

The Home Issue

The
Graduate
Press
SPRING 2021
VOLUME 04

Foreword

Dear Readers,

By the time we had started ideating this print issue, we seemed to be inching towards “normalcy”, and we had grown complacent in the hope that the past year was but a blip, a temporary anomaly in our otherwise predictable lives. However, in the course of the coming months, this illusion was shattered as the world around us seemed to change too quickly for us to keep up with it. Amidst a sea of chaos, we came to weather the storm by relying on the few things which we knew we could depend upon to evoke within us feelings of comfort and belongingness. In other words, things which feel like home, often taken for granted, but actually essential to even get us through the day.

As students, we were struck by the love-hate relationship we had formed with our own homes. While some of us felt stuck in our home countries, some yearned to go back but couldn’t. Some found home in the unlikeliest of places. We seemed to simultaneously want to get out and interact with people socially, while becoming increasingly habituated to attending Zoom calls in our pyjamas. The diversity of ways in which people think of and experience home is reflected in the submissions we received. They are all beautifully nuanced and deeply personal reflections. Say what you will about the absurdity of the times we live in, it certainly makes for great content.

In this issue, we are proud to present the Graduate Institute’s first student-sourced playlist, the “Home Playlist” on Spotify, a multilingual collection of songs that remind students of home. We would like to thank Chiara Moslow, a fellow student for presenting to us this idea, and we hope for more such collaboration with the student community in the future.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed in the production of this issue, including the writers, the editors, and the illustrators, without whose hard work this would not have been possible. Our main purpose in publishing this issue has been to foster a sense of community. We hope that you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed bringing it to fruition. For best results, we recommend curling up with a hot drink, with the smell of rain filling in the room.

The Graduate Press
Spring, 2021



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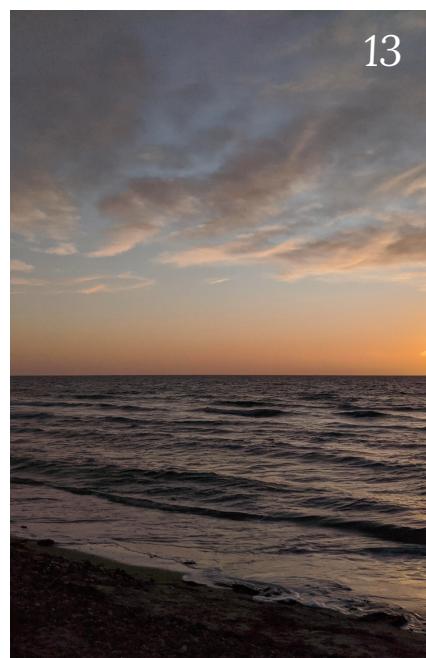
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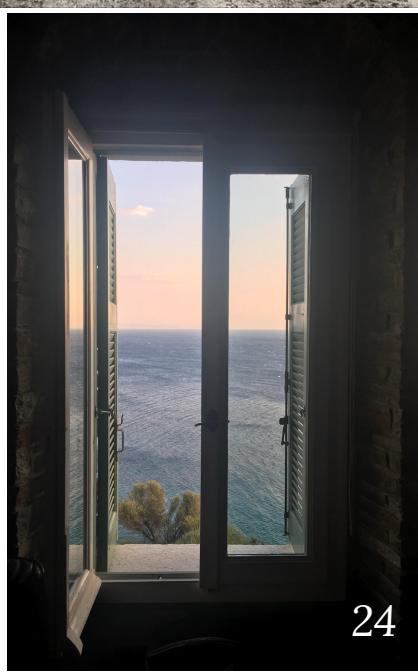
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Brewing Power

By Raksha Gopal



Art by Urvashi Dinkar

My mother introduced me to chai when I was 10 years old. As a child, I hated how the first sip of the bittersweet essence of ginger tea tasted on my tongue. I also vaguely recall swearing to myself that I would never take another sip again. Ever. Over a decade later, I find myself wandering haplessly along the aisles at Migros desperately searching for tea leaves in any shape or form, only to be disappointed. Of course, I never meant to live by the promise I made to myself as a child. Growing up in an industrial town in India, chai came to represent the heart of my household, the ideal start to our mundane days. Every day began with waking up to the fragrance of tea leaves boiling on the stovetop. No matter how chaotic life got, chai held its place as a constant, navigating the emotions of the day with me.

The certainty of having a cup of brewed tea with every sunrise has helped me wade through each wave of change over the last few years. I often find myself telling my friends in Geneva that chai is not just a beverage. Chai is much more. In India, we congregate around the idea of chai. Chai has been privy to the most intimate and the most politically charged conversations, between families, friends, neighbours and even strangers. For years, every pot of tea has heard, carried and passed down stories, from generation to generation. Each drop carries memories of revolutions, diseases and even natural disasters that have challenged our societies, but it has also endowed us with the resilience to surge forward.

On the darkest of days, the right cup of chai has the power to alter the course of the evening and restore a sense of calm and comfort in the core of your being. Chai is power.

Of my first month living alone in Geneva, I don't recall much, except that I had to let go of my morning chai tradition because I couldn't find authentic tea leaves at any grocery store. At the risk of sounding dramatic, the loss of this routine was a shock to the last vestiges of home I still carried within me. I felt stranded in the middle of a pandemic, miles away from home, locked inside my room as classes went online, with an empty IKEA cup now filled with unpredictability, anxiety and confusion. Every day, I would wake up and plunge

myself into the readings for the day. Often, my hands would reach out for a cup, purely based on muscle memory. Frantically, I sought a replacement. I was convinced that it was just the question of my daily caffeine consumption. If I sorted that out, everything would soon fall into place. I would stop worrying about the rising Covid cases back home and in Geneva, I would be able to power through my classes and ace my assignments, while finally being able to fit into the new community I've built here. So, every day, I would dunk a tea bag that I had magically chanced upon at a store and hope for the world to make sense again. Spoiler alert, that didn't happen. I was still living in a warped version of Geneva where time would pass me by and yet seem to stand still. I had no idea how we would ever make it through this pandemic, or if I would ever be able to walk outside and make new friends without the nagging worry of contracting the virus. Would I ever truly feel at home here?

So, this winter, in an attempt to regain a sense of direction that I had lost over the last year, I went home to bring back, among other things, a packet of chai with me. If everything in the world had to go wrong, I couldn't let this last semblance of normalcy in my life evade me. These days, mornings begin at 6 am. I wake up to the spring sun rising over the Alps with my cup of freshly brewed tea held firmly in my hands. Every movement is rehearsed – from choosing the right ratio of water to milk as the tea leaves simmer and dance in the saucepan, slowly filling my kitchen with the fragrance of home, to the gentle pouring of its contents through a strainer and into my cup. As I slowly sip its contents, the warmth of the chai spreads through the cup and onto my skin, awakening every cell within me. This chai is a reminder of every exam day during school, of every political conversation I've had with my friends in college, and every meeting with relatives back home.

In Geneva, I've built my own ritual of inviting classmates over for chai. This is my way of welcoming them into my home, into my sense of comfort and warmth which I wish to share with anyone going through a tough time. A cup of chai may not fix our problems, but it can give us the strength and support we need to face them. It's a way to build a community in a new place, a way of starting conversations when you don't know how to, and a way to feel at home even when you are miles away from it. If you haven't tasted a cup of chai yet, I invite you over. Come and feel the power.





Mal du Pays

by Mukta Dhore

La patrie est irremplaçable; ses racines sont fortes, ancrées au fond de nous.

Tu t'éloignes parfois de cette patrie; les raisons sont diverses.

Tu te trouves dans un nouveau monde, avec de nouveaux gens, avec une nouvelle langue; tu te trouves au milieu de rien et de tout.

Tu crains, tu pleures, parce que ta patrie te manque.

Tu compares, tu essaies fort, si fort, de faire des liens; de trouver les petites pièces de ta patrie sur cette terre étrange.

Tu évolues, tu te transformes. Tu achètes les nouvelles tendances mode, tu parles le nouveau dialecte, tu te pousses vers la nouvelle façon de penser, de discuter, d'échanger. Tu changes.

La patrie reste encore et toujours ancrée, les racines ne sont pas desserrées mais les fleurs qui poussent n'ont pas la même couleur, le même parfum qu'avant ; ceci n'est pas un souci, en tout cas. La patrie est présente.

Tu t'adaptes, tu t'accordes avec le nouveau pays. Le nouveau est maintenant devenu une habitude. Tu es à l'aise. Tu souris, souvent, assez souvent. Tu bavardes, tu échanges, tu as créé un petit cercle des tiens. Tu es vraiment content. Pourtant, peut-être, l'heure de départ s'approche.

En ce moment, tu es frappé fortement par le mal du pays. Pas celui de ta patrie, mais celui de la terre que tu pensais être étrange au début. Le pays qui a bouleversé ta vie. Le mal s'est inversé.

Tu te promets que ceci n'est pas un adieu mais assez bientôt, tu rentreras. Sûrement. Ce pays forme une partie véritablement inévitable de ton identité, de ta fierté. Les liens de cœur se tiennent aussi forts que les liens de sang. Ils ne casseront jamais. Ils t'accueilleront avec tant d'amour et de chaleur. Ceci n'est pas un adieu...





A Tale of Two Cities

By Lucas Dias Rodrigues dos Santos

When I moved to Geneva over two years ago, I was told to expect a crushingly dull place where the main fun activity consisted of escaping during holidays.

Since then, I've come to find this reputation unfair, although I understand where it comes from. After all, this relatively small town is also, somehow, a global city with a prominent role in international politics and finance, and thus a sizeable population from all over the world. But at

200,000 inhabitants (500,000 for the canton as a whole), this must be the smallest global city (except for Davos one week a year); and, sure, compared to other global cities like Singapore or New York, it's not that exciting

By avoiding that kind of comparison, however, I've come to appreciate this city for what it is: a fairly fun place given how provincial it is, with a good share of enjoyable bookstores, museums, pubs, cafés, parks and so on.

But this reflection often leads me to a second one: do I really live here?

I almost never use my French, since I spend my days either taking classes in English at the Institute or hanging out with fellow students (or colleagues during a past internship), using English as the reliable lingua franca. I don't count a single Genevois as even a friendly acquaintance. Although I make an effort to follow local politics and news, as a non-voter and non-citizen that feels un-embedded in what might be termed the local community, it can still feel distant, as if I were reading about events in another country. This is also compounded by the notion that I'm technically only a temporary resident, unsure of exactly how long I'll be here.

Then I learned what this parallel community of ours is called: International Geneva.

The Geneva of multilateral organizations, NGOs and global media, and so on, that has existed since the League of Nations was established here a century ago. This is a well-entrenched enough concept that several institutions have already sprung up to address it, from specific media (e.g. Geneva Solutions, The Geneva Observer), to a government arm called the Service de la Genève internationale, and associations that cater to this community (like the Centre d'Accueil de la Genève Internationale). And the concern I expressed above is not new either: in a recent TV appearance, Yvonne Schneider, said that Fondation Eduki, of which she is director, focuses on fostering encounters between what we call International Geneva, which can seem somewhat opaque, [because] we don't understand why there's a "local" and "international" Geneva; to build bridges between institutions in Switzerland that are interested in international cooperation, but that haven't had the opportunity to meet people that work in international organizations.

This is a great initiative, but one still focused on inter-institutional dialogue. As to individual members of these two Genevas—a dichotomy emphasized by geography, since the International one is clustered around the Broken Chair—never the twain shall meet?

For one, that's a hard position to maintain after even a cursory glance at this city's history, which reveals a place deeply shaped by the diverse populations that have passed through here; a tradition that informs its current civic identity.

Geneva, after all, calls itself the Cité du refuge, proudly proclaiming on its government website how "in all time periods, Geneva has welcomed foreign victims of persecution," emphasizing the waves of Protestants who fled to this then-independent city-state in the 16th and 17th centuries. It casually adds that "in the 19th and 20th centuries, Geneva continued this tradition by receiving numerous political exiles."

An understatement, to say the least. This city was a hotspot for both counterrevolution, hosting exiled reactionary intellectuals such as Chateaubriand (hence why many places here bear his name), to revolution, harboring socialists and communists the world over (Friedrich Engels fled here after the defeat of the 1848-49 Revolutions), as well as anticolonial freedom fighters like the Indians Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Shyamji Krishnavarma. The Bolsheviks were especially present: not only several of its leaders spent many years here, such as Vladimir Lenin and Nadezhda Krupskaya, but even the party's library and archives were also located here, at 91-93 rue de Carouge! Also, fun tidbit: it has long been rumored that the figure lying down in the Cité de refuge bas-relief sculpture on the Tour du Molard is Lenin—but the city government denies it. Russians also made their mark here as students, much like us. So many of them attended the School of Medicine in Plainpalais in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the neighborhood was known as Little Russia.

But we cannot forget the dark side of this history. Those Protestant refugees mentioned above, despite being a majority of the population by the 18th century, were treated as third-class citizens, without any civil rights. It was only in 1792 that, impelled by the French Revolution, the people of Geneva rose up and abolished this rigid hierarchy.

Geneva was also, according to historian Jean Plançon, home to the first Jewish Ghetto in Europe, enclosing the city's Jewish community in one neighborhood in 1428, before expelling them outright in 1490.

Of course, such blotches on the Cité de refuge image continue to this day, in the struggles of Geneva's many migrant communities. This is visible right next to the Institute, where in 2019 the Foyer Rigot was built to house 370 migrants, in front of the UNHCR headquarters. The fuller story, however, is that this and other residences were built after a wave of protests shook the city in 2015, led by a group known as Stop Bunkers, decrying the fact that refugees were being housed in containers and other unsafe and degrading installations. The group's manifesto was titled as follows: "You don't know us? Of course! WE LIVE UNDERGROUND!"

This is International Geneva. Its prevailing

image as consisting of international civil servants, journalists, bankers and students is dramatically incomplete. International Geneva is also those communities who precariously live underground, yet make the city run. It is also the essential workers who transit from across the border in France every day. Two groups that suffer constant xenophobic attacks.

Tahir, Ethiopian refugee, with family members jailed, tortured and killed back home, and who was forcibly repatriated there on 21st February despite being seriously ill, is International Geneva. As is the movement to stop the construction of a refugee expulsion center in Grand-Saconnex, and Institute students' efforts to aid and advocate for migrants (chiefly through the Migration Initiative and Vivre Ensemble).

So, not only is this city very international in almost every way, thus blurring the line between these supposed two Genevas, but we also benefit from conceiving of this "internationality" more broadly. That way, we can better understand that we are not just living here, parallel to a more "authentic" Geneva, but that this is also our home, both to inhabit and to transform.



Hiraeth

By Satyam Anand

On this journey of solitude, as I fear tomorrow
My heart harks to memories as it droops with sorrow.

When life is devoid of spark, all hope forlorn,
Home is where I return to when all else has gone.

Home is the kindling fire, warm in the cold night
When all fades dim, it casts its shimmering light.
Home is basking 'neath the stars twinkling up above,
Huddled against the cold in a blanket woven of love.

Home is the beaming sun amidst stormy seas,
A beacon of tranquility, a calming breeze.
Home is the gentle smile waiting at the door,
For the long-lost sailor finally coming ashore.

On this journey, I now recognise, home is not a place.
But instead the comfort I found in a familiar face.





Art by Sam Nelson

Language

By Anushka Raje

Language has always prevented me from feeling at home. Within my family, I am one of the few who cannot speak Marathi...even though I crave the ease and connection it would bring me if I did. Here in Geneva, I recognize language as a barrier to fully immersing myself in my surroundings. Everywhere I go, the way I speak inevitably negotiates my belonging. I try to express these thoughts and frustrations in this piece.

**We met the moment I was thrust into the world
You came out of my mother's doting lips
You danced around the room
Bouncing off of everyone
Joining everyone.**

**And here you are:
You are the meaning living within words
You carry the weight of culture; entire worlds!
Cascading and colliding in my head
You race to the tip of my tongue
And I grapple with you.**

**Why am I told I use you so well,
When all I feel are your limitations?
You stop me from belonging
You taunt me, smirking
You are right in front of me
But no matter how hard I try
I can't touch you.**





Can I Stay or Should I Go?

Why Greater Immigration Literacy Leads to Empathy

By Purujith Gautam

I, like much of the world during this pandemic, found myself engaging in an (un)healthy dose of content-binging. Comedies, dramas, thrillers and the standard David Attenborough show that is a literal salve to heal one's soul...I binged it all.

But there is one interaction in a TV show that has stuck with me. In this classic espionage thriller, there is a scene where the "honest and well-intentioned" CIA agent (yeah right) is in the Middle East on a noble project (yeah right) and

can't seem to grapple with the way things are "done over there". In a culminating outburst, he aggressively expresses his discontent to an enterprising local who calmly responds to him with a subtle yet powerful dialogue:

"Geography is Destiny, my friend"

This line, delivered so casually, really struck a chord and made me reflect into how much our geography at birth dictates where we will end up and what paths we can take to get there.

It made me reflect on privilege, class and the idea of a “level-playing field”. While that topic has multiple facets to explore, I was particularly reflecting on a tiny document that can often determine one’s life, choices and path: a passport.

As an Indian, I haven’t been a stranger to the challenges that come with a “weak” passport. The idea of applying for a visa to go just about anywhere is internalized. We are accustomed to the standard, and very expensive, 3-month window where your application is thoroughly scrutinized including bank statements, family history, a multitude of proofs and then an interview with a consular representative who can reject it all if they are having a bad day. Oh, and how can I forget, even after getting the visa, there is the eternal fear that you can still be rejected at the port of entry regardless of the visa in your passport.

The visa application jungle is one that many readers will be familiar with, however, I bring it up because I was shocked by the immense illiteracy that most people, generally from Europe and North America, displayed when it came to understanding how privileged they are vis-à-vis their place in the global immigration network.

“So why don’t you just stay back and wait until you find the right job?”

“Wait...you aren’t allowed to enter the UK on a whim? Not even just for tourism?”

“What do you mean go back home to get the visa stamped in your passport?”

These are just a few questions that I often found myself answering over the last 9 years I have spent in the US and Europe. For some reason, I naively assumed that every educated global citizen would have awareness about these tribulations, but more often than not, my “powerful” passport counterparts would display an acute lack of knowledge, and more importantly, an underlying lack of literacy (and associated empathy) regarding an extremely tricky and uneven global immigration network that separates families, reroutes life trajectories

and takes an immense toll on physical and mental health.

I stress on empathy because I believe holders of powerful passports can use it to acknowledge the vast privilege that comes with winning the at-birth geographical lottery ticket.

Stay in most countries without a visa? Sure. Show up in a country at will and then look for work? Why not. Overstay a student visa because you can stay as a tourist anyway? Certainly. Cash in on bilateral investment treaties that allow you to extend your stay? Of course. Apply for a job without fear that an algorithm will instantly reject you because you need visa sponsorship? Wait...that happens? Yes it does.

Take a second to imagine and internalize that...there are scores of immigrants legally applying for jobs in your country that don’t make it past the Human Resources algorithm because of their national booklet. Further, and rather ironically, in development-sector focused cities like Geneva, your lottery ticket at birth could actually exclude you from the decision-making table at organizations that are making decisions that impact your own country.

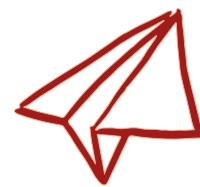
Now let me be clear, on the scale of privilege there are far greater concerns than worrying about where one can and cannot travel for tourism. There are people who have been rendered stateless because of war, persons unfairly discriminated against due to their race and gender, and there are others who, even coming from a “powerful passport” country might never actually get one given existing inequalities and class-related challenges. There is an entire spectrum of issues that receive a varying level of policy-attention, but greater individual literacy regarding global

immigration networks can help push companies, organizations and governments to introduce greater empathy into their immigration frameworks.

On an individual level, greater immigration literacy can help you empathize with someone in your life that just might need that extra bit of support — because I promise you —the number of unknown and known variables in their decision-making matrix are often multiples greater than your own.

Is it truly a “level-playing field” if some players aren’t allowed to even enter the playing field to begin with? Or rather, once they enter the field, are given a different set of rules, and then booted out at half-time?

There’s some food for thought to go with your next pandemic Netflix binge.



Se Conforter Des Mots

By Louka Morin-Tremblay

**J'ai mal à ma langue
Disent-ils avec un accent tropique**

**Pourtant, ma parole diluvienne
Submerge d'écumes les canaux
Que os ruiseños me lleven
La manta del ceo sicano**

**Amorevole, mi conforterà d'un abbraccio
Come se la cà non fosse mai stata lontana
Ma nnô frattempu u'me cori dici: che faccio?
Picchì a casa nun a porti comu 'na collana**

**Mas não tem lugar onde as maravilhas possam
Encontrar uma terra fecunda como a língua**

**Djâda-ka al-ghaythu idhâ al-ghaythu hamâ
yâ zamâna al-wasli bi-l-Andalusi
Tumbarme, ojos soñando, en la cama
Mientras la lluvia baila en frenesí**

**Recalefaceme le corpore con un melodia,
Iste canto del mie compatres hodie perdite,
Mo la primavaira plau vegn a fin sia;
Jau tem l'aura nunenconuschent: ita condite!**

**Home is the warmth of my breath
Once embraced by the cold breeze
Holding onto each other 'til death
Or 'til time our souls appease'**

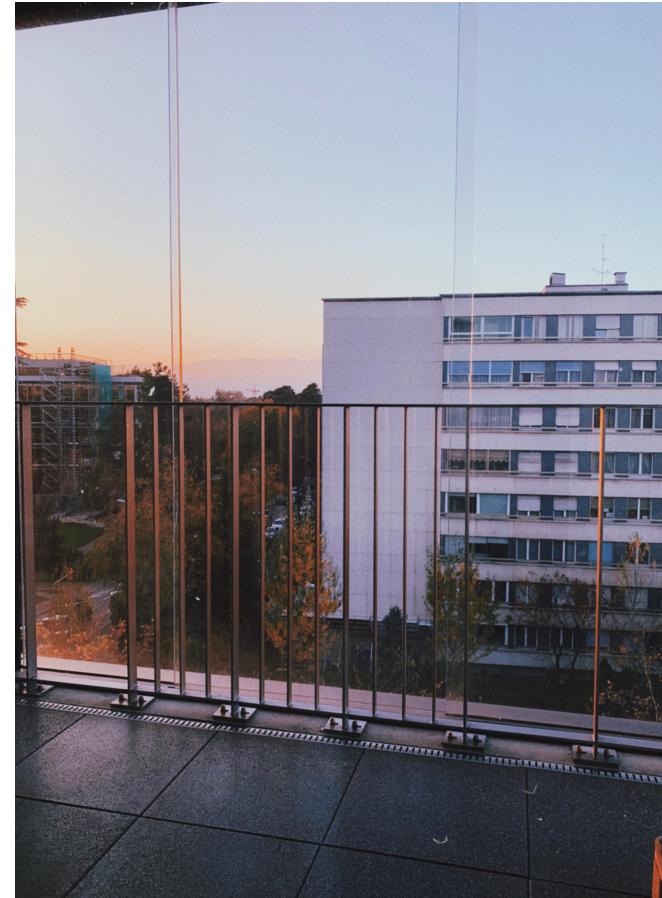
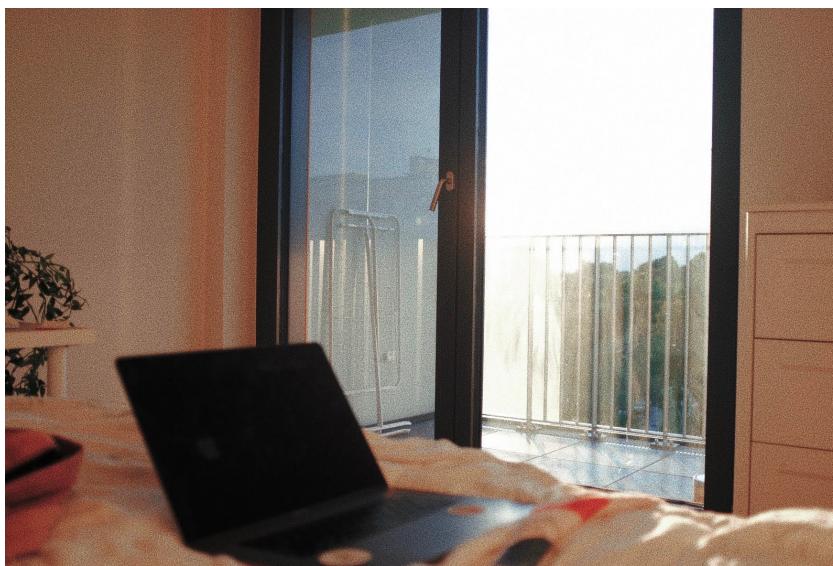




Place- Making During COVID-19

By Delcia Orona





Being Provincial in an International Community

By Neva Newcombe



Art by Sam Nelson

One of the things that has struck me most about my peers at the Graduate Institute is how international they are. I don't mean international in the sense that multiple nationalities are represented in the same friend group or classroom, but rather that multiple nationalities are present within the same person. More often than not, "Where are you from?" is a complicated question at the Institute. The high levels of cultural exchange and international travel within the European Union are to be expected, but I've met more than a handful of students that grew up on multiple continents, traveling around with their families or independently, planting roots in many different soils. I have friends here who identify as French-Algerian, Swiss-Pakistani, Indian-Italian, Russian-Dutch, and generally those labels only reflect their parents' passports, rather than the full range of their own habitation.

As far as I can tell, people with such rich identities do not see their lives with the same awe that I do. Often they've attended international schools, where the majority of their peers have similar experiences, so it seems normal to them. This sense of normalcy, too, came as a shock to me.

Until I flew to Switzerland in 2018, I lived in the same farmhouse my entire life. I didn't even leave very much. My parents run an auto repair shop together out of the large garage on our property; they are the only two employees, and the business is not exceptionally lucrative, which makes it difficult for my family to travel. As far as I can remember, the only time we left the country together was to attend my aunt's wedding in Jamaica in 1999. I was one.

So, I spent a lot of time at home with my family. I read a lot, tormented my siblings a lot, and passed most afternoons inspecting minute details of the forest that surrounded our house: taking stock of which tomatoes had turned orange, which snow piles were shrinking, whether beavers had made any more progress on the tree by the big rock. If it was too cold for that, as it often is in Massachusetts, I would listen to records, sit by the woodstove, or spend time with my four siblings. For 21 years, that 1.5 acre plot was my whole world. Home doesn't even begin to describe it.

know that not everyone has such a singular relationship with their home, but I did not expect to feel so provincial when I came to the Graduate Institute. I am educated afterall, and I believe that I have a rich internal life. But I would not consider myself a "global citizen." Whatever that means, I know that I'm not it, and at times I've felt boring or

inexperienced compared to my peers. Given the nature of our studies, sometimes I even feel unqualified to be at the Institute, as if my lived experience disqualifies me from studying international issues. The world of international affairs is populated by a certain class of people - and their children - that do have global lives. Sometimes provincial types break in, but as far as I can tell, those stories are exceptions.

In spite of the estrangement I feel in this community, after 3 years in Geneva, I have now surpassed all of my family members in travel experience and education. When you come from a poor family, the expectation is that you will make every effort to be more successful than your parents, to "break the cycle." Yet the more successful you become, the more alienated you become from your upbringing— your parents, your community, your home. At this point, I've tasted so many foods that my father hasn't, seen so much art that my mother will never get to, and heard stories that I could never, in good faith, retell. *These experiences accumulate on you, like rubber bands on a rubber band ball, and eventually you find there are some places you just don't fit anymore.*

I don't fit at home anymore, but I'm still not cosmopolitan enough to really belong in Geneva or international society either.

I envy the people who grow closer to their parents as they become more successful and well-traveled, and I envy my classmates that encounter people with similar experiences as they enter the job market.

Of course, we all feel a little out of place in new countries, new jobs, and new social circles; 89% of us are international students, so we are alike in our out-of-placeness. This institution and the network of international organizations it feeds into are built for a certain class of people. Well-traveled people with cosmopolitan backgrounds, to be sure, but also white people, Westerners, and those with tempered political leanings. My whiteness and westernness is what allowed me to come here, and my provinciality is what's forcing me to leave.

At the end of May, I'll leave Switzerland for good. I can't stay here, but I also can't go back to the farmhouse. So I'll try to find third place, maybe one with other people who've grown too much but not enough, and see if I can make that feel like home.



Text Me When You Get Home

by Amalia Daka

The restaurants are opening in Geneva and I decided to celebrate going back to normality with a friend. I missed laughing with her, eating fast, debating if I should order another drink. It was getting late and we decided it was time to go home. "Text me when you get home", she declared to me. As I was heading back to the Picciotto Student Residence by the Lac Leman I started reflecting about the places I have called home.

Home is walking barefoot for 5 days straight without even noticing.

It is white dots of salt on my skin after a day in the sea.

It is sobremesa and long discussions with my parents and friends about passions that have disappointed us.

Everything stops for a second, even time itself; glasses of wine and cheers.

"To our health", we say, putting us back in place on what really matters.

Home is moving my chair according to the position of the sun to catch every little ray of it before the sunset, everywhere I go.

Home is a balcony overlooking the Aegean.

Home is a child falling asleep on a restaurant table after eating too much fish.

Home is a place of freedom, where you can feel loved and ashamed.

Realising that refugees have been drowning in the same sea that you swim.

Realising that this is a place of pain.

A place of torture.

A place of forgiveness.

Home is receiving a text after lunch that says " I have forgotten everything, I miss you, and everything is fine between us" from a close friend because you fought about the political situation and chronic disputes with neighbouring countries that cannot be solved even by the brightest minds of this world.

Home is people getting displaced and cooking the food they love with ingredients from another land, with a touch of spice.

Home is nostalgia, home is desperation.

Home is a place of peace and mess at the same time.

Home will never be black or white.

But, maybe I will compromise with Aegean blue and the colours of sunset if I could choose.

- Text me when you get home.

- Oh, damn, I will.





Reflections on Digital Transitions

By Nicola Tabata, Chiara Moslow and Clare Maxwell (on behalf of the Migration Initiative)
Art by Urvashi Dinkar

With classes moving back to a hybrid format, and many students jumping back into on-campus life in Geneva, it is easy, and maybe even preferable, to forget what it was like to take a digital commute to class every day, and to bring the entirety of one's, work, studies, and social life, into their bedroom, kitchen or living room. We asked members of the Migration Initiative, including students living in Geneva and those living in their home countries, to reflect on how their relationships with their homes, their friends and family, and their studies changed as the spatiality and scope of interaction were narrowed or redefined by the lens of Zoom and WebEx. Here are a few of their answers.

How does it feel to have class in your home?

- It's always **jarring** to compare the organized little boxes of the onscreen world to whatever is happening just off camera! One side is discussing theories of justice and how they relate to human rights treaties, the other side is demanding when I will be done, because dinner will be ready in five minutes.
- **Distracted.** I feel less like a student. Staring at my little self on my screen, I feel **self conscious** looking at myself.
- There are definitely both drawbacks and benefits to taking classes from home. On the one hand, I find it **difficult to focus** on classes when I'm at home because there are so many things I feel like I could be doing (napping, reading, cooking, etc) that distract me. On the other hand, I find it **peaceful** that I don't have to go anywhere to take class, and also that I can do so from different areas in my room (my desk, my bed, my bench by the window, etc).
- It's become difficult to recognize myself as a student when much of the spirit of student life has been lost. Before, school used to be an entire lifestyle that included so much more than just the readings and lecture. Now that we've lost that ability to meet professors by chance in the hallways, or spontaneously decide to go for a coffee with friends when we all get tired of reading, or even just take the daily journey to and from the building, **the essence of student life has been greatly diminished.** These days, the student lifestyle has come to only mean studying. As a volunteer English teacher for the Migration Initiative, my students have had to adapt to our new circumstances by allowing myself and each other glimpses of their homes and even families. In a sense, I think we have grown closer than we would have in person, but I know that some students have felt that this intrusion was too great, and so have chosen to withdraw from lessons they had once looked forward to.

It's no secret that simply moving, whether it's a five minute walk from Picciotto to your classroom or the act of migrating across continents to start a new semester, helps us switch our frame of mind and transition from our roles as family

members or roommates into the role of students. Many of us reflected on how a lack of spatial delineation between our competing roles in life also caused temporal disorganisation, and prompted us to try and find new ways of organising and interacting with our limited space.

Has having digital meetings changed your relationship with your home?

- My kitchen is now a "**public space**". If I want to relax, I leave the space I have Zoom meetings in.
- I feel like I need to delineate time and space in home for online classes - that my room has to stop being a place where I relax or sleep during certain hours and it needs to be a **completely different space**.
- I love my room and my private curated space. Digital meetings means welcoming people into that space. Often I don't mind, as it is a piece of me that I like to share. At other times, I wish that my **private space** was invisible.
- I think having digital meetings has forced me to make home a **safe space** for me, because once meetings and classes are over, I want to be able to truly rest in a conducive and calming environment.
- I used to separate my world into spaces for work and spaces for relaxation, but now that it has become an "**all-in-one**" space, I'm finding it harder to divide my time.

Lack of spatial delineation in our homes also meant that roles collided. We ended up seeing (or accidentally overhearing) our parents, partners or roommates in a whole new way after living rooms and kitchen tables were converted into offices and classrooms. We also struggled with how to signal our availability, and our capacity to take care of family lives and homes without distance or the clarity of single-use space.

How does it feel to be on Zoom/WebEx in your student accommodations vs a family home, or in Geneva vs your home country?

- Being at home with family always makes Geneva life (i.e., student life) much more **distant**, less real, therefore, less stressful.
- Time differences can make things very difficult. Being online while staying in my family home makes me feel **strange**, because I feel simultaneously very young (living under my parents' roof again), and grown up (having adult meetings, where my family can hear me speaking on a topic I am knowledgeable about).
- Being on Zoom/WebEx while in my family home was **difficult**, largely because of the 9 hours time difference between California and Geneva. On top of that, I live in a multigenerational home—my grandma, mom, and brother live at home, and I often have aunties, uncles, and cousins over. It can make taking classes quite difficult, but it was also nice to have a **support system** so close when there was so much change taking place. Taking classes in Geneva is definitely a bit easier because I live alone, I can go to the library and/or study rooms, and I can meet up with classmates to do work together.

Ultimately, we also found that a lot of us still felt more closely connected when we were in each other's geographic proximity, even though we were still physically separate. Perhaps just the shared experience of being in Geneva, and shopping at the same stores or seeing the same things out the window made it easier to relate to one another. Perhaps sitting in our student accommodations rather than our parents' houses pushed us to take our engagement with the institute, and our relationships with other students more seriously.

Have you built close relationships in digital space?

- I have learned to get to know people in a virtual space and feel closer to them than I did at the beginning of the pandemic. However, that is not enough. But, Zoom can definitely make me want to meet someone in person someday!
- No, it's hard to "hang out" with people virtually.

- Classes make it really **hard to socialise**, but sometimes structured hang outs or social/artistic events help to build friendships.
- No, as someone who finds it challenging to connect with people anyways, I find it **extra difficult** online.
- I have been able to develop meaningful relationships in a digital space, but I would never replace it with meeting up with people in person. It is **not the same**, and the genuine friendships you make when being around people cannot be replicated, in my opinion.
- Before the pandemic, I found myself making friends without really trying. Although I was not close with all of my classmates, we would often bump into each other at school, and exchange updates on our lives. Collisions no longer take place, and contact with classmates has become very **minimal**. Now if you don't consciously make an effort, the whole year can go by without you speaking to some people. It feels as though some of my classmates have become people that I knew once, but don't anymore.

First year students have had to navigate a new school, and for some, a new country amidst the uncertainty and tumult of the pandemic. Many have been able to meet only online, and have had to work hard to create friendships that resemble those that they might have otherwise formed in person. Second year students are left wistfully remembering their first semester at IHEID, and the brief time that they had together. We have allowed each other peeks into our personal spaces, while still doing our best to retain a sense of privacy from each other, which used to be a given. Ultimately, we have done our best to adapt our lives and homes to the challenges of undertaking graduate studies. Many of us are ready to leave lockdowns and online classes behind, and get back to "life as normal". But, remembering how our lives and relationships evolved during this time gives us a roadmap as we navigate our transition from being stay-at-home students to going back into the real world.



Washed Ashore

By Urvashi Dinkar



A seascape of trial and errors. It is surreal to see how the sky and the ocean mirror each other and yet they remain with their own unique textures, home to their own lifeforms. Home for me has never resided in one building with walls and a ceiling. It is in my memories stuck in space and time by my longing. The smell of the Bay of Bengal when I first stepped onto the Mandarmoni beach, the wind felt as my mother's hair flowed in the Juhu air, and the peace I felt sitting in the sands of Calungute are part of my constellation of homes.



Home, Where My

Music's Playing

By Chiara Moslow



Art by Sam Nelson

I don't know if I can fully describe what makes home home, but I know what it sounds like.

My home is family and loved ones, and the memories that anchor home in time and space. For me, music and memory are so closely interconnected, each vignette paired with sound. Often these memories are not a momentous event, simply a snapshot, a reminder of a time I felt comfort and love.

Dave Brubeck, and I'm in our comfy red armchair, curled up on my dad's lap when I should be in bed.

Music is also something that I can share with my family. My aunts dancing in the living room, my uncle singing along to Pavarotti in his joking-but-actually-surprisingly-good voice. The joy of hearing a new song you think someone will love, and sharing it with them. In my parents house the radio is always on, and together we enjoy lockdown live streams and radio shows. So it's a link to my family, something that we share, and an instant connection to home whenever I need it.

The Carter Family, and I'm listening sprawled on my grandparents carpet, my aunts, uncles and cousins sitting around me.

I'm sure there's neuroscience that explains why music links us to memories, and this MDEV kid won't subject you to an attempt at explaining it. But music is more than just a memory trigger. Because it does not only belong to nostalgia, faraway people and places. It is also mine, now. It is part of creating new memories. When I discover new music it becomes associated with the place, with how I experienced it. Home is where all the parts of me are understood, so home is made up of all these things.

The Head and the Heart, and I'm eating dinner on our fire escape, yelling at friends we see walking down the street

I think that many of us probably find a home in music, or an escape, or maybe those are the same

thing. Yes, I listen to music to accompany or influence my emotions. We've all leaned our heads against a bus window, and with the right soundtrack, felt those angsty-main-character vibes...right?? Whether it's a mood boost or a good cry, I can go to that world to get what I need. For me that is usually peace and comfort, other times it is happiness and positive energy.

John Denver, and I'm on vacation with my aunts and uncle, listening and feeling the cool night air.

My music is also how I make a place livable. I fill the space, turn it into mine. Like many of us, this year I found myself with more time at home than ever. It was physically home but it wasn't right, the world pressing in at the windows. So I became more conscious about actively creating my home. Spending more time in my space, I want it to feel like my own, a place I belong, and I learned not to take this for granted. And as home changes, I find myself going back more and more to the same songs and artists.

Nathaniel Rateliff, and I'm in lockdown, sitting with my mom and my brother at the kitchen table.

Home isn't always sedentary, and music accompanies me. I like being in new places, new environments and new people. I value the feeling of being overwhelmed, not understanding everything that is spoken or done around me. But my music, the familiarity in it, can anchor me and keep me centered, give me a foundation from which I can be free to explore.

Odetta, and my grandma is driving me home from school, me in the reclined passenger seat.

Finally, music is also about mobility and connections. I can listen to music from across the world, and bring some of that spirit into my space. It links me to my family, those still here and those who are not, and to any place I've ever felt welcomed. I think we all turn to music for diverse reasons, but for many of us it is a homecoming.



So, we asked IHEID students to tell us what songs remind them of home and make them feel at home. Journey through these connections and share in the homes and spirits of our global community.

PRESENTING

THE HOME PLAYLIST



<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2egtaFve88M1WLyEJmh6un?si=fovKhmRqSPOlw4TNvuG5Bw&nd=1>

**100+ SONGS
26 LANGUAGES
1 STUDENT COMMUNITY**





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