the Aleph

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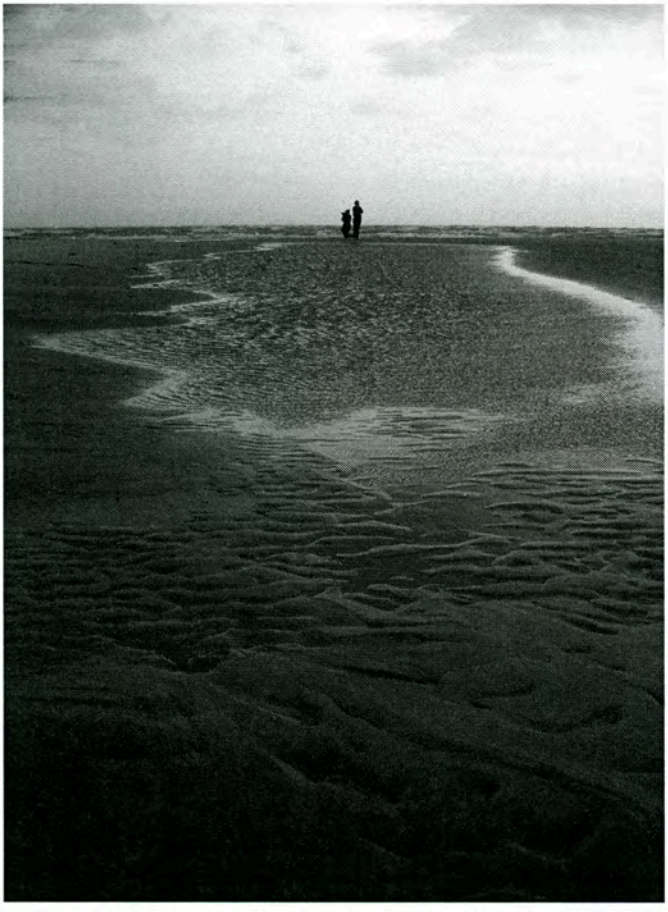
a journal of global perspectives



Walking on the Beach, Denmark Alison Singer

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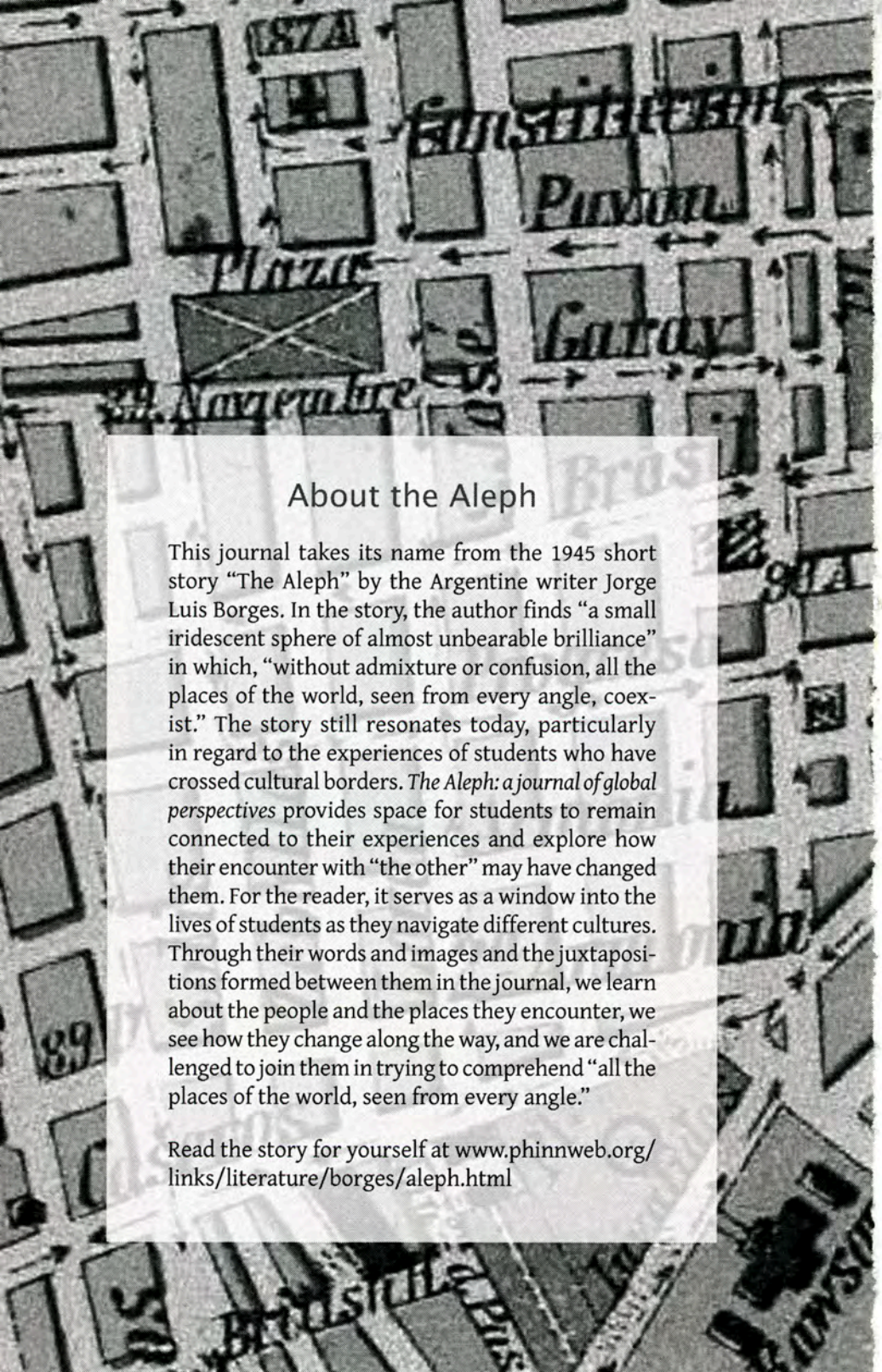

About the Aleph

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."

Read the story for yourself at www.phinnweb.org/links/literature/borges/aleph.html

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Courtyard of Boromini's Quatro Fontane in Rome, Italy Alex Stewart

Verse and Vision I

I. A Beautiful Kind of Nothing

Barry's Irish Tea doesn't taste the same
in paper cups with pasteurized American milk.
It is much better in ceramic mugs
when mixed with thick milk from Galway cows.
And it's best in the afternoon
curled up on a Gort na Coiribe couch
watching the soft rain cascade down the windows.

—Caitlin Caron

II. What Matters Most

It wasn't when
you looked
out the window
through the clouds

gazing at a landmass
once called home.
And it wasn't when
you unpacked
clothes still smelling
of pubs and peat.

It wasn't when
you slept soundly
in a bed without
springs protruding
into your back.

It was because
the lady taking
your coffee order
didn't have a brogue.

It was because
there was no
rain for days
and you missed
your blue raincoat.

It was because
the songs
on the radio
seemed the same

but you seemed
so different
and you didn't know

why. It was because
when you realize
that those moments
have passed,
it's the rain that matters most.

—Caitlin Caron

Moments I

Com licença

Com licença, com licença. Excuse me, excuse me. Already sweating from sprinting up Rua Bartira in desperate fear of missing this once-every-half-an-hour Ana Rosa bus, I pushed my way through the throngs of people until I spied an opening on the metal rail large enough for my hand to grip. I tried to squeeze another hand into the opening to steady myself but the bus lurched forward and so did I. Before nearly landing in the lap of a thirty-something man in a suit, my shoulder bag skimmed a young woman's back enough to generate a grunt and a look of annoyance that I rightly assumed was directed at me. *Desculpa-me*, I said defeated, I'm sorry. She said nothing; her grunt said everything. I looked to the businessman apologetically, as my hand was still resting on his shoulder. *Desculpa-me.*

Não preocupe-se. Posso segurar sua sacola? Don't worry. Can I hold your bag for you?

My brow quickly furrowed at the thought of a stranger in a city typically known for petty theft holding my wallet and laptop, but I considered his comparatively generous reaction to my blatant intrusion of his personal space and nodded. *Obrigada.* Thank you. My eyes never strayed from my bag as my mind filled with worried questions. Does he know I'm American? How would I file a police report in my weak Portuguese? Was he just trying to get my phone number? After what seemed like hours, his hand reached up to press the orange button, indicating that the next was his stop. He handed my bag over with a smile, said *boa noite*, and I took his seat. *Obrigada.*

I smiled to myself, filing the experience as one of those rare instances of unwarranted kindness.

But it wasn't rare. It kept happening. Most of my crowded bus rides for the next four months were accompanied by a tap on the shoulder, an offer to hold my bag, and the three simple expressions: excuse me, I'm sorry, and thank you.

—Anna Lockwood

Two Women in Rennes, France Rachel Federico

"This photo touches the fabric of my life in France. These two women are walking in the rain. I saw them briefly, but watching them support each other on that gloomy day reassured me of the inherent goodness of humanity."

Moments II

The Best Part

There's nothing that frustrates me more than when people ask me, "So...what was the best part of being in England?" I know what they're expecting: standard, cliché, two-to-three word answers like "seeing Stonehenge" or "Tintern Abbey". Actually, Stonehenge can become dull after an extended period of time, and our tour of Tintern Abbey was marred by the dull tour guide that insulted us. Neither really qualified as a highlight of my experience.

How do I explain that one of the best parts of being in Bath was a simple night at home? During our first week of orientation, after seeing the Roman Baths, my housemate and I came home to find the rest of our housemates in the backyard. We

> Mr. D's sold this amazing garlic mayo dip for fries. The first time I had it, I saved what was left over for the next day. My housemate teased me about it, saying that it was weird and gross.

were fortunate enough to have a convenient patio that overlooked gorgeous English houses. It was a warm August night and one of the few times when all eight of us sat outside together. We all shared two bottles of red wine. Our conversation covered a number of topics as we slowly began to learn about each other. It was casual, but a time that I will never forget.

How do I explain that one of the best parts was the guy who sold copies of "The Big Issue" at the end of the bridge while wearing a Scooby-Doo costume? "The Big Issue" was a magazine that some lovely man produced and then assigned homeless people to sell on the streets. The homeless then received a percentage of their sales. There was one such homeless man

who liked to frequent the end of the bridge we crossed everyday to walk to our classes. For whatever reason, he had a plethora of costumes, including a head-to-toe Scooby-Doo costume. He would stand at the end of the bridge, in costume, holding a copy of "The Big Issue" and bobbing up and down to the music blaring from his boom box. There was something about him that always seemed to brighten up my day.

How do I explain that one of the best parts was kicking a container of garlic mayo out of my housemate's hand? In Bath, there was a street stand called "Mr. D's" that sold burgers and fries until all hours of the morning. It was also conveniently situated in the middle of town, which we always passed after a night out at the pubs. Mr. D's sold this amazing garlic mayo dip for fries. The first time I had it, I saved what was left over for the next day. My housemate teased me about it, saying that it was weird and gross, and that it only tasted good late at night after a few pints. The next weekend, we were both stumbling home when he decided to stop for fries and garlic mayo at Mr. D's. He mocked me mercilessly, waving the styrofoam container in front of me, saying "Hey Amy! You want my garlic mayo? You want it?" After he finished his fries, he offered it to me one last time. I yelled, "I DON'T WANT YOUR GARLIC MAYO!" and high-kicked the container right out of his hand. Those who were watching were sure a fight would ensue between us, but we both erupted into hysterical laughter.

How do I explain that one of the best parts was deviating from the path at Avebury to explore the town? Or the wacky British commercials? Or Cadbury chocolate? Or Wednesday night karaoke at The Huntsman? Or Sunday night movies on Channel Four? How do I explain that there really was not one best part of being in Bath, that the best part was just being there?

—Amy Kulow

Whitby Abbey, Overlooking the Seaside Town in York, England Ben Atkins

Moments III

Crossing the Corrib

Many of my adventures in Ireland happened on runs through the country. Sun, wind, cold or rain (skin-prickling and flattening rain), I ventured out into Galway's city and country roads. Running in Ireland has its ups and downs; literally and figuratively. It provides gorgeous scenery as well as unexpected companionship—friendly dogs constantly joined me on runs. However, sidewalks appear sporadically and roads curve sharply out of sight. This creates a hazard since Irish drivers roar around corners and squeeze past one another on narrow roads.

In September, I discovered a path with my running partner Jen. It was on our campus, the National University of Ireland in Galway, which curves by the River Corrib. It is deserted most of the time, with the exception of weekend mornings when all of Galway turns out with its children and dogs, leading us to our new infatuation. It appears suddenly, casually—a castle on the other side of the river. Mostly intact, but fiercely encroached by ivy, it sits quietly.

It becomes our favorite run, and each time the castle draws our attention. Sometimes we spy people across the river, walking or picnicking on the lawns of the castle. One time I even saw horses meandering behind a screen of brush.

It sparks our obsession; Jen and I become fixated on finding a way to Menlo Castle—either across the river or through back roads. Swimming across the river is the simplest option, but also the coldest. Rowers glide by us as we run, teasing us with their ability to cross water. So we decide to search for a route behind Gort na Coiribe, our apartment complex. One night, Jen and I study our professor's map of Galway, which offers little help. Streets in Ireland only have signs on buildings, inconveniently located well above eye level. Still, we get a rough sense of direction. We take preliminary runs, together and separately, to scout it out. One Saturday morning, seeing the rare sun inspires

me to take advantage of the good weather and go for a run. I am on my way to the castle. On this quiet morning I carefully avoid being flattened by the rumbling trucks trundling to the nearby quarry. As expected, two black dogs join me until I turn off their road. Every time I pass an opening I slow down, searching for a road or a sign directing me to the castle. At the end of a road, there stands a suspiciously old stone arch. The entrance to the original walls of the castle? There's still no sign but I enter under the arch and continue down the impossibly muddy dirt road. It's even more deserted, although I stumble upon an Irish gentleman tending to his cow, wisely wearing knee-high boots. He's looking right at the obviously crazy foreigner running by so I have to say something. I tell him about my quest—"I'm looking for the castle." In true Irish style, he tells me it's straight ahead and even to ignore the wooden gate blocking the entrance. I thank him and there is now new adrenaline pumping with the prospect of the castle so close. I follow his directions. The gate is two pieces of flimsy wood that I easily climb over. The road continues in faint marks down a hill which dips down and reveals the back of the castle.

And it's absolutely amazing. On this side of the Corrib, the reality of the castle's solitude and musty history is tangible. I scramble through the stone interior, and climb across the muddy, uneven floor. Outside I spy a small inlet that once docked boats. I grin as I look across the water to the path I've run for so many weeks. I'm finally on the other side of the river! I see several boats filled with rowers slide by.

On my return to Gort, I spy a figure running towards me from the opposite direction. We recognize each other as we draw closer—it's Jen! I run faster to catch up with her; I can't wait to tell her that I finally reached the castle.

—Rebecca Chawner

Moments IV

The Americans, the Irish, and Martin Sheen

Soon after we arrived in Ireland, there were rumors about Martin Sheen's student status at the National University in Galway. We all heard the rumors and believed them to be true, so every day turned into a "Martin Sheen Watch."

Well...I MET MARTIN SHEEN. And it was glorious.

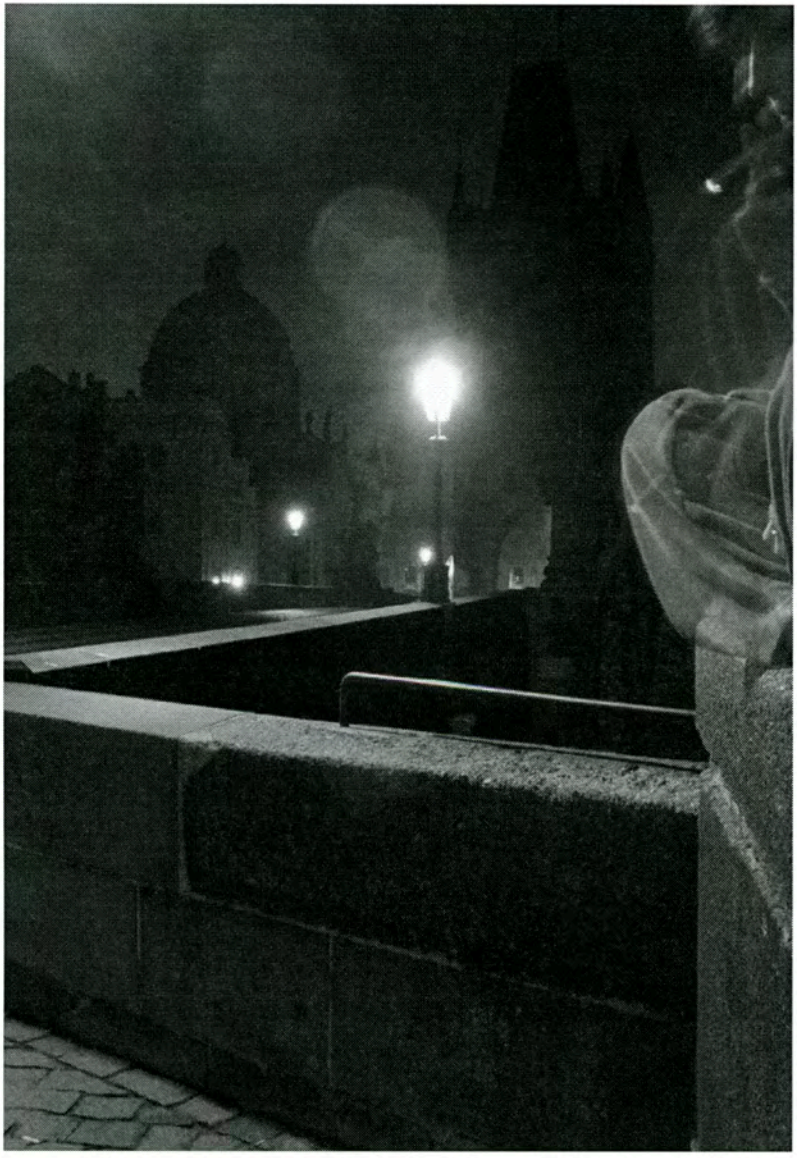
Sam, Caitlin, Aaron, Joey, and I were in the Aula Maxima (the oldest building on campus where many departments are located) so Sam could ask one of the professors a question about the science classes. We bummed around the little geology museum they had there, not thinking that minutes later we would run into the man himself: Martin Sheen. As we were leaving and going down the main flight of stairs, I noticed a man with white hair walking up the stairs. I thought to myself, "Could it be Martin Sheen?" but I didn't think it was because I didn't remember Martin Sheen having very white hair. At the landing in between flights I stood face-to-face with the star of "The West Wing." In my excitement and shock, I burst out with an obnoxious and overly-Stephanie "HEYYY!!" (My friends said later they thought I ran into an old friend). He was soooooo nice and really a sweet, genuine guy. He shook all of our hands and introduced himself as "Martin of California." He had glasses, wore a blue wind breaker, and had a book bag on his back. I was surprised how short he was, probably only about 5'9" or so. He looked very good for his age, definitely more like Charlie than Emilio. All of us chatted for a few minutes about classes and the university (He's taking philosophy and science classes, no English or history, boo. But I guess that's good so I'll listen to the professor instead of staring at Martin

Sheen. Because let's face it, we all know I would be that person). We said our goodbyes, and when we knew we were out of view and earshot, we all pumped our fists and shared silent screams. VERY exciting. All of our classmates were jealous and demanded to know every detail.

I'm on a first name basis with Martin Sheen. SWEET.

—Stephanie Spano

Modern Art, Denmark Alison Singer



Twilight on Prague's Charles Bridge, Czech Republic
Michael Zinshteyn

Verse and Vision II

British Walls

It seems like everywhere I turn there are walls
And every possible door is locked
I'm suffocated by Britain, that's all
There's nothing really to care for

I turn, there's a wall
Open the door, there's a wall
When one door closes, another opens, I was told
Yet, I try every door, and I find a wall
I turn again, there's a wall
Look ahead, there's a wall
Britain is full of opportunities, I was told
Yet all I've seen is tall gray walls
And nothing more
I run into them
I hit them
I try to jump over them
I beat them
I can't take it no more
No more!

I feel like every person I talk to puts up a wall
And I can't get closer at all
Why do people tend to be so cold?
Don't they care for others anymore?

I thought that when the winter was gone
The cold and the walls would disappear, too
But even with the sun shining
There is no warmth at all
Doesn't kindness have room anymore
In this kingdom surrounded by walls?

Again I turn, there's a wall
Open the door, there's a wall
When one door closes, another opens, I was told
Yet, I try every door, and I find a wall
I turn again, there's a wall
Look ahead, there's a wall
Britain is full of opportunities, I was told
Yet all I've seen is tall gray walls
And nothing more
I run into them
I hit them
I try to jump over them
I beat them
I can't take it no more
No more!

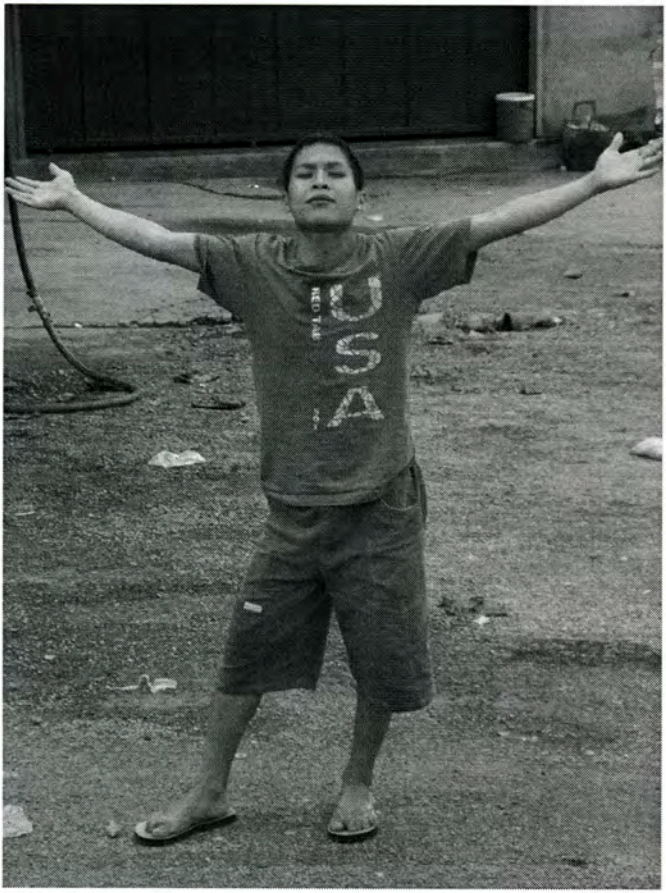
It's hard
To try
To live
A life
Trapped
Miserably
Strength
Weakening
Is there somebody out there who can hear me?
This is my cry! Please come free me!

Finally, I drill a hole
But behind it, another wall
I don't want to deal with it anymore
Why is Britain so full of walls?

—Felipe Estefan

Signing the Belfast Peace Wall Betsy Dingman


BAL@MGIA
2006
Patrick Barry
Lisa Bull
Australia
Melbourne
DONA
ELISA



Untitled, Vietnam Jonah Levy

List I

Gort na Coiribe
Apartment # 103

As has so often occurred in the last few months when asked to describe and define my experiences, I feel the failure of language sticking in my throat. What comes to mind are not the beautiful places I have seen, nor the moments when I may have 'found myself', but rather the conversations, the events and the laughs that happened when I was least expecting to be moved. The anecdotes. My house became the center of my world, as did the people in it: Sarah, Sean, and my roommate, Lisa. I calculate my time in Galway based on the indefinable value of each of these individuals and the meaning they brought to my overseas adventure.

Room 1a. Lisa Maloney
Hometown: Knock, County Mayo, Ireland

i. when we first met, she told me she hated americans—the accent most especially.

ii. she claimed to like *me*, though.

iii. the first and only time she ate mushrooms, i stayed up with her until four a.m., making sure she didn't try to jump out the window.

iv. we quoted Borat incessantly, laughing until our stomach muscles burned.

v. we took joy out of cooking for each other, drinking tea on the couches of the living room, and sharing pints of Ben & Jerry's *Phish Food*.

vi. one of our ongoing jokes was the question, "how about a sneaky kiss?"

Room 2. Sarah O'Neill
Hometown: Tuam, County Galway, Ireland

i. she reminded me of Courtney Love, without the drug habit and embarrassing television appearances.

ii. on my 20th birthday, she bought a cake, lit candles and sang, even though there was no one else in the house at the time to join her.

iii. we ate the whole cake ourselves.

iv. i found her drunk to sickness one night in our second floor hallway. a glass of water a couple feet away, her chin resting on her chest. as i lifted her off the floor, she smiled and said, "now you can tell everyone you lived with a real irish alcoholic, miss america."

v. she made me laugh the hardest when she did karaoke, spastically shaking her hair in her face.

vi. sarah and i had a lecture on Chaucer together, which neither of us ever wanted to go to. one day in class, i thrilled her by putting on a pair of sweatpants while sitting down. it was the most exciting thing that ever happened there.

Room 3. Sean Gerrity (Nickname: Gerty)
Hometown: Sligo, County Sligo, Ireland

i. hundreds of freckles dot his face and body. i just figured his skin couldn't decide which tone to be.

ii. one night, he walked home with me at two in the morning through the deserted streets of galway when he could have stayed downtown with his other friends.

iii. every night, he cooked a real dinner for himself. i will never forget my surprise the first time i saw him use the oven.

iv. he loved an australian soap opera called 'Home and Away', which i absolutely despised. sometimes he would forget and ask me if i saw that day's episode and "could i believe what had happened to Peter?"

v. i liked to do an impression of him. it involved me putting on a deep voice and saying, "i'm GERTY, i like RUGBY."

vi. sometimes i would call him 'seanzie', which he hated. but he hated when sarah called him 'gertolomew' even more.

On the day I moved out, December 4th, Gerty, Sarah, Lisa, and Bryan Hannon (from the house across the street) all got up early to see me off. Lisa made Gerty and Hannon bring my luggage downstairs and put it in the taxi. I hugged each of them goodbye in the near-dawn, forcefully willing myself not to cry as the driver pulled away from the house.

—Stephanie Eggen

Laundry in Avignon, France Lindsay Button

List II

Differences Between the U.S.A. and the Czech Republic

If I say "everybody" or "people", it refers to Americans... If I say "we", it refers to Czechs.

- Air-conditioning is everywhere, even in houses
- You can find water fountains everywhere in the U.S.
- There is more water in a toilet in the U.S.
- American flags flutter everywhere, even on houses or cars
- We don't have frats and frat parties
- We can drink when we are 18, even on the streets
- Americans wear flip-flops regardless of the weather
- Everybody wears caps
- Americans have fewer very close friends
- If an American says "How are you?" he doesn't want to know how you really are
- Americans always put ice cubes in drinks such as Coke, Sprite, etc.
- Few people really know something about world history—I found that people didn't know when WW2 started
- Different college educational system—I consider it

A Family Celebration for Grampa's Name Day
Old and New: The Saponar Sisters in Braşov, Romania Katherine Cummins

"I work with college students from Romania during the summer and last year I had a chance to visit some of these friends."

- Most Americans refuse to learn foreign languages—but it's understandable since they can speak English everywhere; the British are the same
- Americans are more likely to use Macs and iPods—it's very uncommon in Europe
- Different behavior in restaurants in the U.S.—they seat you, water is free, but you also have to pay a higher tip
- You have to pay for ketchup in McDonald's in Europe
- You can get a beer in a fast food restaurant like McDonald's or KFC in Europe
- Driving—you can turn right on red in the U.S.
- Automatic cars are more popular than stick-shift in the U.S.
- Gas is very cheap in the U.S.
- In the U.S. it's common to "hook up" with someone and not even talk to him/her the next day, but maybe that's just this college's specialty
- Girls don't expect boys to open doors for them in the U.S.
- Wider diversity of people in the U.S.
- Racism is a bigger problem in Europe
- It seems to me that Americans think that Europeans listen only to techno—not true at all
- Soccer is not a national sport in the U.S.
- College students wear shirts and sweatshirts with logos of the University—nobody wears those in the Czech Republic—everybody would think you were a nerd.

—Martin Svitek

List III

Misunderstandings Misinterpreted: Awkward Interactions with My Host Family

I said: Je veux faire de l'escalade.
I want to go rock climbing.

They heard: Je veux faire une salade.
I want to make a salad.

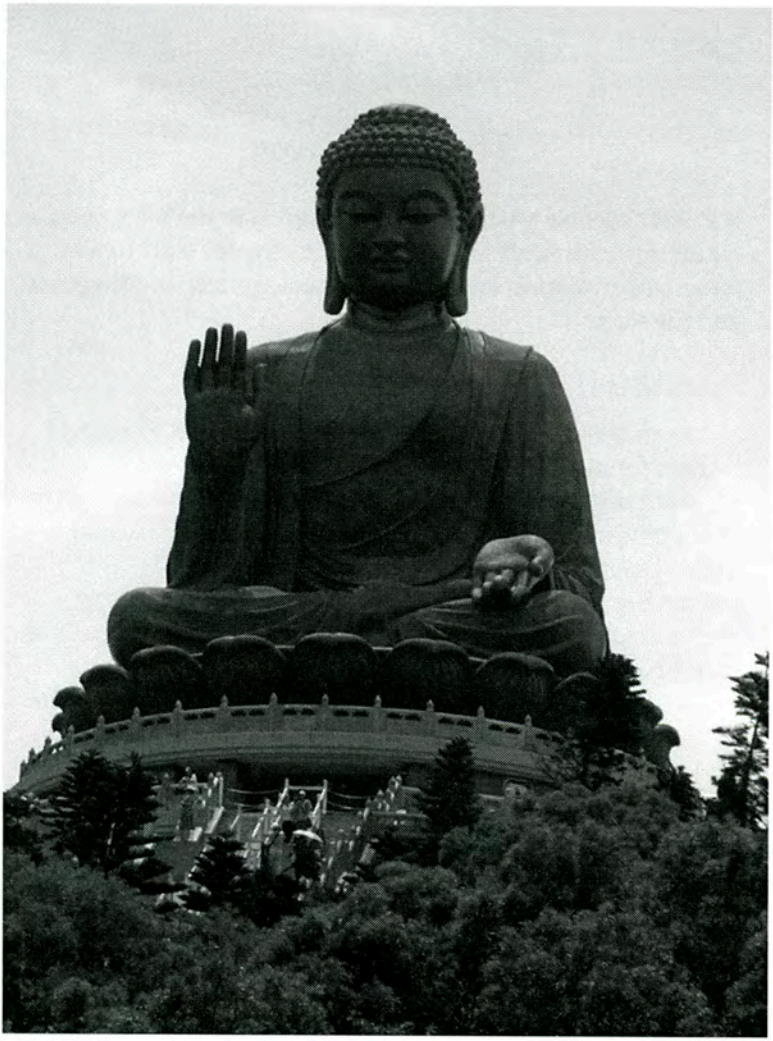
They said: Attends jusque à les pois sont prêtes.
Wait until the peas are ready.

I heard: Commence même si les pois ne sont pas prêtes.
Start even though the peas aren't ready.

They said: Je prends la douche à neuf heures.
I take my shower at nine.

I heard: Personne n'est dans la douche à neuf heures.
No one is in the shower at nine.

—Rebecca Yochelson



Buddha, Hong Kong Kathy Wong

List IV

Then and Now

It's amazing how your thoughts change over time. I learned a lot on my Australia/New Zealand term abroad, and I don't just mean about marine creatures and geology, but about people and the world.

Here's what I thought when I first got there:

- Strange feeling of just being on vacation but yet knowing I'll be here for months.
- Fearing that I may seriously injure myself by just misstepping or slipping a little because of the fact that some of the hikes are pretty intense and on rocky cliffs.
- Worrying about getting run over by cars simply because the old "look left before you cross the street" doesn't work when the cars are on the other side of the street.
- Anxious to get to know everyone because I know people have the potential to make or break a whole term abroad experience.

Here's what I felt while I was there:

- Loving how interactive and field-oriented the classes are.
- Being utterly pleased with the people I met—both on my trip from America and also the Aussie people.
- Going to the beach on a weekend in October is wonderful in so many ways.
- Realizing that the Australian people are so much friendlier when they talk to you—but its multicultural society is made up of distinct groups instead of an integrated "Australian" culture.
- Learning that potential dangers were likely to cause intense discomfort for some length of time, but relieved by knowing things weren't lethal.
- Looking at America as an outsider for the first time and really not liking some things about it.
- Appreciating the fact that I don't have to deal with public transport on my way to school every day.

Here's what I reflected on as the term ended:

- Relating the whole experience to a massive dream but I'm excited to see my friends and family again.
- Missing my homestay family for their little quirks.
- Being sad that I would probably never get to travel and explore a country that much ever again.
- Wanting to come back in 10–15 years with money so I could do more.
- Realizing that I'm going to be in my 30s next year and that's old so I'm really glad I had this experience.
- Finding traveling experiences invaluable and wonderful, but more to experience the people's way of life than their place (even though that was beautiful, too).
- Meeting people and becoming good friends quickly is really not that difficult.

—Anjali Singhla

North Stradbroke Island, Australia Anjali Singhla

Verse and Vision III

Blind Me

Traveling abroad to beautiful cities
Mingling cultures
Old, established...traditional
Though I have sight I am blind
A different way in each eye
Hindering one coherent picture
Left eye connected to artistic sights
Via abstracts
Therein seeing solely an exotic land
Head-wrapped adorned women
Spices and flavors of new markets
And oh so many sights to explore
Right eye linked to rationality
Sees black gold potential
In a state drenched in poverty
While younger generations create new experiences

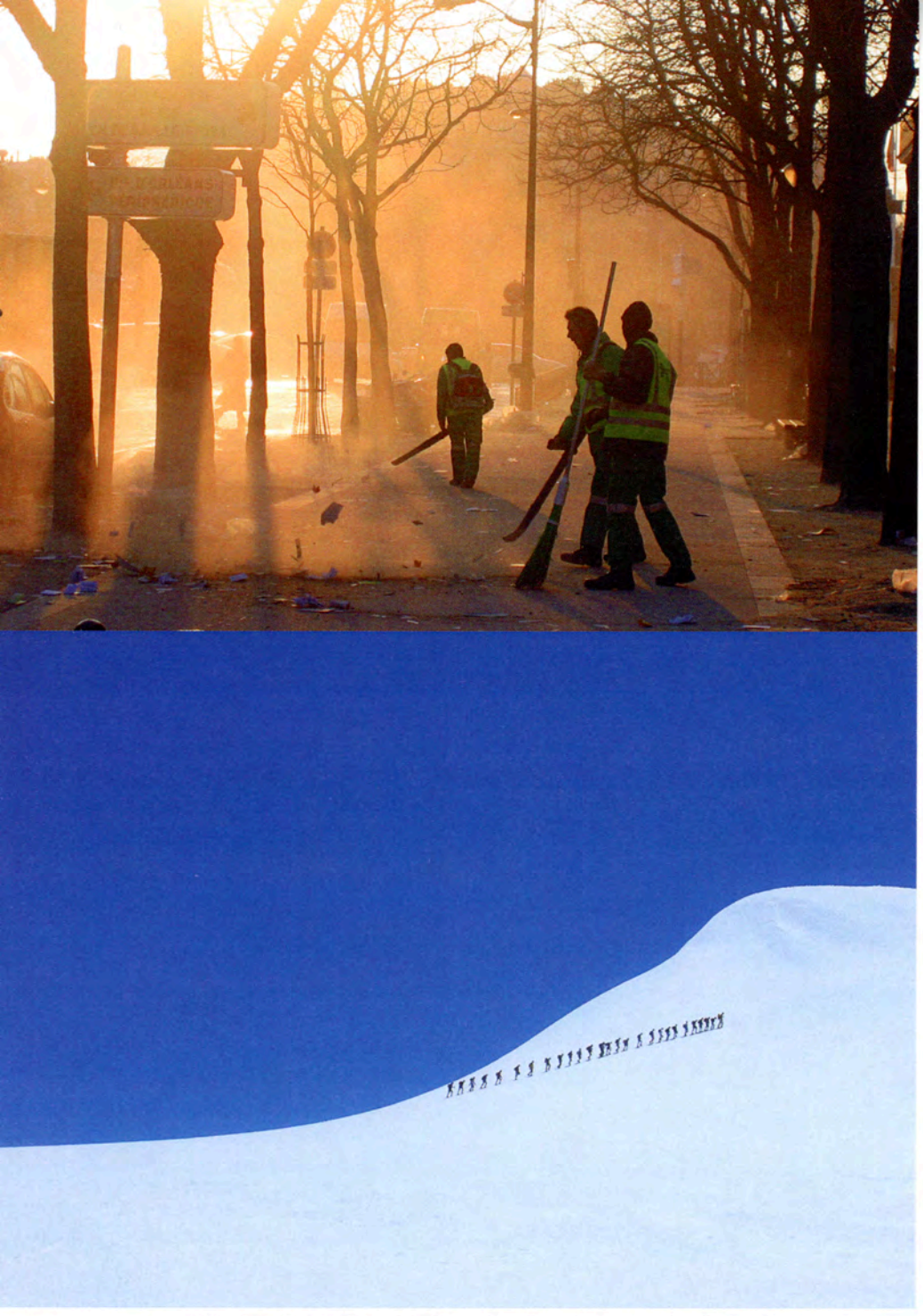
All the while
These sights are viewed from
The tinted windows of a chauffeured car
Both eyes move daily from one gated place to another
Twice blind
Yet both still seeking their own views
As they wonder
Searching for extended blindness with each new place

—Whitney Burton

Trail Through the Sugar Cane, Barbados Katja De Vries

Clockwise, from above: **Sculptures Overlooking the North Sea**
'Eternal Men...Looking to Eternity', Denmark Nicole Henderson
Interior of the Mosque of Cordoba, Spain Jessica Trotter
From Buda, Looking towards Pest, Hungary Peter Roland

Plaza at Night in Venice, Italy Matthew Nazrenko
'Atomic Beach', Brazil Jessica Trotter



Aftermath of Paris Protest, France Rebecca Yochelson
Mt. Ruapehu, New Zealand Matt Ernst

Relaxed Tourist and Suspicious Worker
Boy with a Paper Airplane Tobias Leeger

Word and Image I

In Search of the Right Picture

To be honest, I have to say that before I went to India I didn't know much about the country and its people. Even though we wrote a long paper about Indian culture and economic development, my mind was mainly filled with stereotypes as I stepped off the plane in Delhi. I didn't know what to expect and was a little bit scared. What was the food going to be like? Will it be dangerous to walk in the streets alone? Would people be friendly or rejecting? The looks on the faces of everybody else in the group showed exhaustion from the long flight, but I could see they had the same questions in mind. Now that we are back at Union I guess we can all say that the term was nothing like we expected. During the experience some liked it, while some continuously talked about how much they wanted to go back to the U.S. because they didn't feel quite comfortable in India. But I fell in love with the country and its people.

My journey began on the flight from Frankfurt to Delhi. I travel a lot, and I don't always enjoy being at airports and on planes. However, I enjoy observing how people relate with each other. It can teach you a lot! The flight to India was quite interesting. Once on the plane, I immediately realized that it was a good deal louder and more lively than usual. It was a Lufthansa flight, but most of the passengers were Indian. While on other flights people settle in their seats quietly, arranging their things for a comfortable flight, this was different. People were much more lively, talking and walking around. Children were climbing over the seats (including mine), and it seemed like everyone knew one another. Passengers were helping each other to load their bags in the overhead compartments and many people negotiated and switched their seats. It is hard to describe, but I somehow had the feeling that everyone was part of a big family. It can be uncomfortable to sit for hours crowded

with many people in a little plane, but it wasn't in this case. I immediately felt comfortable, smiled and started talking to the people around me. I can't exactly recall the conversations I had, but the time flew by and we landed in Delhi after what seemed to me like just one hour.

Later, I realized that this flight to Delhi represented something I experienced and learned in India. India is an extremely crowded place, uncomfortable for an individual, yet everybody smiles and life is good despite the difficulties. Humans are social beings and someone's true character is shown by how he interacts with others. Thus, who we are reveals itself especially when we are put in a little plane with hundreds of other people,

> Doing photography forces you to change your perspective of things if you want to capture what a country and its people are really like.

who also have to endure the long, exhausting flight. Likewise, India was one of the most crowded places I have been to and the conditions people live in are incredibly difficult. Yet, they are happy, smile at each other and work together like a big family. It makes life easier and it is how they survive. When I saw the slums in Bombay and the many people living on the streets in the most horrible conditions, I wondered how people could still smile the way they do. Americans, or westerners, I believe, with their more egocentric view of life, would have a much harder time living together under such conditions. I don't know what shocked me more about India, the extent of the physical suffering I saw, or the human's ability to endure it.

During our travels, I realized that the Indian lifestyle and way of thinking is so radically different from our western perspective that it is initially hard to understand. In my opinion, when experiencing another culture, the most important thing is to be open-minded. Easier said than done! If we grow up in a certain place we develop specific patterns of thinking and views of life, which are fundamental to our perception of the world around us. We project the ideas and stereotypes we have on what we see, so we don't always have to question everything. That is O.K. and very practical if we are at home, but *when traveling to*

another country we will never be able to understand its true character without understanding and overcoming our own thinking first. For me, it was photography that enabled me to experience India as it truly is.

I am an economics major and I had economics in mind when coming to India. I could have walked around all day, thinking about labor and wages, capital and investment, government regulations and welfare. I could have explained everything in economic terms and projected my ideas onto what I saw. That was not at all what I intended. Thus, I left my economics books at home and took my camera. Doing photography forces you to change your perspective of things if you want to capture what a country and its people are really like.

It is hard to take good pictures if you simply step out of the air-conditioned tourist bus (with a huge sign saying 'TOURIST' on it, so you don't even have the slightest chance of blending in) and then try to take pictures of another culture. People won't act normally (they will swarm around you, trying to sell you all kinds of obscure things) and it becomes very hard to see the real India. Many times, our bus would drive through the most interesting, strange and amazing streets (I couldn't wait to get out and take pictures) but then we only stopped at another tourist site. It was the disadvantage of traveling with a big group, and some day I want to return to India and fully "dive" into its daily life.

"If your pictures are not good enough, you are not close enough," said Robert Capa, a famous photojournalist. So first, you have to get close to what you are taking pictures of—and that was not too much of a problem. As soon as you left the hotel, the many street children would run after you trying to get money (or that is what we always thought). We see some of the poverty in third world countries on TV and learn about some of the suffering, but it really hits you when it is literally touching you. Little children would hold your arm and even kiss your feet saying "*kana, kana,*" asking for food.

Street children especially were eager for money and, if you would give away some, even more would come running after you. But they were also very excited if you would speak to them and give them some of your attention (upper class Indians, it seemed to me, would never even look at them). The children

Public Toilet in Agra
Street Boy and Police Officer Tobias Leeger

would always have big smiles on their faces. Even the older street vendors and other people in the streets would smile at you in a way that I never saw before. My logic always told me that they were just trying to rip me off, but I *felt* that the smiles were sincere. I decided to trust my feelings. That is what made my time in India great for me.

That is another important thing about taking good pictures I learned in India: you not only have to be physically close to what you are photographing but you have to *feel* close and connected. If your pictures are supposed to express the feeling of India and its people, how can you achieve that without feeling it yourself?

When I realized that, I focused on my *feelings* and tried to forget about everything else on my mind (like being upset about unequal income distribution, or trying to figure out how much business a vendor might be getting, or worrying about the grime and danger in the streets). I tried to step out of my shoes and into the shoes of the people I was taking pictures of. I remembered what the Dalai Lama once said:

> *I traveled to many places on this earth, and wherever I interacted with people, I did it with the feeling of being a part of their own family. Even if I meet someone for the first time, I accept him as a friend. The truth is that we already know each other on a deep level, as human beings, which share the same basic aims: We all long for happiness and want to avoid suffering.*

With all this in mind I started seeing the people around me in a different light. It still was hard to take good pictures, but the more I saw, the more I felt connected and close to the country. I felt like I was on the right track to being a good anthropological photographer.

One day, I was sitting in a taxi with two of my American friends. The driver smiled at me with the big, Indian smile that I saw so often, I smiled back, and explained where we wanted to go. During the ride, he asked where we were from and to my surprise my two friends said "Canada!"

Canada? I thought it was only a stereotype that traveling Americans liked to pretend to be Canadian (But apparently, the old driver, with his long, white beard and his big turban, looked

like a much-feared "terrorist" from Fox News). I was never really that scared in India; I tried to follow my feelings and depict the real life of the people we came in contact with.

In Goa, I talked for hours with some of the Indian boys on the beach. As soon as I understood one aspect of Indian life, customs or culture, twenty more questions presented themselves. I realized I knew nothing, and everything was subjective. I knew that my parents, for example, were back home in Germany, busily shopping for Christmas, simply assuming that it was Christmas everywhere in the world. It can be unnerving to see one's own rigid view of the world break apart and have subjectivity knock you off your feet. In India I learned that we first have to accept that we know nothing, and put aside our feelings of insecurity or superiority before we can actually listen. By listening, we can come to understand things as they really are. And maybe then it is possible to take good pictures, too.

—Tobias Leeger

King Loui Tobias Leeger

"He was obviously the leader of the group of monkeys. He would just sit like that and watch everyone."

Waiting
Barber in Agra Tobias Leeger

Word and Image II

In Search of Good *Craic*

An Cistin in Carraroe, located in the breathtaking rural lands of Connemara in Western Ireland, is one of many pubs influenced by Western and European music cultures. When I asked the bartender at An Cistin if they played traditional Irish music, she laughed, replying "No, only country of course. We love country music here." My search for traditional music continued.

Every evening at 5:00 p.m., a group of musicians gather at Taaffes in Galway for a session. The groups are informal—some regulars but the cast changes frequently—and largely not professional. They are, however, expert players. They may receive a couple of drinks on the house, but their performance is mainly just for

the love of music and the community. This session is dominated by banjo, accordion and guitar, and the traditional tunes have a western vibe.

The bodhran is an authentic instrument played during most Irish music sessions. The bodhran has carried rhythms close to the Irish heart for generations. The drum-like instrument is made of carefully-prepared goatskin and wood, and it is played with a cipin. Players can count out reels, jigs, airs, and other kinds of Irish tunes.

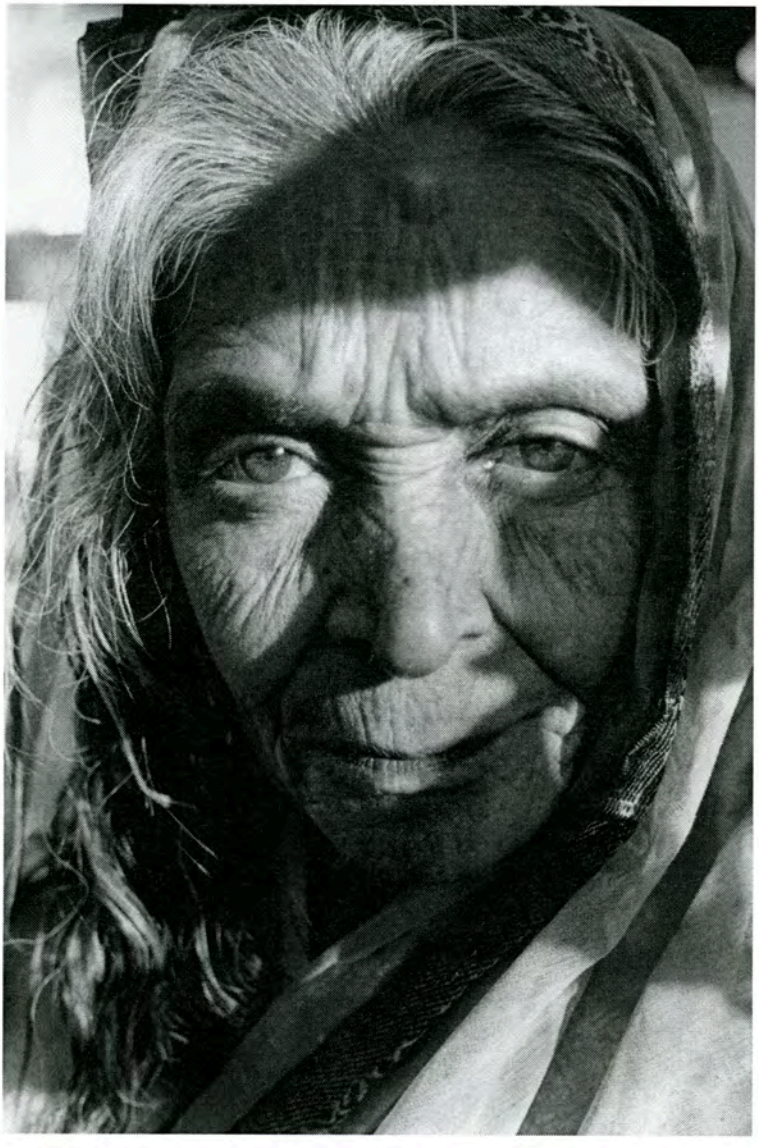
The Crane Bar, a hidden gem tucked away on a Galway side street, is a low-key bar known not only for its traditional Irish music sessions, but also for its concerts held in a separate room upstairs. A young group with a passion for traditional Irish music, known as Nabac, plays just after arriving home from a gig in Denmark. One key element of traditional Irish music is ornamentation, in which musicians add their own flourishes to songs- such as adding trills, triplets and grace notes; changing the order of the melody; or making variations in the rhythm or metre. Like an interpretation of a jazz standard, the particular ornamentation of a song makes it unique and exciting.

Andy (the man on the left in the facing photograph) traveled about four hours from a town of only 1000 people in County Meath for a weekend visit to Galway solely for the city's renowned music scene. Andy was a typical Irishman of great kindness and hospitality, offering my friends and me a ride to Dublin (on his way home) and a place to stay if needed.

Regardless of the pub location, the type of music played, or whether the musicians are paid or volunteer, the passion and love for music in Ireland is universal. Music and pubs are intertwined in the lives of most Irish people. The pubs are common meeting places for people of all ages, and the music—traditional and Western-influenced—brings

these people together in unique and exciting ways. Music gives each pub its own unique character in a way that isn't often found in the United States. No matter what day of the week it is, if you want to enjoy some good *craic* in the company of grand people who are out to socialize in a friendly and respectable manner, while listening to great music, the pubs in Ireland always have open doors.

—Jennifer Libous



Word and Image III

Dadi

My name is Yeasmine Khalique. I grew up in New York City, but I am originally from Bangladesh. My parents emigrated from their native country when I was about four years old. Since then my family and I have gone back to visit my grandparents a few times. I always enjoyed these visits to their tiny rural village, where everyone knew everyone's business, a completely different world from New York City. Everyone always seemed to me to be relaxing on the porch, talking, taking naps under the shade of mango trees, or swimming in the pond to avoid the heat. Even the sheep and cattle were in this state of relaxation, slowly roaming around, taking it easy. There was no air conditioning. What I considered basic necessities in New York were often unheard-of luxuries in Bangladesh. There was no running water; it had to be brought from town or pumped out of a well, and then boiled to make it safe for drinking. Even though my stays in Bangladesh meant getting bitten by mosquitoes, sharing hard, uncomfortable beds with at least 3 other relatives, and not having television, it was fun, and completely worth it. Recently my Grandmother made the same trip in reverse, coming to New York City to visit us.

My Grandma, whom I call Dadi, is in her early eighties, or maybe late seventies—a person's age is not very important in Bangladesh. She was born at home in her village, and there was

> Dadi was smiling for our sake. She could not have been prepared for this trip.

no birth certificate. She has no idea of the exact day of her birth, which does not seem to bother her. Dadi had never really traveled outside the village, except to see a doctor or to visit her relatives in neighboring villages. Her visit to America was a powerful experience for her, taking a plane to the other side of the world,

to one of its biggest and most modern cities. She had never even been in a car before, and now she was in an airplane.

I do not know how she even managed to find her plane terminal, with no ability to speak or read English, and having no prior experience travelling. When I look at her, however, I realize that this tiny woman has an incredible strength buried within her. This is evident in her eyes, the years of wisdom, a lifetime of stories and knowledge. This is a portrait of a woman who has endured a great deal. The preceding photograph was taken the first week she came, when she was very curious about all the new things she saw.

The second photograph was taken about two months into her visit. She was finding it very difficult to adjust. She felt caged in our three-bedroom house. She had left behind an entire village where she was free to roam as she wished with familiar faces and language, and now she found herself in this strange land with people she could not relate to. My mom and I were trying our best to make her feel at home. This photo was taken right after we finished putting henna tattoos on her hand, which is a very popular thing to do in Bangladesh. It might not be obvious, but if you look carefully you can see that she is forcing a smile on her face. The henna tattoos only made her miss home even more. *Dadi* was smiling for our sake. She could not have been prepared for this trip. Her traditional *sari* against our typical American leather couch illustrates the difference between two drastically different lifestyles. From the first photograph to the second you can see the change in her state. She went from a being a lively, vibrant women to one who was drained. This summer we are taking her back to Bangladesh. She is overjoyed to be going back to her homeland, where she feels comfortable and free.

—Yeasmine Khalique

Verse and Vision IV

El Salvador

Full of contradictions
You take my breath away
The shiny flash Land Rover
in the village of smells
near the coffee plantation
complete with briars and flirting butterflies

You are a country simply taking air
between waves created by unstoppable forces
How I would love to help you!
But I am merely a gringo's daughter
Too fair not to burn in your sun
Too young to have a voice

Take no notice of me
For I am just a reflective foreigner
taking the next plane out:
away from your cool shade
your dusty roads
and the someone who could help you

—Norah Scheinman

Montagnard Girl Follows a Student in Sapa, Vietnam
Rian Cahill


STD SDPCO
Airtel
RELIANCE Mobile


District Co-operative Bank Ltd.
Dehradun
BRANCH : MUSSOORIE

Lessons I

India, in Search of an Adjective

As I sat down on Christmas morning surrounded by presents under the tree, I stopped in a moment of recollection as many thoughts swirled around in my head. For India, observing what Christmas has become in the United States is a cautionary tale. One of most important Christian holidays has been transformed into the essence of American consumerism. The holiday has largely shifted away from its traditional focus, the birth of Jesus, to gifts, given and received. When our group presented at the economics convention, we stated that India must find a balance between consumerism and culture, or their valued traditions may be compromised. Christmas is a prime example of how this can happen.

While this will be a major challenge in the future for India, I also thought about the many other challenges facing the country. Simultaneously running through my mind as I opened package after package were thoughts of the children at the orphanage we visited. They barely had clothes to wear, let alone toys to entertain them. I lost

> Widespread poverty, disease, homelessness and hunger were rampant and at times almost seemed too much to bear for us simply as observers.

interest in my gifts as I thought about how in India kids are still kids and want to have fun, yet the severe conditions make them grow up quickly. While I was in my warm house about to sit down for a huge meal, I knew a child in Agra was tugging on someone's shirtsleeve hoping they would spare a rupee so she could buy a samosa to split with her younger sister.

Camel in New Delhi Traffic
Mussoorie Street Festival, India Barbara Johnson

While I couldn't speak Hindi, the look of hardship is universal. We tried our best to ease this pain where we could as we realized even a nine rupee ice cream cone from McDonald's could bring a smile to an old homeless woman's face. The severity of the situation, however, seemed to dwarf our efforts. It was frustrating to just observe these problems, which speaks to the agony these people must go through. For all the talk of India as a rising economic superpower, I saw firsthand how this growth is resulting in a relatively small pocket of affluence, and how the majority of Indians are being left behind.

At the beginning of the trip I wondered how it was possible for a bicycle rickshaw driver to afford to take me all the way from the Hotel Kant to the Taj Mahal and back, a distance over five miles, for only ten rupees. After taking a few rides I noticed that the driver stopped at several stores which he assured me were the best in town. After much pressing one driver agreed to break down the system for me. For every store he took me to that I entered, he received ten rupees. Then he received 2% of my purchases. The cuts rose with auto rickshaws and taxis, and reached 40% for tour bus operators. The degree of interdependence created by this commission system amazed me. Everyone was depending on me to buy something. Everyone was connected in the struggle to make ends meet.

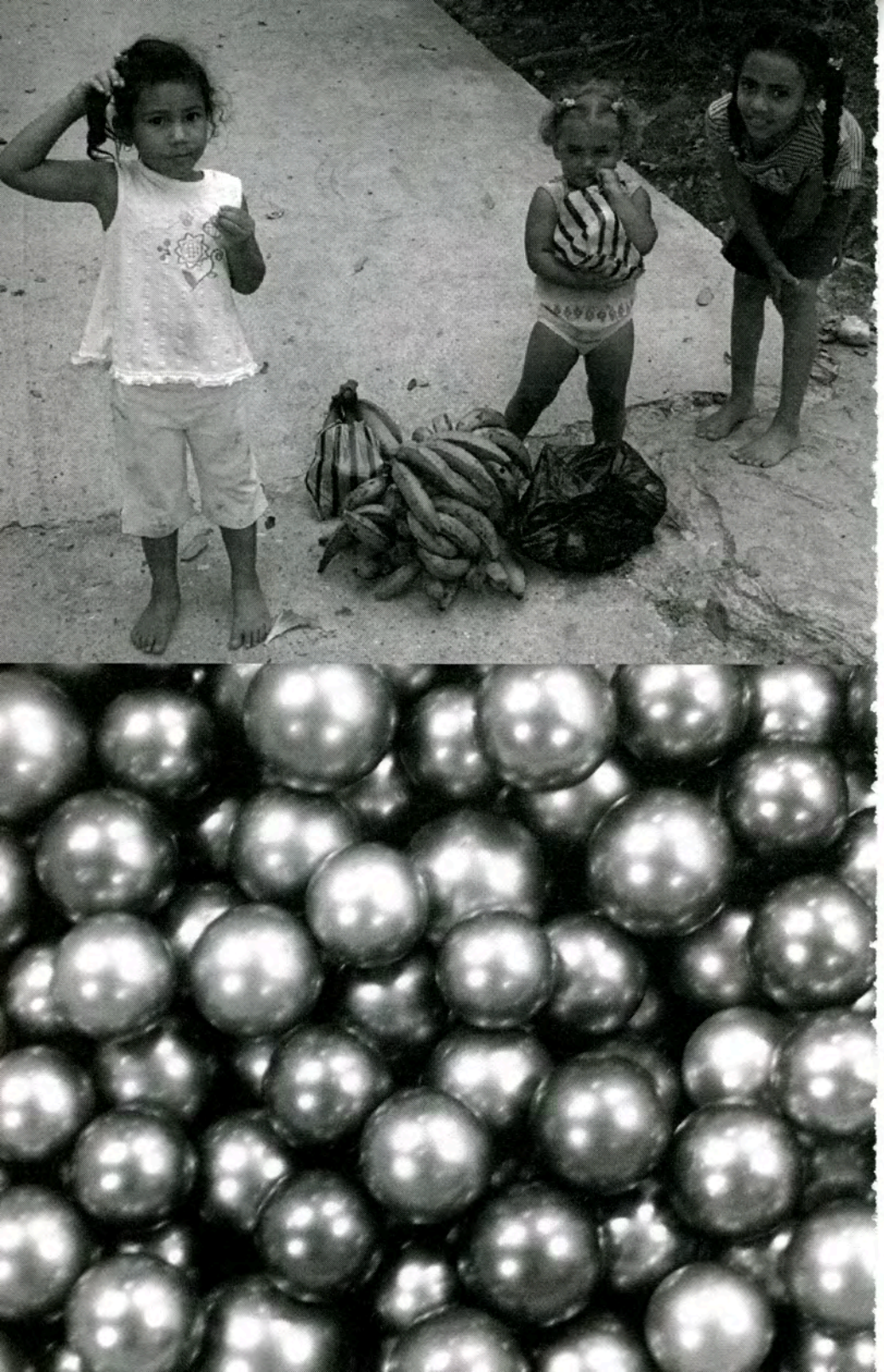
A similar thought struck me halfway through the trip. At first, I looked at shopping in India as a game and went about figuring out the rules. Quickly I was able to successfully barter and pay the price I wanted to pay every time. The secret was to realize that, no matter how bad you wanted an item, the seller was always more in need of your money than you were of the item. Once, however, after I had bartered a young boy down in price for a Taj Mahal snow globe, he asked me if I wanted to buy the shirt he was wearing as well. "Only 30 rupees," he said, or perhaps I would like his hat for 20. While I had been saving money with my bartering skills, I had also been depriving someone of much needed rupees. The amount I saved was only pocket change to me, while to him it could have made the difference between eating or going hungry. I told the boy to keep his shirt and gave him some extra rupees. From that point on, I no longer pressed as hard with bartering down a price.

Since returning to the United States, people have asked me to describe India. "It was an *experience*," I tell them. While this hardly captures the heart of the matter, I have yet to find any single word that comes closer. It was *fun*, like when we joined a pickup game of cricket outside a Hindu temple. It was *relaxing*, like lying on the beach in Goa. *Beautiful* could be used to describe the many sites we visited while *educational* could explain the economics convention and our courses. Yet for each of these positive adjectives, I could come up with sharply contrasting ones. *Depressing*, *heart-wrenching*, *overwhelming*. Widespread poverty, disease, homelessness and hunger were rampant and at times almost seemed too much to bear for us simply as observers. I found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on anything besides the sheer number of people on the streets.

As I flipped open the *Times of India* on the flight home, a quote jumped off the page at me: "If you want to feel rich, just count the things you have that money cannot buy." While we were supposed to bring lessons from home to share with India, India shared many lessons with us. I learned that I have an immense number of things to be thankful for, and while consumerism in our country may have become a means and an end, I need to stay focused on what is truly important. India puts everything else into perspective.

—Josh DeBartolo

Roman Coliseum and Christmas Tree, Italy Peter Roland



Lessons II

Looking Back While Moving Forward

When crossing the frozen, snow covered quad in the middle of a bitterly cold upstate New York winter, I can't stop myself from thinking about Fiji. Involuntarily, thoughts of the tropical fruit trees that dotted our yard and the minah birds that woke me up every morning fill my mind. I slowly reach up and touch the coconut shell earrings dangling from my ears. I deliberately wore them this morning to remind myself that somewhere in the world the weather is warm and the landscape is composed of vivid colors. As the cold wind stings my face I can not avoid wishing for the sweet, warm tropical air of Fiji. These thoughts invade my mind at the most peculiar times. While I'm eating another bagel for breakfast, I long for the fresh pineapple my host mother would cut for me in the morning. While I'm stuck in traffic listening to the sounds of horns blaring and engines running, I think back on the sounds of the village. I still smile when I think about how the exotic sights, sounds, and tastes of Fiji had become so familiar to me.

Today, sitting at my desk in the library under a fluorescent lamp, Fiji feels like it doesn't exist. It's as though the time I spent there is contained in this magical bubble placed outside of time.

> My host parents and siblings were very friendly but living in their home was awkward; they didn't know my past, they didn't get my jokes, they didn't know me. No one on the island did.

I'm back at school, eating at the same places, talking with the same people, and doing the same things I did before I left. Fiji, being located in the South Pacific, is literally a world away and while I continue my life "as usual", it seems impossible that two

Girls near Santiago de Los Caballeros, Dominican Republic Melissa Ross
Tahitian Pearls Hannah Weitzman

places, so drastically different, can exist in the same world at the same time.

But deep down I know it exists, I can still feel it. While my day continues as usual, I can't help but feel different. Fiji has become a part of me. The places I visited, the faces I saw, and the relationships I made have found a permanent place in my soul. My experiences there have become internalized, part of my character, and have manifested themselves on more than one

> Walking through the village people yelled *Yandra* (good morning) from their houses, the teenagers would greet me with the local slang, and I could get people's attention in the local way by puckering my lips and making a mongoose call.

occasion. I found myself thanking the man who held the door for me this morning with the Fijian word *vinaka*, or excusing myself for reaching over my roommate's head (as that is the Fijian custom). In class I connect much of what I read to Fiji. But most profoundly, I find myself thinking differently than before. I question aspects of American culture that previously seemed logical and obvious. I am consistently taken aback by the amount of wealth that I am surrounded by and I have changed my motivations and aspirations for my future.

Before Fiji, my "plan" was to enroll in a graduate program and continue my academic education after receiving my undergraduate degree. Ever since high school it's been clear that school was my talent. I loved to read, I thought learning was rewarding, and receiving good grades was easy for me. While these things haven't changed (well, good grades have become harder to achieve), my time spent in Fiji revealed my other talents and interests that I was unaware I possessed. I discovered that I had the ability to form strong relationships and not just make acquaintances. As social beings who have been making friends and establishing contacts since the first day of pre-school, this seems trivial and inconsequential. But this experience was different than making a friend the first day of class or on a new sports team. In those situations everyone already has something

in common, an interest in the class, a love for a sport, or just simply living in the same town or culture, sharing a similar experience. In Fiji there wasn't one commonality between myself and the people I encountered.

The first week I arrived in Suvavou (the village where I lived) loneliness consumed me. My host parents and siblings were very friendly but living in their home was awkward; they didn't know my past, they didn't get my jokes, they didn't know me —no one on the island did. I felt as though I didn't have a friend in the world. On my morning jogs past the view of Suva harbor I couldn't help but pause and stare out at the Pacific and think: my closest friends and family live thousands of miles across this seemingly endless ocean. I literally felt stranded on an island in the middle of nowhere.

Adjusting to life in the village proved to be far more difficult than I had anticipated. I was entirely out of my element, nothing was familiar; I felt like a fish out of water. But slowly, very slowly, things changed. Instead of retreating to my bedroom, which was inevitably my first instinct, I forced myself to participate in uncomfortable situations. I played volleyball with my host sister and her inner city school friends, proving myself as not only an athlete but erasing some of my pampered American image. I went out to local bars and made a fool of myself dancing to Fijian music. I learned a few Fijian words to tease my brothers and sisters with and soon I was being invited to swim with them in the harbor. I ate food with my hands, sat on the floor, and drank Kava, just like they did. Soon my host mother was calling me *Kai Viti* (Fijian).

Slowly, I made friends in the village and established strong relationships with my family, so slowly in fact, that it wasn't until seven weeks of my stay that I realized I hadn't felt lonely in a long time. The week before I left, my transition from stranger to an accepted friend was clear. Walking through the village people yelled *Yandra* (good morning) from their houses, the teenagers would greet me with the local slang, and I could get people's attention in the local way by puckering my lips and making a mongoose call (the local way of both calling a taxi and the equivalent of our *psssssst* noise). In Suva, the capital and largest city in Fiji, I would run into friends and be stopped in

the street by other villagers. The morning I left for home many people from the village came to say goodbye. I will never forget the heavy sadness I felt when saying goodbye to my siblings. "I'm going to miss you. You're my sister now," my host sister told me, bringing tears to both of our eyes. My host mother and I embraced, sobbing on each others' shoulders, too overwhelmed by emotions for words. I felt as though I was being dragged out of their world. It was too soon. I was not ready to leave. As I got on the bus to leave, all of my friends, siblings, and women I knew from the village stood in the street and waved goodbye. I will never forget their faces.

It was only through my experience abroad that I would have ever realized my talent for establishing relationships with people. On the long plane ride back to the United States I was amazed at how close I had become with complete strangers, people so different than myself. I was amazed at my ability to adjust to their way of life and honored that they shared with me their problems, concerns, and intimate details of their personal lives. Being back at school, spending hours in the library hunched over books, my appreciation of my profound and rich abroad experience only increases. I cannot seem to find that same fulfillment, that same sense of accomplishment in my books or even after receiving an A on a paper. Suddenly graduate school doesn't seem right for me anymore, at least not now. My aspirations for the future have changed. Today, as a junior whose undergraduate career is quickly ending, I find myself relentlessly thinking about my options after school. I find myself endlessly searching for opportunities to work with people abroad. Undoubtedly, I'll return to academia. Insatiable curiosity and love of learning make up a significant portion of my character. But for now, graduate school can wait; there are too many places in the world to be explored, too many people whose stories I haven't heard, and too many things I have not yet discovered about myself.

—Sara Melton

Lessons III

An Animal Lover Down Under

Australia and New Zealand were the perfect locations for me to explore the ways humans relate to animals and the environment. Our study abroad experience commenced at Camp Lawrence. We had been assigned reading and were told that there would be a test as soon as we arrived—so we were all busy catching up on Bill Bryson's accounts of the terribly dangerous creatures of Australia. We got off the plane expecting to be in the hospital, bitten by something venomous and deadly, within 24 hours. Toby, our facilitator at Camp Lawrence, had a special affinity for snakes. I had never spent much time around snakes, and I know many people who are terrified by them, but I find them fascinating. At the end of the second day, Toby brought out his pythons for us. Half of the class abruptly switched seats from the first row to the back when it hit them that there were real live pythons in the cages, pillowcases, and other containers that Toby had lying at his feet. Those who were suspicious of snakes placed themselves as far away as possible. I was the student in the front row hanging on every word. Toby amused us with his didjerido as well—afterwards we were allowed to go up and hold a carpet python. I was all over that! My first picture from Australia is with Vishwanath, from Union College, both of us posing as trees for carpet pythons to climb over.

In my explorations of the human-animal relationship in a cultural perspective, I examined the role of dingoes in Aboriginal culture. During a weekend stay on Fraser Island, dingoes ran around free and wild, living the high life on the beaches of paradise. I was so impressed to see them running around wild; the way they were meant to. I learned about the sacred context of dingoes within the "Dreaming", best described as the cultural and religious orientation of Aborigines. I was fascinated by the role of dingoes as godly—what people would be if they weren't human—juxtaposed within the wider Australian culture that views dingoes as a curiosity to tourists at best, and highly dangerous at worst.

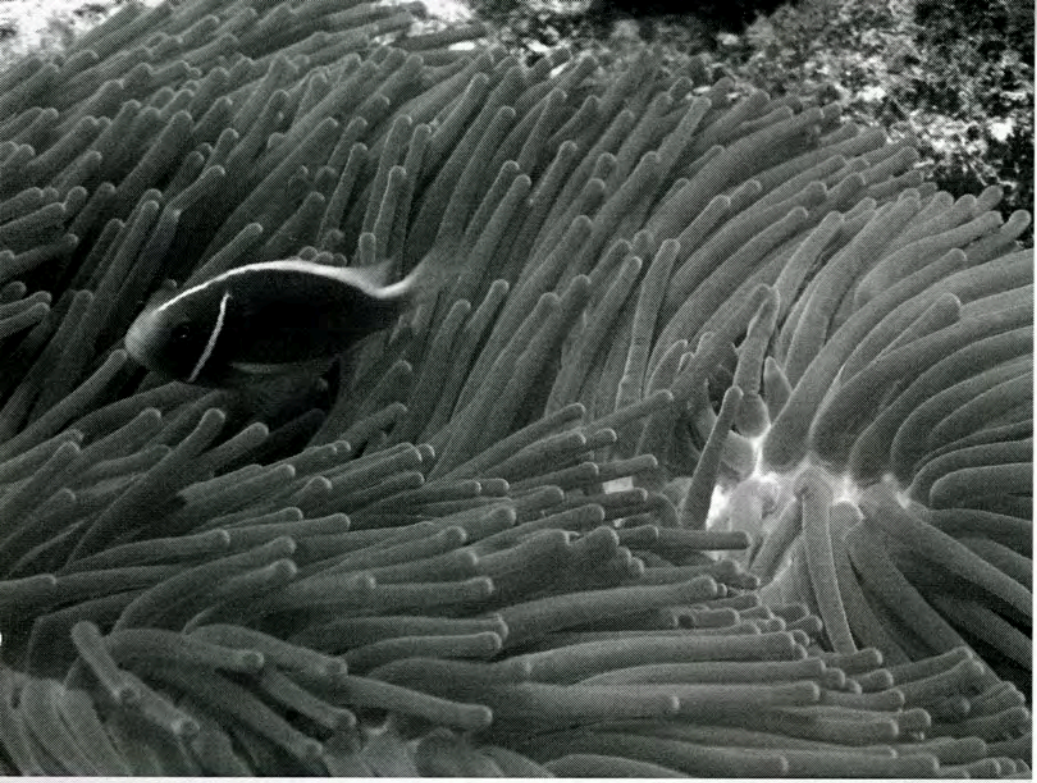
More amazing encounters with animals occurred on Heron Island—a coral reef island. For our marine ecology course, we took a week-long field trip to a research station on the island. There, we surveyed the coral reef, swam with sharks, clownfish (like Nemo!), and 500 other kinds of fish, and went night-snorkeling with the protected Green Sea Turtles whose natural life span is at least twice as long as a human's. In the glow of the moonlight, we walked along Shark Bay, where 1.5 meter-long black-tipped and white-tipped coral sharks swam in the water lapping just feet from us. In the sand, we saw the tracks where the Green Sea Turtles had pulled themselves up out of the water and onto the beach to explore potential egg-laying sites. The tracks they left with their fins resembled the tracks of foot-wide tires. They seemed so gentle, so patient in the sand, but so agile and fast in the water. At one time, Heron Island was the site of a turtle soup factory, but now it is a safe haven for the turtles. These days they are protected, and humans are not allowed within 10 feet of these massive beauties.

In New Zealand, I saw the protected Fjordland penguin—from a safe distance. Because they are thought of as an integral aspect of life, the few thousand penguins that still exist are protected and people are not permitted within about 100 meters of them. We went penguin watching on the beach, looking through binoculars, hoping that we would be able to make one out. We saw one! It was another exciting experience.

A balance must exist between humans and animals. This balance was something I ventured to Maori New Zealand to explore. There I found a Maori immersion school, where the entire curriculum is developed around the relationship between humans and the environment. Here, the health of the environment is not thought of in economic terms that rationalize its destruction. Instead, it is thought of as a component of human health. If an environment is not healthy, then neither are the humans and animals that live in it. In New Zealand society, decisions of public well-being are made within this social construction, and the relationship with their environment is much more reverent than I have found it to be in the U.S.

—Brittany Holler

Stinging Anemone, Australia Gordon Carlson
Sheep, Denmark Alison Singer



Lessons IV

The Legacy of Landmines

"We take American dollars, not Cambodian *riel*." When a country rejects its own currency, it's a sure indicator that you're in the developing world. I was bumming my way through Southeast Asia after a term abroad in Vietnam in the fall of 2005. The legendary Angkor Temples in Cambodia was a four-day stopover on our way to the Thai beaches. Having encountered many tourist traps by day three, my traveling companions and I were skeptical about the "free landmine museum" our driver was begging to take us to. We finally gave in, a decision that would ultimately change the rest of my college education.

As the three of us approached the museum entrance, we noticed a rusty sign that read "Danger! Landmines!" The building looked more like a shanty in the middle of the Cambodian forest than a museum. The premises were strewn with deactivated landmines of all sizes. The museum was also crawling with children who were missing arms and legs. This is the sobering legacy of landmines. Because mines do not adhere to the peace treaties signed long after they are deployed, they continue to maim and kill innocent civilians even decades after wars officially end. The museum was also the home of Aki Ra, who owned and ran the facility. He would shortly become my personal hero.

Aki Ra is the world's greatest landmine clearer. At a young age, he was forced to be a child soldier for the Khmer Rouge, the extremist Communist regime responsible for thousands of Cambodian deaths, including the genocide known as "the killing fields". While serving in the Khmer army, he learned how to deactivate landmines. Once the war in Cambodia came to an end, Aki Ra put his skills to work for the United Nations effort to clear the mines that littered the Cambodian countryside. He continued to engage in this dangerous activity even after the UN forces left Cambodia.

Aki Ra and his family shelter about 15 children who have been victimized by mines. At his home, they enjoy education, games and sports.

I saw street children in Vietnam, children who wore tattered old 80's-style jackets that my mother would have discarded. I saw children whose playgrounds were heaps of trash and whose houses were made of sheets of tin and scrap wood. I saw the ethnic minority children who made a living by selling string bracelets to foreign tourists. But I had never seen children with their limbs blown off. These accidents tended to happen while walking to school, chopping wood, or playing outside with friends. And at one time, I thought stepping in spilled beer was tragic!

While walking through the museum, my friends and I learned about the International Treaty to Ban Landmines. If signed, the treaty prohibits the use, stockpiling, transferring and proliferation of antipersonnel landmines. Essentially, it seeks to eliminate the whole class of weapons. The United States is the only NATO country that has yet to sign the document.

"Where are you from?" asked Aki Ra.

"The United States," I said shamefully. This sense of disgrace seemed to be an ongoing theme throughout our time in Southeast Asia. Despite this, Aki Ra was welcoming and interested in any question we had.

We left the museum in the late afternoon heat and returned to our guesthouse in town. The legless and armless children had

Child Playing on War Relics, Vietnam Cristina Bain

struck a chord in me. However, after a few hours, I allowed the anticipation of Thailand to overtake my feelings of sorrow and pity that I had taken from the museum.

February. Cold Schenectady winters. Midterms. Study abroad withdrawal. Reverse culture shock. Then the dreaded word: *thesis*. The Political Science faculty told us: "It's time to start thinking about thesis topics. A traditional thesis will be a 100-page paper. You can also do an alternative project such as a political novel, a political documentary, or starting an NGO. Get creative." The latter sounded much more appealing. My time in Vietnam had been the most meaningful and emotional of my life. I wanted more out of it, though. How could I incorporate my abroad program into my thesis?

I liked the idea of starting a political group, perhaps a special interest group, but I needed a cause. That's when I remembered that the United States had not yet signed the International Treaty to Ban Landmines. I thought about the children trying to play soccer with one leg. I recalled the shame I felt admitting I was from the U.S., a nation that prides itself on fighting terror, but will not sign the Landmine Treaty. Aren't landmines a kind of terror?

In the summer of 2006 I began my campaign against landmine use by the United States. The project would have two goals: to raise awareness about the issue at as many schools as possible, and to mobilize students to participate in grassroots tactics. These tactics would include letter-writing to politicians, signing petitions against the use of mines and donating money for landmine removal. However, the project encompassed more than this. I had to learn website design, the first step for many causes in this day and age. Any information placed on the site (www.minefreeworld.com) had to be well-researched. I studied the history of landmines and the international campaign to ban them. Unbeknownst to me, the international movement had been active for over fifteen years. There are currently 1,400 NGOs in 90 different countries that are trying to ban the use of antipersonnel landmines forever. While many governments have committees on disarmament, it is the NGO community that provides expert information to the governments around the world. The NGOs involved in the movement are not simply disarmament groups

-they approach the issue from the point of view of women's or children's rights, public health, or the environment. Some of them are religiously motivated. The coalition against landmines represented a large cross-section of society.

To advertise my cause at other schools, I applied for funding from my own college and outside organizations. This required project proposals and budget proposals of up to $10,000. With the funding I received, I was able to advertise my site on other popular college websites to spread the word. I also conducted multiple demonstrations on campus to raise awareness in my immediate community. One demonstration consisted of drawing five chalk circles around campus. That day, each circle was monitored from afar for three hours. Each person who monitored kept a tally of how many students stepped on the circles. By the third hour, close to 350 students had stepped on these fake landmines without knowing it. I published my findings in the school newspaper under the title *350 Union Students Maimed or Killed by Landmines*. The title alone raised a few eyebrows.

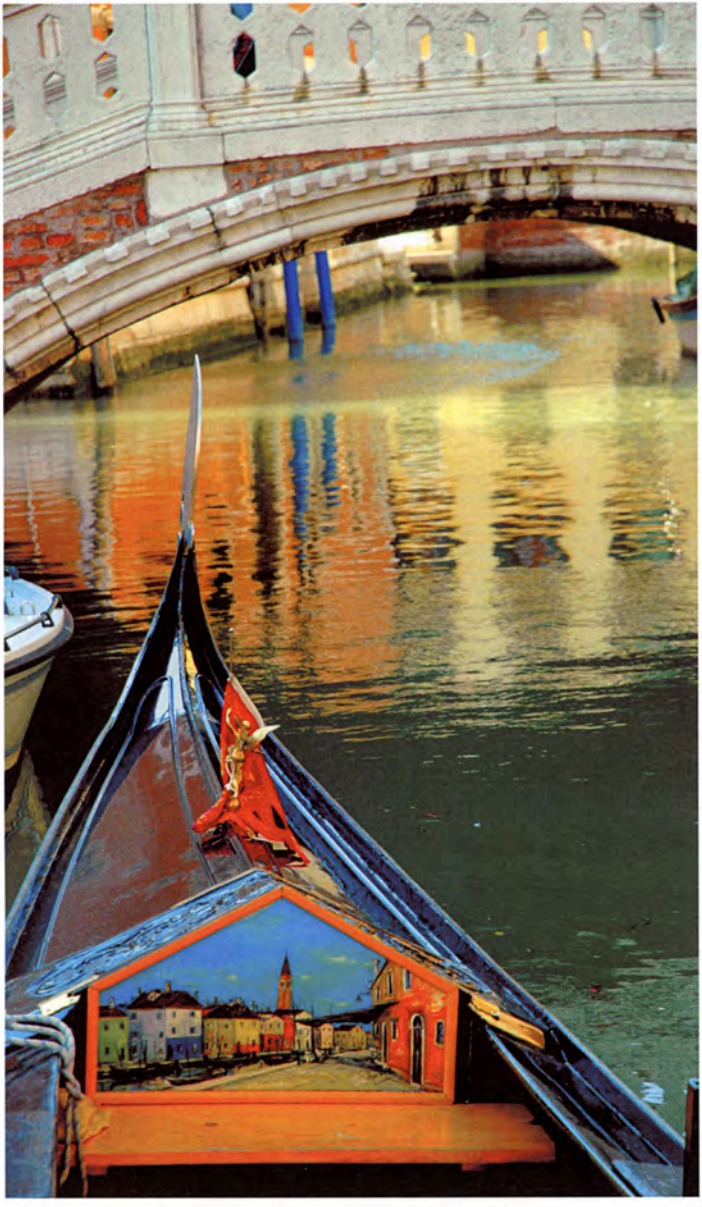
I also raised money for landmine clearance in Cambodia. If changing a national policy is uncertain, raising money is not. This was done door-to-door. It takes $1-3 to manufacture one landmine. It costs $1000 to clear one. I asked for one dollar from each student. With each door I knocked on, I was able to further the cause. Since I've started, I've received emails from students across the country about the cause. I've raised enough to clear one landmine, an achievement for my NGO, but also a sign-post indicating how much farther away the goal of eradicating landmines is.

Some 15,000 to 20,000 people are maimed by landmines each year. There is a victim every 22 minutes. Landmines are an underrecognized problem. College students are an underappreciated resource. Together we can make a difference. The United States has considered signing the International Treaty for about 10 years. With enough public pressure, it will. And when we do sign it, maybe Cambodia will not be ranked 178th in world soccer anymore.

—Karyn Amira

Market in Norwich, England Stefanie Novak
Haast Day, New Zealand Jacob Podkaminer


B
C
D
F



Burano Color, Italy Alana Santoro

Venice, Italy Xiao Mei Hu

Verse and Vision V

Majdanek*

Like two magnets repelling each other,
My eyes absorb this black hole.
My body forced from this place of violence.
Even now the uneasiness pierces my soul.

It was not me
And it was not you, but
We are both a part of it.

Two doors—
A rusted lock.
A wildflower rests on top.
An old widow walks from town
With her head down knowing.
Three eagles watch overhead:
domination and defiance.

I could not enter on my own,
A hand had to help me.
'You must bear witness!'
The heavy breathing starts.
A cold stone slab,
Death.

A candle light flickers.
Its presence wraps around me, choking me from the inside.
My body pressed against the cold wall.
The light bursts into an intense fire surrounding my sight.
I want to move but the force won't let me.
Faces, cries, hands rushing for me;
Hot tears streaming down my face.

Hundreds reaching for me as their cries rage louder.

If it was not you
And it was not me
Then who was it?

A strong hand pulls me towards the door,
Like a bullet in a chamber, I am shot out.
Not wanted by those who were.
I stand in the field staring, but too numb to feel.
Storm clouds move in, I stand alone.

* Majdanek is the name of a concentration camp in Poland. The camp could still be fully operational in seventy-two hours.

—Andrew Martland

Facing: Sachenhausen Concentration Camp Entrance, Germany Evan Duffy
Top: Half-pipe in Amsterdam, The Netherlands Ben Atkins
Bottom: Protest by Westminster Abbey, England Erin Giantomasi

Crossings I

a sorry wrapped inside of a cabbage made of real colors

The fried fish of my apartment sinks into my skin like mist, the new year is starting sooner than I'd hoped. My mother the fish fryer, well, she believes that's how you start the new year, how the rest of it will be. No. That's not true. She really wants to believe that, so she is creaking her arthritic thumbs like rusty revolving doors making enough dinner to feed three times our small family. I'm not even going to be there, scarfing down rice rolled in steamed marinated cabbage and uneasy glances. So maybe I buy it, the rest of the year will have an absence of me and maybe she's scared—but she wouldn't force me to stay.

The thing is, there are all these women around me who are married to the wrong thing. My sister-in-law Anya is glad she got the hep B vaccine before my brother Dmitry cheated on her. When that girl went back to Poland, the infection was the only thing left in his blood to remind him of the heartbreak. I think adultery has its charms but, the thing is, she was pregnant, and I hate Anya but I worship pregnant women. I never got to rub her belly like Buddha but I did cover up his tracks for him. I'm smarter than that now; and I'm smarter than him. I don't leave tracks. No one knows where I go and where I've been. This is the sign of a family made of silences, the one my mother is married to for lack of options. And this girl I love, she's married to devotion. Sweet thing, she's got the softest animal with big, big fur that conceals its tiny body inside her—so thin it slips right through the cracks of her heart and falls into the deep gravity-less dark of her chest cavity. Once, I threw a hook in there and waited. When my fishing line tugged I reeled and reeled but that animal, she never came out—she just wanted to remind me she was still alive in there—pulling.

And, I guess this is when I think about New Year's resolutions but I'm really bad at keeping the promises I make to myself. My friend Kathi says it's pathetic when people try to convince someone who rejects them that they made a mistake. But see, I have often promised myself to close my mouth and it just keeps opening anyway like a mini golf attraction, barely missing blows to my pride with hopes to charm some cosmic girl that floats my heart into my throat like helium. And honestly, I only do it when I know she's lying, when her body keeps leaning into mine despite her words. Maybe this isn't the point. I'm not trying to make excuses. I just want to smell like something new and exciting.

F__k the fried fish. I like the things I eat to be sleek and glistening, unless I don't. Unless I want them to be greasy and gross, full of bad energy and empty calories because I want to eat how I feel. Today I consumed a large chunk of dark chocolate wishing it had come off my new love's belly—melted and shaped like hope. She's really special; I might have made her up but I can't credit my imagination that much. After all, last night's dream was about a movie. While TV invades my dreams, she colors her hair indigo like a fairy peter pan. And I'm so infatuated, I smile lipstick-stained smiles and I don't even care.

My mother, she wants to believe a lot of things. Sometimes she thinks my gypsy friends put a curse on me and she gets her best advice from those Lifetime specials. I guess I could love her, but really, she's the root of a lot of things I could do without—like my hypochondria, anxiety attacks, and poor self-image. This kind of sounds like the formula for your average mother-daughter relationship. But I've never been too good at average and she has these overwhelming stories about little shacks in Odessa with outhouses and a mother who jumped a Nazi ship and swam to shore with her two daughters. I would like the stories more if I didn't know that she was offering them up like bait, dangling it just above my watery vision to pull me back to shore. But listen, I have a silver mermaid around my ring finger and I'd die out there—on that dry land, with all those plates of sad, fried fish.

—Gala Mukomolova

Monastery outside Tübingen, Germany Ted Williams

Crossings II

Countryside

The hills never seem to end. The highway is surrounded by vineyards and farms that are subsequently surrounded by the hills (they cannot be called mountains). The hills are not like the largest hills near Geneva, New York. They aren't trash hills covered in soil and sod; they're pure and neat. These hills are more abrupt and are covered in trees and rocks and farms. I notice the trees grow in single file lines and I wonder where they are lining up to go. Do their leaves and bark feel the wind differently than I feel it with my own skin, my own bark? Does their chlorophyll absorb some kind of knowledge from the sun that my clogged pores can't receive?

The houses can be described as one house since they all resemble each other; they are a mix of clichés and oxymorons of our time. Clothing hangs on a line outside a window which is only a few feet from the roof that holds the digital satellite. The houses are usually far from their neighbor with the exception of communities built on steep hills; these houses look as if they could fall off a cliff and into the rocky cavern below. The houses that are separated are bigger than the ones in the communities; they don't seem to have cars but in this day and age, the country people *must* own them.

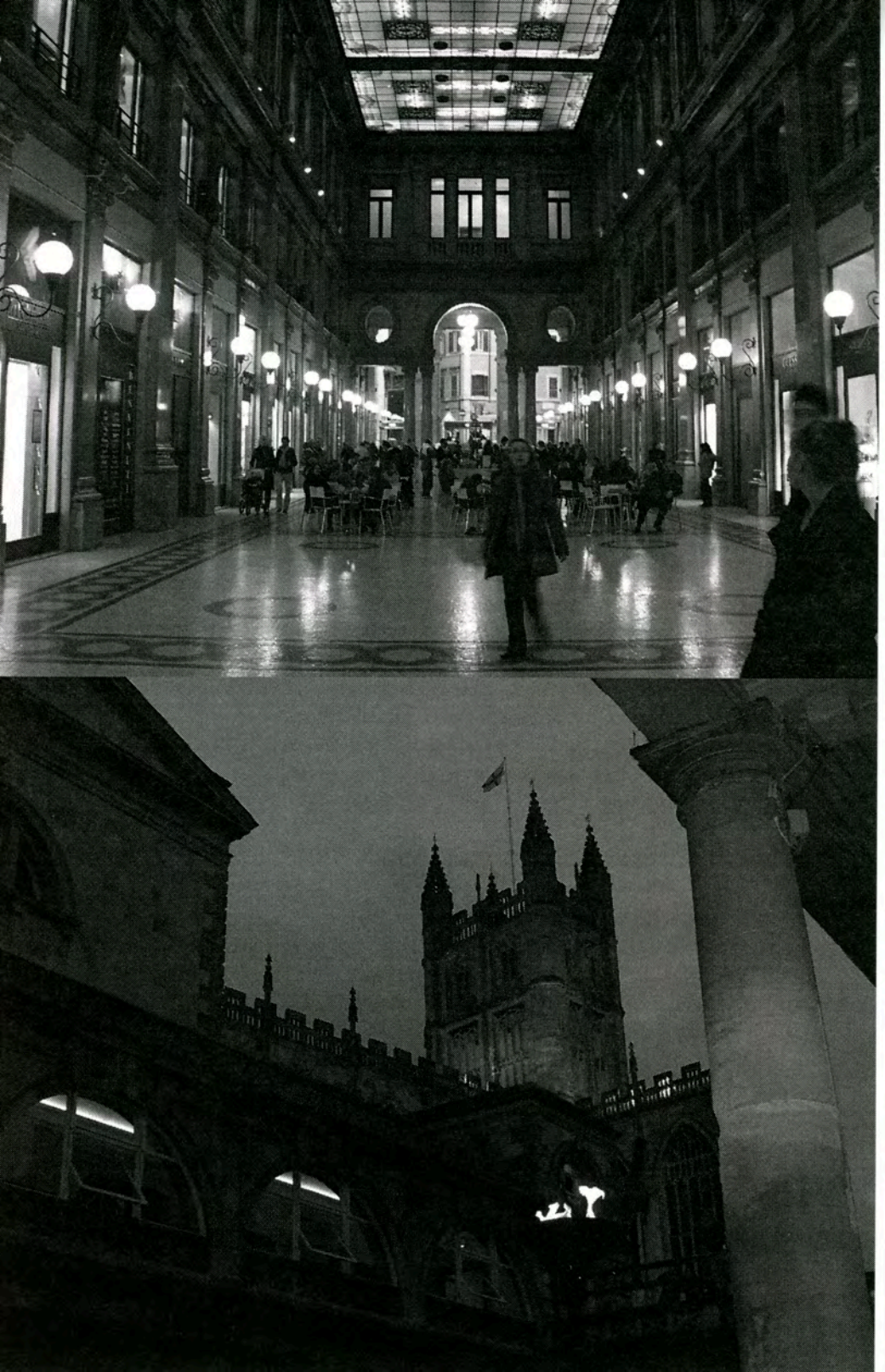
I like to imagine that these rural people don't have cars or phones, satellite TV or any modern appliance. I dream that they are all vegetarians so they grow everything they need. They still own cows and chickens and perhaps a goat or a horse but they only keep them as pets. Their only reason to go to town is to return and take out books from the public library. The outing is made every Monday at ten a.m. and they return home at seven that evening. The only other reason they travel to town is for ink which they purchase on the first Monday of every month when they make their journey to the library. They watch the sun rise and set every day from their favorite chairs on the back porch,

except on Mondays; on Mondays they are still walking home from the library when the sun sets.

Roads don't end here but they don't end in Rome or Florence, either; they keep stretching on and on, intertwining, getting wider and then more narrow and then they widen out again. Just when you think you see the end of the road in the distance, it opens up into a piazza, at least in the cities. The country roads don't end. These roads are made up of tan-colored dirt that looks like sand. The roads run parallel and perpendicular but they never bend and none of them intersect more than once; they run between the hills and vineyards and every so often one road will lead to a tiny community on a hill but it goes up one side and down the other. There are no cul-de-sacs in Italy.

—Peter Marciano

Clockwise from Above: Jewish Cemetery in Prague, Czech Republic Sarah Nargiso
Roman Arcade, Italy Ryan Rapaport
Roman Baths in Bath, England Amy Kulow



Verse and Vision VI

Saturday

We went last night to the pub for drinks
Stumbling down the gate's cobbled stone
It was sweet vodka's fault, methinks,
That all of today I have been quite alone.
Where yesterday I laughed at the constant rain
And furrowed my brow if my socks were wet
Now lies a headache and the loneliest pain
What you see ain't never what you get.

Two days have passed since he left for the city
That great bit of happiness he took on the train
My conscience got lost in this pool of self-pity
Even drunk smiles are now harder to feign.
These are the coldest sheets I ever have slept in
And the pattern they gave me seems stupid and queer
Regretting this house as soon as I've stepped in
Looking for space that's spotless and clear.

Four days passed and he's due back right quick
And I can't help but hate that now's not the time
This loneliness left me bitter and sick
It's a paranoid fear that this guilt fits the crime
He's now on his way down the city's old street
Arriving is pointless, I'll be nowhere near
You can hear the soft clomping of his booted feet
With a knock on the door and he waits in the clear...

When my love comes, he so sweetly calls:
Little he knows that I'm walking the walls.

—Lauren Wetherell

Clock Tower in Paris, France
Chris Veneman

Reflections of Resistance

Becoming Aboriginal

The island of Tasmania lies off the southern coast of the Australian continent, divided from it by the Bass Strait: 125 miles of ocean that has come and gone with the ice ages. A few hundred miles from the Antarctic, the island teeters on the edge of the known world, making it a natural choice for the British colonizers who established a penal colony there in the early 19th century. Of course, the island had a history, a name and a people before white men came to give it their own. The nearly forgotten echoes of this time before drew me in, and I found myself with little choice but to devote my studies to them. I traveled to this island in December of 2005, rang in the new year a few days after arriving and returned home in March of 2006 with a thesis beginning to form.

Tasmania, despite its bottom-of-the-world mystique, felt comfortably familiar. The roads in the suburb of Sandy Bay, where I resided, were narrow and gently sloped over the hills that bowed into the shores of the Derwent River. Nearing the crest of one of the rolling streets, the sea breeze would sweep up to meet me, carrying with it a wave of cold air. The city sleeps in the shadow of Mount Wellington, often capped with snow when the seaside is warm. The houses are low and softly-colored, aged well by the sea air and crisp sunlight. The city is over two hundred years old, much of it originally constructed by convicts. Stone churches, cobbled streets, and bulging, white-washed walls glowed in the winter sun.

I lived for over two months with the Edwards family and their rotating cast of offspring that buzzed in and out of the house, as well as their four cats and numerous chickens and ducks in the backyard. I read, wrote and rested in a small room at the back of the house, waking up every morning at seven to feed and change the water for the birds in the yard. On special mornings, I would reach beneath one of the speckled egg-layers,

a motion that requires at least the illusion of competence to keep the chicken calm. There I'd find a warm egg: my breakfast.

Before settling into Hobart (the capital of Tasmania), we traveled around the island in two cars that were packed full with coolers, tents and empty soda cans. The land seemed to change with every mile. Stubbly cow pastures burned golden in the late afternoon sun and flowed into thick grasslands which sprouted up into green canopies and

> I saw white sails breach the horizon for the first time. I felt the crunch of leather and brass on these old sands. I heard war cries and musket bursts and crying in the night in ten different languages.

high, valley walls. Dark, rotting shapes dotted the shoulder of remote stretches of road, larger and more tragic than anything we were used to. Birds circled and screamed and we craned our necks, speeding past on the wrong side of the road. No larger than Ireland or West Virginia, Tasmania's size belies a profundity that draws you in until you forget that the world extends beyond its shores. Trees stand like titans, gripping the earth down to the hot core. Rivulets carve shaded cracks that wind on forever and evade the cartographer's eye.

Mt. William National Park lies at the far northeast corner of the island. The sand curves around, hugging the edge of the water like an infinitely long white highway. The wind had picked up since our arrival that morning and clouds were roaring across the sky, exploding against the fierce blue. Our teacher, Nels, was just ahead, leaning over the dark, sand-blown body of a penguin. His hand moved down to it, lifting one of the wings and letting it drop. Every few minutes we would see a bird that had died at sea and had been tossed up to the sand by a wave, and every time, Nels would walk towards it and kneel as if saying goodbye.

"Just over this dune." Nels had looked up and was pointing ahead at a great mound of sand, crowned with the pale gold bunches of beach grass that grew where the sand met the dark clay of the island. "We're nearly there."

I had first breathed Tasmanian air less than two weeks ago. Some say it is the purest air on the entire planet. A night wind rushed down my collar and up my sleeves and reminded me that the ocean was closer and wilder here than in Sydney. I could almost hear the waves, crashing and churning the air with icy, Antarctic heaves that gave this island its cooler climate. Tasmania was the last verdant outpost before the deserts of Antarctica. Our cab that night wove through the dark hills, softly pushing the night aside with its blue headlights as it went. "It feels like Vermont," Michael said.

I had known, without really knowing, what I would study here. It chose me more than I imagined it would. On a whim, I had walked to a bookstore the day before I left home and bought a book about pre-Columbian America. I was tired of the same stories of conquest and spice trades and breast-plated Christians. I was sure that my country had a history before it was white, but no one ever talked about it. Every chapter I finished in those long, airborne hours crept into my brain and curled up, tucked so neatly I would hardly notice them until nearly two weeks later. I was about to be caught in the spell of history, and for once, it wasn't written by the victor, but by the vanquished.

I had my sandals off now and I began to press my toes into the sand faster, climbing the gentle slope towards the dune. Nels was just a few feet ahead and Cassandra and Jay walked just beyond. We were right up against the dune now, about to turn into the valley behind it, sheltered from the wind and the sea spray. In front of us coating the narrow way ahead, as if bubbling up from out of the sand, lay a pool of bleached white shells. I bent to pick one up. It was smooth and burning white like bone. Up ahead, I heard Jay gasp and Nels let out a low hum of appreciation. I took three more steps and there I was. The dune rose up like a wall in front of me, at least forty feet tall. Ribbons of white shell traced across the face of the dune. "This is it." Nels turned towards me, his hands on his hips and his grin beginning to spread, "We're at the midden."

The question of a thesis topic worked worked its way around the circle, silent eyes darting to see who would be the next to offer their thoughts on a possible thesis. What could I

do? What could I devote the next nine weeks to? Before I had an answer, I felt my hand rise up and twelve eyes turn towards me. I cleared my throat and began. Slowly, but with purpose, one idea after another opened up. The sentences fell out, uncurling like new ferns. My topic: *the Aboriginals.* I wanted to know everything about them. What songs did they sing to the half-moon? What roots would they squeeze for water? How did they hunt, how did they move, what did they love and where are they now? I sank back in the seat and the question moved to the next raised hand.

We all sat, spread across the wide seats of the train, as it rocked and sped up through the foothills of the Blue Mountains. I turned to look out the window and I saw past my reflection, past the houses and clotheslines that rushed by, past the rows of orchards. I saw lean, dark men, their hair in thick bunches, carrying burning sticks and loping over the grassy hills. They faded in and out like shadows in the sun. There was more in this country, in every part of it, than was shown on the surface. An enduring history was running, like an underground river, strong but muffled by cement and noise. I tried to dig down.

That deep river ran behind the midden and through the four of us, sheltered from the wind but swaying from the power that leeched from the shells. They had lived here. They had gathered and cooked in this very spot and dropped, all around us, the shells their hands had cracked and scraped clean. Shells coated the floor of the valley, bedded in the stiff mud and swimming in the sands as if they had been dropped there a few weeks ago and not a few hundred years ago.

There was no fence, no entrance fee, not even a sign, but here it was, an honest piece of history. Without the trappings I had come to expect in historical sites, without directions about where to look and what to think, it felt so real and secret, as if our gasps were the first this sand valley had heard in centuries. I could see their dark ghosts, huddled by fires, running to the water, leaning against the shady side of dunes with shellfish, pried open, in their hands. Their history had endured here,

Creation of Taonga Carvings, New Zealand Brittany Holler

"The Maori people of New Zealand hold ceremonies in the sacred Marae houses, which are decorated with Taonga carvings. Te Puia is a school of traditional Maori carving and weaving. The school is funded by visitors whose admission fees cover all expenses for students."

tucked back from the beach and not betrayed by signs so that the deep springs could well up and show the careful observer how the world has nearly always been. I was entranced.

I imagined a child, a small girl perhaps, chasing the waves back and forth while her mother and father watch from the side of the dune. They look out past the waves to the dark islands and tell stories about them. They sing songs about their creation and the girl runs up to join them. The sun is low and their bellies full from a good day of gathering the shellfish that live along the rocky shore. The father puts his hand on his daughter's head to hold her near him and together they gaze out to the island that white men would call Flinders, the island that would become the little girl's last home before she is buried in its rocky soil.

If only for her sake, I thought. If only because to be forgotten is a fate far worse than death and she should not have to suffer both so cruelly. I felt, like the sucking tug before a wave, the change that was all around me. I saw white sails breach the

horizon for the first time. I felt the crunch of leather and brass on these old sands. I heard war cries and musket bursts and crying in the night in ten different languages. The deep river sank back, paved over by generations of ignorance and power-lust. Some truth flowed there, deep and dark and nearly forgotten. I could never pull it back to the surface, no one could, but if I could only get close enough, I might dip my hand in and understand, for a moment.

Thus, I became absorbed in the Aborigines of Tasmania. I felt the power exerted by the group's 40,000-year legacy and wanted to find out where that group was today. Opinions flew fast and tempers often flared when this subject was broached among Tasmanians, so I could be sure there would be no lack of data. Aside from an appreciation of the intricacies of both ancient and modern Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, I learned a great deal about group dynamics in general.

I learned how groups maintain boundaries, how identity is asserted and how membership criteria are formed. All of these seemingly esoteric pieces are instrumental in evaluating the status and the prospects of the Tasmanian Aborigines. What I found was a defiant will to assert identity, augmented by a long-standing public denial of that identity. I found a white Tasmania largely inoculated by myth and stereotype. I learned to ask pointed questions with sensitivity.

Contrary to all accounts I heard or read at the beginning of my research, there *are* Aborigines on Tasmania. They were not exterminated. What may seem like the extinction of a people is an illusion. Identity is determined primarily by choice, through meaningful selection of parts of a personal and shared history. Identity, at least its publicly recognized form, is dependent upon external social forces to open up space for its assertion, but once that possibility exists, the group determines the rest.

Tasmanian Aborigines are a people with a history in three parts. In pre-colonial times, the group was a nomadic, hunter-gatherer people that inhabited the island in small, scattered tribes. After colonization and the decimation of most mainland Aborigines, the Aboriginal women and their white, male captors populated the islands of the Bass Strait and passed on the Aboriginal bloodline, and, most crucially, facets of the Aboriginal way of life. Today, self-professed Aborigines are everywhere in Tasmania.

Historically, the inefficient and uninterested colonial government arbitrarily set the standard for Aboriginality by means of a blood quotum, using it as a tool for further oppression and racial discrimination. Generations later, the definition was expanded to include self-selection and community recognition, taking crucial steps to a more liberal and academically-accepted view of identity. Threatened by this influx of new members, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Council tightened membership criteria in a bid to consolidate and secure their power and influence at the top of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Today, with more people self-identifying and a high incidence of mixed marriages, Aboriginality is coming to include a much wider spectrum of socioeconomic classes and conditions.

Tasmanian Aborigines take great pride in the three major cultural traditions that have survived, namely basketweaving, muttonbird hunting and shell necklace-making. These function as badges of membership and as highly visible distinguishers from the white majority. Language has recently been adopted as a means of teaching and asserting identity to Aboriginal youth. While the known vocabulary is limited, the aim is to substitute native words for English ones, to subtly affect the worldview of the speakers and integrate Aboriginal identity more firmly into their lives. Exercising sovereignty over land rights and human remains forces the white public to recognize the existence of Aborigines and provides shared physical spaces for the gathering of the culture. Finally, identity is powerfully stated and broadcast through visual art and poetry in which notable similarities can be found to other indigenous traditions.

Becoming Aboriginal in the state's eyes is a process all its own, with paperwork, necessary documentation and a review process. Becoming Aboriginal on the personal level does not mean that a new person emerges or that a false mask is donned, but rather that a subtle reorganization of priorities and emphases occurs to publicly position the individual closer to their heritage. Aboriginals never left Tasmania but their public presence was vehemently discouraged for many generations. Today, while the struggles are numerous, this ancient ethnicity employs cultural tools of assertion to make their identity known and proclaim their unbroken legacy.

—Andrew Maryniuk


TASMANIA'S MOST
WANTED
TASMANIAN TIGER

Verse and Vision VII

Gutted

The lower 9th Ward
2 white HWS vans
Damp Louisiana air. Sweaty.
"Moldex" model face mask on, bandana over the hair, hat over the bandana, glasses over the eyes. No skin showing.
More sweat.
The sidewalk is littered with broken glass, a bra, a teddy bear half buried beneath grass because it has been there for 15 months.
The chain link fence around the house is pushed over, but still standing, open, waiting.

First step to gutting a house—take out all the belongings
Front door is ajar and you can see the couch pushed up against the window.
Camera in hand, the musty air lingers on the porch as I walk through the front door.
You can't see the floor, and you can't walk upright because the insulation from the ceiling is hanging from the ceiling beams.
There's a TV, a black leather sofa tilted on its side, and
Picture frames and sheetrock a foot deep make up the top layer.

Start taking things out,
The Montes Alpha wine box that also sits in my parent's living room is the first to go
Then videos, DVDs, books, school trophies, broken picture frames, trash.
It all looks like trash
Pile it up, one foot into the road and up to the sidewalk
Different piles: trash, chemicals, food, electronics

Back in with a trash can this time
Past the living room into the bedroom. The queen-sized mattress

is lying against a wall, the box spring on the floor.
More pictures, more books, make-up and hair products—don't forget those are chemicals!
Shoes, a whole closet full of shoes thrown around the room.
There are no pairs, just single shoes.
A prom dress still on the hanger,
A photo album—we'll keep that, make a new pile
Fill up the trash can and dump it onto the sidewalk,
Back to the bedroom
Now curtains, blankets, endless amounts of t-shirts, all moldy.
A set of text books, loose-leaf paper stuck to the floor, and condoms.
What am I supposed to do with these?

Empty the trash can onto the sidewalk
Step over the wrapping paper molded onto the hallway floor to get to the bathroom.
Can't see the bottom of the tub, there is sludge over everything.
Still tacky, dark grey with flecks of pink insulation
Topped with loofah sponges in bright pink and baby blue
But the room is dark.
Curtains are closed
Door can only open a quarter of the way because of the foot of sludge on the floor
It's not just sludge, it's shampoo and conditioner, tampons and Clorox bleach, rolls of toilet paper that are brown, thick, squished like tootsie rolls.
It's too dark, too small, I move on to the kitchen, crunching Christmas lights on my way

I can taste sweat dripping into my mouth, condensed on the inside of my face mask.
I can taste the snot running from my nose, pooling at the bottom of my face mask.
All you can hear is the sound of shovels attempting to scrape up the magazine pages glued onto the floor in the living room
Cars drive past, no one stops
No one lives here.
A tour bus slowly rolls by to take a picture
Trash cans, mold, and face masks.

It's worth a picture,
Is it worth a picture?
No one lives here.
Cars drive past, no one stops.

Back to the kitchen, things are everywhere.
Big must go out first—fridge, stove, dishwasher
There is food in the first closet I open
Empty out the dishes, boxes of cereal, soda bottles, wooden shelves.
Next layer, dish cloths, porcelain tea cups
On the floor, remove the space heater, dish detergent, stacks of books, and a dead rat, bloated and mushy when I scoop it up with my shovel.
All out to the trash pile, now as tall as I am, but still between the sidewalk and the street.

Since the ceilings are already down, the next step is the walls.
Take off all the molding
Each door frame, window frame, baseboard
Strip off the synthetic wall and break down the sheetrock
White dust all through the air
Shovel it all into trash cans to haul into the street and dump onto the pile
Sledge hammer for things that won't fit out the door.
I use it on the bath tub.

Next, every nail must come out of every stud in the whole house.
EVERY nail must come out of EVERY stud in the whole house.
And it must be swept, and swept and swept. In this house, hard wood floors stay, but tile must go.
Pull out the nails,
Sweep
Back out to the trash pile
And it begins again.

—Collette Reny

Explorations I

Vietnam

I spent my semester in Vietnam conducting an independent study on Vietnamese women who fought in the military during the French and American Wars. I had initially planned on studying the extent to which gender confined women into particular roles during a revolution, but once I was there I realized my subject was too broad. Vietnamese women, in effect, did everything. There were no jobs reserved for men, no jobs considered too difficult, too dangerous, or too high-ranking. More men filled the higher positions because the majority of women were in the Volunteer Army, and when men and women served together tension over gender rarely came up—it seemed that there was too much to do. How could I write a paper about women's role in the war if it was this pervasive? Access to actual statistics is impossible, and even then the Vietnamese government is notorious for tampering with such numbers. Numerous female veterans in the sources I've read as well as the people I've spoken with will admit that the government has cut by 50–70% the reported number of Volunteer Army members—they can't afford to pay that many veterans benefits. Thousands who fought for years go unacknowledged, and hard data is therefore difficult to come by.

Everyone seems to agree on the fact that women played a significant role in the American War, possibly even making the difference between winning and losing. What varies from person to person, generation to generation, and between the genders is the perception of women who served during and immediately after the war. From written details of the war to verbal accounts, the way women are perceived and thus depicted changes depending on who you're speaking with. The difference isn't drastic, but definitely noticeable.

Where do the varying ideas come from? How do generals depict the women that fought under them and how do male soldiers describe their female compatriots? How are women

remembered? What's the national rhetoric (found in history books produced by the government in Vietnam) and how do grandmothers portray their role to their offspring and grandchildren?

I created a questionnaire directed at college-level students, asking general questions about their perceptions of women who fought in the war. I'd met a number of English language majors here, and asked 25 of them to fill it out for me, trying to get equal

> Women—all of them, regardless of whether they fought for a month, a decade, or not at all—were expected to marry, go back to the kitchen, and create a new generation.

numbers of men and women. Some students were from Hanoi, and some from the outlying provinces; I hoped the replies would cover a good slice of society. The most serious constraint was that they were all studying English as an academic focus, and thus also spent time studying Western (specifically American) culture, which could have a potential effect on their impressions of the war and of gender role constructions in reference to it.

The replies showed some interesting things about how women are perceived. When asked the question "describe how your history textbooks in elementary and high school depicted women who fought in the American and French Wars", almost everyone said in one way or another that Vietnamese women had done what was necessary for their country, that the wars had reached a point where *everyone* was needed. This struck me as an interesting answer; almost without exception students suggested that women only fought because it had been crucial to success, and that—had the wars not been so bad—women's involvement would *naturally* have been much less. While Ho Chi Minh in all of his writings suggests that equality and emancipation are basic for women, in reality the female gender was looked upon as a reserve army of sorts. This is supported by responses to a series of questions about what should be required of female citizens. Basically, very few students who answered thought that women should be *required* (as in a draft) to serve, and only a few thought it was a good idea that women

should be required to complete the same training in college that men are. Without exception, everyone thought that requiring military training (both theoretical and practical military skills) reflected antiquated policy and that more focus should be put on international relations and peace. Since *Doi Moi* (a policy

My translator has told stories of girls on the training field, wearing designer jeans, high heels and a flack jacket, being instructed on how to properly clean a weapon.

established in 1986 creating a sort of market-based socialism) has opened Vietnam to the rest of the world, these students have grown up in an increasingly Western-friendly and Western-admiring culture. While their parents' and grandparents' generations complain of a loss of culture, in reality it is a product of development. People who've never known war and live in a world of MTV and imitation Versace clothes will have no desire to read military theory written 75 years ago, or learn how to shoot an AK-47. My translator has told stories of girls on the training field, wearing designer jeans, high heels and a flack jacket, being instructed on how to properly clean a weapon. They were chagrined at the idea of getting mud on their clothes. The country has a serious dichotomy between the generations, and few students admit interest in the war stories told by their older relatives. Only 2 out of the 20 respondents even knew specifically how and where their grandparents had served; most had only general knowledge.

When it comes to the portrayal of women through words, I found that there were more well-known stories of famous women than men. There were at least 4 stories of women or groups of women who'd performed extraordinarily during the war, while famous male soldiers were much harder to come by. While General Giap is famous for his role in the war—he basically planned and ran it—there are few stories of ordinary foot soldiers that did anything legendary. Women are viewed as heroines in many situations; everything from transporting food and weapons on the Ho Chi Minh Trail to repairing roads and bridges and hauling cannons up the mountains is detailed in one story or another, and it's much more common for students to

know these stories than stories of their own family members or stories of men. In some ways, therefore, women were put on a pedestal for their involvement. It was *expected* and normal that men would fight for their country, but when women did they were the subject of national legends. This is not to say that every woman in the war was treated well or properly acknowledged for her involvement. I would, however, go so far as to suggest that due to Vietnam's cultural construction of gender, when women performed outside of their 'norm', it was a big deal.

Unfortunately, the breaking of gender construction during the war ended for the most part with the war itself. The idea that gender is a construction at all is something of a controversial topic in contemporary Vietnam, even within sociology departments at colleges like the Institute of Women. In an interview with Karen Turner (an author on Vietnamese women in the military) in Hanoi, she provided me with a glimpse of the frustrations she faced as a speaker on gender. While students are beginning to understand that what people had previously thought of as "natural" associations with gender may not be so, the majority of professors and older faculty were staunchly opposed to the idea.

A book written by a female sociologist in Hanoi called *Single Women* describes the opposition to accepting these ideals, though her opinions may be more extreme than others. She noted that a commonly-held opinion was that women fought because their homes and families were being destroyed and fighting was a way to go "back to life as they wanted it, as it was before the invaders came". Women who returned from the war too old to marry, or too sick/malnourished from years in the jungle, remained alone, "leading a miserable, unnatural life". If sociologists in universities are writing things like this, how has that affected women today? Would they be less likely to volunteer for service, knowing the possible consequences? Fortunately, it seemed in our conversations that the youth aren't flat-out accepting this rhetoric.

When talking to female veterans about how women were portrayed, their factual accounts and calm tones conveyed how they "did what they had to do," and that there were tragedies to be sure, but no more than for any other battalion, and certainly no more than for men. The separation they will

acknowledge, however, is the treatment of veterans. Male veterans with problems coping had war syndromes, medical problems for which they generally received treatment, money, and understanding (sometimes all three, sometimes not). I've spoken to or read about women who'd been in the Volunteer Army for almost a decade, fighting in some of the worst parts of the country, who were written off as temperamental or crazy for their complaints about lack of proper veteran treatment. While I'm sure some males weren't treated properly and some women *were*, the impression is given that more female veterans with post-war trauma were ignored and more women whose lives had been ruined by the war were ostracized from the community for their inability to fit into the mold society still had. Women—all of them, regardless of whether they fought for a month, a decade, or not at all—were expected to marry, go back to the kitchen, and create a new generation.

Women who couldn't fit into this mold—voluntarily or involuntarily—received a variety of reactions from society ranging from pity and assistance to extreme ostracism and prejudice strong enough to affect not just the woman but any family she may have had to leave. Some women coming back from the war simply didn't want to get married and settle down, some were too old to be considered a desirable wife, and some were too injured or ill. Many who initially found husbands upon returning home were then abandoned if they proved infertile (malnourishment and malaria made this common) or couldn't produce a healthy son (Agent Orange caused hundreds, if not thousands, of cases of birth defects ranging from simple learning disabilities to miscarriages and significantly crippling deformities). Some women desperately attempted to get as close to society's norm as possible, even if it involved having children out of wedlock and raising them alone. This plan essentially backfired, as these women were often shunned from their communities (usually small rural towns) and pressured socially to live in villages with other people in their "situation", a prejudice that was then passed on to their children.

Vietnamese representations and perceptions on one hand raise women's involvement to 'legend' status, but this is as much of a problem as a subservient status. As soon as

there is a differentiation, whether it appears to be a positive or negative one, problems arise. If female veterans were really "equal" to their male counterparts, the gender-specific issues wouldn't exist. On the surface, if someone asked me to "explain womens' involvement in the war", it would seem to be a positive story, filled with women who broke the gender barrier and helped their country win a war against an invader with superior military might. While inequality during military service may not have existed on any measurable level, that didn't translate to equality in other non-military roles or during peace-time. These inequalities lie at a deeper level, and will be that much more difficult to eradicate. Fighting inequality when gender has yet to be identified as a social construction will be a significant challenge, and identifying it as such is in the hands of a generation that generally believes women have a "natural inclination towards motherhood" and will spend the rest of their lives in misery if unable to fulfill their "natural destiny". *Single Women* even went so far as to suggest that not having children could have negative health side effects for women, that children made women mentally stable and not reproducing thus made women unstable and sometimes crazy.

The focus of my independent study changed considerably upon my arrival in Vietnam and I realized that I'd been asking the wrong question. This study was one part of something that was a life-changing experience for me, and gave me more insight into how history influences current society. Depictions—whether they be in history textbooks or through cultural perceptions deriving from young women seeing how female veterans were treated after the war—are powerful things, and the perception of military service by young women today is vastly different from previous generations. Is this the effect of the prevalence of Western culture in contemporary Vietnam, or is it a recognition of women's dedication and commitment to a government that ultimately abandoned—financially and socially—many of the people who fought for its legitimacy?

—Cristina Bain

Following, left: **House in the Mountains, Scotland** Andrew Meunier
Following, right: **Busy Hong Kong Street** Kathy Wong


新高雅酒店
NEW KINGS HOTEL
N796 970
970X
260 N122
N216 N241
BUS STOP
N102 N118 N171
BUS STOP

Explorations II

Body Image in Japan

In traveling halfway across the world to Japan, I was under the impression that I would be able to escape the American ideal of what a person should look like to be considered beautiful. I quickly realized that this was not the case. While studying the culture of Japan, I learned that many of the things they do are based on tradition. For this reason I did not expect to see the "beautiful" stars of Hollywood plastered throughout the major cities and department stores of Japan. Instead, I expected to see the Japanese idea of "beautiful". In traveling throughout Japan as well as shopping around the city I lived in, I quickly realized that teenagers strive to become more westernized as opposed to following the traditions of their parents. Department stores have western models in their ads, and commercials feature western stars. Cameron Diaz, for example, is the main spokesperson for Softbank Cellphones. She is seen in the ads outside their stores, as well as frequently on television in their commercials.

Because of the pervasiveness of westerners in Japan's media, it is not that odd that Japanese teenagers are striving towards a western look as opposed to being proud of their own look. In Japan there are a set of things that are considered beautiful. First are the eyes. If the eyes are big and open wide, they

> They have this ideal that when you put your feet together your legs should only touch in four spots.

are considered beautiful. I first realized the extremes that the Japanese would go to look more western when I was speaking to one of my Japanese friends at Kansai Gaidai. She was talking about how I have double eyelids whereas they do not. She then

said how she had used a special cosmetic tool to fold back her eyelids to try to give her the look of a double eyelid. The Japanese do this to look more like the ads they see in their magazines and on television, a dynamic similar to what happens here in the United States. There is also a popular kind of plastic surgery available in Japan, which involves slitting the ends of the eyelid to make one's eyes open wider.

The Japanese also strive for a very young look. To achieve this, they believe that one must have lighter skin, with pink-colored makeup. Their clothes also contribute to this, and Japanese women wear things with cute characters on them, such as Hello Kitty. In the cosmetics sections of stores in Japan, it is rare to find make-up that is not whitening. When you are a foreigner in Japan and you need makeup, you may not necessarily want whitening, since foreigners usually strive to be tan, not pale.

The third part of "beauty" in Japan is a completely proportionate body without any curves. They have this ideal that when you put your feet together your legs should only touch in four spots. I have always thought that the limited idea of beauty in the American media is a bad influence on younger children, but I realized that it is even worse in Japan. The "ideal" body type in Japan is even thinner than it is in the U.S., which I did not think was possible. When going shopping I was unable to buy pants, and I had to buy extra large tops. This look that they strive for goes hand-in-hand with the sense of youth they're seeking, because the body type that is ideal to them is a child's body.

In traveling to Japan and observing body images in their media, I was expecting and hoping that the image there would be a little more realistic than in the United States. I instead found that the body image was, in fact, more unrealistic.

—Rachel Bennett

Nonfiction I

The Two Dreams

I had a dream. I dreamed that I walked into a place called the Away Café. The guard at the door gave me a hug and said, "Welcome to Away Café, the hub of away people." I went inside, I saw many people who all seemed to know one another as they hugged and chatted. I made my way through the crowd and arrived at the bar. The bartender asked me, "Would you like some away beer?" I said "I do not want to get too excited."

- How about away tea?
- I don't want to get addicted.
- Away coffee?
- Too bitter.
- It can be sweet too, the bartender said.

I told him to bring me something natural, and he brought out orange juice. I took my juice and sat down on a couch. It was soft; I felt comfortable. I sat there sipping the juice and observing people in the café. They all wore clothes indicating that they were awayers. I saw on the shirt of one guy, "You'll find your happiness in Rio." One girl wore "There are 9 million bicycles in Beijing," and another "Mind the gap." I heard them talking; I understood their conversation because they spoke in the away language that I'd gotten to know and about the away stuff that I read everyday in the away newspaper. But somehow their away talk did not resonate with me.

A group seeing me alone came to start a conversation with me. None of them drank juice, which made me worry a little, but they were friendly. After a while, I realized our talk began to be like the away talk, and after a while, I stopped talking. I yawned and put my head back on the couch; I did not hear the

conversation any more. I slipped into another dream. In this dream, I was in Vietnam with my family, attending the funeral of my uncle. All of them were wearing white, dragging behind the coffin, crying. Fake white money for the dead was strewn all along the way; everything was white. I was distressed to find out that I did not wear white; I was wearing pink. I looked for my mother; I wanted to hug her but Vietnamese don't hug. I touched her, and someone touched me. I felt the touching. My roommate. She told me, "Stop daydreaming," to which I asked,

"Which dream?"

—Linh Nguyen

Carnivale in Maastricht, The Netherlands Jamey Mulligan

Nonfiction II

The Dream in La Guagua

I felt very tired that day. The weather was very nice, but everything looked cloudy. I thought that something strange was happening to me—something that can't be described. As we boarded the bus I noticed that it was full and the road we were about to take was very broken up. The sounds of merengue music came in through all the windows of the bus, as well as the incredible sights of the Dominican landscape. All the landscape looked beautiful, green and exuberant. The passengers on the bus came and went; one man was hanging out of a window while the woman sitting in front of me rocked her baby, who was crying a lot. I asked myself questions regarding the passengers, wanting to know their personal stories and where they were traveling to. But my poor Spanish did not allow me to ask a lot of questions. I was embarrassed to talk to them.

The bus was going towards the northern part of the country. My friends and I were going to a site named *Los Veintisiete Charcos* (The Twenty-seven Pools). Even though the name of this place contains the word *charcos* (pools of water), in reality several of these *charcos* include waterfalls. These pools have existed for thousands of years but they were just discovered recently (ca. 1994) by the rest of the world. Thousands of tourists go to Rio Damajagua every year and now there is an industry of guides managed by local people.

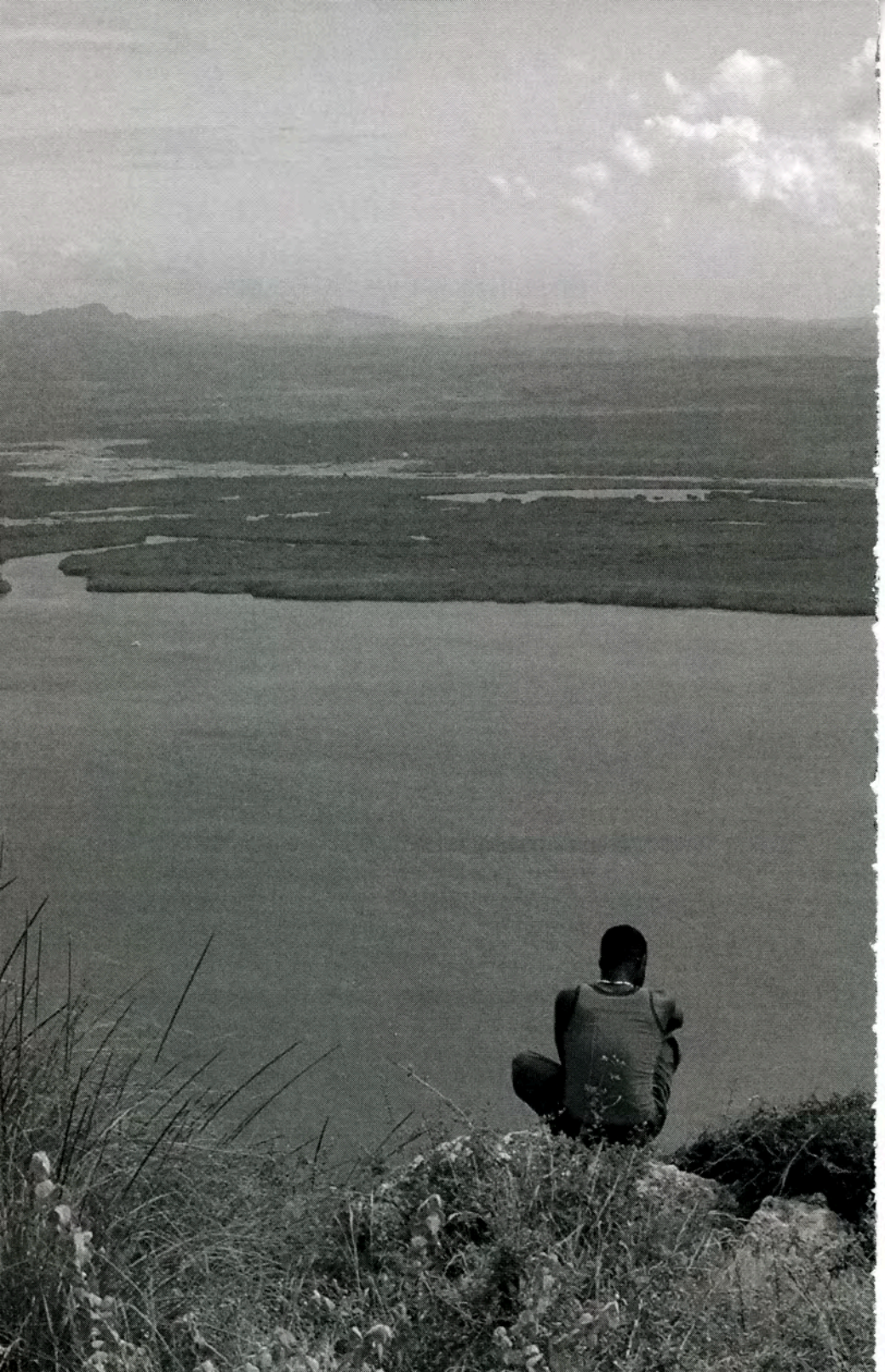
I was very excited about this trip to *Los Veintisiete Charcos* but I also felt a bit nervous. After what seemed like too short a time, the bus stopped suddenly at our site; our adventure had begun and the guides offered us assistance as they do with all tourists. We didn't know if we would actually need guides, but finally we decided that they would be essential because none of us knew much about the site that we were about to visit. The guides gave us lifejackets and helmets for protection, and then we walked about a mile to where the first waterfall was located.

El Sueño en La Guagua

Me sentía muy cansada ese día. Estaba muy bonito el tiempo, pero todas las cosas parecían ser nebulosas. Yo pensaba que algo raro me pasaba—algo que no se puede describir. Al subirnos a la guagua vi que iba llena y el camino donde íbamos estaba muy quebrado. Por todas las ventanas de la guagua, entraban los sonidos de la música del merengue y se veían los increíbles sitios del campo dominicano. Todo el paisaje se veía hermoso: verde y exuberante. Los pasajeros en la guagua iban y venían; un hombre estaba colgando fuera de una ventana mientras que la mujer delante de mí estaba oscilando a su bebé que gritaba mucho. Me preguntaba yo misma sobre los pasajeros, queriendo saber sus cuentos personales y a dónde iban. Pero mi español pobre no me permitía hacer muchas preguntas. Me daba vergüenza hablar con ellos.

La guagua se dirigía al norte del país. Mis amigos y yo íbamos a un sitio llamado Los Veintisiete Charcos. Aunque el nombre de este lugar contiene la palabra "charcos," en realidad varios de estos charcos incluyen cascadas. Los charcos han existido por miles de años, pero solamente fueron descubiertos recientemente (cerca de 1994) por el resto del mundo. Miles de turistas van al Río Damajagua cada año y ahora hay una industria de guías manejada por la gente local.

Yo iba muy emocionada por nuestro viaje a Los Veintisiete Charcos pero también me sentía un poco nerviosa. Después de lo que pareció ser muy poco tiempo, la guagua se paró de repente en nuestro sitio; nuestra aventura había comenzado y los guías nos ofrecían ayuda como lo hacen con todos los turistas. Nosotros no sabíamos si íbamos a necesitar guías, pero finalmente decidimos que eran importantes porque ninguno de nosotros sabía mucho sobre este sitio que íbamos a visitar. Los guías nos dieron chalecos salvavidas y cascos para protegernos, y entonces caminamos como una milla a donde estaba el primer charco.



The waterfalls appeared marvelous, so much so that they did not appear to have been naturally made through the ages. The guides showed us techniques for jumping off the waterfalls and warned us of the danger presented by rocks at the bottom of the pools. One person from our group was very frightened and did not want to jump off any of the waterfalls. All the rest of us jumped off many times. While the guides would help us scale the rocks, we would stop to swim in the pools of water. It felt like we were in a water park!

We became very tired but our group and the two guides got to see all 27 *charcos*. We arrived at the last one after traveling on foot for five hours. I stood at the top of the last waterfall, noticed that it was very high (more than 30 feet), took a deep breath and jumped to the bottom of it.

The bus ran over a big pothole in the road and my eyes opened, waking me up. The music could still be heard from all directions and the baby in front of me was screaming even louder than before. The bus stopped very suddenly, and thus our adventure had started because the bus had blown out a tire. We were parked on the side of the road waiting for somebody to help us. From my window nothing appeared as though it could be a pool of water or a waterfall and we remained stranded there the rest of the day. But I was happy that at least my dream had been so beautiful.

—Minerva Muzquiz

Preceding, left: **The Boy and the View**
Preceding, right: **The Bus** Minerva Muzquiz

Los charcos parecían ser maravillas, tanto que no parecían que habían sido hechos naturalmente por el tiempo. Los guías nos enseñaban las técnicas para saltar entre las cascadas y nos advertían del peligro de las piedras en el fondo del agua. Una persona en nuestro grupo tenía mucho miedo y no quería saltar. Todos los demás, sí saltamos muchas veces. Mientras que los guías nos ayudaban a escalar las piedras de los charcos y las cascadas, nos parábamos para nadar en el agua de los charcos. ¡Nos parecía que estábamos en un parque de agua!

Nos cansamos mucho pero nuestro grupo y los dos guías logramos ver todos los veintisiete charcos. Llegamos al charco final después de cinco horas de caminar a pie. Me paré en la cumbre de la cascada final, vi que estaba muy alta (más de treinta pies), tomé un suspiro profundo y brinqué hasta el fondo de la cascada.

La guagua le pegó a un gran bache en la carretera y mis ojos se abrieron despertándome. La música todavía sonaba por todos lados y el bebé delante de mí estaba gritando más ruidosamente. La guagua se paró muy de repente; así entonces la aventura había comenzado porque una rueda de la guagua había explotado. Nos encontrábamos al lado del camino esperando que alguien nos socorriera. Por mi ventana no se veía nada que pareciera un charco ni tampoco una cascada y estuvimos así el resto del día. Pero me alegraba que mi sueño hubiera sido muy hermoso.

—Minerva Muzquiz

From My Journal I

Come as a Stranger, Leave as a Friend

Fear paralyzed me as I stepped onto the plane in Boston. I was headed to Galway, Ireland for the next four months and was blind to what an amazing transformation I was about to undergo. I told my friends to expect me back at school because I was sure I would be miserable or homesick and need to come back. I have never been more wrong in my life.

My four months in Ireland were without a doubt the best months of my life. I could not have imagined all the amazing things I was about to do. I met new friends, traveled, and learned so much about the Emerald Island. Ireland is a very special place where you can go not knowing anyone and leave knowing that any time you return it will be like coming home.

Below are excerpts from each month I spent in Ireland:

September 2006

The day after we arrived in Ireland, we headed to a small village called Carraroe, which is about an hour and a half from Galway. We stayed there for four days at the home of Tommy and Peig Kelly. We took Irish language classes and learned some Irish step dancing as well! Peig cooked us tons of food, and bore an incredible resemblance to Mrs. Doubtfire.

We got to truly experience pub life in Carraroe. While there was only one pub in this small village, it was the quintessential Irish pub. Our first night there, an older man came up to me and asked me if I wanted to play the flute. I looked towards my friends for some guidance and thought "hey, sure, why not?", and told him "of course". He looked and me and said, "Well,

High Cross at Clonmacnoise on the Shannon, Ireland
Stephanie Spano

then start playing". And I said "Well, I need a flute." He looked at me in sheer shock and said, "You didn't bring your flute?" We all thought this was so funny. People at this pub ranged from seven years old to seventy years old, and everyone was having the *craic*, the Irish idiom for a good time. Even though I had not brought my flute, there was some excellent music provided by others and it was a fabulous time!

October 2006

On one of our free weekends, seven of us headed to London. Ryan Air is a really cheap airline that flies out of nearby Shannon. We only had a day and a half there, but it was loads of fun. We went on the London Eye, the world's largest Ferris wheel that overlooks all of London. We went to Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Parliament, and Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. Since Galway does not have much in terms of sushi, my friend Cory and I made it our plan to find it in London. After two hours of walking, we finally found "YO! Sushi". The trip was so much fun and so easy to do.

We loved the fact that we traveled by foot, train, bus and plane to get there. Last week, my best friend from home came to visit. We took a day trip to the Cliffs of Moher, which were gorgeous. We went all the way to the top and took some amazing pictures. Afraid that we were going to miss the bus, we ran all the way down which was somewhat scary since the cliffs are so high up. Then we headed to the Aillwee Caves. It is a bare limestone area that you can enter and explore. It was incredible. We arrived back in Galway very tired after the busy day. On one of the other days while she was still here, we went horseback riding around Galway Bay with my friend Aaron from Union College. We got to go along the beach and into the water on the horses. It was a great little afternoon adventure before heading to class.

Just yesterday, Cory and I got back from Paris. Wow, it was so incredible! We were able to navigate much better there than in London. Our days were packed full. One morning we went to the Louvre and saw the Mona Lisa. We walked down the Champs-Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe. After a great French dinner with

my friend from high school and her friends, who were visiting from London, we went to the Eiffel Tower and sat on the lawn with a glass of wine. The Tower sparkles for ten minutes every hour and it is so beautiful.

November 2006

My experience working at the Galway Rape Crisis Center and just being abroad in general has definitely changed how I view the world. I have matured so much as a person being here. I used to be incredibly anxious about the unknown and new experiences, but now I embrace them. I realize that there is so much to the world and so many people to meet. After this experience I have thought very seriously about being a traveling nurse. There is still so much in the United States that I have yet to experience that I think this would be a great opportunity.

December 2006

Finally, last night I returned to Dublin. I had an amazing time experiencing the different cultures in Scotland, Italy, and Denmark, but it was nice to return back "home." It was nice to be able to meet up with my HWS friends who were studying abroad as well. They all had such an amazing semester, which makes me believe that anywhere you go abroad will be amazing. I fly back to America this weekend. This semester has blown by, and I can't even believe I have to go home already.

—Jesse McKenna

From My Journal II

FWD:

From: HALLMAN, JOHN
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2006 9:02 PM
To: My Parents
Subject: RE: HELLO

Hello—
I am doing really well. I am currently in the capital of Vietnam called Hanoi. I will be here for 2 months. I started language classes yesterday and they will be quite hard. I also start my internship this afternoon. There is a big economic conference in Hanoi while I am here and I hope to help out with it. But we will see.
The food is really interesting. I can eat an entire dinner for 25 cents in USD. It is cheap. But not everything is that cheap. Some friends went out to a fancy restaurant and spent 50 bucks each.
The city has 5 million people and 2 million scooters; the city is just filled with them. They are better on gas, take up less space and are cheaper. A lot of Asian cities are predominantly scooter-driven. Hope to hear from you soon. I will be less brief next time. I have class soon.
Love,
Mark

From: HALLMAN, JOHN
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2006 4:45 AM
To: McNally, Susanne
Subject: hello from Vietnam

Professor McNally,
I hope you are doing well. I assume classes are going well especially the one on Socialism—it has some good people in it.
I have been able to see much of the countryside and it is amazingly beautiful. The rice fields are terraced in the mountains and the amazing greens are unbelievable. Pictures cannot do justice.

The environment is now just beginning to look the same as it did before the American war.
The Vietnamese people are very interesting. They are very apprehensive at first but they can ask endless questions after they realize that I am a normal person, but I just look different. They have a completely different notion of privacy and the Vietnamese people in Hanoi really live their life in the street. It is amazing: little restaurants on the sidewalk, people napping in a hammock on the street and selling things in the street. It is so fun to watch.
I was in a small village last weekend and helped out the peasants. There were only women who were up to my waist and I was hoping they would ask me to help, and they did. It was cool, except I did not want to be bit by a cobra. I pushed around carts full of rice plants.
The traffic here is ridiculous; there are 2 million scooters in a city of 5 million. There are no public bathrooms, so you see some awkward things, nor are there garbage bins. People throw everything on the ground which I guess is O.K., because they have people at night sweep it all up.
—Mark

From: HALLMAN, JOHN
Sent: Monday, November 06, 2006 3:45 AM
To: My Mother
Subject: RE: address

Mom—
I had an amazing weekend at Ha Long Bay. It was so beautiful. It is basically a mountain range that is partially submerged under water, with only the tops showing. We sailed on a huge boat and stopped at different coves and dove off the roof and swam in the water. We also saw a couple caves, and had the best crab I have ever had on the boat. Might actually be the first time I have had crab, a lot of work though. The place is amazing. I wish we spent more than a weekend there. On Saturday, we went for a hike on this island called Cat Ba, and it was cool. Had my first plate of spaghetti in Vietnam, the sauce was really sweet, but nice to have a familiar flavor for once. I am starting to really like seafood, I love shrimp and now crab. Never tried lobster, need to do that when I get back. Don't know if they have it here.

I only have 3 weeks left in Hanoi, and about 6 weeks in total. It has gone by fast, but I have done a lot. It is a good combination in my opinion.
Love,
Mark

From: HALLMAN, JOHN
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2006 2:56 AM
To: John Shovlin
Subject: Vietnam Adventures

John—
Vietnam has been amazing. I have had such a fantastic experience here. I have traveled the entire country and got to really embrace Vietnamese culture. My language is really starting to become quite good. I converse and get around really well. I hope to continue to study when I get back in the U.S. with a tutor in Geneva.
I went for a weekend and helped a family in a rice field, which is ridiculously hard work, especially in the heat. But being twice as tall as some of the women in the field they loved to watch me help out. We just got back from Ha Long Bay, which might be the most beautiful place I have ever seen, and it is basically mountains that have been submerged underwater and only the tops are visible. We took a boat into these gorgeous coves to swim and dive off of our boat. Sounds like a difficult study abroad trip right? The landscape in Vietnam is so diverse—mountains next to beaches, terraced rice fields on mountains in the jungle, huge plains/flat lands and 2,500 km of coast. It's an amazingly beautiful country, but undergoing fast development—for better and worse.
I am still struggling with what to do after college. I have been looking for jobs in Vietnam, only casually, but would like to work abroad for a couple of years. I am also interested in mastering my French as well, maybe back home in Canada to work in Québec or Montréal. I want to understand the world, so if I can travel and get paid for it, it would be a perfect combination. Then I want to get a graduate degree. I have only two things to do—have an exciting life and make the world better. I am doing the first, but need to do the second a little better. Let me know if you have ideas/advice.
To progress!

—John 'Mark' Hallman

Woman Sorting through Rice Harvest, Vietnam Rian Cahill

the
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a journal of global perspectives

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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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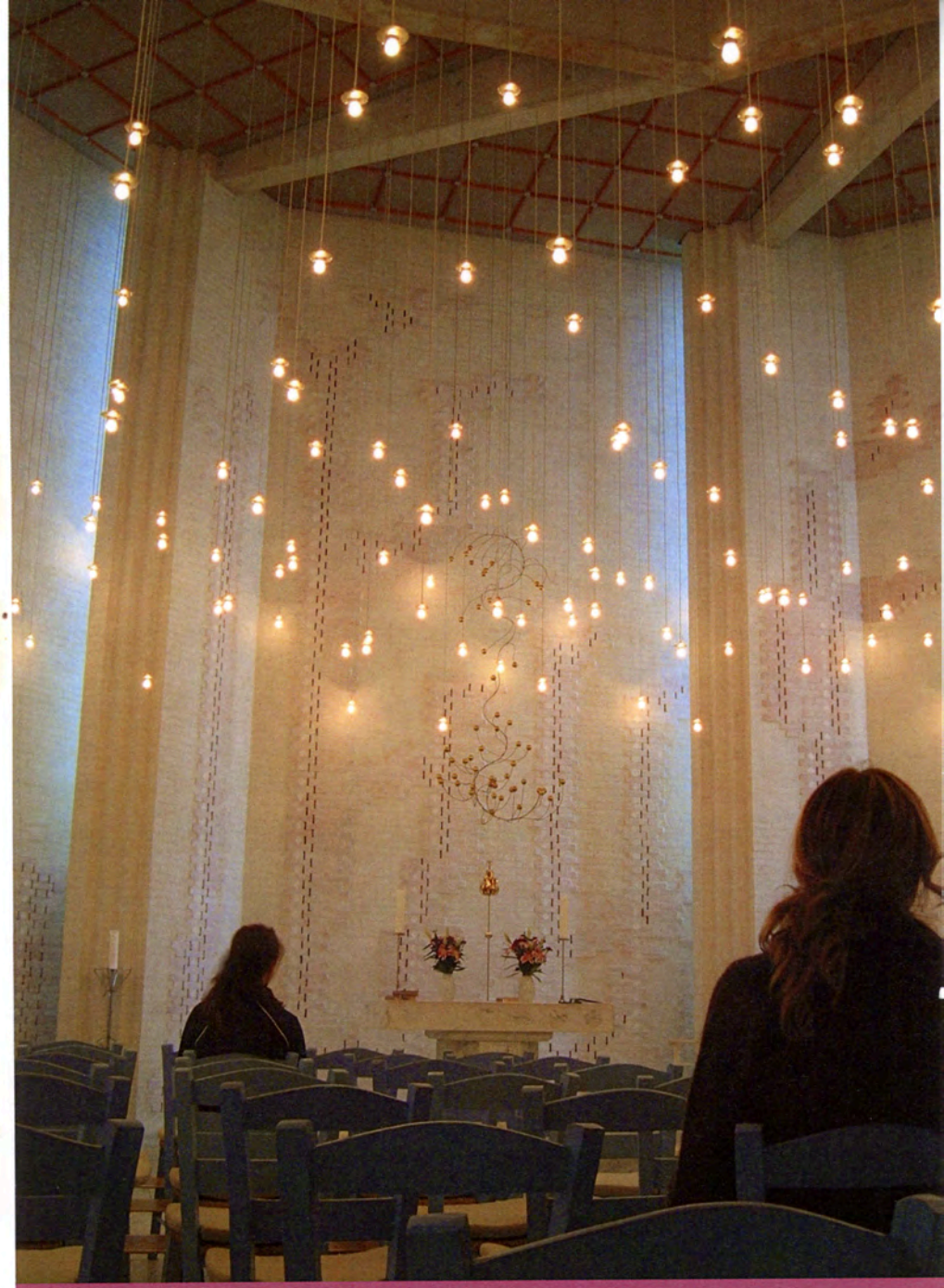

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