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Swatch Watch

Julianne Hyer
Denison University

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Swatch Watch

By Julianne Hyer

The only warm day we spent strolling streets of Vienna,
Weaving our way through Austrian noise,
Our foreign shoes meeting well-worn pavement,
We ventured to the new, the modern avenues
Lined with tall glass test tubes
Experimenting with the limits of consumerism.
It was there,
Amidst elevators rocketing up and down
Where Mom and I were drawn in
Enticed by the Jellybean colored watches
The bright artificial flavors of fashion
Pulling the eye and
Grabbing the wallet.

I wear it now,
A black Swatch watch,
Inexpensive because it's a child's watch
(I praise my Barbie wrists!)
Every time I glance at it
I think of hard cobblestone alleys,
Foaming cups of cappuccino,
Frozen bones at the steeple of Stephansdom,
An ex-boyfriend who had the flu—

It was an anxious pay phone call from the French aerodrome
(I remember standing on the breezy Prague balcony,
soaking up the Czech culture,
when my phone fatefully rang.)
An unexpected call followed by frantic emails to his mom.
It was all a mad scrambling to get him from Paris to Vienna.
I spent half my time after that exploring the ancient beauty of Austria,
Mom, Dad and I with our guidebooks, our orange backpack
And, of course, our constant craving for Viennese pastries.
And I spent the other half nursing that boy back to American health.

It was that terrible last hurrah of a senior year fling,
The dying, laborious breath of a high school relationship.
Both of us desperately clinging,
To something certainly not worth saving.
Both of us knowing, unhappily attempting to accept
The impending logical end.

After that plane touched down,
After I stopped looking for the written beauty of Prague's West Slavic
And after I stopped listening for the strong syllables of Vienna's German,
I stretched my cramped small body,

Untwisted and unfolded myself from those blue cushions
And took a step away from everything.

I remember walking off the plane
And turning this watch back six hours;
My weary feet back on U.S. soil
A bittersweet return to "home."
A home, not so much a home,
But instead a graveyard
Littered with unburied decaying skeletons of pasts—
Friendships in accelerated entropy,
Love facing a firing squad,
And parents at the cemetery gate with flowers
Heads bowed, praying for continued connection.