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Loca Antiqua

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Loca Antiqua: Italia

Journal Entries by Larkin Kennedy and Melanie Vanderkolk

Day 1 – May 21, 2003 – Arrival in Rome

Walking out of the bus station and coming face to face with the Colosseum first thing was pretty darn cool. I had been a little put out earlier because most of our flight over Europe was done through clouds, so I wasn't able to see France roll out under us, but I suppose that end view was excellent enough to put all tired thoughts aside. The airport itself wasn't actually inside Rome proper, we had to take a train in, and it was very strange, seeing the occasional arch and whatnot. The tenement housing looks familiar, but then, I suppose tenement housing the world over looks pretty similar. The wildflowers are still out, and of course the poppies with their little splashes of bright orange-red all over the place. And we're in Rome, where you can pretend history still walks (if your imagination is at least as good as mine) and the walls crumble as you watch, and new, modern apartment buildings intersperse themselves with arches and marble facades which definitely weren't created in the last five centuries. There's even the much-hyped Mediterranean haze, though I'm not entirely sure how much of it is pollution.

Walking through the city with our luggage, however, wasn't quite so cool, and I didn't even pack very much. Getting our whole group on the train, and then the subway, without losing anyone and without losing anyone's luggage was a feat. Then, after finding our hotel and taking a shower, we were off again. We walked all over the ancient city of Rome, thankfully sans luggage this time.

As Dr. Fronda's wife puts it, we were immediately experiencing the Baton Death March through Ancient History. We walked to the Lateran, where we caught the subway right outside the ancient walls of the city, taking it to the other side, and then we walked back. Yup, we went from Wall to

Wall, and it wasn't as far as I was afraid it was going to be, though it's farther than I was hoping to walk after getting off a plane. We wandered in and out of a couple churches, past old triumphal columns, were shocked by the huge modern monument on the side of the Capitoline Hill, and then pattered about in the old old forum. I'm already on my second roll of film, and I also have the unfortunate desire to refer to the wall as the "pomeranian". Yes, I do realize that is a small, yappy dog, and I likewise realize that the wall is actually called the Pomerium... but that is beside the point.

At least now I've managed to orient myself in the city, though I ache more than I did after we moved our stuff last week. And I know better than keeping the Forum between myself and food when I'm beginning to be hungry, as it takes a while to walk around that thing and they don't let you walk through it.

Day 2- May 22, 2003

Today we experienced the Roman Forum. We listened to Nate's presentation at the Arch of Septimius Severus, filling our water bottles with water from the natural fountain – so cool! – and had class in the shade next to the Curia. Only in the Roman Forum can you sit on fallen columns and have class discussion. We were let loose to wander, and I discovered the Temple of Vesta, the Column of Phocas, a pretend temple to Romulus, and many, MANY others.

For lunch we were on our own, forced to go look around and get comfortable with the city. I say that we were "on our own," but somehow, after beginning in three different directions, all three groups ended up meeting at the same street corner before finally finding different cafes. Heather, Mary, Annie, Nicole and I ended up at an outdoor café called Benevoli Dora, where the staff only spoke a little English. Nicole and I got Bruschetta (mine with tomatoes and mozzarella), while Heather and Mary got pizza,

and Annie only wanted a beer. She ended up with a warm beer from the tap that may or may not have been Heineken. Note to self: there is a fee for actually sitting at a table, and "conto" means "check." Yes, we did look it up while sitting at the table.

After lunch, we met at the Capitoline Museum, where we saw sculptures and busts that I've only ever seen in books - the Dying Gaul, for example, as well as the original Marcus Aurelius statue from his column. Nicole and I then spent what felt like forever looking for the painting of the Cumaen Sybil that Dr. J claimed he saw. Upon finding it, we discovered that we were pretty museum-ed out for the day. Luckily, we found our way home to Hotel Lancelot, but we were surprised to see a man (one of those men dressed as a ridiculous gladiator, nonetheless) standing on the third tier of the Colosseum, deciding whether or not to jump. At first, we thought they were doing some sort of stunt, but then we heard that he'd been up there for an hour. We're not sure of the outcome, and while he looked very angry when pacing back and forth on his cell phone, we just walked past the Colosseum again, and there was no sign of anything - we assume he was talked down.

I have never enjoyed a shower so much as I have the past two days. Walking around ancient monuments - I'm still astounded that I can say that - leaves your whole body incredibly dirty and sore.

For dinner, Larkin, Nicole and I searched for a place that was nearby and cheap and found a place with really good pizza - well, OBVIOUSLY, it's Rome! We just sat there, sitting outside, watching all of the interesting people walk by. The streets amaze me here. Why do they not believe in lanes? There are about ten billion people riding around on scooters, zigging in and out of traffic, and the buses are incredible huge and fast. We've almost died several times already. The shops are also pretty extravagant. So far, the shoe stores look the most expensive, but the places with the leather jackets seem pretty bad, too. Clothing itself seems pretty comparable to America.

Outlook for tomorrow: Get to go inside the Colosseum (yea!) and then into several churches. New plan for eating and saving money: eat a big breakfast and steal more food at breakfast for lunch and snacks.

Day 3 - May 23, 2003

I was a little behind the weather today, perhaps the combined effect from walking all over the city for the third straight day in a row. Also, my site presentation was today, and it didn't go terribly well (yes, that's right, we did have work to do, fancy that). My public speaking skills aren't terribly good at the best of times, and I wasn't sure exactly what part of my paper I was supposed to present, since we seemed to keep going over parts of it in our daily discussion groups, and I was running out of substance, but it didn't go badly, really, either. Oh well.

My presentation was in front of the Colosseum, which is definitely a nice backdrop. Whenever my "um's" and "ah's" would overcome me, I'd gesture to it, and hope people were looking at it more than they were paying attention to me. Thumbs up for setting at least! It was oddly cramped inside, however. Perhaps I built it up too much in my mind, and we are so used to huge stadiums nowadays that the enormous travertine structure looks, to us, like nothing all that special. It's still fascinating, though, to stand there and walk around it, and imagine what it must have looked like. That is one thing I think everyone liked about the movie *Gladiator*, and it was a definite help while wandering around the real thing. They were putting a floor down on it, too, and after some tomfoolery I ended up down there, staring up at the seats and at the Japanese, German, and English tourists doing silly *Gladiator*-esque poses for the camera. It was kind of giddy, just being there, however.

We had been up early enough to avoid most of the kitschy items-sellers, but after we were done with the Colosseum they were out in full force. I can't decide

which ones are my favorites... There are sketchily made busts and miniature statues wherever you turn, and I cannot stop giggling whenever I see a Gladiator in full K-Mart Halloween costume regalia, complete with plastic sword, standing around in front of traffic, smoking or whatnot, and waiting for the next unsuspecting tourist to come along and take an "authentic" picture with them. On the other hand, I am inordinately fond of the little beaded skull caps with beaded fringes, and there is one man who does nothing other than walk around with a bubble gun, pointing it at people and streaming the bubbles at them with a small "neerooo"-ish noise. Can't picture that? Too bad, you'll have to see it for yourself then. Our hotel is actually right near the Colosseum, so whenever we go just about anywhere, we end up going by the mountain of stone and its accompanying hangers-on, and the first time I saw bubble-gun man something just about broke in my brain.

At any rate, we went to the Palatine next, which is basically a hodge-podge maze of ruinous walls all grouped around each other at the top of the hill. Nevertheless, I had an excellent time wandering around inside them, saying to myself silly little things like "so *this* is the antechamber of Domitian" and "Augustus' house - I'm in Augustus' house!" and so on. We were frugal today and took away buns and cheese and fruit from the continental breakfast the hotel oh-so-sweetly provides for us every morning, so we enjoyed our lunch up on the Palatine. We were next to the domus of Augustus, in fact. ("I ate lunch in Augustus' living room!" etc.)

I enjoyed the Palatine museum more than I did the Capitoline one, actually, but then I'm sort of biased into liking prehistory more than marble. The Palatine had both prehistoric and protohistoric artifacts, even if they were tucked away in the basement. It was also a great deal more manageable than the Capitoline. There were still busts and

statues of the same degree of quality, but there weren't nearly as many. One doesn't walk into a room and get astonished by the rows upon rows of marble busts staring creepily down at you in the Palatine. Also, the statues were all labeled. Just seemed more put together, less heaped, is all. And like I said, I enjoyed the pre-republic remains. Seeing even more of them would have made my day.

In the afternoon the class met up and walked to the Lateran basilica again. It's huge, and impressive, and with amazing paintings and statuary... however, it's not terribly awe-inspiring. I like the little basilica churches scattered through the city more, and as for bigger structures, I've always been partial to Gothic architecture. The massive marble statues lining the nave are pretty neat, though, and I've never really seen anything quite like them in a church before. It's almost menacing the way some of them loom over you.

More interesting to me than the Lateran was the basement of a tiny church a couple blocks north and west of our hotel. When they had had drainage problems a couple of years back and went to investigate, they had found a first century Roman house, with a Mithraean *insanclamentae* and Mithraeum - a gathering place for members of the cult to Mithras. It was terribly cool, and I walked off my post-*nap* funk while poking around down there by myself. The Mithraeum wasn't much more than a small room off the Roman house, cordoned off with a couple of Corinthian columns, but walking through the rooms of the house itself and smelling that slightly damp dirt smell, reminding me of caves, was fascinating. I realize we'll be going to Pompeii later, and *that* it has great big ruinous Roman houses to wander around in, but this one, buried under the ground and dimly lit and even smelling old, just seemed to bring the feel of it home.

Day 4 - May 24, 2003

Classical Heritage

Today was a really fun day. After breakfast, we went to the Piazza Navona, a huge open area that has three Bernini fountains with sculptures of gods and has a lot of vendors selling stuff - lots of gypsies, lots of con-artists, but a great place to just sit and watch people. Beforehand, though, we visited the place where Catherine of Sienna is buried and the Pantheon, a monument I'm embarrassed to say that I had completely forgotten was in Rome. I guess I had too many other monuments on my mind. The building was SO much more impressive than I thought it would be. The dome was much bigger, and the niches where sculptures supposed used to be only made it seem bigger.

Sigh. Feeling the effects of the bottle of wine Larkin and I shared at dinner.

For lunch, the professors left us at Campo de Fioro, which had many restaurants and more shops than I care to remember. Five of us actually went back to the Piazza Navona, though, and ate our lunch of bread and fruit from breakfast, watching a large pigeon strike at any other who tried to get some of its banana. We somehow made it back to the Roman Forum, where Larkin, Nicole and I sat for two hours talking and watching people walk by us. This may be one of my favorite times so far, if only because we were relaxing in the ROMAN FORUM. Everyone else finally showed up, and we headed for the Imperial Fora. I gave my site report at the Column of Trajan, and I think it went well, considering John gave me a thumbs-up on the graph in my handout.

And now, at 12:09, I sit here very tired because for dinner, Larkin, Nicole, Matt and I decided to trek back to the Piazza Navona, where we were able to find a small café called La Fraschetta. I had some excellent pasta with mushrooms, and the waiter was very eager and very nice. The nightlife around us (being that we didn't eat until after 9:00 or so) was fun to watch. So many people were just walking around with their gelato - gelatea - however you spell it!

Day 5 - May 25, 2003 - Cumae - Arrival in Pompeii

My feet have blistered up all over the place under the influence of the three different pairs of shoes I brought. It doesn't look like any of the wounds are going to heal significantly, either. My calves are also killer right now. Who knew ancient history would be such work?

This morning I went to mass, though I almost didn't make it. By the time I went downstairs, the group going to church had already left, and it took me a few moments to decide to find my own way to the Lateran. Turns out I had plenty of time, as they had taken down the times wrong and the next mass wasn't actually for another half an hour. The service itself was neat - they used the main aisle of the Lateran, and the saints proceeded to tower over us throughout. I was barely able to follow along where we were, and they seemed to have skipped a few parts, and the homily was definitely wasted on me. Over all, however, it was pretty neat.

After that and some fiasco with maneuvering the vans, we set off for Pompeii. I enjoyed the trip despite the squashed-ness of it and the cramping of my legs. But honestly, I kinda enjoy going on car trips when there's good music playing and people allow me to look at the maps. I love maps, and the one I was given was even more of a puzzle thanks to its being in German, and we were enjoying the Italian countryside while listening to the Beatles, so what can be better? There were lots of vineyards, and I noticed on our bathroom breaks that toilette seats appear to be a luxury around here. Do they really cost that much more? I suppose I am just used to the toilette + seat coming as a set.

We drove along the coast for a ways, and stopped for a while at Cumae, which was by far the highlight of the day for me when we got to go into the Sibyl's cave and look around. It's not just a series of caves but also the site of a Greek colony up on the point, so I spent at least an hour happily wandering around the hillside and

clambering over ruins in the sunshine and the off-the-ocean breeze.

Modern Pompeii is... interesting. There are stray dogs running all over the place, and I keep thinking they are going to give me a heart attack, the way they keep playing in traffic. They'll bark at incoming cars as if they were rival dogs on their territory, coming inches away from tires and fenders before dancing back out of the way. Very nerve-wracking. Our hotel is more interesting still. It's definitely not as nice as the one in Rome, but then, it's also less than half as expensive. I was getting used to doors that worked and soap in tiny basins and showers that didn't have the toilette in the same depression in the ground... but what we have in Pompeii is honestly nicer than what I was expecting, coming to Europe. I've been in much much worse hotels. It still made me laugh, however, when Alli and I realized we didn't need to use the door, we could just climb in the room through the front window, not to mention the lovely scenic window of the trailer park which we have in the shower area; the best came while we were lying in bed, about to go to sleep, listening to fireworks go off somewhere nearby, rattling our windows, and could also hear Matt blowing his nose one room over, the sound of the phone ringing in Dr. Jacobsen's room and his muffled answer to it, and then to top it all off the train went by and rattled not only the windows and the light fixtures, but our beds as well.

They served us French fries with our pasta tonight, and we had a spirited discussion about whether "real" mozzarella is made out of buffalo milk. I don't think Dr. Fronda convinced me... surely they had mozzarella before they brought the first buffalos over from the grand New World across the Atlantic?

Day 6 - May 26, 2003

Today has by far been the strangest day. Plans completely changed on us in the morning, and we also were not allowed to steal anything

from breakfast for lunch. We took the train to Naples, which may be one of the sketchiest cities I've ever encountered, and then walked to the museum. The museum was cool because it had a lot of artifacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum. We walked to the harbor (where we grabbed a real quick bit because we were starving) and took a ferry to Capri. It was supposed to be really beautiful, but clouds were approaching, and it started to rain.

The professors basically just said, "Ok, there are ruins that way and shopping here. See in two hours." So, because we are college students (and mostly girls) we did some shopping, and I finished buying all the presents I wanted to get. Then Larkin, Nicole, Mary and I decided to go on an adventure. Essentially, we went up a cliff and then down it and somehow had an incredible time. Nicole started speaking Latin, and we waved "Ciao!" to every car that went by - safe? Maybe not. Fun? Of course.

Back in Naples, Fronda led us on a death march back to the train station, and I vaguely remember making it back to the hotel. Because we were once again starving, a few of us sat outside with our food, where we had to fight a cat for it. Now, thank god, I am clean, and it is time for bed. Trains are whizzing past our window, but I don't care. I'd just like the day of adventures to end.

Day 7 - May 27, 2003

Pompeii! Just wow. It kind of makes my skin creep to think about its ending moments, and to look on the plaster casts of the people that died in its streets, but the city itself is amazing. Shops and houses, with dusty mosaics on the floor and lovely atriums inside seem to wait for their owners to return, if you're used to the house you own having no roof, at least. I felt as if, if I closed my eyes, that when I opened them I would be in a bustling city street lined with closely packed two story buildings, alive with people and faced with brightly painted plaster and graffiti everywhere. But all you really see when you open them again are dusty streets marked down the sites with wheel-ruts and the aimlessly wandering

tourist glancing into passing shops, all broken off at the one-story point. We were able to get a much better sense of the feel of a Roman city in Pompeii, and I enjoyed how my over-active imagination was able to look back into the past even easier than it can in other European cities. The houses, and what ceilings there were, were the most impressive. Oddly, the tombs were much less creepy to walk through than the city had been - perhaps, as Nicole suggested, it is the feeling that there, at least, people had been put to rest.

We went through an impressive amount of the ancient city today, and I must confess that around lunchtime my energy and my temper were both flagging. My interest was still intact, however, so after munching on more bread and tuna, and being glad there wasn't a cat around to beg for our meal, I was definitely able to wander around even more extensively. I had bought some gum yesterday in order to use a café's restroom ("Egypt!" the gum proudly proclaims, and "super-soft bubble gum and TOY!" for some reason) and that came in handy today while I was attempting not to get too foul-tempered with hunger.

Alli did a presentation on prostitution in Roman times, which was quite interesting, and the brothels were quite the things to wander through, and take pictures of. I got a great one of Alli herself sitting on one of the stone benches (with stone pillows, too) in one... as someone quipped, they obviously weren't meant for sleeping.

This afternoon we were supposed to go to Vesuvius, but we all pretty much wimped out on it. My father, being a geologist and all, would probably have been disappointed in us, but we were rather pleased with ourselves and our decision when less than an hour later it started raining buckets on our heads. We went to the supermercado instead, actually - ooo, excitement. The big entertainment came

from trying to decide what to buy, and then finding out what we had actually bought. One especially interesting plastic container we were assured contained mousse but seemed instead to have some sort of whipped milk inside, very strange. I also thought I had picked up lemonade though it was actually grapefruit juice, and our foccacia were little bundles of mystery.

Tomorrow we leave for Assisi and Ravenna. I'm almost sad to leave this cute little hotel - now that I'm used to it, it's so much more convenient to climb in through the window than it is to walk in the door like civilized folk. And I'll miss Pompeii's tourist-prepared atmosphere, wherein I can tie my long dress up around my hips so that it reaches my knees but no farther. Oh, the scandal.

Day 8 - May 28, 2003

Today has yet again been a day of adventures. Having left in two vans without a Plan B or a way to contact each other if we got separated, we were asking for trouble when we got to the little town below Assisi. I was in the Fronda Mobile, in which we were listening to 70s pop music, and somehow the Jacobsen Mobile went another way. We looked for them after parking, but had no luck. Our group then began the long trek across the town, possibly the cutest, most rustic town ever. The view from the hill is absolutely picturesque. We got to the Francesco Basilica, where we thought the other group would be awaiting us - an hour and half later, after our site-seeing and eating lunch, they arrived. They'd gotten more lost than we had. Because we had to trek back across the town, and because our van rocks, the Frondae (as I now refer to them) bought us gelato on the way back.

(skip to entering the city of Ravenna). And the misadventures keep getting better. We entered the city and promptly got lost. Then we got separated. Then we got lost, going down one way streets the wrong way and in circles - literally, it was like a ride at the amusement park. Luckily, we found the hotel. Now I'm awaiting 8:45 to come so we can all meet briefly in the lobby and head to dinner. I've promised

myself a real meal including hot food that will be fully cooked and will fill me up. Tomorrow we're doing our only day of trekking around Ravenna, and since there are no trains outside the window, and I wasn't able to sleep in the van, I expect a good night's sleep.

Day 9 - May 29, 2003

Ravenna is a very quiet little city as opposed to Rome or Naples. We all agree that it feels oh-so-safe there, and I especially felt that it returned us to a degree of normalcy. I mean, since we had arrived in Pompeii, what with the rather failed trip to Capri, the fighting of cats for food, and Pompeii itself being a bit unreal, the trip had begun to step out of the realms of what I had been expecting. Maybe, perhaps, general grumpiness and tiredness was setting in from all the running around. Everyone, including the teachers, has less energy for traipsing now than we all did at the beginning of the trip, I think.

But back to Ravenna. The churches here are fascinating, what with their Byzantine-era mosaics all over the walls and floors and sometimes ceilings. It was odd that most of the churches weren't terribly well-kept, either. They were very clean and neat, but many of the mosaics themselves were partially rubbed away. Also, in every church (including San Vitale) there was scaffolding and paper obscuring some work-in-progress or other. Some walls had what looked like water damage and wall paper or paintings in worse shape than those we had seen in Pompeii - it was kinda odd. San Vitale is my favorite church yet, despite this. I loved the greek cross layout especially, with the very centrally based plan of it and the high arching ceilings. The mosaics (the very famous mosaics, at that) are nothing to be scoffed at, either. It was especially neat to see the famous ones of Justinian and Theodora flanking the nave just like they appear in every history and art history book in the world. Then some German tourists came and kicked us off the pews. German tourists are the new bane of

my existence. Think I'm joking? I spent almost 20 minutes in one museum patiently waiting for some of them to get out of my way so I could take a picture once, and later on in Ravenna I had been quietly sitting on a bench, minding my own business, when a huge group annexed my bench around me and kicked me off.

We had most of the day free, and it was lovely to have it to myself for once. No shops were open - as we found out later, Ravenna closes down after noon on Thursdays - but I was able to walk around for a good two hours or so alone. For some reason, my training in Spanish has kicked itself to the forefront of my brain now that we've been here over a week, so I keep trying to answer people in Spanish when it's completely obvious they have no idea what I'm talking about. It's weird how the two languages are just similar enough to confuse me, but not similar enough for unconjugated verbs or various idioms to work in conversation. In general, it only made me feel more foolish. It's not like I didn't try to communicate anyway; I stopped at one place which did happen to be open. It was a small workshop where they made mosaics, but I felt bad because the poor man who let me in kept hovering over me and all I wanted to do was look around. After a few half-hearted attempts at dialogue, I left. He looked rather relieved to see me go, but his work was beautiful. He had on display reproductions of a bunch of the famous mosaics of the city, and they looked all new and vivid without the water damage and everything.

Much of what I walked through wasn't a terribly good part of town, and so what with that and the language issues, I was rather happy to get back together with the group for dinner. Interestingly, despite the look of the neighborhood, it did not smell of sewage, a problem that seems inherent to most Italian city streets. Strange, that. We ate dinner near my favorite piazza, the Piazza del Popolo, and I finally got the

seafood I'd been craving all trip. We also got gelato... mmm. Even if I was able to bring nothing else back, I'd want my one memento of this trip to be a small Italian man who could make me hand-made gelato every day. That would be tremendous.

Day 10 - May 30, 2003

Today was long in that while we did little else than sit in a car, I keep forgetting it was all in one day. We left a bit after 9 and headed to Florence - which has yet CRAZIER drivers! Unfortunately, we only had a couple of hours there. We saw the Duomo (the second largest church in the country) and the statue of Perseus, which stood among many other statues. Supposedly, Florence (besides being the Mecca of leather) was to have the best gelato. We tested and disagree, but that's ok. I don't think I was as impressed as I should have been with the city. Perhaps if I'd known more about it. The funniest part of the day was when we were eating lunch and looked over to see a gypsy child going through our trash. She then fought Nicole for our cookies - and lost. What I loved most, though, was when I was able to wander around by myself.

The ride back to Hotel Lancelot also took much longer than expected, but a few of us went to eat dinner at the Frondas' favorite pizzeria - they speak no English, and it's some of the best pizza I've ever had. When we tried to take the bus back, though, we couldn't find any because many streets were closed. The city was practicing for the celebration they'll have on June 2nd. All we knew when we were seeing this surreal moment was that we were really confused. Oh, and I'd also seen my first car full of transvestites, so it had been a full evening. By the time we had walked back to the hotel and got into bed, it was 2 a.m.

Day 11 - May 31, 2003

When we returned to Rome, we were met by a flustered hotel staff who attempted first to put Alli and I in a single room, with one bed, and who then were so apologetic that they ended up putting us in an enormous and gorgeous room with two beds, a large bathroom, a desk, and even a

wrap-around balcony. They also offered to give us dinner our last night in Rome for free, but in the meantime Alli and I have been spending a lot of our free time out on our amazing balcony, reading and writing.

Today we had considered going to Hadrian's villa and getting a last use out of the vans, but everyone decided against it after the tiring debacles that characterized their previous use. We all wished them a fond farewell... fond in seeing the last of them, that is, and instead we got the morning free before meeting up together at the Spanish Steps. We read a poem about them together, which, although perhaps overly sexual in imagery, does explain the layout of the area and the general lazy gleam of it in the sun. Apparently earlier in the Spring there are also flowers on the steps, but by this time of year they had all wilted and exposing the incredible poshness of the area. There are stores like Armani and Gucci scattered about, as well as a McDonalds and a Hard Rock Café. It was quite expensive; I did no shopping there.

We also went to one of the neatest little churches I've ever seen after we all traipsed up the steps and past all the couples kissing on it - public make-out session are definitely in in Rome - as well as going past yet another Bernini fountain. The church had six chapels where the arches between and the little rooms themselves were entirely spanned by human bones in various patterns. They are all bones of monks, and a couple of complete skeletons of deceased friars have been propped up and robed up with habits so they glare out of their hoods at the passers-by. The whole effect was very creepy, and impressive, and slightly awe-inspiring. But not really a place I'd like to go on Halloween.

Tonight Mary, Melanie, Nicole and I were up for a quiet evening, so it goes to show that we got one of strangest experiences of the trip. Our waiter showed up at our table with glasses of grapo (whiskey) which was completely unasked

for and not (if you'll believe me) even desired. To be polite we took them... and the fact that it was very good whiskey did nothing to mitigate all of our problems with taking shots, and I'm sure the faces we made were amusing to the rest of the diners. No doubt that is why we were given yet more grapo, though my friends decided to blame it on my bad Italian grammar when asking for the check.

Day 12- June 1, 2003

Even after last night's shenanigans, I somehow woke up this morning more refreshed and ready to see the city than yesterday. We caught a crowded bus to the San Callisto catacombs and got a hilarious tourguide to show us around. We were able to see lots of graves and even some remains, as well as some of the original frescoes. Afterwards, we began walking back to the hotel and then gave in to a bus, instead. I think I could really get used to this siesta thing, because while everything annoyingly closes, it allows me to take naps.

At 4:00 we left to take the Metro to the Vatican, and we had our first encounter with St. Peter's. It's the biggest church in the country, and it's absolutely beautiful. The piazza in front of it has great pillars and statues, and walking inside made my mouth drop. Instead of its size, it was the beauty that really got me. I didn't really like the Lateran because it seemed so empty inside, but St. Peter's felt more personal because of everything that was inside it. We stayed for Vespers and also for mass (my first Catholic mass, and in Italian!). For dinner, Larkin, Nicole and I tried really hard to find two places listed in our guidebook but to no avail. The Taverna Angelica looked too expensive, and the San Luigi had become a Mexican restaurant called La Cukaracha. We finally ate at Bella Napoli and slowly, because we were tired, made our way back to the train station.

The quote that sums up today's thoughts on my trip: "To be in Rome is to be in touch with everything that matters in life." (from our Murray book).

Day 13 - June 2, 2003

Today we and Colin Powell visited the Vatican. However, whereas we took a very around-and-about trip in the stifling heat and crowds, Powell was able to take a relaxing motorcade inside the little country, and was ushered into a little room where the Pope (apparently) even stood up to offer him a chair. We hear they discussed peace in the Middle East... We, on the other hand, discussed how tired we were after this much of the trip had gone by, how much our legs ached, how many blisters we had...

Dr. Fronda had wanted to take the triumphal route through the city like the old Popes used to do after their appointment at the Lateran while traveling back to St. Peter's, not to mention it being the same route Charles V took when he came to visit. Unfortunately, or at least ironically, this old triumphal route was already in use by a parade, and we had to travel strange back streets and winding alleyways in order to make it close to the Vatican. Apparently, today is the newly proclaimed Italian national holiday, and people were out in droves to watch the parade and listen to patriotic speeches. It is kind of entertaining to have ones plans so thoroughly thwarted, and by something that works so well with the history of a place. But that didn't make our walk any shorter.

We did get there in the end, walking up Mussolini's street from the Castel Sant'Angelo, and sitting in the shade of St. Peter's square we fed the pigeons and watched motorcades go by with the little flags on the fronts waving back and forth. Everyone split up into little groups after a small break; Melanie, Nicole, and I wandered through the basilica, taking a good look at the Pieta as we went, and then we climbed our way to the top of Michelangelo's cupola. It is very high up. The views of the city were therefore spectacular, but the crowds made us feel rather hot and smooshed and irritated, so we didn't stay up there long.

In the afternoon we all met up again to be shown the excavations under the church, and the officially recognized site of Peter's tomb. It was actually rather exciting, we got to walk as a group between the two Swiss guards as a crowd watched us presenting our reservation and then disappear down where they had previously seen two motorcades of actually important people going earlier.

The excavations themselves were amazing; they had uncovered the street of a pagan necropolis, and had opened up some of the family tombs so you could see the mosaics, frescos, and inscriptions on the walls and floor. Some even had statues. But by far the gem of the tour, by the Church's standards, was the grave of St. Peter itself. Apparently, after a lot of speculation, they had found 19 male bones in one wall of an early shrine dedicated to him, and the Pope decided that what with the accompanying writings, that was good enough for him. They were moved from the original resting place during a persecution, then supposedly replaced at a later time by the same or some similar devout Christian... whatever. The official ruling is that they are St. Peter's bones, and the Pope even is said to carry one of the knuckle bones around with him everywhere.

Day 14 - June 3, 2003

Today was the Vatican Museum (AKA our "final"). The professors gave us an essay topic, and we were all released into the museum, looking for inspiration. There is so much in the museum, that I think you could spend days there. I enjoyed going off by myself, but I still got lost a couple times. I must admit, though, that sadly I was not as impressed with the Sistine Chapel as I should have been. It was lovely, don't get me wrong, it just wasn't what I thought it would be.

After working on my final paper, which ended up being 9 very long written pages, for about 5 hours straight (with only a 20 minute Magnum break in there) I have little else to say about the day. For dinner, six of us went to an

amazing restaurant called Pappa Baccus, and I've never had been food. Nate had found it in some guidebook, and he was really excited to be able to bring a menu home for his father. Yum, it's expensive, but totally worth it, and it very necessary to go back some time.

Day 15 - June 4, 2003

We had a free day today! But upon reflection, Melanie, Nicole, and I realized we were fairly tired of traveling (which was unfortunate for me, as I was not returning with the great big group of Denison Classics people), and that there wasn't much in the city we wanted to see. Or, rather, at our current energy level, we didn't/couldn't think of anything new we wanted to see.

Instead, we bought all-day metro/bus tickets and basically rode random buses through Rome all day. Fun, no? Actually, we did first go to the mouth of truth, them because they had heard of it before and it is on a lot of postcards listed as a "major site", and I because I had seen the movie *Roman Holiday* with Audrey Hepburn. It's set in Rome, and is very cute, and part of it takes place at the Mouth of Truth.

I think next time I am here I would love to visit some of the sites in the suburbs, such as Ostia and Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, but in the meantime I was quite content to take the long bus ride from La Bocca de Veritas to the Trevi fountain. We wandered around there, into and out of shops and even picked up a few small things for the professors. We even found the cutest little place for lunch, where it smelled like heaven inside, if heaven was made of fresh-baked bread and basil, and which had gorgeous paintings all over the dimly-lit walls and ceiling.

After lunch we hung around the Trevi fountain for a few hours, making sure to throw coins over our shoulders into it to ensure a return to Rome. Not sure where we picked up that particular superstition, and it seems like a silly practice, perhaps, since it can't really be that hard to miss the biggest

fountain in Rome with a coin, even if you do throw it backwards and without looking. Perhaps, then, this implies that once you've visited the place once, it's impossible not to come again. Rome might as well be a type of drug.

We took another random bus, this time the short bus, because we had kept seeing the short buses motoring around the place, and Nicole had taken a shine to them, and because we all secretly wanted to be able to claim to have ridden the "short bus" through Rome. Unfortunately, the short bus was a miserable experience. It was stifling hot and crowded, and the suspension wasn't exactly the best. We all began to feel our energy evaporate after a very short interval, and I at least began to feel sick to my stomach. We piled out of that thing when we reached the Piazza Navona, at least, and it wasn't quite where we had planned on ending up. We had gelato there, thankfully, which improved our moods infinitely.

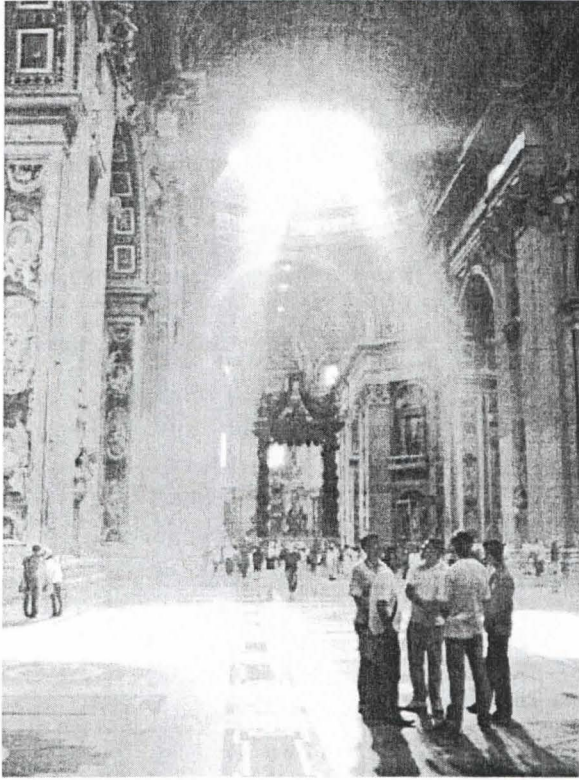
We all ate dinner together for the last time at the hotel, taking advantage of their mistake when we had just returned from Ravenna to get a good free meal out of it. And we got more gelato.

A postscript about how Larkin and Alli did not actually go back to the States with the rest of the slightly cranky and traveled-out group:

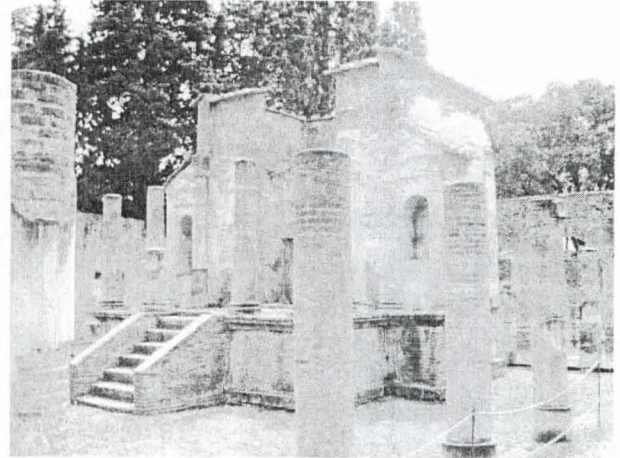
Instead, we took a convoluted and 48 hour train trip to Romania. "Romania?" you say. Yea, that's right, we were able to join onto an archaeological dig out there in the middle of nowhere, where we were supposedly going to be living with some nice Romanian folks and catching a tan as we worked shovels and trowels in the sun all day. There were some shenanigans on the way there - if you ever want the whole story of our quest to Romania, we'll attempt to give it to you in person, as long as you promise not to look bored, for it's quite long. Suffice to say, don't ever get train

directions online when traveling through Europe, and don't trust them if you do, since Alli and I managed to make our way to Slovakia and after backtracking we spent a very interesting night on benches in Budapest (complete with sketchy men attempting to "help" show me where the bathroom was) before we finally made our way to the excavation in Mosna, Romania. My passport book is now amazingly full of stamps. The four weeks we spent in Romania before skipping out early and journeying with a few friends to Vienna then Rome to catch our plane were likewise full of craziness, such as the moonshine we were presented with every night to drink, and the weekend of Friday the Thirteenth which we spent in the heart of the real Dracula's territory, visiting his castle and taking a cute little tram to the top of a mountain. We had the weekends free, during one of which Alli took a planned tour to see the Roman Dacian ruins while I went with another friend somewhere else (trains are very easy, and even pleasant, to use once you get over the American impulse to worry about where you are going and how, and just relax about it), but the rest of our time was spent breaking big pieces of dirt into smaller pieces of dirt. That honestly is the quick version. If you would prefer a longer one, you can read my senior research, as for that I am doing a review of archaeological literature on methods and theory and then using that to evaluate the exact purpose of the Mosna excavation itself.

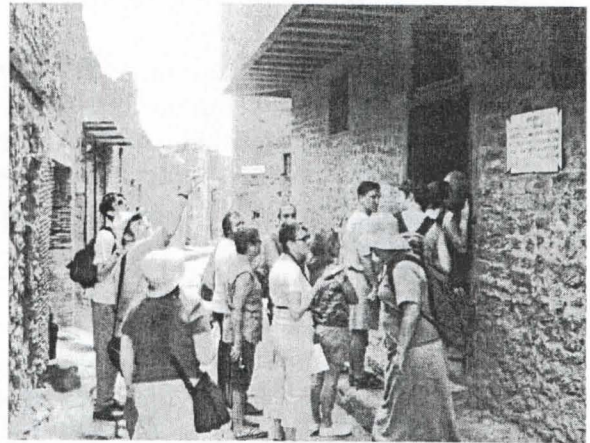
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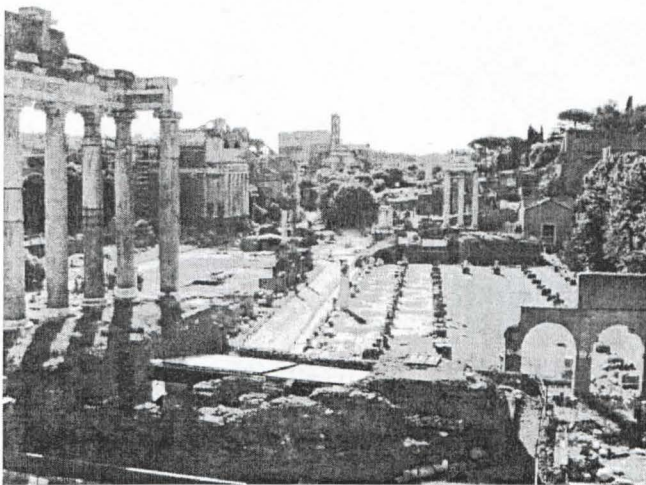
Inside St. Peter's in Rome



The Temple of Isis in Pompeii



The *Loca Antiqua* group entering a brothel in Pompeii



The Roman Forum in Rome