



### Getting away from it all

I really enjoy travelling and often feel freer on the move. Although I've never pursued that dream holiday, I still appreciate the longing to get away from it all. Everyone deserves a break; if all we did was work, we'd soon burn out. And yet holidays are still a luxury that not everyone receives or can afford. They were barely a part of my upbringing. A modest family income was earned through excruciating overtime. My memory measures labour in the smelted metal burns on my stepfather's arms, the checks on my mother's overalls. Once independent, I learnt to value time over money. Unsurprisingly, I tussle with routine; the day begins differently if you don't know where you'll be by the end of it, mentally or physically. It wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea, but I embrace fluidity.

## **Educated people are supposed to travel widely.**

I was keen to engage in enriching travel. Exploration of foreign places and ways of life broaden the mind. The search for unusual stories and difference is culturally lauded. An international lifestyle is considered intriguing, exalted.

## **Making sense of 'it all'?**

Freedom of choice has become part and parcel of the travel experience whether the journey is a short break, a longer adventure or living on the move. And yet, like holidays, the right to travel is not one enjoyed by all—travelling abroad and freedom of movement could be but aren't considered synonymous.

Privilege comes into question: Why is a passport the birthright of some and not others? And how do these incredibly valuable documents get used? A global youth movement rightly concerned by climate change is demanding responsible action. Part of their concerns include how we travel. What might the priorities for true long-term and affordable travel plans look like? And the political motives behind raising blockades against those seeking a better life or even fleeing persecution need be disputed, refuted.

These might be weighty topics for a second issue, but this is where I find myself. I'm trying to get better at moving steadily towards rather than 'away from it all'. And with the sense that discussions need to be opened, here are some personal reflections on the summer:

## **What's your flavour?**

Most leave the sticky city swelter at this time of year. It's late July and I've just arrived in Vienna for two weeks. It's too hot to be out for long during the day. Here, tourists and service workers rub shoulders in the evening. The daily promenade of middle eastern cultures meets western window shopping under the sway of honey locust fronds. One of Vienna's main holiday-style treats is ice cream. I'm taken by the range of exotic flavours: rum, coconut, mango, pistachio, chocolate, coffee, even vanilla come to think of it. There's a healthy cultural mix in the queue. Everyone seems to be making an instinctive choice, enjoying the lush immediacy of feeding their sweet-tooth. Ice cream takes many of us back to childhood. Any semblance of shared innocence, no matter how fleeting, feels gratifying right now.

I recall another scene of shameless, summer indulgence, this time from Agostino Ferrente's recent documentary *Selfie*. The otherwise intense film grapples with personal loss after the infamous death of a teenager, gunned down by police in Naples. The film's two main protagonists—friends of the victim—were given mobile phones to record their everyday lives. In a rare moment off from staring intently at their screen, they capture themselves with an aperitivo. They're kicking back, bare chested, drinking cocktails at a road intersection, enjoying their very own version of a shot on the rocks. At that very moment, their seriously relaxed faces belie the tensions of a treacherously hard street life.



Once while visiting the city, I stopped at a fountain in *La Sanità* to get some water. Kids were filling up balloons and I was bold in my approach. As I smiled at the game, a boy looked up and me, coolly remarking, “You’ve got a gold tooth.” Impressed by his lack of pretence, I responded in kind, “Yes, I know.”

### **Is life really such a beach?**

I'm stretching out after a leisurely swim, raising a glass from the cool box to good company. Our day trip to the beach at Lago Bracciano just outside Rome could have been a folly. The scenery was a sure attraction; whilst bobbing up and down in the water, I'd reflected on the name of the nearby town, the forest landscape, its arms (*le braccia*) that hug (*abbracciano*) the lake (*il lago*)—a gentle, reassuring place. And it's Ferragosto, the Italian national holiday on the 15th August; it was more than likely that many others would have the same idea. And yet everyone's relaxed, in holiday mode, myself included. A beach is one of few places where you can strip down to the bare essentials and lie back to unwind together in public. I see beds as desert islands and sandy beaches in summer are communal beds strewn with fabric turf. My fellow lowlanders, Cinzia, Paolo and Light, easily fall into oversea's conversation with a nearby gathering of

young bathers. We share the beach, a sense of common ground and a sociable moment. When walking by the water's edge with Cinzia, her broken foot healed beyond crutches, I'm lulled by a thoughtful stride released of the need to get anywhere.

### **Where there's a will, there's a way**

I'm travelling back up north by coach accompanied by song. The voices I hear are the sonic memory of those I joined in choir at Anna Maria Civico's singing workshop in Cataforio, Calabria. I celebrate their trace—each person's tonality, our combined resonance, a rich layer of natural accents undulating over murmuring motors. I trip back to the transcendental harmony we shared one afternoon sitting beneath olive trees that melted my entire being.

The young woman sitting next to me, who has so far slept through most of the journey, is feeling revived by our pitstop. Elena strikes up a conversation. She's going as far as Bologna, back to university, after spending the summer with family in Sicily. Our chat is lively, her awareness acute. Even though she's travelling within the same country, over land and sea, she has moved away to improve her chances in life. She realises the parallels between herself and migrants arriving in Italy and feels increasingly enraged by injustice. Her voice connects with others, resonating forcefully in my consciousness.

### **Spoilt for choice?**

The artist dressed in vivid pink has something pertinent to say—Anna Meyer's show at Hoast, an artist run space in Vienna, is called *Wahl der Qual*, a play on *Qual der Wahl* (freedom of choice / being spoilt for choice having flipped into election agony). Indeed, the exhibition has opened two weeks before Austria's snap election caused by a vote of no confidence in chancellor Kurz.

The long, thin painting that stretches centre stage from the ceiling of this intimate space is called *Diktatur des Likens / Ibiza* (Dictator of Likes / Ibiza). It depicts a peninsula full of bathers across the sea from a proud island haven. The beach is awash with coded signs: facebook's 'f', its extremities finished with thumbs up 'likes', takes on fascistic form; a flag flying mid-composition from a lookout hut depicts a waning, communist hammer and sickle also interrupted by far-right iconography; overpainted warning triangles, barely disguising the Jewish Star of David, show migrants drowning out at sea. Anna painted the piece two years ago knowing full well that Austria's former vice-chancellor and far-right FPÖ party chairman Strache holidays on Ibiza. The now

famous corruption scandal that took place on the island has laced the painting with even heavier connotations.

The show is full of comment through direct representation: police flanking one side of a composition, anti-fascist protesters thronging the other; an individual encased in a box container, the hipster turned 'hopester', wielding a burning torch in the vanguard against politainment; and the politician's exposé countered by the artist's thoughts laid bare. Anna writes: "Agonising elections will never end unless we finally get moving."

**traverzine** is a platform for those interested in exploring and sharing ideas about environmentally aware travel. The zine traverses contemporary issues regarding leisure, work and migration through direct experience. Thoughts are a great means of travelling: poetry moves us; one photograph can recall myriad journeys; a single drawing can transport us to other worlds. traverzine is a means to communicate your ideas about how travel might be perceived differently at a time of great environmental and political change. Writing submitted for publication should be no more than 1,200 words or 7,000 characters with spaces in length. Images should be 10.5 x 7.5 cm at 300 pixels per inch. Please send all submissions to: [info@traverzbooks.net](mailto:info@traverzbooks.net)

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cover: Anna Meyer's 'Diktatur des Likens / Ibiza, 2017' postcard on fridge, 2019