



Hill Town / Sea Town

UMass Journalism in Sicily 2009

Hill Town / Sea Town '09

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Cover: Kana Sakai

Inside Cover: Katherine Neubert



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Introduction

“I think it’s been 11 years that we’ve been doing this.” I said to Rosa on the bus. I came back and checked. The first Sicily class was in the Spring of 1998. We’ve seen and learned and done so much since then. We’ve been tubing down a crater on Mt. Etna and we’ve eaten gourmet food in a 12th century abby in the Madonie Mountains (Gangivecchio). We’ve witnessed the cacophony and chaos of the Friday produce market in Catania and we’ve been startled and awed by the mummies in the Catacombe del Cappuccini in Palermo. We’ve stood in Greek Temples and eaten the best blood oranges on the planet. We seem to never get tired of the stunning landscapes and the warmth of the Sicilian people. For the last three years, we’ve stayed off the bus for most of a day to try to capture the character of Sicily more thoroughly than we can by jumping from place to place. This year’s project was entitled Hill Town/Sea Town. The class spent the morning in the town of Castelbuono where they use donkey carts to collect the trash (very cool, very green) The rest of the day we explored Cefalú, a fishing village on the northern coast of the island. This book is the fruition of that day. Inside you will find a collection of beautiful images by our 7 photographers and 16 “vignettes” by our 8 writers. Enjoy - and then call your travel agent. Spring is the best time to be there.

For many of the eleven years I’ve had the help of two incredibly talented women - Rosa Rizza, our dear friend and guide in Sicily, and Karen Skolfield, who has taught the writing portion of the class since 2002. (With a couple of exceptions that involved babies or whatever.) I can’t imagine running this program without either of them but, alas, Karen has declared 2009 to be her last year. (This might also have something to do with the above mentioned babies but, who knows.) She will be missed dearly and perhaps she’ll reconsider when she realizes that I will refuse to bring back any Sicilian olive oil for her. I hope that Rosa and I will continue to do this until we are gray. My only concern is that I’m the only one of the two of us who actually seems to be graying. Rosa, appears to be getting younger. Hmmmmm.

Rick Newton
May 1, 2009





Lisa Linsley, Katherine Neubert





Joy Mahoney, Katherine Neubert



The Morning Choir

A mother dresses her son: backpack in hand, he pouts.
She points to his coat. He looks down, up, shaking his
head. Eyebrow raised, lips scowling, she stares. A
mother's stare. He loses his battle.

"Buon Giorno!" Nearby a woman calls from her balcony.
Two men walk below: one smiles, the other nods:
"Giorno!" they reply, in unison.

A sound interrupts the street. Far at first, fast
approaching, a voice announces. The hum of an engine
grows louder. A blue truck appears. On cue, pedestrians
sprawl against stone walls. Unwavering, the truck
pummels by, its driver seemingly oblivious to the limited
space. He passes. Unscathed, everyone continues.

The piazza bustles with the morning crowd. A baker
displays his goods as passersby enjoy the sampling of
bread- pistachio spread on sweet rolls. Two elders
converse on a nearby bench. Cane in hand, the grayer of
the two laughs jovially, while the other scans the
crowd, pensive. Two girls approach. Apprehensive, they
ask, "foto per favore?" He nods, indifferently. They
take his picture, he sits- poised- posing for every shot.

In the distance bells clang. Pigeons fly overhead. The
blue truck announces its imminent arrival.

Greetings are exchanged. Pictures taken. Sounds of the
morning. Songs of the town.

Alanna Goddard



The One Who Overlooks

The surrounding cliffs stand like giants, peering down on the town. Here, houses and buildings look older. The paint on the window frames has chipped away; remnants of old shutters shield the glass. Rickety structures remain.

Contrast to Castelbuono, cars are bigger and the roads are wider in Cefalu. Cobblestone, tar, cobblestone. Colors grow brighter, richer as you move toward the sea. Condos and apartments mark their territory over the violet coast.

Along the coastline lies a boardwalk where tourists and locals roam. Mopeds fly past without hesitation: they stop for no one. Restaurants and gelaterias line the street parallel to the water. Sicilians and tourists walk past each other, greeting and smiling--

salve, buona sera. A group of teenagers run and take pictures of their madness, disrupting the stillness of the water.

The water takes on shades--navy, turquoise, green--crashing against oversized rocks. In the distance, perched on three rocks, a father and his two sons are fishing. They cast their lines toward the horizon. The water ripples, then calms.

Jill Ward







Lisa Linsley

All Familiar, All Unknown

She has a sneaking suspicion that she is on her own as her feet dance along the cobblestones uniformed in green mossy dresses. Her eyes play games with the strange dimensions she's never before seen.

Each road could be a pathway; each staircase, a mountain.

Who lives here? she silently wonders. No answer.

Her footsteps make patterns of sound. No grid of avenues assists with her navigation, and for the first time this week, her camera attracts more attention than her flip flops.

Two men stand on the stoop of a pasticcheria - she doesn't understand their language, but manages to utter the only string of sounds she knows. Posso prendere una foto, per favore

They smile, she smiles. She takes a picture, they give her a cannoli. She waves goodbye and so do they. Speaking



doesn't ultimately define communication, she decides, and writes this down.

Carrying onward, her steps parallel the rays of the sunshine. At home, she realizes, she'd never stop to admire the way a wrought iron fence plays mother to collapsing leafless vines.

Here, it is all too easy to spend an entire day watching one cloud drift along the lane lines of the horizon.

Caroline Moss

Kylie Jelley

Like Broken Glass

Vince paces from one end of his pole to the other in his gold Nike shoes. Kneeling down to bait his hook, he cups handfuls of maggots from a plastic bag and throws them onto the rusting port. His small tanned fingers sift through the wiggling mess, searching for the juiciest bait.

Nicola strides along the dock with his Top Gun Surf Pole over his shoulder. A tall dark man clothed in army greens, sunglasses and a mustard yellow hat. He pauses to stare at the fish swaying dead in the shallow water, then unfolds his corroded chair and puts down his box of worms.

"Attenzzzzzione," Vince declares, casting his line out to break the bottle green waters. Sunlight flecks off the waves and water sloshes against the limestone shores of Cefalu.

Nicola's reel clicks; he stands with his pole in between his legs preparing for his first catch. He cuts the line, ties on a four ounce sinker and bait. Nicola is adorned with enough gold to catch the eye of the pale tourists across the shore.

Vince's hands slowly work the reel, the fishing line glistening. Impatiently, he reels faster, then yells in Italian, "Papi, the fish ate my bait!" His father and brother are settled on some charcoal boulders with the tackle box and a bucket of baby sardines.

It's Tuesday. Vince is not in school.

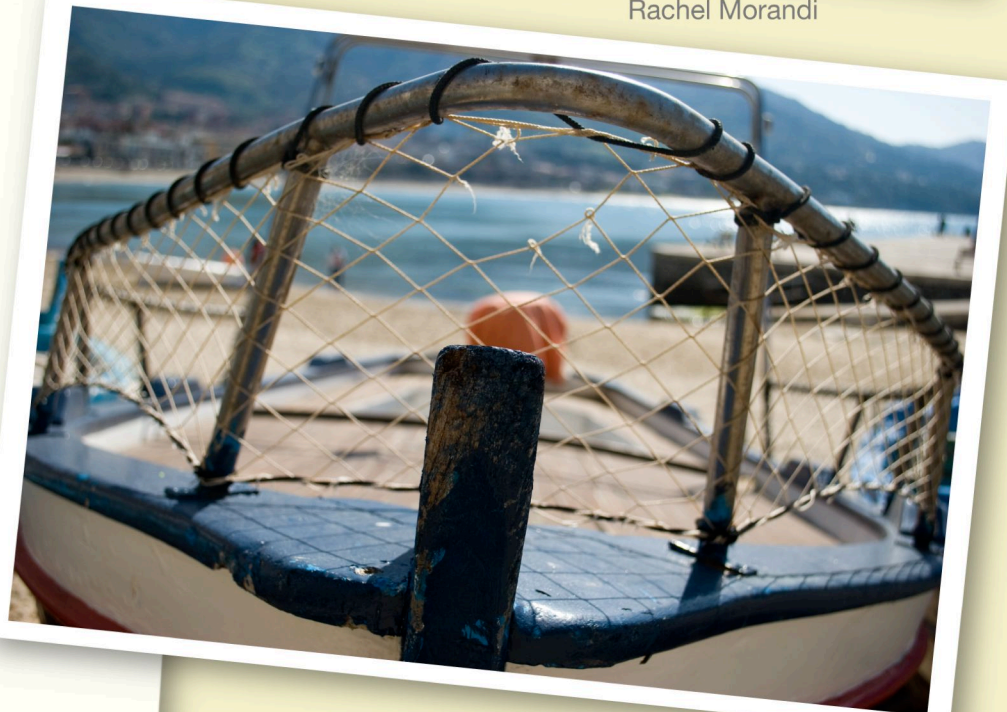
Nicola casts his pole in the water; their lines cross. Vince scours up at him, packs up his pole and heads to his bike.

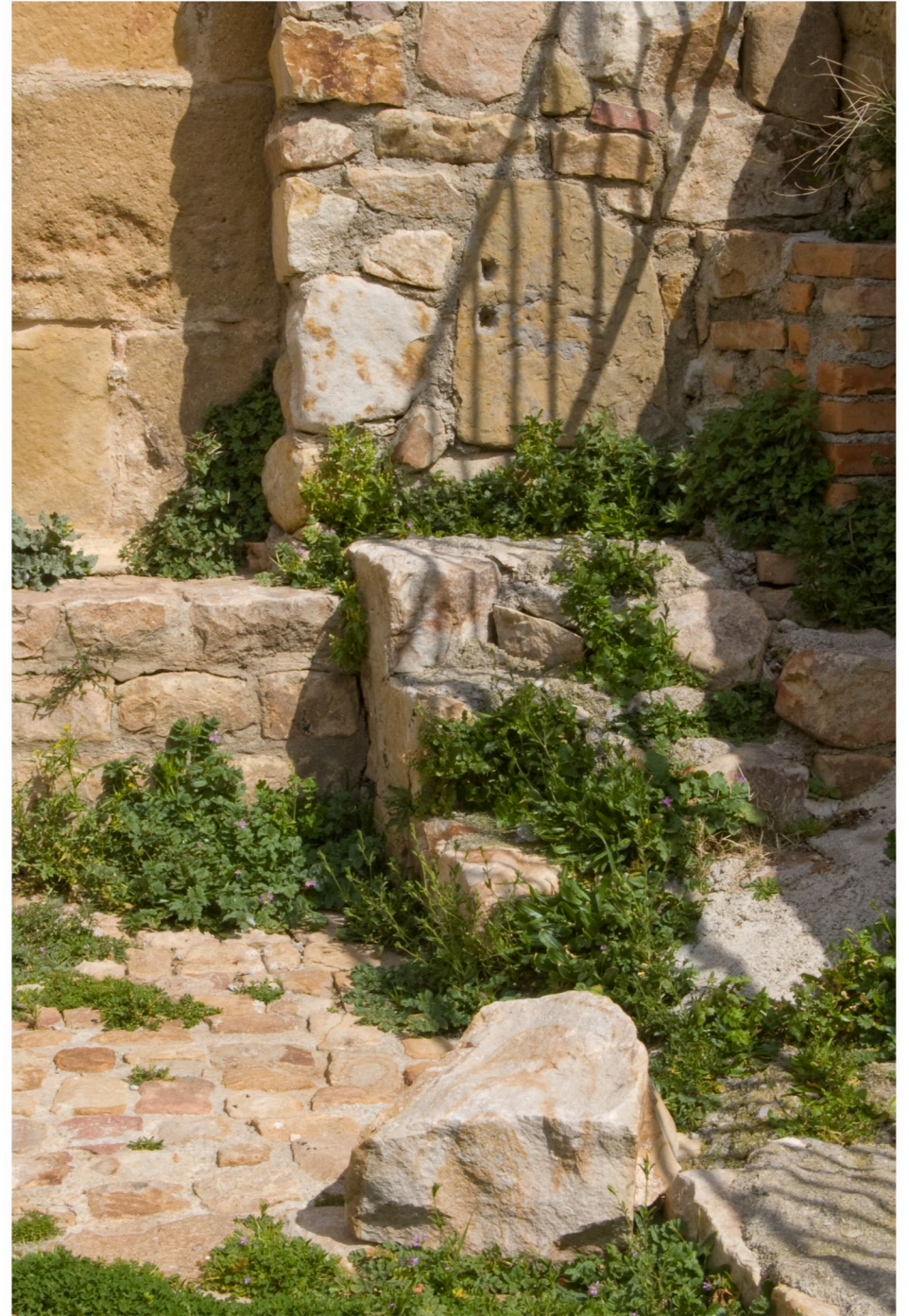
A few hours later, the boy sits slumped against a stucco wall on a narrow side street with his friend smoking cigarettes. He smiles, revealing a mouth full of braces.

Joy Mahoney



Rachel Morandi







Joy Mahoney, Lisa Linsley

Persephone has taken a leave of absence from the company of Hades and Aeolus celebrates by sending a warm wind running through the anorexic alleyways of Cefalu before passing through the black wire fence of a playground...

And nobody knows what the old men think as they sit on their benches, except, maybe, the old men. But they sit and they stare and they rest their withered and warped fingers on their dark pants. Six old men. They fill two benches. They look out over the street. Across, a playground looks back.

A white brick radio tower sits emotionless, boarded up, overlooking a tattooed playground, a dark statue, and a wimpy fountain.

The white brick radio tower has been boarded up with blue pieced of plywood. In some places the paint chips. Some of the windows are laced with blue painted bars – but only some.

A red spray-painted hammer-and-sickle is tucked in the lower corner of the building. A scarlet birthmark.

Nicola Botta stands on a pedestal reaching out a hand, clutching a pamphlet in the other. A gun lies on the ground below him.

The gun is metal and so is Nicola Botta.

The old men still sit there, perhaps thinking, perhaps not. All six of them still look alive.

The playground has been covered in ink and paint. Crude bold words bleed into the wood. A little boy rides the slide or rocks back and forth on the swing in a comfortable silence, smiling. His mother sits on a bench, her back to a small orange tree – she nurses a baby in silence, smiling.

On red wood, white ink – you are the most beautiful thing that has ever happened to me.

Cisco Covino



Sei la cosa più
bella che mi sia
mai capitata!!!

Catalina

Preface. [In one of the famed "go-green" towns of Sicily, Castelbuono, lives Rosario and Catalina. Castelbuono is nestled into the hillside of the Madonie Mountains. Rosario is one of the garbage men in this town, who is accompanied by Catalina, his donkey. They aid in the clean up of the town. This is the story of their bond...]

Narrator:

Catalina, a beautiful name. An exotic name. A name that a Spanish woman with long, dark hair and bright, red lipstick would boast.

Catalina's an ass. No, I'm not kidding, she's an ass. She is exceptionally hairy and has ears that stand stock-straight, like those of a German Sheppard. The fuzzy, black tuft at the end of her tail is her personal fly swatter; one that comes in handy during those hot, summer days.

Her boyfriend loves her. He loves her so much that he makes her pick up trash. A guy would love to have that type of relationship. have a girlfriend or wife who takes out the trash. Good luck.

[The Narrator adds her personal insight onto the story...]

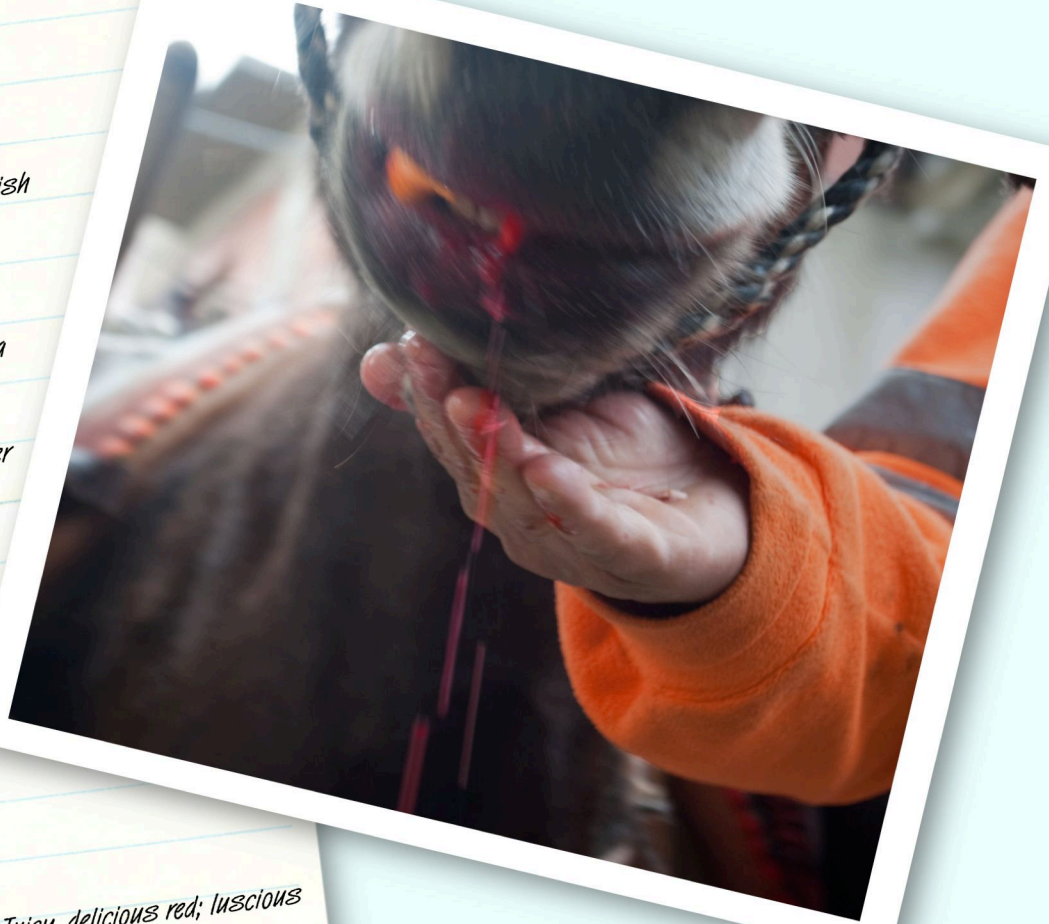
"Rosario, please. Do your part. Do you want Catalina to leave you for another garbage man?! Here, give her a blood orange."

She loved it. She loved it so much it stained her lips red. Juicy, delicious red; luscious and lava-like red.

Rosario couldn't take his eyes off her; he was beaming. Catalina was beautiful.

'Arancia rosa' had done it.

Samantha Podhurst



Rachel Morandi



Joy Mahoney, Hunter Amabile



Small, rusted, and common
Along tight side streets Sicilian mothers watch strangers curiously, while grandmothers
frown and sweet-faced men in orange jumpsuits clean the streets. Each adds to the town's homey
atmosphere.

lumbered balconies rise from the ground at odd angles-close like the townspeople. Pigeons
flit between railings, from sun to shadow and from shadow to sun. Balconies depict the
personality of the family within: here, sheets of green, pink and yellow thread the bottom balcony
bars, while across town, jackets and scarves with brand names are hung out to dry.

Laughter, the cooing of a baby, and loud, fast music flow down side streets.
The entire town is a track of miniature hills and valleys in an obstacle course of cobbles.
Rubber speed bumps seem out of place here where all else is suspended in time. Rocks pooled
with moss, tossed carelessly, hold down slated roofs. These tiles are pink, white, grey, dark. Were
they new, the tiles would be a dark shade of red.

"Affittasi" banners stretch across balconies. Many houses are for rent.
Nearly every house has an exquisite wooden door with its own ornate handle, no two
alike. The butterfly-image mailbox can be found beside many doors: small, rusted, and common.

Artemis Savory



Katherine Neubert

Brittany Dalphond

Sto Bene

A couple sits precariously at the edge of a stone wall high above the waters. The sound of the waves intensifies, booming as they stumble over each other. Then, just as quickly as it began, silence, and the waves return to their peaceful lapping of the shore.

Indifferent to the sporadic volume changes of the waters, the couple laughs and smiles, undaunted by the fear of falling or the power of the ocean.

Offshore two fishermen lay a net.

The young woman laughs.

A breeze takes the opportunity to relieve the heat of the sun.

The younger of the two fishermen stretches over the boat to keep hold of the net.

The couple laughs, facing each other, as the wind whips her hair.

The waves settle into constant swishing; back and forth, back and forth.

The current pulls the boat through the waters.

Like a ringtone in a movie theatre, a phone call interrupts the moment. She falls silent.

He kisses her. "Sto bene," he says, and returns his phone to his pocket.



Lisa Linsley



A Mechanical Symphony

Luciano and Mario sit there, undisturbed, gazing out across the cerulean blue glass. Caps shade their tan faces; their bodies clothed in suit jackets, the shades of a rainy day. The beating sun is broken by the cool, sea breeze. The men sit still.

Small fishing boats recline off the horizon; their patterns of color dance across the sandy beach. The still vessels are broken by the sound of courageous Vestas, echoing off sandstone buildings. Fiats squeeze through streets not built for their size. The serenity of the sea breaks the growth of modernity.

The sun plays games across the horizon, dropping crystals into the deep, sapphire waters.

Luciano and Mario sit there, sometimes in silence, always in harmony. Their eyes touch the panorama, and their minds dance away.

The waters ebb away from the shoreline, taking and giving with its every motion, a piece of itself.

The two old men have their backs turned away from the mechanical symphony. Instead, they sit still, like children sleeping, dreaming this scene away.

Samantha Podhurst

Threatening

Shadows give color to seaside rocks that point upward like deadly knives. Blue and purple waves slam against the jagged boulders. Clear skies dye the horizon dusty white.

Cars whip down wide alleys like every road is a drag race. They pass an alley full of cats: a small ebony feline licks its paw while sitting atop a station-wagon. A scruffy old man points to the cats, then holds out a hand in expectation of payment. No one obliges his request: he goes for the couples walking out through the alley from a terrace overlooking the sea. The scene of far-stretching ocean glittering in the afternoon sun is perhaps sharded for them when faced with the aggressive beggar.

Mark, a boy from Palermo, hunts the Duomo Piazza for a female. When one smiles and looks him in the eye, he speaks in quick Italian. She smiles again to show that not a word has gotten through to her. She is alone. It is siesta. His short black hair is greasy, the jacket he wears nice, but on closer inspection, not clean. His smile cocky, his attitude sure.

Artemis Savory



SNELL

ESCLUSO
AUTOCARRI





Beyond the Exterior

Three older men sit on a bench outside of a market. Two lean against a concrete building. One holds himself up by a cane. All wear scally caps. Most wear sweaters, brown shoes, though one outlier wears black.

Cars and mopeds jet every which way. There are no pedestrian rules in Castelbuono. People scurry between markets, as women beat rugs over their balconies conversing with friends three stories below. Vines have slithered their way up buildings and taken over. Moss has outgrown its welcome. Colors have faded. Trees have withered. Cobblestone streets remain intact.

Surrounding the town is a fortress of green hills and snow covered mountains.

A dark gray cloud shadows one of the hills. The sun is trapped. A contrast of light emerges.

As the town climbs, roads become narrow-hilly, even. Toward the top there are newer homes. Some have gated driveways and fresh new paint. The busy atmosphere vanishes. A contrast between new and old.

Jill Ward

Among the Standing, Reflection in Time

Pools of water gather in crevices of rock. Their presence here is fleeting: at midday they are victim to sun's rays. Yet here they lie, remnants of ocean tide, witness to majesty that surrounds them, an island of their own perspective.

Endless blue fills their view. Deep, piercing water; clear, illuminating sky. They meet, never mixing, navy and turquoise hues creating an infinite line-horizon. Grey, jagged rocks rise from the water: rugged in appearance, corroded by time. Their severe contour exquisite in nature.

Nearby, stone walls stand. Cement slabs form the exterior- once vibrant yellow paint faded, a pale tint left in its waking. On the walls, pipes appear in varying directions: like veins they weave, seemingly connected- no beginning, no end. Rust seeps through crevices- dark blood brown contrasting with the fair hue. Tarnished grates shield windows. With no visible entryway, it appears deserted, aged by time, a flaw amidst beauty.

This building remains, weathered by storms, water and wind having left their mark. It has witnessed serenity, endured turmoil, forever outliving its reflection in the pools.

Alanna Goddard

Kylie Jelley

Raw Simplicity

From first glimpse the city sleeps. Laundry hangs delicately in the breeze above a window's steel rails.

A man walks slowly, his eyes foggy layers of brown and blue. He doesn't smile. His hands are wrinkled, clean and soft with long fingernails. Shaking, he takes out his burgundy wallet smelling of new leather, opens it to reveal a handsome photo of a young man; a relic of his past. Proetto Carmelo. Born in 1919. Now ninety years of age.

Deeper into winding Castelbuono, donkeys' hooves knock against the stone, while men in electric orange jumpsuits walk steadily beside them, picking up trash. Pigeons soar in and out of holes in the stone walls and groups of old men flock together in the piazza.

The smell of freshly baked croissants lingers through the streets until noon, and grocers fill their stands with organic produce.

Two doors down a chicken hangs limp in a window of the Carne Macellaia Fresca. It looks cold, the color of ivory with goose bumps, veins running down its neck. Stark light illuminates the meat inside a glass coffin and glints against its metal frame. In the back of the store a pig hangs by its hooves from a large metal hook, pink curly tail still in place.

Ropes of sausage dangle overhead, intertwined with the tear drop shaped Caciocavallo hanging by a thin red string. The butcher, Stephan, a young man with dark features and a white smock, stands silent. The knife moving with diligence, his hands covered in blood.

Two girls and four tired feet stand at a staircase. The steps, made of stones, suggest that nature was the architect for this particular walkway.

They look pensive, they look at each other, they look ahead of them.

A sign, reading "No Trespassing" in Italian, hangs limp from its intended spot on a nearby rock wall. The girls, knowing what it means, choose to ignore its demand, and make their way down the steps and through a maze of jagged rocks. Two rocks, carved so smoothly overtime by the elements, look like beds. A place to sit and rest, a place to let the senses take over.

An infinite jetty spoons the blue outline of the sea. Houses have settled on the other side of the rocks, their pale pink coloring complimenting the sky, their laundry lines flapping tablecloths that match the water. There is a mesh in the color palate of the earth.

Even what is clearly unnatural still fits in.

Caroline Moss





Dionysus and Apollo sit side by side, saddled on the edge of heaven looking down over a small hill town, their voices lost over the light moan of a spring breeze...

The air is cool and the sun is warm and the wind carries with it the scent of the mountains. At the roundabout, the fountain shoots water in the air, cars park around it – some parallel, some perpendicular – it doesn't matter. Four men in dark coats and flannel caps sit on a bench next to the butcher's shop. The four begin to laugh, tip the corners of their mouths and tap their canes as a man in an orange reflector suit walks by, waving, with a donkey following close behind. The four old all life their heads in salutations, their bodies sinking back into the bench and they make sure to hide their smiles as the orange man grabs a bag of garbage from the butcher and tosses it into the basket on the donkey's back.

The young man trots away, the donkey follows in step, lazy and careless. The two pass the tobacco shop. A child hugs his mother's leg, digging his face into her dress, shutting out the world and the mother coos in Italian.

Birds look down from the bell tower of an old castle.

The man and the donkey walk uphill, away from the castle, towards the monastery. Clips and clops bounce off the cobblestones with each step. A man of the church, dressed in a thick, dark robe, greets the man and the donkey before hushing his voice and continuing a conversation on his cell phone.

The two keep walking uphill and yellow birds swoop into the trees before them.

Cisco Covino

Brittany Bell Dalphond

Castelbuono

He stands proud on this hill, looking down.

Golden, perhaps from the morning sun, he seems to glow. His streets wind up, down, left, right and back again. Curving like smiles and frowns, each road with the ability to choose a mood.

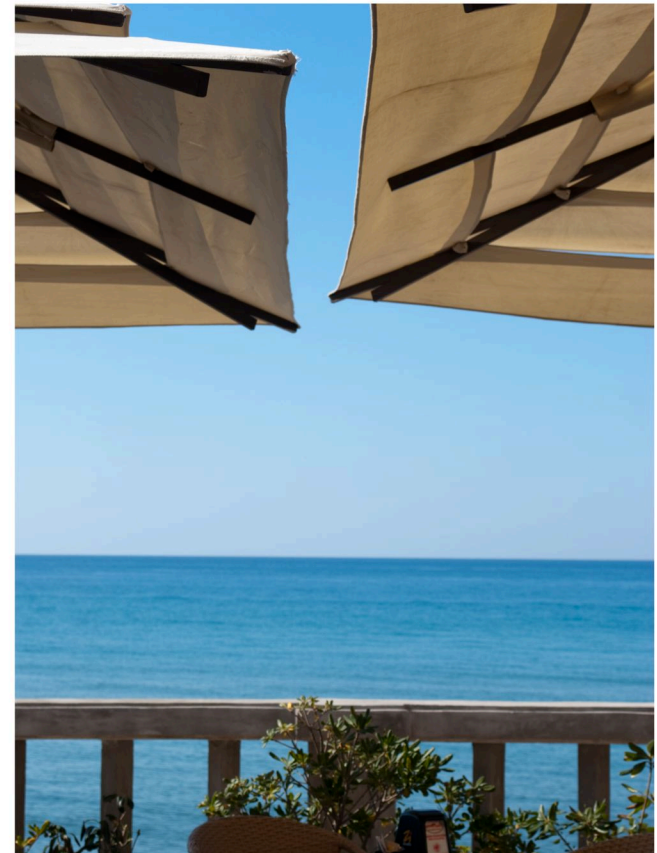
The term "go straight" takes on new meaning here, for there is rarely a straight street. But, turn enough times, and déjà vu. All roads lead to Rome. Eventually the old man leads you back to where you came.

Up above, a woman hangs laundry. White sheets and lace curtains drip drop down two stories; the sweet, fresh scent of her fabric softener flooding the area. From there she can see across the street and down onto a rooftop where a group of men are repairing the old clay tiles that are worn and grey from the sun. No one flinches at the beeping of toy-like cars that bump through steep and skinny streets.

Cracked peach stucco walls rise up from cobblestone pathways. Each fissure a wrinkle of time like laugh lines, or worry lines. Wooden doors are worn. They stand demanding reverence, their wisdom growing with each grain of wood revealed by chipping paint.

Castelbuono has seen much. Like a wise old Sicilian man.









Top: Hunter Amabile, Joy Mahoney Bottom: Katherine Neubert, Hunter Amabile







Finito!

Opposite page: Hunter Amabile

Bottom: Bethan Allam





"Truth"

Because I can.