

WANDER

A photograph of several wooden boats on a river. The boat in the foreground is dark wood with 'Rabari' written on its side in white, stylized script. It is decorated with colorful tassels and a blue cloth. Other boats with blue and purple canopies are visible in the background. The river is surrounded by a steep, rocky cliff with patches of green moss and vegetation.

Brandeis Abroad
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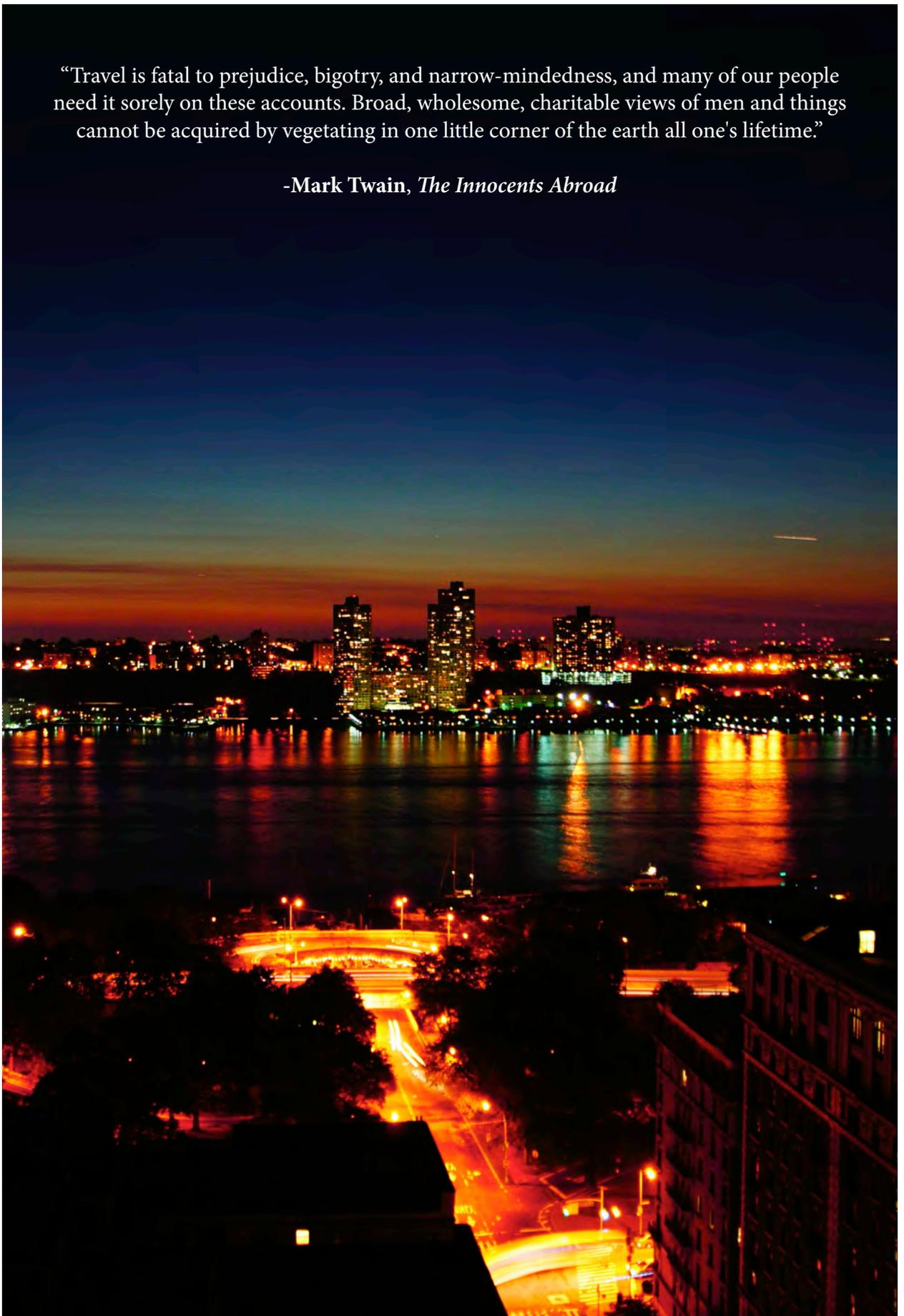


Wander: Brandeis Abroad



“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”

-Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*



Letter From The Editor



Fellow voyager,

You have your ticket in hand, no passport or visa necessary. You're headed to lands unknown and landscapes of vibrant thoughts. The itinerary is yours to choose. You may want to take a wanderous stroll through Budapest. (pg. 27) Famished? Savor some thanksgiving turkey in Seville. (pg. 11) Or if you prefer, relax and let Parisian straphangers entertain you. (pg. 19)

I have traversed 6 continents and seen over forty countries. There's a lot out there. I've met many people from diverse backgrounds and I've seen many places of all hues. I've been sculpted by each visit as I've imbibed exotic cultures and cuisines. The people I've encountered during my semester abroad in Indonesia have imprinted me in ways I can only begin to fathom.

Our characters are molded by experience yet we are still resilient to change. We might shift or stay planted, after a global dipping. But, we are always cultivated by it through gained self-awareness. Traveling can expand our empathy through greater understanding of alternative philosophies. Our peregrinations enable internal exploration and external discovery.

As humans, we have the ability to adapt to environments from the frozen Arctic to arid Sahara. As students, we not only survive these places, we flourish. We find ourselves in an ever-smaller world where context is blurred and humanity finds increasing commonality. These vivid vignettes will transport you through cultures and countries. We hope that your time adrift takes you somewhere new, where you see the old in perspective anew. Don't forget to write!

Auf wiedersehen,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Isaac'.

Isaac Steinberg '15

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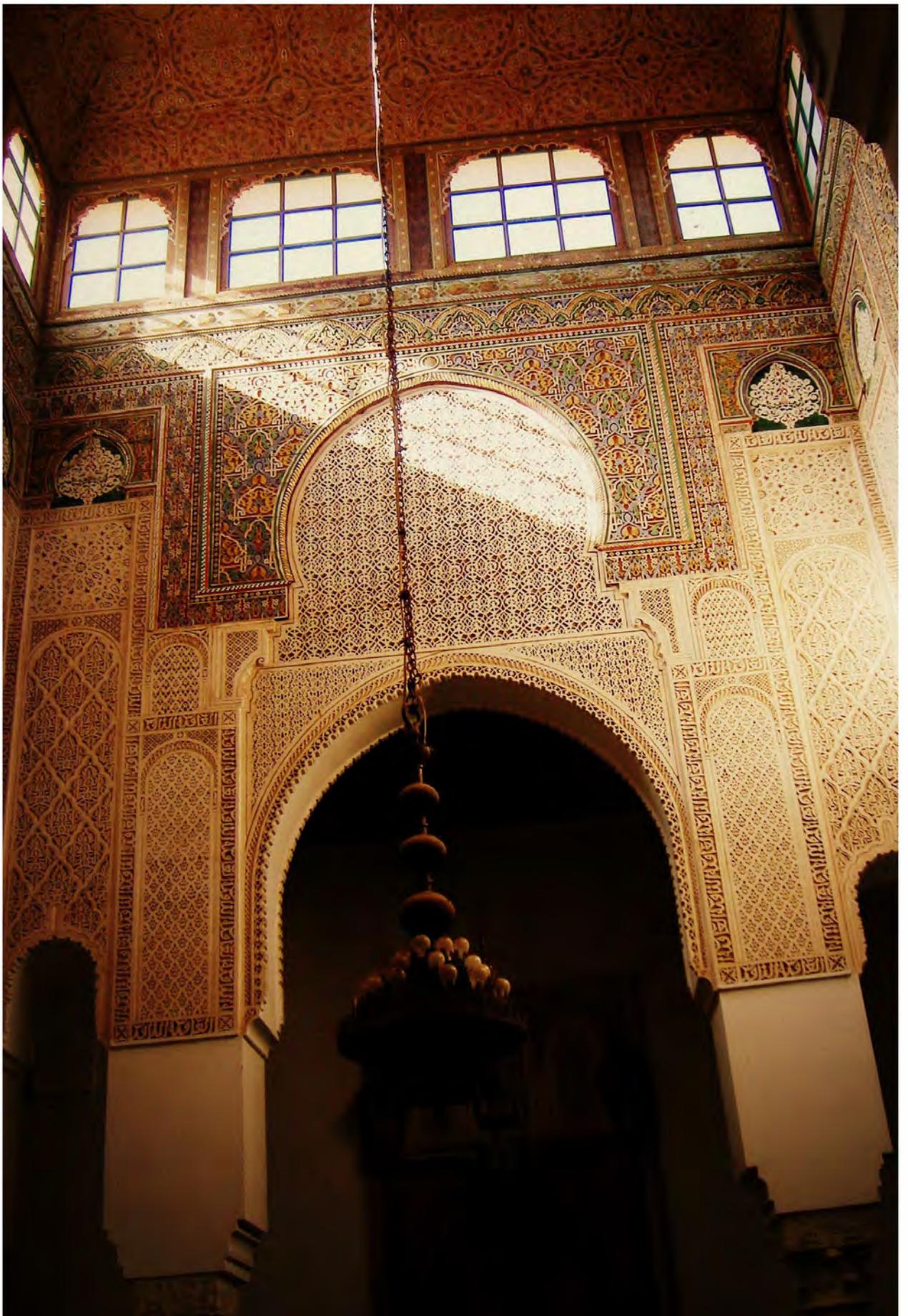




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Rachel L. Ruben *Copenhagen, Denmark*



Si, Soy Americana

By Katie Doody (1st Prize)

*Class of 2014
Seville, Spain*

On Thursday, November 22, I sat in Cafe Mármoles in Seville, Spain, staring at my usual mid-morning meal of freshly baked bread topped with tomato, mozzarella cheese, and olive oil. As I tried to focus on the copy of Don Quixote stretched out on the table in front of me, my mind wandered back home to the United States. Throughout Spain, it was a normal Thursday morning: students sipped café con leche and talked politics, old ladies gossiped on benches in plazas, and parents led their still-sleepy youngsters, clad in matching uniforms, to school. However, I knew that in America, my friends and family would soon be waking up to put together their Thanksgiving feasts. Although I was having the time of my life in Spain, the thought of not being at home to cook string beans and watch Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade made me sad. It had been three months since I swapped giant mugs of coffee for shots of espresso, football for fútbol, and South Street for Calle Betis, and I missed the comforts of home. After a semester of blending into a foreign culture, every now and then, I missed naturally belonging.

As I began to fish for a two Euro coin to pay the waitress, I looked up and saw the unexpected: two café workers wheeling in a giant cooked turkey. They placed it behind the bar as two customers watched with wonder. Immediately, a discussion ensued about the significance of the turkey. I listened with amusement as the group of Spaniards tried to uncover the mystery. It's a special holiday in Los Estados Unidos, one explained. They stuff themselves with turkey, another offered, and something about Indians and Pilgrims. The waitress

smiled. "We'll have an American party tonight," she said.

I walked up to the counter to pay when a man at the bar turned to me and smiled. "Are you American?" he asked, "can you explain this turkey to us?"

"Sí," I answered, "soy americana," before I clumsily attempted to explain the connection between English colonists and copious amounts of mashed potatoes accompanied by football games and turkeys wearing top hats.

As I walked back to my home-stay, my mind lingered on the conversation. Although I had lived in America my whole life, I realized that the conversation in the café was, as far as I could remember, the first time I ever used the phrase "I'm American." My identity had never been tied to my nationality. But I realized that, as bizarre and backward as it may seem, studying in a new world for four months made me proud to be part of my country and my culture. After full immersion in the land of flamenco, sun, and sangria, I noticed that, ironically, living in Spain made me feel more American.

It wasn't just that before arriving in Spain I had never expressly stated that I was American. In fact, most of the time I was embarrassed by my own culture. I assumed I understood the world's perception of America, and I thought I would spend my days in Spain trying to deflect claims that Americans are ignorant, overweight, and eat only Big Macs. I didn't want to be associated with that "typical American." I looked forward to traveling to Spain, shedding my own culture, and adopting a new way of life. I thought a study abroad student's mission would be to camouflage.

Throughout my first few weeks, I was excited by successful efforts to blend into Spanish culture. I fearlessly ordered ham (which I usually avoid at home) in Spanish restaurants. My friends and I smiled when a group of Spanish teenagers walked faster than us and passed us on the sidewalk (we took this as a sure sign that we were adopting the relaxed Spanish lifestyle and not racing from place to place like stereotypical Americans). Eventually, I received the ultimate validation that I was part of the community: a woman stopped me and asked for directions (bonus points for being able to point her in the right direction).

However, my first few weeks were also full of frustration. Despite my efforts to blend in, I had plenty of moments when I clearly stood out. When my camera broke, I struggled to explain to the man in the repair shop what was wrong, and eventually resorted to camera-like hand gestures and head nodding. In restaurants with friends, waiters watched the confusion on our faces and handed us English menus. Pedestrians chuckled when we stopped in the middle of the sidewalk to open large, unwieldy maps. Although we picked up quickly on Spanish slang, bus schedules, and the popular bars, we couldn't quite become chameleons. We lived with, learned from and befriended sevillanos, but we remained foreigners.

As the weeks passed, my idea of my role in Seville started to change. I began to learn that it was impossible to shed my identity and become Spanish overnight. I realized, overtime, that my culture and my past were something unique that I could share with other people. During the second half of my semester, my most meaningful and memorable interactions were moments of cultural exchange. A friend from Peru showed me videos of a traditional dance from her country, and in exchange, I taught her the lyrics to songs by her favorite American artist/complete obsession, Taylor Swift. My new sevillano friend Jorge cooked my friend and me a traditional Spanish dish,



Julia Karant Toulouse, France

migas, and in exchange, we cooked him mac 'n' cheese and baked him Christmas cookies. My warm and welcoming host mom, Carolina, cooked countless delicious Spanish meals for me, and in exchange, I gave her Massachusetts maple syrup and a recipe for homemade pancakes.

My experience in Seville was full of new ideas and understandings, both expected and unexpected. Expectedly, I improved my Spanish, learned to eat ham, traveled throughout Europe on cheap and slightly nerve-wracking airlines, danced flamenco, and drank plenty of tinto de verano (a Southern Spanish specialty: red wine with Fanta). Unexpectedly, I came home with a new appreciation for my own culture, Big Macs and all. **W**



Sí, soy americana.

¿De dónde eres?*

By Margo Kolenda

*Class of 2014
Seville, Spain*



*I am in fact American, though 'haps
I'd wish it otherwise— my weathered feet
have left a dizzied trail upon old maps:
a mix of foreign earth they've chanced to meet.
A Spanish ritmo o'er my lips doth reign
though Italy my tongue has captured strong,
my hands are tied to Thailand's rough terrain,
my heart beats to a Costa Rican song.
Through ancestry my soul with blood is bound
to distant lands in truth I've never known;
I've native rights to live on New York ground,
to others I hold claim in name alone.*

*Where am I from? It seems I've hit a wall—
my states are not united after all.*



*Spanish: Where are you from?



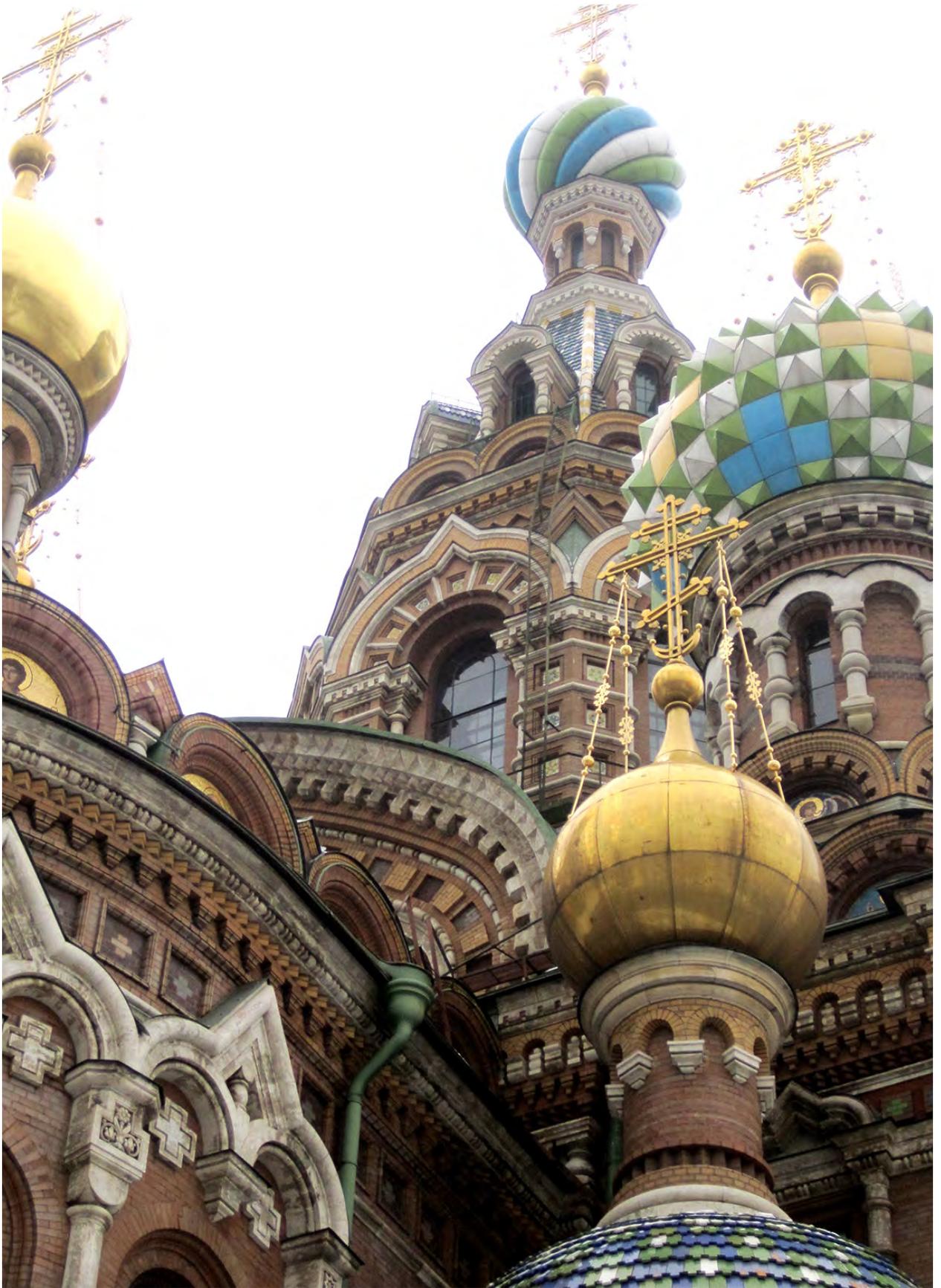
Margo Kolendo *Seville, Spain*



Top: Jessica Chirstian *Bahia, Brazil*

Bottom: Jessica Chirstian *Bahia, Brazil*

Right: Jeniffer Ginsburg *St. Petersburg, Russia*



History of Sleep

By Catherine Fairclough

*Class of 2014
Sterling, Scotland*



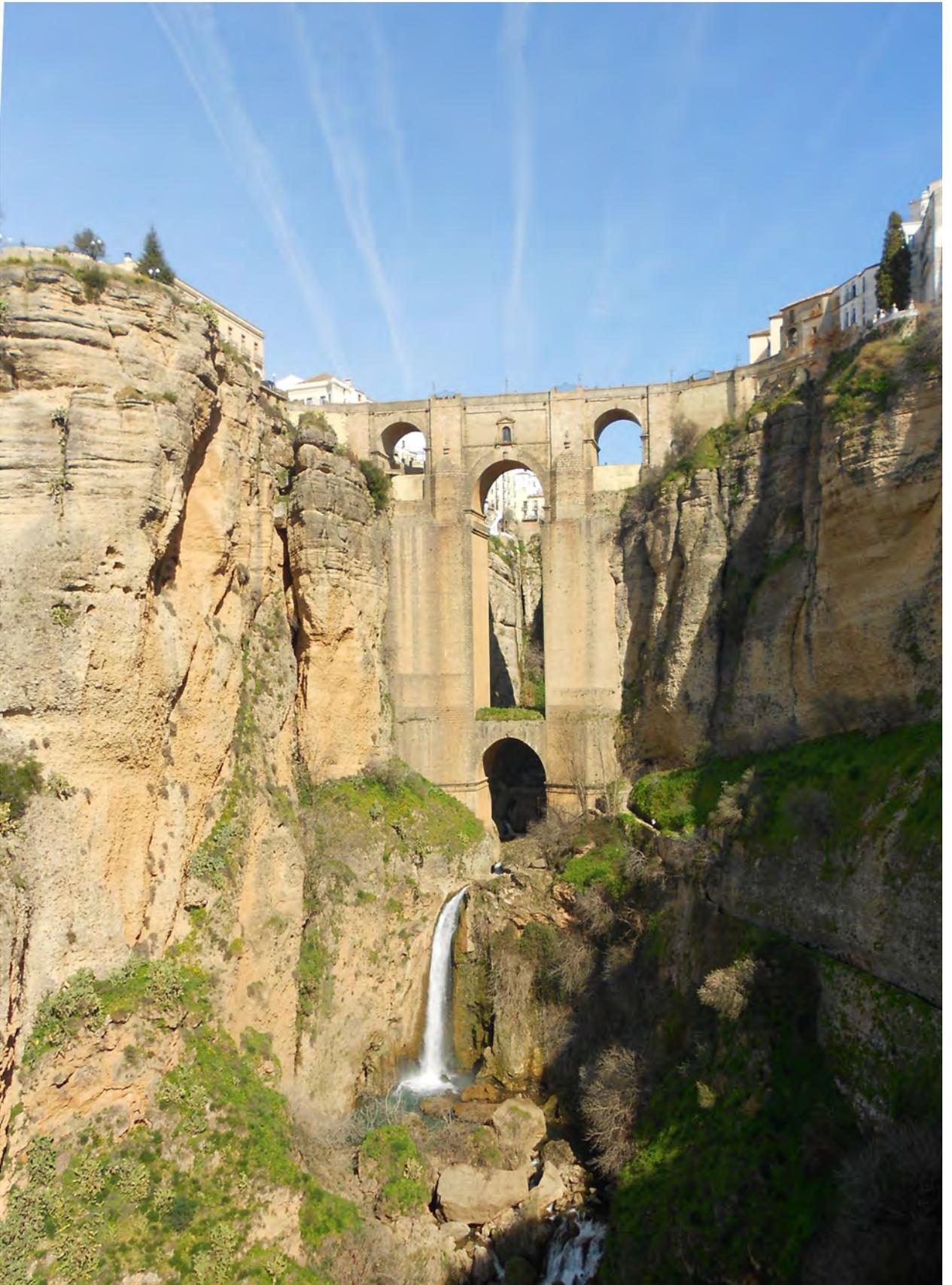
*Sit at the bottom
of a gray loch
and look up at the water
holding memories
of earth's past*

*History settles in
floats around you
leaving room for
the tides of tomorrow*

*Swan feet ripple as
the diluted sun
wraps around you singing
of another day
when it will shine as brightly
as a unicorn's horn.*

*Sleep
in current history.*





Margo Kolenda *Ronda, Spain*

Metro Profiles:

Observations from the Paris Metro

By Charlotte Erb (3rd Prize)

Class of 2014

Paris, France

“Before the appearance of omnibuses, railroads, and streetcars in the nineteenth century, men were not in a situation where, for minutes or hours at a time, they could or must look without talking to one another.”

-Georg Simmel

*“The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
petals on a wet, black bough.”*

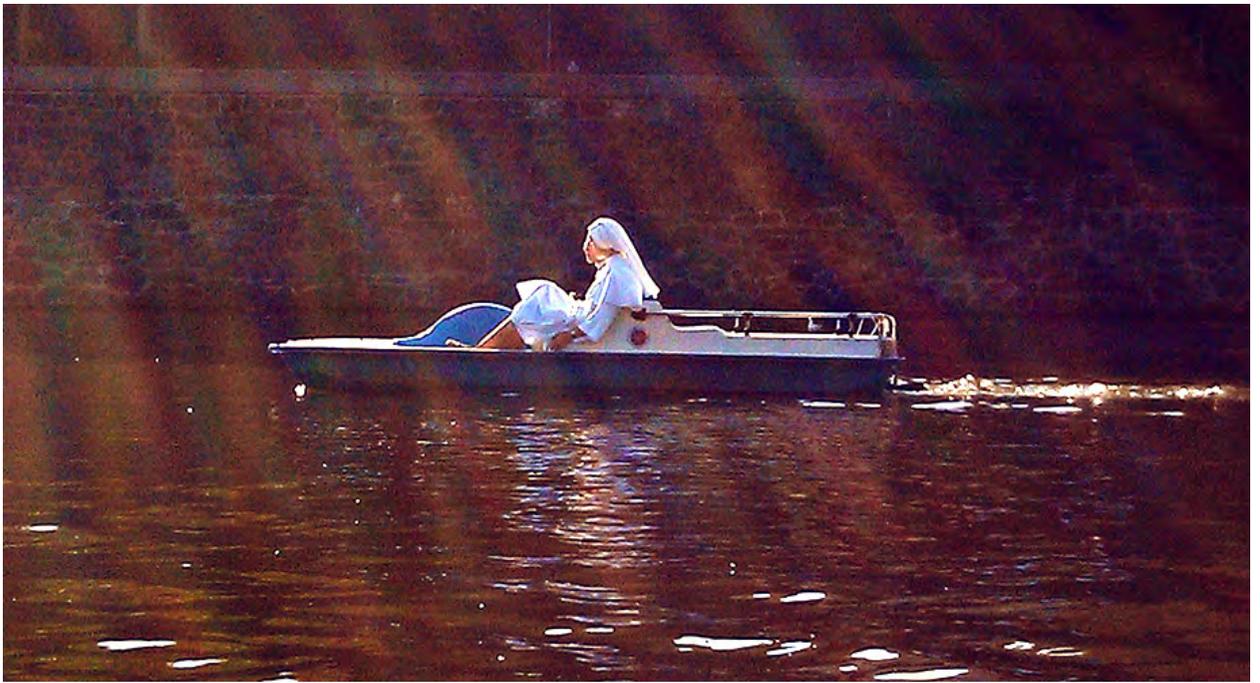
In a Station of the Metro

- Ezra Pound

He has short spiked hair and a puffy jacket. He’s wearing a thin metal link bracelet and grey khakis. He’s sitting in the seat next to you, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. You know his type. You’re unenthused. You’re staring straight ahead. He starts to move and your peripherals tell you to look. He’s reaching into a plastic bag dangling from 3 fingers. He pulls out a smaller bag. A tiny ziplock square. His hand covers the contents until he spills them out into his open palm. Guitar picks. Tortoise shell and yellow. He tests their



Sadye Sagov Rome, Italy



Rosanne Libretti *Prague, Czech Republic*

bent against his thumbnail. And with that you don't know his type anymore. He's exceeded the expectation of the type in which you cast him. You could be sitting next to a musician. A rock star. Or a normal guy who hasn't shaved his face since yesterday and decided today that he wants to play the guitar. Either way, in 3 stops he changed from a puffed-out punk to a man with a guitar waiting for him when he gets off.

You feel like you've seen her a million times. Girls like her are all over Paris. Empty-headed, her main interests include texting, jewelry, and boys. Her button nose matches her thin lips and her hazel eyes sparkle with mascara and meticulously applied eyeliner. She has fine hair and her soft bangs sweep across the right side of her forehead. She's the kind of girl who would work in an office in Paris – maybe that's where she's going. And she's the kind of girl who is picture perfect – and therefore uninteresting to you, boring in conversation. Squeak to a halt and the doors open, belabored but efficient. The man next to the girl stands up and marches out to the platform. She sits down and she's finally able to get back to the book that has been waiting in her bag – *Les Trois*

Mousquetaires. Her bookmark sticks out at the end of the fat paperback – she's already been through the thick of it. You wonder how many stops it took her to get to the end, how many lines have seen that worn cover. You smile to yourself. She tells you that the best things are hidden.

The sky is dark and you're going out. He steps onto the train in his loafers like those your dad used to wear. He pulls down the fold up seat with one hand and sits down across from you. He carefully sets his cello between his legs, its red cloth case like a coat. He has his arms around the instrument, his hands resting on its hips. He's wearing a thin gold wedding ring. You wonder where he's coming from and where he's going. Maybe he plays in the *Orchestre de Paris*. Maybe his wife does too. Maybe classical music is unraveling itself under his pauper-style cap. Maybe he's a street musician wrapping up a long cold day at work. Or maybe he's a friend picking up his neighbor's cello from the shop. But no – a part of you knows he plays. He doesn't notice you; his eyes say that he's somewhere else. You imagine him playing, one hand on the fingerboard, a thick, swollen vibrato. The other hand on the bow, pushing

and pulling it across the strings with strength and fluidity. He's inside the music, his eyes are closed. The sound is in and around him and he's a cog, desperately fulfilling what the orchestral machine produces. The doors open with a drumroll and a hit. He walks through them and takes the music with him, holding his cello gently like he would a child.

The car is crowded but you cram in with everyone else – there's no hesitating. Body to body on all sides and you're glad you're wearing your coat as a buffer. You keep your eye on your bag, pulling it around to your front. The dissonant alarm announces the imminent closing of the door. You're sardines in a can. She pushes in last and her eyelashes barely fit. Her lip-gloss glints like a fluorescent light. At the next stop she gets off to find a less-crowded spot, maybe even a seat. You hear the tempo of her steps as she clicks down to the next car, heel against stone.

You've seen him before on the 11. He sleeps in one of the cars during the day. People step on the train and see him, trying to hide their glance and then their reason behind the decision to take the next car down instead. He sits in the 4-square seats, his bare feet resting on the seat across from him. He's on an island. No one dares sit next to him or his feet. They're bloated and flaky, spotted pink and white on the soles. His flip-flops lie on the floor. His hair sticks out in tufts. One morning he tried to sleep, his thin nylon jacket pulled over his head. He was a torso of cloth, like a mannequin. His head moved as he adjusted his darkness. A group of children got on behind him. They were loud, rambunctious. A few of them quieted down, their gaze distracted by something else. You see one of them turn to his friend and point at the feet. They giggle and you find yourself frowning at them. Their teacher tells them to come closer to the group. You wonder where he sleeps at night or if he sleeps at all. You wonder whom his parents were and if he has brothers or sisters. You wonder how he got to Paris

and what he liked to do as a kid. You wonder what his favorite foods are and if proper socks and shoes would help his feet. You see him every so often, sometimes through the window as the train rolls up to the stop, sometimes as you walk into the only empty car. He watches the 11 go up and down, back and forth, Châtelet to Mairie des Lilas all day and night. He knows the stops by heart. The car to himself, he is the ambassador of the 11. And you worry about him before you fall asleep.

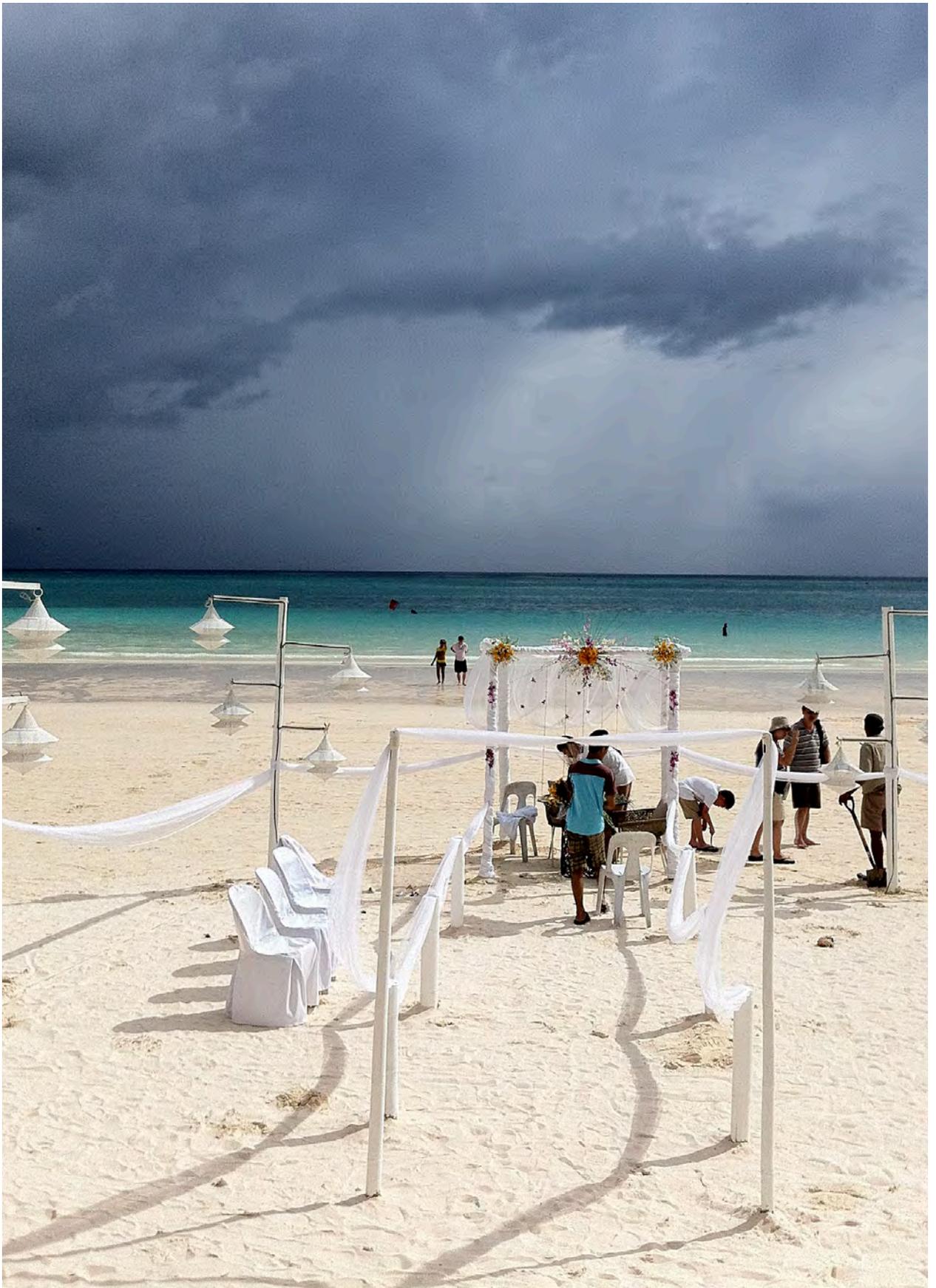
She steps on like she owns the place. Her thin legs come out from under her fur coat and point down to her fabulous heels. You stare at your own shoe choice – moccasins with Dr. Scholls inserts. She places her hand up high on the bar to keep herself steady, like she's posing for a photo-shoot. As the car jolts forward you try not to stumble and manage a *pardon* when you bump into the person next to you. Her glossy black hair is high on her head in an artful chignon, and her bangs cut across her forehead, her porcelain skin peeking through. Her lips make a bright red pout. Her fingers encircle the bar, adorned with her grandmother's rings. She knows exactly how to order *foie gras* and her family keeps up a summerhouse in Italy. There is no translating her. She is *la belle parisienne* and you hate and love to see her. **W**



Photo Credits

Top Right: Jessica Chirstian Bahia, Brazil
Top Left: Sadye Sagov Prague, Czech Republic
Bottom: Jessica Chirstian Bahia, Brazil







Left: Alice Zhu Boracay, Philippines
Top: Alice Zhu Hong Kong, China
Bottom: Rachel L. Rubin Copenhagen, Denmark

Not All Those Who Wander

By Nathalie Shushan (2nd Prize)

Class of 2014

Paris, France

You mean to walk a straight path but, *comme d'habitude*, you're distracted by the splendor of this magical city that you're lucky enough to call home. The quiet, unassuming side streets call to you, one after the other, until suddenly you notice that you've lost your way. Your eyes are open wide in an attempt to see every city that is layered upon one another because you know that if you look hard enough, you can see Napoleon's city, too. Tucked away behind everything that the eye can see lies the dreamers, the poets, and the painters that came before and you realize that you are no longer walking with any real destination in mind but, instead, you're wandering aimlessly along these winding roads that seem to twist and turn more with every step you take.

C'est l'amour: the real love that makes your heart swell until presque breaking point. *Vrai amour*. Pulse racing and pupils dilated at the very sight of your love that has you enamored. Enchanted. Walk out of the *métro* to greet Notre Dame, it's your breathtaking "am-i-really-here?" aha moment. Realization. The realization of a dream come true *depuis longtemps* que j'ai rêvé de toi, mon amour. The real love that shakes you to your core and breaks you down until you are reduced to nothing but a heart whose beats sing the song of the accordion player in front of Sacré Coeur. This tune that resonates throughout your body until you can feel it in your bones and it fills you in places you didn't even know were hollow. You have been transformed in the way that Monet was transformed when he laid his hands on a paintbrush for the very first time. Complete.

And there is nothing better than when

the stars align and it's that perfect time: *à l'heure*. Isn't she brilliant? She shines brighter than all of the stars in the sky, every hour on the hour. Her majesty. This real love that you feel for the first time and that you've dreamed of for your whole life. And when you see her, it's everything you feel when you fall in love condensed into one eternal moment. Time stands still or maybe it ceases to exist altogether because it's only a concept and, now, love is a fact. More objective than 2pm, this love is so real that it surrounds you, becomes the air you breathe and the music you hear and all you see is your love. This love you feel for the very first time that has changed you and turned you into everything you've ever wanted to be. You are the best version of yourself, *grâce à ton amour*. And you beg for it to never forget you because is it really ever better to have loved and lost? Once more, you look up, wide-eyed and wonderful, at the city of your dreams and realize that, although you've wandered so far and you've lost your way and you don't know exactly where you are, in this moment, you are exactly where you were always meant to be. And it is this certainty, which creeps up on you quietly while you're trying to find your way in a foreign city, that paves the way for your real love. You breathe deep, content with the knowledge that the night has never made you feel so alive and you realize what you might have always known: That not all those who wander are lost. **W**





Sadye Sagov *Rome, Italy (1st Prize)*

Getting Lost to Grow Up

By Karly Olvido

*Class of 2015
Vienna, Austria*

Uncertainty scares me. It's intimidating, uncontrollable, uncomfortable, and I don't like it. Before I went abroad, I was afraid to leave the cushiony safety net of college after graduation. I didn't want to wrap my head around repaying loans, worrying about getting into grad school, or facing unemployment. Becoming an adult comes with inevitable uncertainties, and those are the evil, terrifying thoughts that stubbornly sit in the back of my mind.

And then I decided to study abroad in Vienna during the Fall semester of my senior year. Living in a foreign country for a semester is a peculiar mix of excitement and unfamiliar fear, and I loved every thrilling minute of it. As

an aspiring art historian, Vienna quickly became my favorite city and Europe was my new home.

My first venture outside of Austria was a weekend spent exploring Budapest on my own in order to use resources there for my thesis. Looking back, this was foolish, considering I don't know a lick of Hungarian and my German speaking skills at the time was mediocre at best. My adventure began with a 5:00 am train ride. As a Neutral Milk Hotel album was whispering from my iPod and the sunrise was gracefully spreading across acres of golden fields towards Hungary, I went through a meticulously planned schedule in my head. My Saturday was supposed to go like this:



Julia Karant *Toulouse, France*



- 1) 7:00 am: Arrive at the train station and find a bus towards Blaha Lujza Square.
- 2) 7:30 am: Find the hostel and eat something.
- 3) 8:00 am – 9:00 am: Take a nap (I avoided sleeping on the train because I was warned that sleeping single travelers are easy prey for pick pocketers).
- 4) 9:30 am – 12:00 pm: Find Central Market Hall and eat Goulash and other tasty things there.
- 5) 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm: Find the Fine Arts Museum and use the library for my thesis.
- 6) 4:00 – 7:00 pm: End the day at the baths.

None of these things happened according to plan...

My soothing train ride came to an end when I reached the Budapest-Keleti Terminal. The bus station to Blaha Lujza was more difficult to locate than I thought. When I asked for help, people demanded money from me. Suspicious men kept trying to convince me that they could exchange euros to forints with sincere accuracy. I eventually found the help desk and the bus terminal. It was almost 8:00 am and I wanted my nap.

I finally got on an empty bus and rode for about fifteen minutes when I noticed that the bus was heading towards a suburban area. I knew that the hostel was in a bustling part of the city. I asked the driver if the bus was going to Blaha Lujza, but he indicated that he couldn't speak English halfway through my sentence. So, I got off at the next stop hoping to find someone who could direct me to the correct bus.

I was staring at my map in total confusion when I saw a woman with her child in a stroller not too far from me. I asked her, where "BlaHA Loo-GEE-ah" was (remember, I can't speak Hungarian). She laughed and asked me in broken English to point it out on my map. She told me that Blaha Lujza was far from where we were, but she was happy to walk with me to the bus station.

I am a very shy and private person, but I found myself conversing with a complete stranger about my home, my family, and my studies during our twenty-minute walk to the station. I got to know a little about Alida, too, the mother who was helping me find my way to a place that I still can't pronounce. She told me that I was brave because I traveled to Budapest by myself at a young age, as it is uncommon for American students to travel solo. It was strange, I thought. I would have never described myself as brave. Naïve, but not brave.

I surprised myself all throughout this trip. My carefully planned schedule was ruined

before my day began, and I did not freak out. I had several, pretty personal conversations with strangers in addition to Alida, and I wasn't my usual introverted self. I spoke German to other lost tourists, and people understood me. I got lost, but I found my way back and was humbled by the selflessness of strangers.

My getting lost experience isn't unique to my adventure in Budapest, by the way. In fact, I got lost in almost every European city I visited: Paris, Barcelona, London. It seems that I have an innate talent for getting lost and luckily finding the most gracious people to help me. Because of each of these encounters, I have become considerably better at winding my way through very stressful situations, from missing my plane in Paris to getting on the wrong train in Barcelona.

The most important lesson I learned during all of my European adventures is things usually don't turn out the way I envision them to. Sometimes, they end up being better. Sometimes, I'm forced to take opportunities that allow me to learn about others, as well as myself more than I anticipated.

After my bittersweet departure from Vienna, I realized that studying abroad, overall, made me more confident as a budding adult. Although I'm still terrified of student debt and all that, studying abroad better armed me with the fortitude I need to stand up to the challenges of post-undergraduate life. I may not have to decipher Hungarian again any time soon, but I know that I am more prepared to take on other stressful challenges that await me after graduation because of my experiences abroad. Although my fear of the uncertain is not completely gone, I can deal with it now. Right now, it's time for me to see the world, be nomadic, and learn through mistakes. It is okay to be uncertain once in a while because I will eventually find out where I'm supposed to be. Now, I can't wait to go back to Europe someday, and get lost again. **W**

An Ode to History

By Jennifer Ginsburg

Class of 2014

Kiev, Ukraine

This summer I had an internship in Kiev and I had the opportunity to travel to Lviv (western Ukraine) and Chişinău (Moldova). I loved exploring the old European cities, but while the days were always interesting, they were not always light-hearted. A lot of blood has been spilled in this part of the world, and while massacres and wars mark the history books, monuments mark the present, standing in memoriam to the dead.

I look up at the Babyn Yar Memorial. In 1941 the Nazis massacred Kiev's entire Jewish population here in two days. Now the area is a park – it is balmy, drizzling, everywhere is green, and the smell of cut grass and spring pervade the air. How does one reconcile the events of so many years ago with the laugh of children at play? I pull up my hood against the rain and head back to the metro station.

I enter the Holodomor Memorial. It stands in memory of the four million Ukrainian famine victims of the twentieth century – those dead due to failed Soviet policies and aftermath of the Second World War. One famine occurred when Stalin declared war on the kulaks (wealthy peasants) and vowed to liquidate them as a class. And succeeded. How can one memorial do justice to four million? It cannot, and yet, it must. I light a candle for the dead, bow my head, and leave the memorial to reenter the sunlight.

I stand before the memorial to the pogrom victims in Chişinău and put a rock at its base. A century ago one of the largest pogroms took place in this city that the world does not remember. I am sorry, my ancestors, that I can do no more. At least you have a stone standing

up for you against the current of history, unlike so many others.

I stand at the fence surrounding the plot of land where the Golden Rose Synagogue once stood in Lviv. Lviv is an ancient European city, founded in 1250, part of the Polish and Austrian-Hungarian empires, so full of history, and one city that managed to escape destruction in WWII. But not completely. From the 14th century until 1941 Lviv had boasted a vibrant Jewish community. I stand at the fence, trying to comprehend the enormity of what happened, not just here but everywhere. I do not know if I succeeded. I doubt it.

The present is full of monuments to the innocent victims. It is hard to comprehend the true horrors of the past without seeing the memorials. The memorials try to prevent the present from forgetting the past, but they may not be enough. They do not prevent the grass from growing or the memories from fading. **W**



But they are what there is.





Alisa Partlan *Bruges, Belgium*

Islands of Intrigue

By Isaac Steinberg

*Class of 2015
Sulawesi, Indonesia*

Water-buffalo shit encrusted my right boot. We had been trekking through the Morowali Jungle in Sulawesi, Central Indonesia, for about week by then. A hired local was leading us to night camps set up by his fellow tribesmen. Some camps were abandoned, some occupied, for their own housing. Rante was a hunter-gatherer. About five feet tall, thick skinned and brutish with a bushy black mustache, he would slice the offending green thicket with a rusty machete as he escorted us through the wilderness. The days were long and sunny, the nights were starry and filled with an orchestra of insects. I would drift off to anti-malarial dreams of impossible physics in impeccable surreal detail.

We hit the trail quickly every morning. I was one of 12 students on a semester abroad with 3 leaders, dotting 11 Indonesian islands over three months. I'd ring out my river-washed wife-beater, salty from an exasperated hike the day prior. My bedding was rolled up and hooked on my 55 liter backpack and my pants tucked into my woolen socks. Some oatmeal, fruit, and tea were whipped up for breakfast. We were to walk for six hours with two river crossings and a stop for lunch before we would reach our last night in the tangled greenery.

Prickly sweat had taken hold, an affliction of the foreigner, a body out of context. No, not to be confused with malaria, that affects us indiscriminately, miliaria or prickly heat doesn't make you hallucinate. Long treks were fine. I could deal with the thorn-hook vines. They'd dangle in front and catch your skin, with a sharp inner edge and with the inertia of your step, they'd slice you. It seemed like all the Aus-

tralasian flora and fauna were out to get me, sharp spines and thorns, poisonous resins and bites. But the agony of prickly sweat is fierce. An epiphyte would pass me by. I would twist and peer backwards to see the wild magenta orchids perched on tree limbs and my lower back would be seared with stings. Pins and needles without numbness, sweat ducts clogged with keen bacteria. It was an unscratchable itch, like my desire for discovery.

We made it to the camp in time for sunset. I tied on a sarong, let my hiking clothes dry, and spoke to the locals with whom we were sharing the camp. Bamboo huts, pet turtles, and plantain, were staples in these parts. Children handed me rhinoceros beetles the size of my hand. Elders offered us student's kretek cigarettes when the smoozing went late. The tobacco and cloves would crackle as they smoldered, filling the small clearing with a sweet smell. "Mie goring ini enak sekali Rante!" Roughly, "these fried noodles are the bees knees, Rante!" An Indonesian cornerstone carb of Chinese decent, fried ramen noodles and sprinkle of MSG were welcome at any Indonesian outing. An omelet and a few tangy snake fruits and a mangosteen, and we were off to bed. I would peer through my mosquito net into the distant night sky silhouetted by the tree canopies and wondered where the boat would take us.

BURRRRGGGG BURRRRGGGG it would toot as the Pelni departed. We were on a charted 1970s German cruise boat. These vessels circulated the sprawled 18,000 islands that make up the country. With Jakarta at the heart one could traverse the islands on a boat, two weeks to the west to Sumatra or two weeks east



Isaac Steinberg *Sempella, Sulawesi, Indonesia*

to Papua, New Guinea. Pelni, as it was known, was the government boat system. Our ride was to Bau Bau, from the waist of the island of Sulawesi to its toe. There we would arrive at our 3rd homestay, this time with the Bajow, or seagypsies.

I scaled the 3 plank wide roadway, as children weaved past me. I was headed back to my homestay to change into my bathing suit. The Bajow live in the Pacific Ocean, or rather above, hovering over the sea. An adventurous fishing population they had been forced to settle down some 70 years ago by the government. Their community, about 1000 Sempella, is affixed atop bleached coral mounds. Wooden beams created a street network for pedestrians. The water beneath us housed our meals and our waste and leftovers. The tide allowed for an ever-changing seascape; a fall off the walking path could mean a dip or broken leg with a 10ft drop at low tide. The children preferred the former and would swim in the hot afternoons, as turds floated alongside.

Standing on an elevated platform at the edge of town I passed makeshift harpoons and goggles to my fellow homestay father, Ikan. He was leathery and burnt. The sun and the sea composed of his existence. I climbed down the mangrove-wood ladder into the tree-carved canoe. We paddled out to the protected reef. It had been badly fished, the seabed was caked in bleached coral. Ikan tossed an anchor

and he plopped into the ocean. I followed suit. He slicked his sun-salted bleached hair back and put on homemade glass goggles. He then prepped the harpoons, an inner-bicycle tire kept them taut. We dove down and waited. He floated horizontally, taking cover next to a fanned out pink coral. Submerged, my ears were popping. I could see him in the distance below he was around 25-30 feet deep. Air, I gasped and dove back down. Swimming to watch again I hear a snap, like a metal chain whisked across concrete.

Ikan wriggles up through the water with a harpooned Picasso triggerfish in hook. He rips off the quivering fish from the harpoon and tosses it into the boat. We continue to fish for some time. I caught two, but the butterfly fish unfortunately wasn't considered good eats, traumatized it was discarded and flew seaward. We paddled back with a mélange of meats, as if a butcher had crossed an aquarium. Scooping out the water as the boat filled up with splashes, we were on our way home.

We ate tremendously that night, a feast of the sea. I took my bucket shower in brackish water and lathered in a deep-green anti-prickly sweat soap. Clean I felt for then but I knew the tingles would return. I was in Indonesia and my boat would be sailing in a few days. Their world was the sea and all its vastness; mine was a small island off of NY. Yet, I felt right at home in their open waters. **W**



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