be much stronger support for his party. (*Editor's Note: the Party of the Roma received 1.14% of the vote in the European Parliament election of November, 2007, and failed to gain representation.*)

The efforts on the part of Roma intellectuals are admirable and necessary, but I did notice one thing in particular upon visiting a Roma community firsthand: all of its inhabitants appeared incredibly happy. There was no resentment from them as our group of twenty Americans strolled around their community. Our flashing cameras and sympathetic expressions provoked no anger or embarrassment from these impoverished families. The children cheerfully played together for what seemed like hours and they could not have been more affectionate towards us and each other. As I noticed their bright faces and overwhelming kindness, I couldn't help but wonder how wise it is to fight for change. I, of course, praise the inspiring efforts of the Resource Center and the Roma Party. Their ambitions are inspiring, but as they explained to me and as I begin to recognize, fighting for change is a delicate process. Sure, it's necessary that a family makes an honest living and adds to economic growth, but there must be a way to improve the lives of Roma while still preserving their heritage. Finding this balance won't be easy, but with NGO support and a little appreciation and sensitivity for Roma tradi-

tions, I'm optimistic that one day the Roma will be perceived by non-Roma as a positive part of European society.

—David Sanders

Diptych: "Tiger Cages" in an East Berlin Stasi Prison, Germany and Roma Boy, Romania Lee Dickinson



Reflections of Resistance II

Meeting Anne Frank

Studying abroad in Maastricht, the Netherlands, took me all across Europe, including a trip to Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands and a city rich in culture and history. I arrived on a warm spring day, with a refreshing breeze and the sun shining. It was a perfect day to explore.

A relatively small city of approximately 740,000 people, Amsterdam is easily accessible by bus, and I quickly found my way around. It is a picturesque city, built around the many canals that run through it. The city was quiet on this lazy afternoon, with people shopping and relaxing at small restaurants along the canals. There was little traffic and it seemed that the bicycles, which flooded the roads and bridges, were the ideal form of transportation.

I made my way to the Anne Frank Museum, which is located in the building where Anne and her family hid during the Holocaust. A Jewish family, the Franks went into hiding with four other families during World War II. They survived for two years, until they were discovered and sent to concentration camps. Of the group, the only survivor was Anne's father, Otto Frank, who returned to Amsterdam after the war, and upon discovering Anne's diary, decided to publish it. Translated into several languages, it has become one of the most widely-read books in the world.

As I stood in line to enter the museum, I looked around at its location on the corner of a row of buildings that lined a canal. The hiding place was in the heart of the city, rather than in an obscure location, and it was difficult to imagine how an entire family could have been completely concealed from the outside world, given the number of people who must have passed by each day. The museum began on the ground and lower floors of what was originally Otto's office building, and by climbing a steep staircase I eventually found myself in Anne's bedroom.

Decorated with drawings and pictures of actresses, the room was reminiscent of that of an average teenage girl. It was haunting to consider how her life was so different from my own.

In just a few minutes, I felt suffocated in the small quarters, as I stood where Anne once stood. Looking out the windows that were once covered by screens, I could only imagine how difficult it must have been to be so near the outside world and other people going about their lives and to not be able to escape.

The experience brought to reality the effect the Holocaust had on individuals and families. When we learn about the Holocaust, much of the focus is on the number of people who were persecuted, and though enormously significant, this approach neglects the actual people and their individual lives and stories. Anne gave a voice to the victims of the Holocaust, and what stood out most while walking through the museum was that so many peoples' stories were lost, vanished into thin air. But through the museum and the publication of Anne's diary, it is assured that the victims' suffering will be memorialized and never forgotten.

—Erinn Cain

Reflections of Resistance III

Children of Resistance

Reality forced us to organize a resistance movement of our own. Our identity worked itself out through the responses and actions we had to take. We learnt as we fought. Far from paralyzing us, our grief mobilized us and gave us courage... We set out on our road without considering the power we had; our love for our children was stronger than their whole repressive apparatus.

—Statement of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Linea Fundadora

December 3, 2007

Today our group met with one of the 14 founding Madres de Plaza de Mayo Linea Fundadora, an organization formed by mothers whose children were kidnapped and disappeared during the Dirty War, the seven years of Argentina's oppressive military dictatorship. The Madres were key leaders in ending the Dirty War, fighting for justice and respect for human rights, and they are a dying legacy. It was a privilege to hear about the state terror in Argentina on such a personal level. The Madre first told us how the government used terror to justify widespread kidnapping and torture. When the military abducted a person, they would raid their neighbors' houses and threaten them to keep quiet when questioned about the disappearances. The military regime used silence as a powerful tool to cover up the murder of thousands of innocent civilians. The government kidnapped anyone who they thought threatened their power and fear kept the people silent, until the Madres started actively protesting, and the disappearances became an international issue.

The Madre told us about how the regime "disappeared" her daughter, Anna Maria, and her son-in-law. Anna Maria was pregnant at the time. After they were kidnapped, the Madre took measures to find them; she was never provided any answers. I

just cannot understand how 30,000 Argentines could go missing, with still no answers for their families. She also said that although the Linea Fundadora has made significant progress in politics and human rights, she is still not satisfied, nor is she ready to give up her search for what happened to her daughter, son-in-law and her unborn grandchild. This reinforced how devastating it is that the Madres are all very old and the organization (and their demand for answers) is in jeopardy of dying out.

December 5, 2007

This afternoon Evan and I went to the Plaza de Mayo (the square in front of the presidential residence, the Casa Rosada) to check out the 24-hour protest for human rights, sponsored by the Madres. This event only happens once a year, so we were very fortunate that we were here during it. It was late evening, and most of the Madres had already gone home. The younger generation had taken over; it was amazing to see so many youth involved and politically active. A band and a ton of kids were getting into the common goal of fighting for liberty and justice.

Flor, an Argentine girl, came up to us to ask for a lighter and we started talking. She was incredibly friendly and open, and we learned that she was the granddaughter of the Madre that we met with on Monday. We talked to her for about an hour and she was very eager to tell us all about her thoughts on Argentina and her life. She was also very curious about life in America. She told us about how Argentines as a whole think that they are better than other Latin Americans, but how, in reality, they really are connected to the rest of Latin America. The only thing that they are really better at is being witty. I thought this was very interesting since I've been wondering what really brings Argentines together. She also asked us about the upcoming U.S. presidential elections and asked if there was anything worse than Bush, which I thought was a little ironic, considering that the thing that brought all of these Argentines here tonight to march around the Plaza was a result of their own government's practice of kidnapping and murder.

Flor feels an obligation to be a part of the Linea Fundadora and to carry on the work of the Madres, but she also feels pretty apathetic and wants to do other things with her life. She even

said that when she was younger she felt a sense of resentment towards her grandma since she spent all of her time with the Madres, looking for her daughter (Flor's aunt). I found this especially interesting since it made me realize that it's not only America's youth becoming less politically involved, but also the youth here. Overall, I think it's the fact that we live in different generations and enjoy more liberties than the youth did 30 years ago. However, it really was an amazing experience to see so many Argentines come together and protest passionately.

December 6, 2007

We ran into Flor again at the Plaza de Mayo and she asked us to join the protest. As we walked around the plaza with her, Flor explained to us all of the different organizations partaking in this rally, some of which have radically different ideologies. I told her how happy I was that she invited us to walk with her and that, if she hadn't, I would not have felt comfortable joining the protest. She asked why this was and why the other foreigners were not walking. I answered that I thought it was because the movement was so strong that it was a little intimidating to join. I also didn't know if it would be acceptable for us to join since we were not a part of an organization nor were we Argentines. Flor explained that political justice and the fight for human rights is a global struggle and everyone should come together in order to achieve equality.

Flor then introduced me to her grandma, who linked arms with me. Together, we continued to walk around the plaza. Holding hands and marching with this eighty-year-old woman who comes to the Plaza de Mayo every Thursday to march in front of the Casa Rosada with the hopes of one day having the Argentine government give the people the answers they deserve, I understood how dedicated these people were to improving their country and making the world a better place. She thanked us repeatedly for being there, and for caring. She didn't need to.

—Katy Osborne



Snapshot I

Virgin to London

Buckingham Palace had left that certain taste of staleness on our palates that accompanies all true disappointment. I thought the English had whored their culture to cameras when the only remark from fellow tourists had been “Look son, they’re wearing funny hats!” The English love their funny hats.

But as Ahmad and I crossed under Admiralty Arch, I thought, ‘This is what I was promised.’ Trafalgar Square erupted before us. Swarming sidewalks flowed into the street. Fountains of frozen nymphs, urns gushing, flanked Nelson’s Column.

A megaphone bellowed about the Burma monk killings, and the crowd roared in protest before the podium. Activists in red headbands ignored tourists climbing stone lions.

A megaphone bellowed about the Burma monk killings, and the crowd roared in protest before the podium. Activists in red headbands ignored tourists climbing stone lions. We wanted to blend in, and remembering to look right before stepping into the street, my friend and I melted into the mob. “Almost makes you feel a part of something, huh?” Ahmad said. And I concurred by nodding my head.

We ascended the mythical steps of the National Gallery for a better view of the protest. Architectural intricacies splayed out before us—all corrugated columns and mighty stone. Ahmad pointed out Big Ben in the background when the crowd called again, and we entered the museum below the portico.

If I could only explain how it feels to meet what you've always imagined. Pissarro's raw *Boulevard Montmartre at Night* mirrored a rainwet street with its imprecise globs of light. The smoke of Monet's *Gare Saint-Lazare* obscured the station and framed the train, like a Japanese print, with no vanishing point, and the chaos of the railway yard captured. You notice texture first on a real Van Gogh, imagining the horsehair flick with the flair of the artist's wrist. The caption said yellow was Vincent's idea and symbolized gratitude, but gratitude for what? Honey, happiness, the sun?

Art induces an indescribable catharsis. All I know is, overwhelmed, we re-met on the steps, smiling. We found our way back through the protest, but were too elated for the outrage to be contagious. I nodded toward the tourists and handed my camera to Ahmad. "Hey man, take a picture of me in front of that stone lion."

"Fine, me next."

And we stood out ecstatic.

—Michael Ash



Snapshot II

(Down)Under the Sea

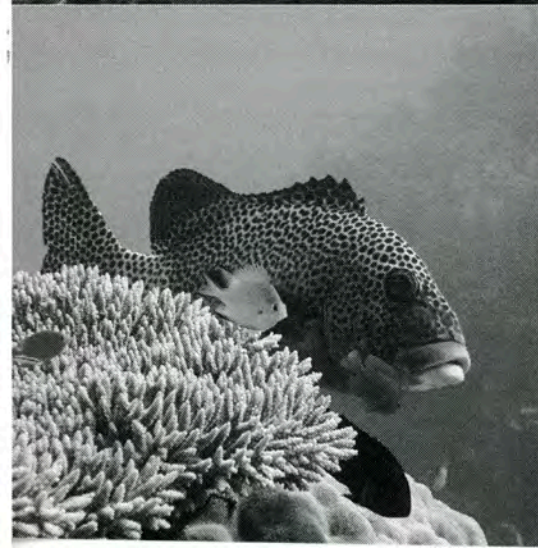
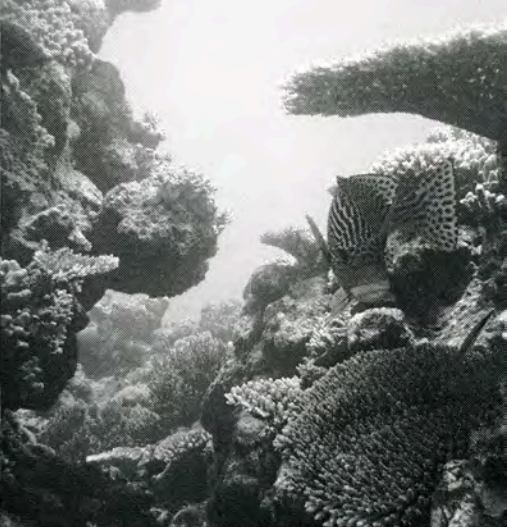
The Great Barrier Reef is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. It is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem containing many types of coral, fish, and mollusks. It is one of the richest habitats on the planet. The best way to experience this beauty first-hand is by snorkeling and scuba diving. Getting up close allows you to really appreciate and marvel at the beauty of the many colors and the diversity of life.

Unfortunately, this magnificent ecosystem is in danger due to the threat of global warming. The effects can already be seen in about a fifth of the coral reefs of the world, which experience coral bleaching and cannot recover.

Corals get their beautiful colors from a species of algae that lives within their tissues, providing them with nutrients through photosynthesis. But when they are subjected to external stresses, such as changes in water temperature (recently due to global warming), pollution and overfishing, these algae will abandon their coral hosts. This causes the coral to lose its color, giving a whitened or 'bleached' appearance. The corals no longer have access to the photosynthetic nutrients provided by the algae, and will eventually die if the damaging conditions are not reversed quickly enough to allow the algae to return.

Even though much damage has been done, by changing our destructive ways, we can preserve what is left of this natural wonder.

—Carly Hyatt, Colette Hyatt and Lisa Angotti



Snapshot III

Village Dances and Drinks

After my term abroad to Australia and New Zealand, I traveled to Waya Island, the largest volcanic island in the Yasawa Archipelago of the Republic of Fiji where I had the unique opportunity to interact with the indigenous population. My photographs show the strong community ties and emphasis on traditional Fijian culture that I was fortunate enough to experience. During my stay, I had the opportunity to spend time at Nalauwaki Village, a small village on Waya Island, where I was greeted by a traditional kava ceremony.

In Fiji, the *kava* drink plays an important role in social life, especially in indigenous communities. The *kava*, the dried root of a particular plant, is first mixed with water in a large, wooden bowl. The ceremony is accompanied by hand-clapping and the chanting of traditional songs. The mixing of the *kava*, the straining and the serving are all performed with a high degree of skill by the Chief of the village. The *kava* ceremony is reserved for important occasions such as welcoming guests to the village and the visitors are obliged to drink *kava* in traditional cups made from coconut shells.

During my visit to Nalauwaki Village, I also observed traditional Fijian dances and indigenous culture. Because Fiji's culture is a rich mosaic of indigenous, Indian, and European traditions that reflect Polynesian influence, my photographs from this region are not only culturally unique but speak for the isolated population of Waya Island. I will always remember the smiling children of Nalauwaki for their eagerness and excitement at the sight of my camera.

—Fariha Ramay



Verse and Vision V

I try to remember

I try to remember I am a woman
who has walked on glass
sand and concrete barefoot
from Lincoln Center to Hell's Kitchen,
on the beer stained rocks
of Coney Island shores
In the darkest mornings
I have ventured towards lone buses,
5:30 am finding me treading
the foggy air of Berlin streets,
clutching the clunk of my boots
A woman yelling somewhere behind me
at a man who owns her
kitchen and her c__t
I am not scared of being alone
anymore—I am a woman
and in two decades
I have sewn together nations
in my skin through stories
You ask me, how another year feels
but I am not a tree
I have lost every ring
given to me in the name of love
but I have never lost the girls
I try to remember
the way touch stays with us always
and hug too many strangers
hoping to hear a howl
In the secret alleys
where Cork holds its old spirit
In the scrappy dog yips
of little Limerick girls
In the space between

the Liffy and Temple Bar—
there are the songs of street birds
Tell me a story
When the ride from Dublin to Galway
steals all my hours
I watch the color of water
and try to discern river from rain.
Boats move along the corrie
cutting into the glassy surface
like enormous swans
and just as awkward—I
swallow my songs
rather than sing into the wind.

—Galina Mukomolova

Night Boat Ride on the Seine, France Leah Dittrick



Crossings I

Cobblestones and Concrete

My mother tells me that when I finally started to walk on my own, I walked with my arms raised straight over my head, fingers reaching for the hands that used to guide me as I learned. I don't know how long I kept that up, but I know I have never been a steady walker. In high school, a friend of mine tried to teach me to wear heels before prom; I fell into a pile of pillows and gave up. I didn't even need heels to fall over sometimes. It just tended to happen as I was walking up the stairs, across the kitchen, down the driveway. I used to blame my size-five feet, but that was just speculation.

Those first few steps on English cobblestone had the same effect. I wobbled in my sneakers, tripping over the cracks and poorly aligned stones. My hands reached for something or someone familiar and instead met the cold stones at the bottom of our hill, the sloping green of the Royal Crescent just inches away. There were people on the lawn, sunning their backs and books, blankets stretched out in the autumn sun. No one looked up.

The streets of Bath were nothing like Rochester or Geneva. The cobblestones were just the very start. The cars were smaller, tightly packed, randomly parked on any side of the street in any direction. I couldn't remember to look right first when crossing

No more "good mornin'" and no tea served with brown sugar cubes and milk. No more flowers outside the windows of every pub, no more "cheers."

the road and found myself confronted with screeching brakes and sudden stops. The first few times I came across a blinking white light with a black and white barber-striped pole on the side of the road, I stood there tapping my toes on the sidewalk, waiting, confused, while drivers stopped and as the English

pushed past me. I didn't know those lights meant that cars had to stop for pedestrians.

Pedestrian streets were a whole new concept for me, too. Milsom Street was always bustling, with shopkeepers cleaning their windows and changing the store-front displays, and the English wandering about with their uniformed children. They never seemed to be in a hurry as they stopped to pop into the paper store or the homemade bath soaps shop. There were homeless men holding up business signs on the sidewalk while reading Jane Austen and others calling out, "Big Issue, Ma'am?" as I walked by. There was a traveling bunch of people paid by the city to water the flower baskets that lined the buildings and hung from every pole. There was a man who played the steel drums, a violin player who walked a tight rope strung between lampposts, and a man who rode a ten-foot tall unicycle in front of the Abbey. A Jamaican busker named Delroy sang to us on his guitar every morning; his tune "Good mornin' pretty lady, good mornin' beautiful woman" became our anthem and Sally Lunn's Tea House became my *raison d'être* in Bath.

December came and I spent my last few days walking the town and detouring into my favorite shops to see the Christmas decorations, the winter-spiced teas, the mulled wine and the mince pies. I had bought a pair of flat boots one day, and as I walked down the Northampton Street hill near the end, I realized I'd finally broken them in. My soles adjusted to the uneven slabs of stone naturally now, never slipping in the rain or stumbling on the rounded pebbles.

It was my last day in Bath, and a thought struck me on Broad Street just outside Topping and Company, my favorite bookstore: I was going home. There would be no more street performers, no more pounds and conversions at the bank. No more "good mornin'" and no tea served with brown sugar cubes and milk. No more flowers outside the windows of every pub, no more "cheers." In the States, there would be no more cobblestones, and to be honest, I couldn't remember what it felt like to walk on concrete anymore.

Maybe I shouldn't mention this, but I tripped getting off the plane in the States. I'm sure it was just a coincidence.

—Jennie Seidewand



A Glimpse in Rome Amanda Fritz
Man Taking Five in Monte Albán, Mexico Marie Schubert



Crossings II

Personal Statement

Mommy, do I have to water myself like those plants to grow?

Not all princesses live in castles or wear golden crowns. A princess can be a mere picky and overprotected girl who grimaces at the smallest thing, like a tiny over-burned spot on a french fry her father makes or a muddy road that she would not allow herself to step on. Any girl can be royalty in that sense. Don't think so? I have a great example here: me.

The seeds in the nutshell still lack the fire to grow; it is too warm and protected to break out.

I was the only child that couldn't take care of myself. I was also the only girl that never appeared on a field trip. Now I am the second Rotary student from Vietnam leaving for a one-year exchange program in Orinda, CA.

"So finally, the little princess decides to break out and grow out of her little tough shell, huh?" my aunt asked.

A tiny seed was sown the day I arrived. I hoped it would grow fine.

During the first two weeks, everything went wonderfully.

I assured mother in my first call home, "...Yes, mom, I am fine. Mommy, see? I can do it! I knew I was picky but not anymore! You know what? I can eat burned potatoes now!"

I even walked straight through the muddy grass lawn proudly in my sneakers while all the other girls decided to go the long way to protect their brand new boots.

The seed germinated. Life started. The newborn tree never knew what to expect, assuming everything was as comfortable as the soil it came from.

While other exchange students paid attention to food and travel, I seemed to be attracted more to scrutinizing the language, which is definitely not my mother tongue.

"I say what I mean, Pete," I said. "I never ask 'How are you?' because I know people will answer 'I am fine' automatically even if they are terribly sick. I never say 'awesome' or 'cool' because they are overused and people don't appreciate what they mean anymore. These words are being spoken unconsciously, don't you think?"

"You know what, you are so difficult, girl," he commented. "Your father must have had a hard time with you."

"I know, I know," I replied, a smile of victory plastered all over my face.

The same conversation happened again and again. But one family I talked to was different. I moved from host family to host family. I am glad that I moved, although at first, it caused some problems because staying with a host family was a part of the exchange program. In fact, it wasn't until I had found my fourth host family that I got what I needed.

"You are here to exchange cultures with others, girl," my host mother uttered. "I'm not saying what you said is wrong, but you need to understand that you are in a different culture. What you are judging is a part of the culture you are living in and also a part of the language you are learning and speaking. You may decide to use it or not, that is your choice, but don't criticize it because that is what people say."

I kept on nourishing my pride; I never realized that it was such an infantile argument all along.

I was still a brat, a brat who thought the world of herself.

I stumbled along the way but I never fell.

It was raining so hard yesterday that I wondered if the tree could keep growing. "Don't let go," I whispered. "Even in a storm, cling to the ground. If you survive, you will see a wonderful world."

Was I growing up? I don't know.

"When you reach sixteen here, you can proudly go to your father and ask for your own Mercedes. You need to be twenty-one to drink champagne in America, instead of just having sparkling apple cider," I said.

"What is the important birthday in Vietnam?" Henry, a Rotarian, asked me.

I still don't know. I said "With me, birthdays have never meant anything important. We are growing up every day, aren't we? Isn't it a mere monotonous circle that repeats every 365 days? An ugly, odd number, by the way."

February 6. Midnight. Three more minutes and I would turn 17. Somehow, this birthday gave me a different feeling, although it was a mere prime number. It couldn't do anything, couldn't be divided by anything.

Not yet. I was not grown up yet, auntie.

The next morning, I woke up, and looked out to the garden. Blooming among the flowers, a new tiny amber leaf budded from the ground: my apricot plant—the flower I was named after is ready for new life. Awesome.

—Bui Duy Thanh Mai

Mother and Child in Miyajima, Japan Zachary Barash





Drawings from the Journals of Benjamine Mason, France



Crossings III

Four Generations in a Flag Store

Viet Nam is very far from America, both literally and figuratively. This includes the twelve-hour time difference, which leads to me living life in “tomorrow land,” as my best friend says. After more than two months in this country, I have reached a mental state in which I am hardly fazed by anything. I live with thin, red worms in my water, the looming threat of cholera on my vegetables, and my room, though perpetually clean, is constantly invaded by mice, hoards of giant cockroaches and their tiny ant comrades, and the occasional rat. To walk down the street is to chance coming within a few scant inches of a slaughtered pig on a motorbike, the animal halved and its head stacked on top of its torso. Late night features small children playing ball on the sidewalk beside twenty-three lanes of motorbike traffic, while their homeless counterparts beg me for money as I surf the Internet and eat my dinner in the café. I have become accustomed to all of these things that, in my prior life in America, would have given me pause. I would have considered these Vietnamese facts of life extremely odd and possibly even troubling, had I only visited the country for a week or two. However, I have learned the basics of the language, taught English to sixth graders, viewed the beautiful people and landscapes through the lens of my camera, and made myself an integral part of the society (and not just as a tourist and a consumer). In terms of this Southeast Asian society, I feel that I was able to give at least as much as I took. With all of this in mind, and after much consideration, I believe that I can make some observations and comments concerning one of my favorite topics to address—Vietnamese families and their businesses in light of Confucian philosophy. In fact, one of my fondest memories of my time in Viet Nam focuses on this exact topic.

It was a sunny Monday morning and I had just finished

teaching my English class at the local secondary school. My fellow English teachers ventured off to the bus stop while I hailed a *Xe Om* (motorbike taxi) instead. Since it was one of my last full weeks in Ha Noi, I wanted to finally find the special Vietnamese flags I had been looking for. After donning my helmet and then telling the driver which street, naming my price and haggling for a bit, I was soon racing through the streets of Viet Nam. I reached the street, dismounted, paid the man and walked past a couple of stores until I spotted the telltale colorful merchandise hanging outside the small storefront.

As I silently entered the small space, I hastily backed up and added my sneakers to the pile of cheap, plastic sandals that are a staple of the average Vietnamese wardrobe. That is one very important thing I have learned while living here in Viet Nam—when in doubt, do what the locals do. The family perked up as they saw me abide by their rules without having to request that I do so. As I tore my eyes away from the array of flags that adorned every available space, I was handed a laminated sheet of paper with pictures of almost every country's national flag. After perusing it under the watchful eye of a woman who must have been about fifty-five years old, I handed it back and announced, much to her and her husband's excitement, that I was not looking to buy an American or British flag, but a Vietnamese one. They showed me the different sizes for the national flag (red background with a large yellow star stationed in the middle) and I picked a very large one for my room back home. Apparently, their real surprise was yet to come as I turned, walked outside, and picked two more obscure Vietnamese flags for my collection. One of them is a general festival flag (practicality is key in Viet Nam) and features a square of white in the middle that is surrounded by frames of blue, red, yellow and green, in that order. The flag is edged by red, uneven, flame-like appendages. The five colors represent the natural world (fire, water, earth, etc.) and are prominently featured in Chinese philosophy. The other flag I had been searching for was of the Vietnamese Buddhist. The flag has five vertical stripes of color—blue, yellow, red, white and orange—and then the same five colors in smaller, horizontal stripes at the end of the flag. In fact, the colors are the same five colors of aura that emanated from the body of the Buddha when he attained enlightenment. The blue stripe represents universal

compassion, the yellow represents the Middle Path, red for blessings, white for purity and liberation, and orange for wisdom and Buddha's teachings.

Immediately after paying for the flags, a young woman of about twenty-five entered the store from the back room (which was where they lived.) On her hip was a beautiful, chubby toddler with huge, soft brown eyes. I greeted them both in Vietnamese and the little boy even gave me a weak hand shake. Feeling someone behind me, I turned to find the woman's smiling father offering me a glass of hot tea. I thanked him and pulled up one of those medium-sized, red plastic stools that, for me, will always characterize Viet Nam. The stools are very practical since they are so small and tend to be well-used, a bit dirty and portable.

As I sat down to drink my tea, I began to talk with the woman's mother, while she began to work on making some flags. Until that point, I was unaware that she actually made the flags herself. She rolled out a huge swath of red fabric and made a chalk line before grabbing a yellow star and lining up one of the star's sides with the chalk line. She then pinned the star into place, folded the unfinished flag into fourths, and grabbed the next piece of red fabric.

Her husband wandered in and out, cleaning the front of the store and sweeping the sidewalk, only pausing at the threshold to either remove his shoes or put them back on. Their daughter toted around her toddler and left for a few minutes to get the little boy some breakfast.

As I began to speak with the woman's mother about my Vietnamese studies, English teaching and travels in Viet Nam, an eighty-year-old woman woke from her nap on an old, worn plastic lounge chair that was situated in the back-left corner of the room. She barely moved her head and looked at me groggily through her cataract-ridden eyes before asking her daughter a couple of questions. Her daughter immediately halted her work on the flags and dutifully filled her in on my studies, teaching and travels—this was because the older woman had slept through the autobiography I had previously shared. I was actually surprised and quite glad to find that my Vietnamese was good that day. The elderly woman looked me over one last time and seemed satisfied. She then fell back to sleep (or at least did not move or talk for the remainder of my visit).

As I finished my tea, I looked at the bustling business that I had stumbled upon and realized, to my amazement, that I was seated before four generations of this family. There was grandma napping in the corner, her daughter and son-in-law serving me tea, selling me flags, and pinning more flags, and their daughter who was dutifully taking care of her young son. I finished my tea and took the opportunity to sit on my little red stool and commit the scene to memory, since I was both fascinated and heartened by four generations in a flag store.

On November 15, 2007, Pham Quang Minh spoke during my "Vietnamese Life and Culture" class. At the end of his talk, which was entitled "Globalization, the End of the Cold War, and Viet Nam's Renovated Foreign Policy," he mentioned that "family is the center of Vietnamese society." I had already seen this fact exemplified during my visit to the flag store. Minh also noted that no matter who (or how important) you are, you must be loyal to your parents and respect them. This philosophy and structure of familial respect for elders, he pointed out, is outlined in Confucianism.

One of the main beliefs in Confucianism is *Hsiao*: love within the family, love of parents for their children and of children for their parents. In fact, Confucianism is "primarily an ethical system" that features a hierarchal system guiding how one relates to and respects elders, teachers and other leaders. One of Confucius's most important teachings is the construction of the five basic relationships, which are "those of husband and wife, of parent and child, of elder and younger brother, or generally of elders and youngsters, of Ruler and Minister or subject, and of friend and friend."

I was able to see most of these relationships and the respect involved therein when I visited the flag store. When the grandmother woke up, her daughter immediately paused her work on making a flag in order to address her needs and questions. Also, it was plain to see the immense love for children displayed by the fifty-year-old woman and by her daughter for the little boy. There is also something to be said for the fact that they all live together in their home behind and above the flag store. While the older man cleaned the front of the store, his wife sat on the ground working on constructing yet another flag. I assume that

the flag store has been handed down for at least one generation now. It is quite possible that the older woman used to run the store with her husband and has now passed it on to her daughter, granddaughter and maybe even her great-grandson.

It has been said that the hundreds of teachings of Confucius can be summed up in one word: *Jen*, or social virtue. Included in *Jen* are the social virtues by which a society will maintain “social peace and harmony like benevolence, charity, magnanimity, sincerity, respectfulness, altruism, diligence, loving kindness, goodness.” As a visitor to this flag store, I saw most of these virtues. The family realized that I could speak some Vietnamese and that I knew something about the Vietnamese traditions and culture. This was quite apparent when I removed my sneakers, stood there in my horribly colorful and mismatched socks and addressed them in age-appropriate and proper Vietnamese pronouns. Their demeanor visibly changed and I was offered warmer smiles, a bounty of questions spoken entirely in fast and excited Vietnamese, a plastic stool and some piping hot tea. I drank the tea slowly so as to stall and speak to them and observe their familial relations for a longer period of time.

While observing the store packed full of colorful flags, I noticed something I had recently begun to overlook. When I first arrived in Viet Nam, I was constantly noticing the small red and gold temples in businesses. They are usually adorned with fruit, flowers, pictures of family members and those thin, red sticks of incense that let off small swirls of pleasant-smelling smoke. I have seen an occasional Buddha statue as well. As Pham Quang Minh remarked at the end of his lecture, these temples to the cult of the ancestors are refilled on the first and the fifteenth days in the moon calendar. Being the staple of Vietnamese businesses and homes, of course I spotted one in the flag store. It was between two long tables over which flags were draped. The flags hung over the front side of the table but were not touching the temple. In actuality, this temple means that the flag store held many more than four generations of this family.

After getting used to seeing them in almost every store, my experience in the flag store and the comment by Pham Quang Minh has rekindled my interest in the ancestral temples. There are very simple reasons for the existence of these temples—ven-

eration and respect. Confucian ethical philosophy discusses the need for harmonious, respectful and obedient relationships between older and younger family members. The ancestral temples are a way to continue this harmonious relationship after the elder's death. In Confucianism, however, "death does not mean the annihilation of man (as the spirit is thought to survive the body)." Followers also believe that "upon death the 'spirit' wanders in space as in exile. Duty requires that it be brought back to the family altar and worshipped," and this filial duty is very important to Confucians. The first and fifteenth day according to the moon calendar necessitates that "the ancestral spirit is to be invoked and offered liquors, flowers and fruit, which is accompanied with prayers and incense." This sheds new light on my encounter with the flag store family, as merely counting the presence of four generations was shortsighted on my part. As the revered ancestral temple now clearly displays, there is a continuum of reverence, respect, and harmony inherent in this Vietnamese family. More than four generations are being honored in this small space.

—Caitlin Seadale

Street Vendor in Hanoi, Vietnam Katy Osborne



Crossings IV

Cotopaxi

Last Spring, I took part in the HWS study abroad program in Ecuador and Peru. It was a life-changing experience. I learned how to speak Spanish at a conversational level and had numerous experiences in a culture that was extremely different from my own. One month into the program, during a stay in Quito, Ecuador, I—and a fellow Hobart crew oarsman—decided that we were interested in climbing Cotopaxi, one of the highest mountains in the Western Hemisphere. Although Cotopaxi boasts an altitude of just under 20,000 feet, we chose it because it is not a relatively difficult technical climb and because we were both inexperienced mountaineers. My friend and I found a travel agency that provided the guides and equipment to climb the mountain and booked our excursion on the condition that we would train for a month before going.

Training for the climb in Quito at 9,350 feet was as difficult as it sounds. We ran for an hour every single day and climbed various smaller mountains to acclimatize to the altitude. We both agreed that had we not had the athletic discipline from crew, or had each other for support, we would not have been able to do it. When the Friday before the weekend of February 24, 2007 came, we felt satisfied with our training but nervous and uncertain about the actual climb. We said our goodbyes to the rest of the group and headed out by bus toward the Cotopaxi base camp. We arrived that night and were immediately told to put on our packs, containing all of our gear, and climb the first 300 feet to the base camp. This took us an hour. The base camp was at an altitude of 15,000 feet and it was there that I got my first taste of extreme altitude. Once we got to the camp, we were all exhausted and we rested for the night and all of the next day. I became nauseous and vomited every time I laid down, so I did not get much sleep. I instead waited out the nausea and thought a lot about why I had decided to do this.

The next day went by very slowly and I ate a lot of pasta and soup in preparation for the climb. All climbers leave for the summit at midnight so they can avoid as much sun exposure as possible. The sun is so powerful in Ecuador that it melts the ice and snow at 20,000 feet and can cause avalanches. Midnight on the morning of February 25, 2007 came, and I was tied on belay to my friend and to my guide. The nervous feeling in my stomach that I had the previous day was gone. I decided that I was either going to make it to the top or not—the determining factors were out of my hands. Our guide pushed us very hard because he was impressed with our level of fitness and excitement. It is hard for me to remember very much from the climb, but I do remember every little step being a hard decision and that it was very difficult to breathe. Ultimately, we were one of only three groups out of 35 to make it to the top. To our surprise, we absolutely crushed the climb—it normally takes six to seven hours and we made it to the top in four and a half. We were able to stay on the summit for an hour and watch the sun rise. It was one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen, and one of sweet success.

Climbing Cotopaxi was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It taught me a lot about myself and my potential, given that I beat the average climbing time by one and a half hours. On the climb, I risked a lot of time and money—but more importantly, I risked my life. Success gave me a tremendous sense of satisfaction and self-reliance that I had not expected. I told myself before we began that I would rather be safe and not make it to the top if I felt endangered. I truly surprised myself with the self-confidence that I felt from my resolution to climb the mountain. Hard work and a positive attitude paid off—so much so that I want to make mountain climbing part of my life. Time permitting, I intend to climb Mount Kilimanjaro and then, eventually, take a crack at the Himalayas.

—Alex Tye

Verse and Vision VI

New Chums Beach Coromandel Peninsula

My dream last night
was horrifying
and today is
disheartening
and the shore is nearly
deserted,
save for the early risers
and the mountain stream
sliding through the sand.

Out on the
rocks,
a boy made a noise
like a train whistle
and I jumped for it
(the stream)
hung for it
(the air)
and hit the water like a heron.

The woman
in my dream last night
had a face like ash
and she fixed me with eyes
that told a story
of hardship
breakdown
beatdown
comedown to nothing then
and everything here and now
on curb where we met.

She told me of
the siren's call
to air raid
drawing unsuspecting
men to their ends
dashed
upon the roofs
of a sailor's call
to dawnraid
on the island
where the unsuspecting screamed
and you could see the sound
from the mainland.

Out on the rocks
I found a tide pool
with a stone the shape of a heart
in the middle of it
and I squatted in the surf
and talked to my reflection.

Alone is
beautiful
sometimes
in the way that
the rolls of film in my pocket
will take a little bit
of this beach with me
to show to everyone who wasn't
there.

On the beach
I squatted down in the sand
and wrote poetry with my fingers
for someone else to find.

She told me how
they ran towards the shore
and on the rocks
an airplane made a noise like
an airplane
and they jumped for it
(heaven)
hung for it
(hell)
and hit the water
(earth)
like herons.

—Ben Michelak

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Sarah Paris





(Non)Fiction

Foreign

They were seated in the kitchen when I walked in, hands white from carrying the groceries back from Tesco's. "Got another parcel from home," James called out, tossing a small box at me like a rugby ball. Shopping bags fell to the ground as I caught the parcel, decorated all over in Scooby Doo stickers. I attempted to glare at him, but found it impossible to even fake anger towards the burly Irishman and laughed instead.

"Your mum is too sweet, Whit," Alex chimed in. "Sent us all Christmas cards and chocolates!" Sure enough, on the table sat a stack of Advent calendars, one for each of my flatmates. "I can't wait until the first of December so we can start eating them!"

"Oh, you haven't eaten yours yet, then?" James inquired, looking down at an open calendar. "Oops." Alex rolled her wide green eyes and stood to help me with the dropped food. James gave a crooked, impish smile and went back to picking out the chocolate from the calendar. We finished with the groceries and sat down just as Dan walked through the door, his unnatural blonde hair (dyed by me, albeit clumsily) shining like a beacon in the late-afternoon gloom.

"Fancy a game of Stop the Bus?" he asked, pulling up a chair across from Alex.

"Sure."

He passed cards around to us in a practiced fashion and started the game. We played in silence for a few minutes, with only the sound of cards being shuffled cutting through the air.

"It's hard to believe it's almost December, isn't it?" Alex asked. "I laid an eight, it skips you, Dan."

"Yeah yeah, I know. It's sure going to be weird next month without Whit here. Who will I talk to when I can't sleep at night? You're the only insomniac in the flat!"

I smiled and laid down my card. "You can always call me; just get a webcam and microphone."

"Isn't the same as having you right down the hall, though. How are you on your last card already?"

I put the last card on the pile between them. "Guess I'm just that good! We Americans are pretty good at everything, you know," I joked with a smile. Dan scoffed good-naturedly as I stood and ruffled his unruly hair. "Speaking of webcams and the like, I better check to make sure my mother hasn't called." I walked from the large kitchen into the hallway, grabbing the package as I went.

"Tell Mom I say hello!" James called cheekily after me.

My bedroom screamed uncertainty. In the kitchen or living room, I could be myself, without preamble. But in this space, labels reigned supreme. Here "Whitney: the American" and "Whitney: the European" crashed into one another, resulting in a mish-mashed wreckage of cultural artifacts. While my closet was filled with the latest fashions from Top Shop and Henney's, the converters for my laptop and stereo made it clear that I was foreign. Adding to this sense was the array of boxes sitting around my room, each addressed in the same looping cursive.

I glanced down at the similarly penned address on the latest package. It read: Whitney Austin, 11 Unthank Rd. Norwich, Norfolk, NR47TJ. And in the corner was my mother's...well, *my*, address: 32 North Main St, Homer, NY 13077. I tossed it onto the bed and turned my attention to the blinking green icon on my laptop. One missed call. Sighing, I sank into my desk chair and clicked on the icon, and seconds later my mother's face appeared on the screen, smiling expectantly.

"Hi honey! I just tried calling but you were out. Did you get your package? Do you like the snowflake lights? I thought you could decorate your flat with them!" I managed a thin smile, maneuvering myself to block mom's view of the bed and unopened box.

"Yea, they're great." And would require yet another converter. "The calendars were a big hit with the gang, too."

"Oh, I'm just thankful they accepted you so easily." My fake smile vanished altogether.

“Accepted me? It’s not like I’m an alien or something.”

“You know what I mean. My baby’s across the ocean in...”

“I’m twenty-one.”

“...in a foreign country and I worry. But I’m glad you made such good friends. You’re going to miss them when the semester is over. Only a few more weeks and you’ll finally be home!”

Home. I let my eyes stray from my mother’s face to the scenery behind her. From the deep burgundy color of the walls I recognized the office of my mother’s house. A school picture of me, taken in fourth grade, hung there. I had lived in that house all my life. It was the only home I had ever known.

Until now.

“It’s gone by so fast,” I muttered distractedly.

“It feels like forever to me! I can’t wait to see you, honey.”

“Yeah, I can’t wait to see you either. But hey, I’ve got some work to do, so I’ll talk to you later, okay?”

My mother continued smiling that unnaturally large, slightly strained smile, as if she knew what her daughter was really feeling. “Okay, Whit. Three weeks!”

I nodded and put as much enthusiasm as I could muster into my voice as I replied, “Three weeks!” I clicked the “end call” button and sank back into the chair. Three weeks and I would be on a flight to Small-town, USA. Boarding my plane for England, I had felt I was leaving my childhood behind and embracing a new phase of my life. Did going back home mean I was regressing?

A sharp bang sounded off my bedroom door, as if someone, a certain lithe and yellow-haired someone, had just run headlong into it.

“Dan! How many times do I have to tell you to simply knock politely?” I yelled indignantly, though a small smirk lifted the corner of my lips as I opened the heavily abused door. As I suspected, Dan stood on the other side grinning mischievously.

“Ah, but where would the excitement be in that?” He peered into my room cautiously. “Off the phone with your mum?”

“Yep. Why?”

“It’s Friday, we always watch a film together, and you’re not

flaking out!" I smiled genuinely for the first time since retreating to my room.

"All right, if I have to," I teased. "What are we watching?" Dan glanced in the direction of the living room, where Alex and James were arguing over a DVD.

"There is no way I am watching Austin Powers again!" Alex whined.

"Come on, it's classic! He's a ledge!"

My smile widened as Dan and I shared an amused look. It was the same argument that occurred whenever we watched a film, and invariably, Alex always won. I followed Dan into the room as Alex put in her pick, James sulking on the couch. Sitting next to him, I patted his arm reassuringly.

"You know, I was really pulling for you this time." He gave me a side-long glare then shoved me playfully.

"Shut up."

"Oh, you'll miss me when I'm gone," I taunted with a laugh. Instead of more smart-ass remarks, James placed his large hand over mine and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"You're right," he replied. "It won't feel like home without you here." Removing his hand, he turned his attention back to the film. Alex plopped down next to me, while Dan sat in front of me on the floor, leaning against my legs. In his lap was a large bowl of sugared popcorn, which he would occasionally pelt Alex with, making her screech. There was nothing entirely significant about the moment, as the same thing occurred every week, but I found myself gazing at the three people gathered comfortably around me, the same people I had lived with for the past three months, and now couldn't imagine living without. Taking a handful of popcorn, I tossed a few in my mouth and sent the rest into the back of Dan's head.

"It won't feel like home without you here."


I couldn't agree more.

—Whitney Austin



Serenity Kneeling in Hong Kong Caitlin Elgert
Yak Overlooking the Remarkable Mountains in New Zealand Alessandra Moore





From My Journal

My Irish Once-Self

Prelude

For a high school graduation present, I received a journal with a personalized message inside, “This is for you to begin a new chapter of your life.” Sounds cliché, but looking back, that journal does contain a chapter of my life, a record of my once-self. That once-self has changed over time, and although it has not been lost, it is sometimes hard to recall the exactness of the past. What follows are excerpts from the first of my two Galway journals.

August 28, 2007

I’ve finally made my way to Aer Lingus flight 132 headed to Shannon, Ireland. Only problem is, the status of my luggage is questionable—meaning it is quite possibly M.I.A. Great! Forces may be trying to throw obstacles in my way, BUT I WILL GET THERE—in fact, I am en route now. So this is the beginning of a whole new era for me—and if I have to do it with just the clothes on my back (literally) then so be it!

August 29, 2007

Galway, Ireland. I’m sitting in a pub right now, drinking my first pint of Irish Guinness, listening to a small, informal ensemble—a fiddler, two guitarists and a female vocalist. She’s singing “Sweet Child of Mine” but the background music has a nice twist, and her voice is just lovely. Anyhow, very odd indeed how I’m here. CULTURE SHOCK ISN’T THE TERM, IT’S MORE LIKE PURE CULTURAL IMMERSION BLISS!

September 2, 2007

Went to the farmer’s market today in city centre—so wonderful! It’s like a new-age meets old-world vending style. I got fresh zucchinis from the farmers, and roasted red peppers, which were absolutely to die for, from the authentic Italian goods stand

that had just about every specialty Italian olive, cheese or side you could think of in wooden barrels. A large, wooden ladle was used to extract the goods from the barrel and place them in your plastic bag. The plastic bag was then placed on a scale, which then spit out an astronomical euro figure for you to hand the nice helpers. But they were worth it my dears, oh yes.

The trip to the Aran Islands (Inis Mor) was great! We bussed to a town forty-five minutes from here and then took a ferry to the island where we biked/walked/biked some more. The island would make a great topographic map, let me tell you. The edge of the island is a cliff, and it is so high and you're so vulnerable that it could make your bones quiver. But the rush is hard to top, and the entire excursion (biking—which I haven't done in ages) was "simply brilliant", as the Irish would say. It was a tough haul, but I'm glad it's under my belt. It's a complicated balance: interpersonal relationships with my American peers and Irish folk, the pub scene, the University thing, the maintaining-good-health thing, and just think—classes haven't even begun yet! But to be honest, I've never felt this cleansed in my life! Even staying in, like I did tonight, with good company, some tea and some laughs is such good fun. Going out, like I did last night, and getting silly with some pints, all the while dancing with Irish boys who kiss your hand while semi-waltzing to traditional Irish guitars and banjos and songs, is also just grand! There's so much to see, say, experience, cherish, relish in—the whole nine.

September 6, 2007

(In Carraroe, from our "home-stay" visit)

I think I may have short-changed the exquisite beauty of this place just a tad...or, more accurately, a HUGE amount! The visual pleasure here is completely fascinating: there are stone walls as well as stones and rocks embedded in the landscape, probably left over from Ice Age glacial movements. The grass, shrubs, flowers, etc. are all so breathtakingly vibrant, and coupled with the stone/rock landscape, the sea and the sky (gray clouds with hints of purple) make it a place that puts you in perspective in the grand scheme of things. Also, since it's a small town with seemingly wholesome folks, there's calmness and serenity to

it—plus the lack of traffic helps a lot! A lot of small vehicles are diesel here; it's funny to see a Mercedes drive by sounding like a Mac Truck.

Owen, the little boy of the host family, warmed up to me and continually jets up the stairs to talk and then is, of course, retrieved by one of his parents. He speaks mainly Gaelic, I guess, but also some English. It seems like a good amount for a five-year-old. He talks with me in English, though, and is SO ADORABLE with huge blue eyes and a little tough attitude.

(Later that weekend I learned that “Irish” is what the Irish call the form of Gaelic they speak, which is also found in a couple of other regions, like Scotland).

September 14, 2007

Tonight Mary, Megan and I went into the city centre to get a bite to eat and then walked around the city. There's so much live entertainment on the cobblestone streets that creates this sort of energy that makes me really talkative, optimistic, intellectual and happy.

September 18, 2007

I've adjusted fairly well I'd say, and as I was explaining today, I think it's because no other logical option exists. Re-adjust, enjoy, discover, travel, explore, laugh, be productive and ACCEPT—or be miserable.

October 1, 2007

“We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” (T.S. Eliot)

October 5, 2007

“Life isn't about finding yourself—Life is about creating yourself.” (George Bernard Shaw - taken off a postcard in the bookshop of the National Library in Dublin.)

October 10, 2007

It's funny because for a time, when I first got here, everything seemed so foreign to me. This is, of course, because it was. But now I struggle to remember what it was that I thought odd at first...

October 13, 2007

Yesterday we went to the Munster Literature Center. While there, we listened to a short-story writer read a few excerpts from his work, a musician sing while playing his guitar and a poet read some of his poems. In a word: AMAZING! How can such talent come out of one small body? The musician was a skinny, unassuming man, with layered, eclectic clothing, glasses, slightly thinning hair and a beak-like nose. His face was angular and thin. If you saw such a fellow on the street, you wouldn't imagine that he, his chair and his guitar could create vibrations within you that have the ability to make your thoughts clear and optimistic.

October 26, 2007

So, this is the end. I have successfully filled in this entire journal. And oh, how far I've come since the beginning. I've grown tenfold, I'd say, since I got here. I have more direction, I am more goal-oriented and I am really serious about making my life the best I can make it. And I'm not joking with this, not at all. I really can't picture not having come here. I've learned a lot about myself here because I'm essentially on my own, which I love —and in a non-American culture.

—Rachel Curtis

The Aleph: a journal of global perspectives

No. VII, 2008

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ISBN No. 1937-0474

Printed by *Canfield & Tack* in Rochester, NY

The creators of *The Aleph* would like to thank the students who have provided their talent, and whose energy continues to inspire and delight us. 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 (2002) and adopted by SIL International, an NGO working to document thousands of dying ethnic languages, many of which are written in modified Latin scripts. Most digital fonts do not include 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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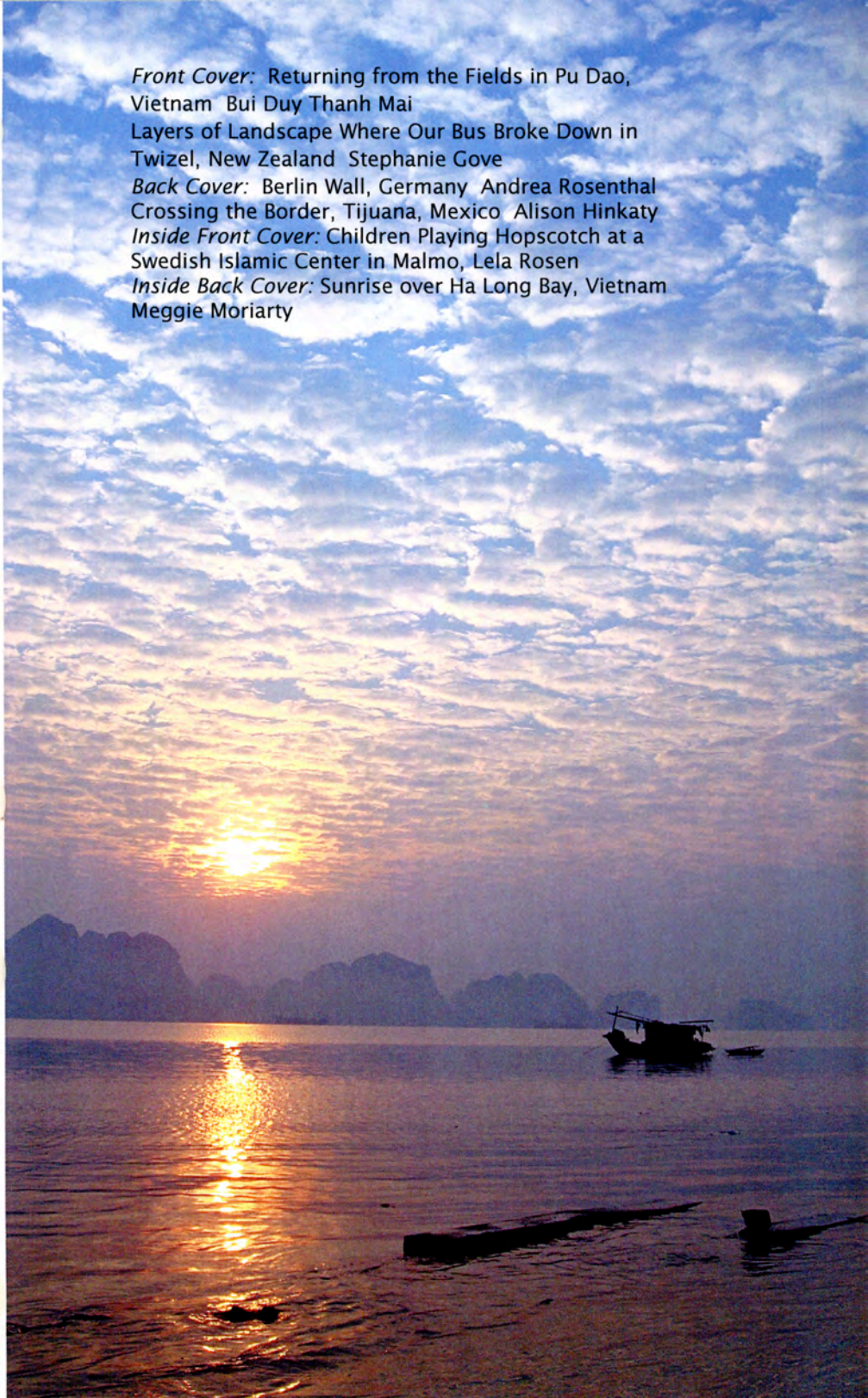
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Volume VII, 2008

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