

# Introduction

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CONFLICTING EMOTIONS CROSSED MY MIND as I reread Jim Clowes's introduction to the first issue of the Anthology Project, *Letters Home*, published one year ago. This short essay was one of the last things Jim wrote before he learned about the illness that would eventually take him away from us. The prose conjures up his presence in an almost physical way. It is informed by the sense of urgency that was so evident in Jim's concerns about the necessity of international dialogue and understanding during the last years of his short, full, life.

The dangerous threats to international understanding that Jim discerned in the post-9/11 era are certainly still with us. During the past year, the kind of vulnerable travel that he advocated and admired – travel that moves beyond the comfort zone of one's own assumptions and safety nets, opening the traveler to a reflective process that breaks down boundaries that separate self and other – has become ever more dangerous and difficult. But as this anthology once again demonstrates in its examination of the elusive horizons that seem to box us into our original homes, this travel is still possible, and it has never been more important.

It has become increasingly difficult to imagine how anyone can claim to have achieved a genuine liberal education without a disruptive, transformative journey into the world beyond the borders that shelter us. Such a journey forces one to experience oneself through the eyes and voices of other people in different cultures.

For the students who have produced and contributed to this volume, "home" is no longer a sanctuary from which they can view the world from an elevated, panoramic perspective, but a place to which they can send their stories of other homes inhabited by peoples surveying different horizons. In this activity of listening, seeing and reflecting, they have entered the long path toward self-knowledge and begun to see the historically constructed cultural horizons of the home from which their journey started.

To open oneself to the wonder of an encounter with the stranger is to begin to experience the strangeness of one's original home and perhaps, eventually, to imagine a world in which all of us strangers can build a common home – one with many rooms and views rather than a narrow tower that would define one set of horizons as absolute and final.