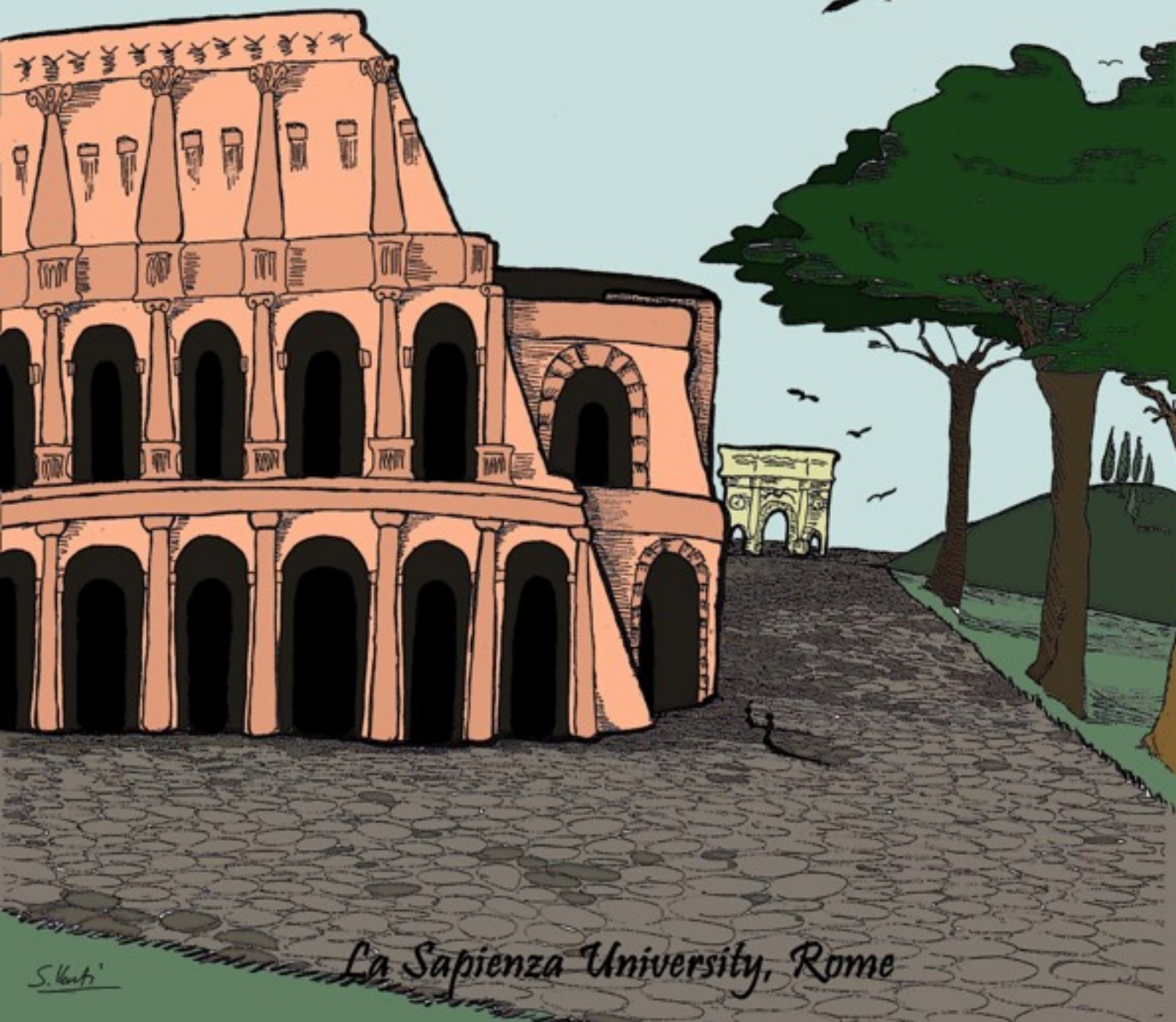


December 2012, Mira Mag 14

# Mira Mag 14

*A free magazine by Modern Language students.*



*La Sapienza University, Rome*

*S. Venti*

MiraMag is a free magazine by Modern Language students at Sapienza University, Rome, Italy.

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Cover page by Sabrina Venti.



Dear Readers,

So here we are again with a new issue of MiraMag! Get ready to learn more about foreign people's experiences in Rome and Italian people going abroad. If you're interested in topical news, we suggest you read our article about women against violence and our interview with an English language lecturer. After losing yourselves in the streets and events of Rome, don't forget to test your knowledge with our special Culture Quiz!

Enjoy your reading!

The Editors, MM14

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# Women against Violence

By Michela Galati

***Across the world, between the ages of 16 and 70, one woman in 5 is subjected to abuse. In Italy, one third of the female population experiences physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse. Violence against women is a widespread phenomenon to which people pay little attention, and too often the victim herself is seen as guilty for what happened.***



Discussing violence against women during the presentation of Paola Di Nicola's book, *La Giudice*. Photo taken by Michela Galati at the **Female against Violence** event, Rome, 25/11/2012

The family is where most crimes of abuse against women are committed. This, considered to be 'domestic violence', makes it even more difficult for a woman to bring charges against the perpetrator.

The authorities' lack of interest renders women even more powerless. Women are also afraid that nobody will believe them because they often feel that in court, a man's testimony has greater value. According to Professor Joanna Burke of London University, the percentage of rapists sentenced to prison has dropped from 25% in the 1970s to 3-4% today. This is a step backward for humanity.

In a manner of speaking, this brutal phenomenon is a result of the sexist society in which we live. Not so long ago, violence against women was almost seen as normal, with women subjected to cruel abuse and forced to be silent. Women didn't have the courage to say stop, nor had they the power to change the situation or to

bring charges. More often than not, they accepted this brutality and injustice.

Thanks to the feminist movement, courageous women have gathered to fight against such abuse. In the late 1970s, anti-violence centers began to be set up to support and provide hospitality for free to survivors of violence. These centers helped to improve the situation and today women who are victims of violence can find immediate assistance, respect and someone who will listen to them. It is unbelievably important to talk about these horrible situations, not only for the victims themselves but also to make people aware of the problem, in order to change things.

Today there are many reception centers that support women in this fight against violence. In Italy, there are about one hundred anti-violence centers. Support is promoted through television and radio commercials, demonstrations and other events that try to sensitize the whole population.

Many well-known names are involved in these centers. Michelle Hunziker for example – herself stalked by obsessive admirers - is a member of the **Doppia Difesa** association, one of the most popular anti-violence centers in Italy. **Differenza Donna** is another important association, with 4 anti-violence centers in Italy and one in Palestine.

Since its creation in 1992, **Differenza Donna** has supported and protected 15 000 women.

Besides these centers, there are many associations that organize events in order to spread women's voices, to share experiences and to fight against all kinds of discrimination. One of the most popular Italian networks is **Se Non Ora Quando**, which organizes events and spreads information against violence on Facebook. This information thus has the chance to reach many women, perhaps especially those in need of help.

Perhaps not everybody is aware that 25 November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. You may wonder: why this date? Well, on 25 November 1960, the three Mirabal sisters were assassinated in the Dominican Republic because they were political activists. Because of this tragic event, in 1981 the United Nations General Assembly chose 25 November as a day dedicated to the theme of violence against women. Related events, performances, discussions and memorial days are organized across the world.

Italy also participates, and I personally took part in the **Female against Violence** event held in Rome, at the Lanificio 159 in via di Pietralata, a former factory and now arts center. This event was organized by two associations, namely, **Se Non Ora Quando** and **Female Cut**.

This was the first time I had ever participated in an event of this kind and I have to admit that I was amazed. It was a festival in honor of all women who have suffered and continue to suffer as victims of this disgusting phenomenon of violence. I went



Lunetta Savino performing her monologue at the **Female against Violence** event in Rome, 25/11/2012. Photo by Michela Galati

alone, but I didn't feel like I was. We were there all together for the same purpose, enjoying that festival, enjoying life. The atmosphere was incredibly positive: it gave a sense of hope and protection, and showed that there was more to be done. There were tons of people: women, men, teens, kids.

There were performances of all kinds of

entertainments. Actresses such as Lunetta Savino, Veronica Pivetti, Francesca Reggiani, Emanuela Grimalda, recited monologues from the reflective to the comic, all with the same aim: to give voice, courage, help and love to women.

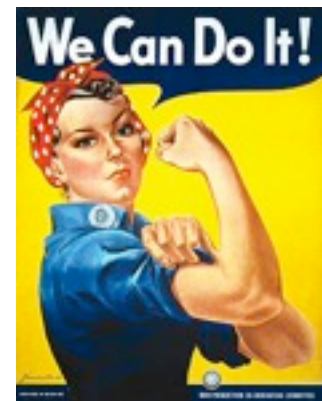
There were singers like Awa Ly, touching ballet performances, a gallery of contemporary art against violence, videos, accounts of personal experiences. There was the presentation of a book entitled *La Giudice* by Paola di Nicola, a female magistrate who describes the difficulties she has encountered as a woman in a field dominated by men, where women are considered incapable of holding such positions.

The event ended with everybody dancing to pop music, displaying their freedom, their pride in being women, their courage and their hope for a better future.

So women, don't hide, don't justify brutal acts, don't be scared. Experiencing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological violence and deciding to keep it to yourself makes things even worse, given that a victim's silence means resignation and the acceptance of this situation. We cannot permit that. We can't just close our eyes and let others choose for us. We have the power to change things, we only have to be conscious about this. Let's be hopeful. Let's fight for our rights, for our needs because things still have to change. Victims must not be afraid, because they are not alone, not anymore.

#### Some useful contacts:

1. **Differenza Donna**, via Flaminia, 43. Tel. 066780537  
[www.differenzadonna.it](http://www.differenzadonna.it)
2. **Doppia Difesa**, [info@doppiadifesa.it](mailto:info@doppiadifesa.it)
3. **Public service helpline**: Tel. 1522.



Poster by J. Howard Miller, 1942

# Sackings at the University of Cassino

By Marta Felici, Marta Pietrosanto and Sara Svolacchia

**On 11 October, Cassino University, 10 in the morning. Some students raise their protest signs among a crowd of *lettori* (the Italian for mother tongue lecturers) from many Italian state universities. They are protesting against the Rector's decision to sack eighteen language lecturers. As far as the students are concerned, this means a loss of nine thousand hours of lessons with mother-tongue lecturers. The protest took place on the occasion of the opening ceremony of a new university sports centre. Besides protesting against the sackings, the demonstrators were against the Rector's offer to downgrade the lecturers to door-staff and to close the University Language Centre. MiraMag interviewed Simon Richardson, an English lecturer at a state university in Rome, who participated in the protest.**

## **How did you find out about the protest in Cassino?**

From the lecturers' google mail site. We stay in contact with each other all the time.

## **Why did you decide to participate?**

Well, I'm a trade unionist, it's my duty. It was necessary since the situation is not looking particularly good considering what some rectors and administrators are doing.

## **What is the main reason behind these sackings?**

It's hard to answer. It's not financial, but political and strategic. It's difficult to tell if Cassino is the beginning of a new aggressive policy of the administrators, or if it is an individual incident. There is another possibility: it might be a hidden policy and the Rectorat Cassino might have been authorized to do it by the Ministry. It's difficult to tell at the moment.

## **What might the consequences of the sackings be?**

I don't know. It's too early to say. Italy seems to be deciding that teaching languages, despite it being a European obligation, can possibly be eliminated or ignored. But I don't want to be alarmist.

## **The media didn't speak much about the protest. Why not?**

Well, because we are a small work-force and there's only 1600 of us in Italy and terrible and depressing that we may be, who cares what happens to foreigners in Italy, whether they are university lecturers or windscreen cleaners. The problem is always the same. There was coverage

on Italia 5, Rai 3, Rai News 24 and in *L'Unità* plus on a series of local televisions and online news sources, although the reporting was not necessarily particularly accurate.

## **In your personal experience, what are the ups and downs of being a *lettore*?**

(laughs) This could be long. The ups are

the work and leaving an impression on people. The downs are the discrimination, poor salary and the constant idea that we must prepare for what's coming next.

## **You said that *lettori* are discriminated against. Why is that so?**

Well, first of all because they are foreign. Secondly, because they have won many costly trials over the years. Besides, since they are more professionally trained than Italian teaching staff, they would cause problems in the domestic job progression structure.



People protesting at the University of Cassino. Photo by S. Richardson, 2012

According to Simon Richardson, the reasons behind the sackings are not economic, but mainly political, and have to do with Italy's discrimination against foreigners. In order to compare and contrast two different points of view on the matter, *MiraMag* interviewed Francesca Esposito, a Modern Languages student from the University of Cassino who also took part in the protest.

**What is your personal experience of mother-tongue lecturers?**

For me, they are very important. They worked very hard in Cassino, because they focused on an in-depth study of grammar and other aspects of language, without assuming that all students had a high level of knowledge. In this way they provided equal and effective language courses for everyone. The Italian staff covered a wider range of topics.

**In your opinion, what are the main reasons for the sackings and what might the consequences be?**

The responsibility falls on the Rector and on the administration of the University of Cassino. According to them, it is possible to replace language lecturers with multimedia platforms, Erasmus scholarship and mandatory study holidays abroad, which is something I consider absurd because you can't replace a teacher with a multimedia platform. Firstly, the equipment we have here is inadequate and, secondly, multimedia equipment cannot answer our questions the same way as a person can. In my opinion, the reasons behind the sackings are mainly economic. I think that all these problems are the consequence of the cuts made by Gelmini's Reform, which especially affected the smaller public institutes, such as the University of Cassino. I don't understand why the Rector decided to penalise a whole category in the area of language studies. As regards the consequences of the sackings, in the first semester of this academic year there are courses which are not pertinent to language study itself, such as music, theatre and drama. Besides, the multimedia platforms are not operational, and the faculty lacks its traditional teaching role. Unfortunately the question arises: why did they remove courses and teaching staff that are so fundamental?

**In your personal experience, did you learn more with mother-tongue lecturers or with the Italian teaching staff?**

I can't say that mother-tongue language lecturers are more important than Italian lecturers or vice versa, because they are complementary. By following the two courses, you can have a wider perspective on the subject.



Young people raising their protest signs in front of the University of Cassino. Photo by S. Richardson, 2012

Unlike Mr. Richardson, Francesca thinks that the reason which led to the sacking was primarily economic. However, they both agree that this decision will have a negative impact on the learning of foreign languages. The situation for mother-tongue lecturers who live in Italy does not appear to be particularly bright. How about other countries?

*MiraMag* asked Xi Fang, a Chinese postgraduate student at the University of Rome who studied Italian as an undergraduate in China, to explain how mother-tongue Italian language teaching staff are seen abroad. Here's what she said:

***In China, foreign lectures are highly respected. For example, my Italian lecturer in China was designated by the Italian Embassy and she gets paid by the Italian government. Her role is considered quite prestigious.***

So there you have it. Three different perspectives from three different interviewees, but the words of all of them highlight the fact that, in Italy, despite the growing influence of the English language in Italy, *lettori* are discriminated against since from the administrators' viewpoint they are not part of the teaching staff. In China, on the other hand, the situation is quite different, and the Italian *lettori* are highly respected and well paid. The reason behind the distinction between Italy and elsewhere points the way to many possible answers. Hopefully, *MiraMag* has helped you to look further into the issue and to find your own point of view.

# Chinese Students in Rome

By Xi Fang

***From 120° East to 12° East, they have crossed half the Earth. From disciples of Confucius to pilgrims of western culture, they are the new Marco Polos following the Silk Road. From Beijing to Rome, they are the Chinese students who study, live and work in a city of overwhelming beauty mixed with infinite chaos. Some of them have been in Rome for five years or more and know this city like the palm of their hand; others have just arrived and for them everything is new and fresh. People speak a language they don't understand very well, and when they get out of class and want to call home, it's already midnight in China. Surprises, frustrations, pains and gains. Let's take a look at the lives of Chinese students in Rome.***

## Why Italy

Many Chinese students choose to study in Italy because of its high reputation for music, art and design studies. The splendid history of the Roman Empire, the rich cultural heritage and the prosperous fashion industry all help to make Italy an attractive destination. Moreover, the Marco Polo -Turandot Programme has greatly promoted study in Italy since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Besides these official reasons, there are also some more pragmatic ones: the cost of life in Italy is relatively low compared to other popular destinations for study abroad. It also seems easier to be accepted by Italian universities: few students are rejected before they come to Italy, and the Italian Language Test in China doesn't work as well as it should: many students come here with B2 certificates without actually being able to communicate. When they get on the plane for Rome, they may not realize that the Long March has just begun.

## Study

Difficulties arise as soon as these students get to Rome. Many of them can't enrol, or don't pass the entrance exam. Some wander for months until their visa expires, while others try one university after another until they are accepted. Some give up after their studies begin: they find their courses too difficult and fear they will not succeed in getting their degree. Many return to China, but



Chinese New Year Event in Rome, 2012. Photo by Xi Fang

some stay on to work for Chinese people.

Very few Italian universities provide courses in English, which is the best-known foreign language among Chinese students. So language remains the greatest difficulty for many Chinese students. Most confess they could hardly understand anything when they first came here, and this also influences their social life. According to many Chinese students, their Italian classmates are kind and helpful, willing to lend their notes. But it's still hard to actually make friends. Han from the Academy of Fine Arts said: "They usually go around in

their small groups, telling each other jokes that we can't understand, so we are soon isolated." And group work seems to be even harder, as Qing from Sapienza commented: "Italian students often work on their own and don't respect your opinion, and it is so hard to decide a time and place to get all group members together."

Studying in Rome is very different from in China, it requires much more autonomy. Many students think Italian universities are not well organised and they can never get useful information quickly. In Chinese schools, students are organized in classes, there's a head-teacher who is in charge of general didactic affairs, you have your own classroom and study with the same group of classmates. Most Chinese universities have dormitories on campus, while here you have to worry about transport and high rents. You have to be on the ball constantly not to miss anything.

Fortunately, almost all main universities in Rome have Chinese student associations where they can get more effective help. There are also organizations like Uni-Italia and the Confucius Institute which organize “Aperitivo Linguistico” where they can make friends with Italian students interested in Chinese and develop their Italian. Moreover, in Rome’s Chinatown – Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, they can find all the flavours of home.

Over half of Chinese students in Rome do one or more part-time jobs, most work for Chinese employers, for example, in Chinese restaurants, shops, factories and so on. They work hard but get paid even less than Chinese workers with working visas.

In Chinese students’ eyes, Italian youngsters become mature much later and few have a clear plan for their future. They always appear desperate, furious about everything, and they complain a lot, but very few try to do anything about their problems. They are also more revolutionary than we Chinese are. However, they are not so lazy as people say in China, and many Chinese students in Rome say their Italian classmates study really hard.

### Life after classes

What do Chinese students do after classes?

Shopping is no doubt the first choice. Rome’s shopping malls are fantastic, especially when the sales are on. Chinese students always know how to spend less money to get the best, they are familiar with all the outlets and shopping malls. Rumours and information circulate in an incredible way among them.

They like travelling, and make good use of the Schengen visa to travel around Europe. They like eating, cooking, going to exhibitions as well.

Most of them don’t like night life, they don’t like going home late and they find it quite silly to talk in the square with a beer in hand for the whole night. Their greatest disappointment is that they can’t find a karaoke club in Rome.

Italians are proud of their coffee, but for Chinese it’s hard to accept Italian espresso at first. The more famous the cafés are, the more bitter their coffee is. Some get used to Italian coffee soon



Poetry by Chinese ancient poet Wang Bo. English translation: “A bosom friend afar brings a distant land near.” Chinese calligraphy by Xi Fang

and fall in love with it; others, well, they say: “now we are at the level of cappuccino.” Ice cream and desserts are loved by everyone, even the most desperate dieters.

Most Chinese students say they enjoy Italian food, but they definitely prefer Chinese food. When asked what they think about Chinese restaurants in Rome, all the girls replied: “Come to me, I’ll cook for you.”

According to them, Chinese food in these restaurants is far from authentic. There are perhaps some acceptable restaurants, including the Asian Inn near Piramide, Junhao Restaurant, A Fa Restaurant and Hangzhou Restaurant near Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. For those who want to try milk tea, there’s one shop on Via Cavour which may be the only Chinese milk tea shop in Rome.

Otherwise, try to get yourself an

invitation from some Chinese students.

### Impressions

Before coming to Rome, some imagined they would see a modern world full of elegant people dressed in the latest fashions. Some expected to see a peaceful old artistic city with erudite gentlemen passing by. These ideas coincide partly with fact: as some Fashion Studies students said: “Here in Rome we can find more people with their own styles. Old ladies here are much more fashionable compared to those Chinese, but young girls appear older than they actually are. Italians pay a lot of attention to detail. They’ll always make accessories and small decorations to match the overall style.” As for Italian men, well they are as good-looking and passionate as they are rumoured to be. Some students, however, complained about people’s inefficiency, unreliability and laziness. Italians don’t seem to work much: offices are open only half the day, the buses are always on strike and shops close so early, with no 24-hour shops. The city is dirty and the buses crowded like in China, people shout all the time... However, despite all these disappointments, Rome remains a unique and inimitable city.

*MiraMag* would like to thank Han Xinghua, He Yang, Li Qing, Liu Zhenbei, Wang Xianghao, Xu Mengmeng for their contributions to the investigation regarding this article.



# Alternative Sightseeing in Rome

By Valentina Monaco

**Rome... Everybody knows it as the eternal city, but do you know why? For centuries this splendid city was the capital of Roman Kingdom and then of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. It maintained its supremacy during the medieval and modern periods, its magnificence never ending. What I would like to offer you - in addition to some of the best-known attractions - is an alternative way to enjoy also the smallest corners of Rome and perhaps enable you to see the city from the Roman people's point of view.**

## On the road with Audrey Hepburn

Have you ever dreamt of visiting Rome by riding a Vespa, like Audrey Hepburn in *Roman Holiday*? Your dream can come true! Rent a scooter and start your tour in places that are not so well-known to most tourists. Here I suggest a wonderful sightseeing tour for you to do on your own.

Start from Termini, where you can easily rent a motorbike. Drive to the nearby **Piazza della Repubblica** and keep going until you get to **Piazza Venezia**.

After this, take **via dei Fori Imperiali** and be enchanted by the **Colosseo**. The next step will be **Circo Massimo**, the ancient Roman chariot-racing stadium.

After this, drive past **Terme di Caracalla** and **Piramide** and you will arrive in **Aventino**, one of the seven Roman hills, where I suggest that you



Route map for your Roman walk

visit the **Giardino degli Aranci**, which provides a fantastic view of the many monuments, rooftops and domes of Rome. Hop back into the saddle and drive past **Basilica di San Paolo**, **Ponte Marconi** and **Il Fontanone** until you get to the **Gianicolo**, a hill which does not figure among the proverbial Seven Hills. After this, head for the **Lungotevere** and you will be able to see **Castel Sant'Angelo's** unmistakable cylindrical shape. The last stop of the tour will be **via della Conciliazione**, which connects the Capital with Vatican City and ends at **Piazza San Pietro**.

## A walk to remember!

Rome on foot is the next tour I propose, especially for those who love walking along Rome's evocative alleyways.

Start from **Villa Borghese** which spreads over **Pinciano Hill**, better known as **Pincio**, which looks over **Piazza del Popolo**. Walk along **Via del Corso** until you reach the **Ara Pacis**, a symbol of peace and prosperity, or make a shopping stop at **Via Condotti** which is just off **Piazza di Spagna** (aka **Spanish Steps**) and the impressive Church of **Trinità dei Monti**.

**Fontana di Trevi** is also worth a visit. A traditional legend holds that by throwing a coin into the fountain your return to Rome is guaranteed! Closeby is the **Pantheon**, an ancient temple turned into a Roman Basilica. From here you can quickly get to **Piazza Venezia** and the **Vittoriano**, also known as **Altare della Patria**.



Screenshot from *Roman Holiday* taken by Silvia La Penna

The next stage of this walk is **via dei Fori Imperiali** and the **Mercati di Traiano**, a large complex of ruins at one end of the **Colosseo**, and the ancient **Foro Romano**, the nerve center of public life in Ancient Rome.

Next comes **Bocca della Verità**, and - last but not least - **Piazza del Campidoglio**, between the **Foro Romano** and the square known as **Campo Marzio**.

Adjacent to this square is **Santa Maria in Aracoeli Church**, built on ruins of the ancient **Giunone Moneta Temple**. In the **Campidoglio** area you will also find the **Rupe Tarpea**, a rock where criminals and traitors were executed by being flung off the rock face.

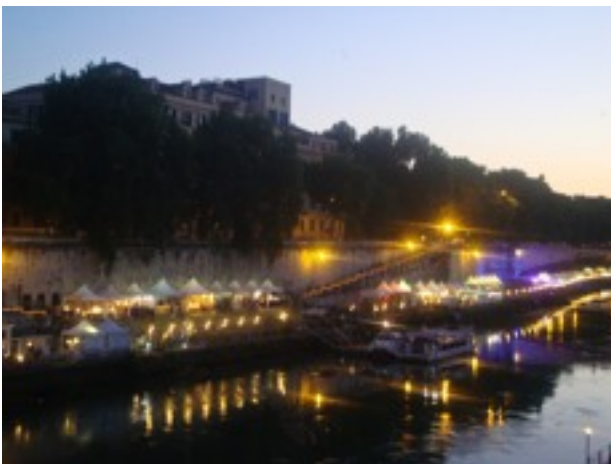
### For a disco night

Do you love dancing and get impatient for the weekend to start? Here are some of the coolest places in Rome where you can enjoy great music.

The **Art Café**, inside **Villa Borghese**, is a club frequented by VIPs, where you can dance the night away - provided you follow their elegant and fashionable dress code. This chic and snobbish disco also organizes themed parties, fashion shows and events with special guests.

The **Qube**, in via di Portonaccio, is one of the largest discos in Rome because it is made up of three floors which offer different types of music. The special feature of the **Qube** is the so-called Manycome Party: this club welcomes diversity and rejects standardization without any dress code or restrictions regarding social status, thus welcoming socialization and fun.

**Spazio Novecento** is one of the most fashionable and stylish clubs, situated in one of Rome's most modern districts, namely, **Eur**. In this club, top djs such as David Guetta, Bob Sinclar, Luciano, Villalobos and Carl Cox, offer their music mix.



The Tevere on a summer evening. Photo by Bimba Russo



Piazza di Spagna (aka the Spanish Steps). Photo by Sonia Simone

The **Piper Club** in the popular **Coppedè** district is the oldest of Rome's clubs, dating back to 1965. Here you can enjoy both disco music, and often good concerts on Saturday afternoons. You can meet lots of new people at these concerts.

### Student night life

In Rome there are scores of students from all over Italy and elsewhere who aim for maximum entertainment at minimum expense.

In the popular district of **San Lorenzo**, a student area par excellence, there are numerous clubs full of people from happy hour onwards. There are pizzerias where you can eat as much as you want – or as much as you can – for a minimal price. Try for example, **Pourquoi!** or **Il Dito e la Luna**. And there are many pubs with very reasonable prices, such as the beautiful **San Lorenzo Caffè**. But the cheapest are definitely **Bar Celestino** and **Hera Hora**.

A common habit among students is to carry drinks around in the open air in **Piazza dell'Immacolata**, laughing and dancing to the sounds of guitar and djembe.

### Lights in the dark

It seems appropriate to end this list of night tours with a chic and relaxing alternative. For those who want to spend their weekend taking pleasure in company of foodie friends, I suggest a walk downtown, surrounded by Rome lit up at night.

If you're looking for evocative scenery, how about having dinner in one of the lovely alleyways of **Trastevere**? There you'll find many restaurants offering typical local cuisine, for example **Zio Ciro**, **Gusto** and **La Taverna del Moro**.

Close to this district is **Campo dei Fiori**, market place in the morning and crowded square by night. From here go to the charming and famous **Piazza Navona**. Having an aperitif at one of its many open-air bars while contemplating the **Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi** – a Bernini creation – lit up in the dark is an experience you will never forget.

# Achieve your Goal: Study Abroad!

By Federica Alessandrini and Sara Lanzi

**What is the importance of studying a language abroad? What emerges from the 2010 European Survey on Language Competence (<http://ec.europa.eu>), a major initiative by the European Commission to support language learning across Europe, is that 73% of students living in Europe start studying English at primary school. In secondary education, the percentage goes up to 90%.**

Despite these statistical data, Italian educational policies do not provide students with an adequate linguistic education. Most university students of Modern Languages start university with gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and syntactic structures in the foreign languages studied. How are such negative results possible when we consider that the study of English starts at a young age?

To find out more about this, *MiraMag* interviewed Francesco D'Elia, managing director of Simply English Travel, a tour operator organizing language courses abroad. He is also the European marketing director of the Omnicom School of Languages of Canada. What Francesco stresses during the interview is that most young people complain about the lack of suitable language training.

But what do they actually do to improve their language knowledge? "Students can spend many



Photo by Federica Alessandrini, 2012

hours learning a language also during their spare time, without any suggestions from their teachers", says Francesco, adding "If you have an aim, you should create opportunities to fulfill it."

Nowadays there is a great range of means to enable young people to widen their language knowledge such as watching movies, chatting with native speakers, listening to music and, when possible, going abroad. In Francesco's experience, "humility, sacrifice, far-sightedness and perseverance are the right ingredients to achieve your goal."

During the last 30 years English has achieved global status because "it has developed a special role recognized in every country", as David Crystal points out in *English as a Global Language*. Thanks to this "special role", when Crystal considers English as *lingua franca*, he also includes "its use in diplomacy and international communication, in the media, in education, on the internet."

We asked Francesco D'Elia about the importance of studying a language abroad. His reply: "More job opportunities." What is more, "exploring new cultures, lifestyles and perspectives enriches you. It can also help you to find the kind of work in which you use your languages," as Francesco has done.



Francesco D'Elia

We also asked forty-five school students in the Lazio Region about “How best to learn a foreign language?”. As the chart shows, the development of new technologies provides easy access to language knowledge whereas previous generations were accustomed to printed materials. Even playing video games is a practical way of using languages and using simple imperative forms (*game over, press start, continue*) supported by visual images.



Results of a survey among 45 school students in the Lazio Region, November 2012

Nevertheless, the best way to learn a language is and will always be going abroad.

**So, what are you waiting for?** Being abroad gives you the ability to view the world from another perspective, and the chance to increase your self-confidence. Moreover, the skills you acquire will positively influence your career opportunities and, even more important, it will be easier for you to understand your own cultural values better.

Don't let the Italian Minister, Elsa Fornero, consider you *mollycoddled*. **Don't be choosy, but choose the best for your future yourself.**



Mariangela and friends outside the College sports center.

## At Nazareth College

by Mariangela D'Agostino

My dream of seeing an American college became reality thanks to an international agreement between my University G. D'Annunzio and Nazareth College, just outside Rochester (NY).

Unfortunately, no grants were available, so my parents paid for both the course and the accommodation. What a wonderful gift!

Life at the student residence was amazing! I spent five weeks there attending lessons and enjoying myself with students from all over the world. At the end of the course I obtained a certificate and seven formative credits.

Every morning I attended lessons and in the afternoon did homework in the computer lab. It was a really intensive English course and included doing independent research on a North American cultural topic.

I decided to delve into the topic of food because I think that you can learn a lot about people by observing what they eat. While working on my topic I had the opportunity to interview some local people. At the end of the course, each student had to present their project to the class.

During my time at Nazareth College, I was able to learn more not only about North American culture, but also about other cultures, especially Turkish, since my roommate was from Turkey.

Is there anything better than organizing a cultural evening to help students socialize with each other? The College staff asked each national group to cook a typical dish from our own country. I made lasagna and tiramisù.

We also had to do a recital. It was a really exciting night in which I was able to try different kinds of food. At my recital I sang Renato Carosone's 'Tu Vuò fa l'Americano.'

I remember my time in Rochester as a period of great personal growth that helped me to be more sociable and to improve my self-confidence.

I would suggest that Modern Language Students who really want to learn languages try to have an experience abroad like mine, in a context which forces you to speak a foreign language.

Only in this way can you acquire the ability to speak fluently. It is only when you are far from home that you have real opportunities to improve your language skills.

# Zambia: a Return to Nature

By Sonia Simone

Why did I go to Africa? It all began when twenty friends of mine, all boy scouts, told me one summer that they were organizing a three-week trip to Zambia, a Southern Africa country. I decided to join them.

I will never forget the day of my departure! While my father was driving me to Rome Fiumicino Airport I was very excited, even euphoric, and really looking forward to arriving in Zambia! My plane took off in the afternoon and landed in Malawi at night. Since there is no airport in Zambia, I went there by coach. It took three hours to arrive at the mission where my friends and I were staying.

If you like being in direct contact with nature, you should go to a place like Zambia! I went on a trip to some villages, where I saw people living completely immersed in nature, in huts without bathrooms.

I also visited Zambia's South Luangwa National Park, where I saw many savannah animals living in total freedom. I was able to go around the park in the dark, after sunset, thanks to a man in my car who had a large torch that lit up the animals. Although I didn't see much, I heard the calls of the animals.

There are not only villages, but also towns that reminded me of images of Western cities in the 1960s.

When I went to Chipata, the city nearest to where I was staying, I saw supermarkets, banks and schools, but I realized that technology barely existed. There are no bright lights on roads or buildings, for example. The roads are made not of asphalt but have red-coloured soil. I often got dirty with this soil when I travelled by car. Once I blew my nose and the tissue turned red!

I was amazed by some unfamiliar habits of Zambian people. In the villages, most of the housework is done by women, while men take the

most important family decisions, in spite of the fact that they spend their time drinking alcohol.

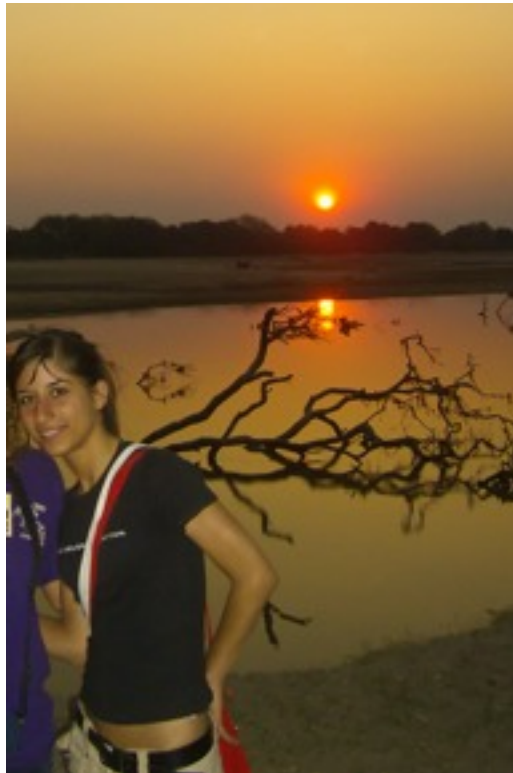
I was astonished to learn that smoking cigarettes in public is almost a crime. One day some of my friends and I were smoking and a local girl made a bit of a face, asking us: "Why are you smoking?". She asked the question as if we were taking drugs! She said that we could be arrested if the police saw us smoking.

One of Zambia's biggest problems is the presence of serious diseases such as AIDS and malaria. I met an Italian couple who had decided to live in Africa and who ran an association whose aim

is to provide treatment for pregnant women suffering from AIDS to prevent them from infecting their children. I slept with a mosquito net over my bed and I had to undergo anti-malaria treatment.

I think that everyone, especially Modern Language students, should spend a period of time in a country such as Zambia because not only can you encounter new cultures and habits, but you can also improve your English. In Zambia's schools, children begin to learn English at the age of six, and all educated people can speak English.

When people ask me how I felt about being in a country very different from Italy, I



Sonia and a Zambian sunset.

always say that I felt at home, as if I had been born there. In fact, when I came back home I felt really strange and I didn't switch on the computer and the television for several days. Everything that was normal to me before this experience became superfluous and pointless, and I wanted to return to Zambia because I love the way the Zambian people live. I realized that your career or the clothes you wear aren't the most important things in life. Above all, the eyes of poor children touched my heart.

# The Thousand Faces of Romania

By Enrico Mostarda

Romania is far from being an easy place. It's full of contradictions and there is great variety among its regions and people. Some places are modern, such as Bucharest, the capital, where I stayed for just one day, and other places are very poor. In others, such as Panciu in the district of Vrancea, I saw that the people live in poverty.

I went to Romania because a friend of mine is doing her civil service at an association named **Asociatia rom pentru rom**, which looks after children in need. Every afternoon children between 3 and 14 years old go to this association. The younger ones play in a room, while the older ones have literacy lessons. Later in the day they all take part in workshops and board games.

The association is open to all children, but the users are mostly Roma, an ethnic group whose people are Romanian because they have been living in Romania for many centuries.

In Panciu I met the Roma children and, after an initial shyness, I fell completely in love with them. Knowing children with so many problems is a shock and it's almost impossible to remain emotionless in front of their need of love.

At the beginning, when they don't know you, they seem a bit grumpy, but later you become the object of all their attention. For this reason the way you behave towards them is very important, as you become a kind of role model for them in some way. They need to be able to trust you, and their initial behavior is due to the almost total lack of attention they have received so far from the adults in their lives.

The children may seem rowdy, but you can perceive their will to learn. The volunteers told me that Romanian teaching methods in schools are very strict, and the children prefer to learn with the association's more gentle approach. Perhaps both approaches should be combined in schools.

I was involved in a workshop at a primary school, where volunteers try to help the children

understand the problem of isolation through games.

The great difficulty I found was related to the language, as I was rushed into this yelling crowd. I was always asking the volunteers for the Romanian equivalents of basic words and expressions such as *stop*, *slow down*, and *go outside/inside*. However, the fact that I don't speak Romanian wasn't a deterrent for the children who always asked me whatever crossed their minds. This helped me to

learn Romanian faster than any other language I've ever studied, although I spent very little time there and it was my first experience with the language.

By talking with the volunteers I realized that this is a hard job, but there is always the will to work, and that's exactly how I felt. You're always emotionally involved and even though you

can't really get any time off, for a lot of the volunteers it's better than working in an office.

Since I've been back in Italy, I can't stop thinking of these special children who have habits very different from those of children from richer countries. When possible they play, but unfortunately they also have to take care of the younger children and it's touching to see ten-year-old boys and girls dress the the younger ones. When they grow up, which means when they reach the age of 10 or 11, they often go to work as fruit-pickers. It is also interesting to notice that none of them has any problems eating vegetables or any other kind of healthy food - a sobering thought if we think of our spoiled children.

When I decided to go on this journey, I didn't know what to expect, but I don't regret anything. I came back with many experiences accumulated in a short space of time. It's been a different kind of journey in many respects, and even though I enjoyed myself a lot and I visited new places, what I will always remember is getting to know these grown-up children.



Photo by volunteer Antonietta Di Costanzo, November 2012

# In Manchester 'Because of You'

Review of a Kelly Clarkson concert  
By Filomena Carraturo

Not many people in Europe seem to have heard of Kelly Clarkson, but she's quite famous in the US. This American singer stepped into the spotlight in 2002, when she won *American Idol*.

After her victory, Kelly immediately began publishing albums, including *Thankful* and the extremely successful pop-rock *Breakaway*, which includes international hit singles that you may have heard on the radio: 'Breakaway', 'Since U Been Gone', 'Behind These Hazel Eyes', 'Because of You'.

In 2011, her pop-country-inspired album *Stronger* came out and it was accompanied by a world tour. The Stronger Tour started in January 2012 in the US, then moved to South America, Australia, and finally came to Europe with six dates.

Here's my review for Manchester, 12 October 2012. Why Manchester? Well, first of all because the tour didn't include an Italian date, but also because the flight and hotel were really cheap and the city is simply wonderful. The Manchester Evening News Arena (MEN), where the concert took place, is practically in the heart of the city. This is very different from Italy, where concert arenas are often out of town and difficult to reach.

At MEN you queue in a large hall near McDonald's, shops and other services, and it's undoubtedly the quietest queue I've ever stood in. It was really cold outside, so waiting for the concert in that room was comfortable. My friends and I were lucky to be really near the stage and amazingly we were able to move freely and dance. People were respectful and I appreciated that.

The opening act was performed by Cover Drive, an R&B band from Barbados. Kelly appeared around 9.10 pm on the notes of 'My Life Would Suck Without You'.

The set list was well organized. With 'Walk Away' everybody started dancing. The song was very energetic and really welcome after the "tranquility" of the first songs. Before starting 'You love me' she declared that it was an important song and that she took ten years to write it. I have to admit that the live version was better than the recorded one.

For each date of her tour, Kelly performs two covers, one chosen by fans via Twitter and one chosen by her. Fun's 'We are young' was performed in a masterly way! She sang the first verse

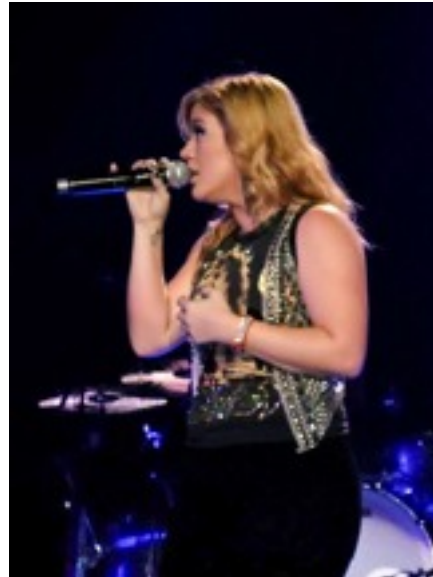


Photo by Filomena Carraturo, 2012

accompanied only by piano, but with the chorus the Arena was on fire and Kelly went to the centre of the stadium, so that even those sitting behind had the opportunity to be near her for a

moment.

After performing 'Already Gone' from the same location, she returned to the main stage to sing 'Don't You Wanna Stay', a duet with the country singer Jason Aldean. To obviate his absence, his hologram was projected near her. Then she sang a cover of Oasis chosen by her fans.

For the song that made her famous all over the world, 'Because of You', Kelly adopted a simple scene: only her voice accompanied on the keyboard. I was quite moved. The singer's voice was not affected by the surrounding noise: it was as perfect as in the CD. At this point, she performed her new single 'Catch My Breath' and then, playing with the guitarist, 'Since U Been Gone'. It was fun to jump all together during the chorus!

After a little break, she appeared with different clothes. Despite her fuller figure, Kelly wore a tight black dress with sequins and performed an acoustic version of 'Never Again' that left everyone stunned. For a moment the arena was silent and the final applause was noisier than ever. In the end, improvising a choreography with her backup singers, Kelly sang 'Stronger'.

I think it's quite simply the best concert I've ever been to. Kelly's voice is unique and inimitable. The British girls in the crowd were slightly surprised that I had made that trip just to see her live. But the truth is that it was worth it. Would I do it all again? Yes. Over and over again! Isn't this the magic of music?

# Rome Film Festival

By Marija Pekovic

The Rome International Film Festival is an event that takes place every autumn. Directors, actors and others involved in filmmaking arrive from all over the world to present their latest movies hoping to win awards and recognition. This year, the seventh time that the Eternal City has held this event in the Auditorium Parco della Musica.

From 9 to 17 November, along Via Flaminia, the street that leads to the Auditorium Parco della Musica where the festival is held, it was possible to feel something unusual going on: people of different generations and from different corners of the world filled the buses, the squares and the halls of the festival – their love for cinema created a bond among them all, and guided them to the same destination.

Once at the Auditorium, however, they may have felt a little disoriented as there were so many events. If you ever go to this event in the future, remember to get a map at the entrance and ask for help at the information points - it will make your exploration of the Festival a lot easier.

The Festival provides many breathtaking events. One of the most impressive sights is the red carpet where famous stars pass among young fans screaming and asking for autographs. Some of them were absolutely worth waiting for, for hours: Sylvester Stallone, Adrien Brody, Jude Law, Bill Murray, James Franco, Dakota Fanning, to name just a few.

Among the Italian stars present were Isabella Ferrari, Violante Placido, Claudia Gerini and Stefania Rocca. Of course, there were also a few good-looking actors whose arrival made the women in the audience happy, such as Luca Argentero, Alessandro Gassman and Alessandro Preziosi.



The Main Hall of the Rome Film Festival, La Cavea. Photo by Marija Pekovic, 2012



The Red Carpet - Fans waiting for their favourite stars. Photo by Marija Pekovic, 2012

A wide variety of films was presented at the festival, including comedies, thrillers, historical dramas and science fiction.

Some films were not in the competition for the awards but had chosen to have their world premieres at the Rome Film Festival. These included **Black Star, Bullet to the Head, The Lookout, Mental, A Gun in Each Hand** as well as the popular film **The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2** with its vampiristic heroes that have already conquered legions of fans all over the world, especially among younger viewers.

In the competition unit, there were fifteen films from five continents contending with each other for the awards of the Festival.

**Marfa Girl** by Larry Clark won the festival's most coveted prize, the **Golden Marc'Aurelio Award**. It is an excellent film both as regards technique and its cultural value. It is about a teenager called Adam who tries to find his place in Marfa, a town in the high desert of Texan Far West where clashes happen constantly among the communities of artists, whites and Mexican Americans. It is a sensitive portrayal of conflict under the surface of prosperity.

However, some films that won prizes remain in the shadows. The Italian film **E la chiamano estate** was booed by the audience who yelled "Vergogna!" ("you should be ashamed of yourself"), although it did win the Best Actress Award. This paradox, however, may be good news for the box office, since it may stimulate people's curiosity to see the film for themselves.

It's definitely worth paying a visit to this Film Festival. If you have the chance next November, be sure to seize it!



# Culture Quiz

**Do you consider yourself an expert on Anglophone cultures? Then this quiz is the right place for you! MiraMag gives you the chance to test your knowledge through questions on festivals and other aspects of culture. How much do you really know about them?**

**1. Bank Holidays** take place regularly in the UK.

What are they?

- a) An annual festival that celebrates the Queen's birthday.
- b) The anniversary celebration of the bank.
- c) A public holiday, founded by a major British banker in the 19th century.
- d) A party for bank clerks.

**2.** What happens nowadays at Bank Holiday times?

- a) Lots of people have a long weekend.
- b) Bank clerks set up a prize for local cricket championships.
- c) All shops in the UK are closed for the day.
- d) Everyone has a day off work.

**3.** In the UK, beekeeping has been widespread for many centuries, and the British Honey Association promotes an annual international trade fair. In which country does **Honey Week** take place?

- a) England.
- b) Scotland.
- c) Northern Ireland.
- d) Wales.

**4.** During Honey Week, national and international chefs suggest many savoury and sweet recipes.

What advice do they give?

- a) They tell people that it is possible to bake cakes using honey as an ingredient.
- b) They absolutely advise against cooking meat with honey.
- c) They inform people that both roast beef and biscuits can be cooked with honey.
- d) They suggest avoiding using too much honey because it's unhealthy.

**5.** The **Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake** is an annual event that takes place near Gloucester, in the Cotswolds region of England. During this event spectators are likely to:

- a) Take home cottage cheese.
- b) Be cheesed off with the game.
- c) Get hurt.
- d) Meet a big cheese.



Photo © Ian Grundy - aka 'stagedoor' on flickr.

**6.** In the East of England people celebrate **Plough Monday** on the first Monday after the Epiphany, or Twelfth Night. What does this festival represent?

- a) It's an agricultural tradition dating back to the early 1400s.
- b) It's an old Roman ritual which celebrates the beginning of the year.
- c) It's the day in which old Germanic tribes celebrated Freyr, the God of fertility, for a good harvest.
- d) It's a musical event created in the 60s by an English pop band called The Ploughmen.

**7.** On Plough Monday, citizens of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Yorkshire and the East Midlands parade through the streets and watch **Ploughboys** performing a dance called Molly Dancing. What is special about Ploughboys?

- a) They are chosen by the Queen.
- b) They blacken their faces.
- c) They are of German origin.
- d) They are women disguised as men.



A typical Plough Monday celebration.  
Photo © T.J.Tooze - aka 'telbov661' on flickr.

**8. Oak Apple Day** is so called because:

- Apples are celebrated.
- Oaks are celebrated.
- Both apples and oaks are celebrated.
- Charles II hid in an oak tree during the battle of Worcester and managed to escape from the Roundhead army.

**9.** Why is red a Christmas colour in Britain?

- It's Father Christmas's colour.
- Red has been the colour of the English monarchy since the Battle of Hastings.
- It's the symbol of Christ's blood.
- It goes with green.

**10.** When is Father Christmas's birthday?

- On 25 December.
- Father Christmas doesn't exist.
- On 6 January.
- On 6 December.

**11. Hogmanay** is the Scots word for:

- A traditional Scottish food.
- A trick played during Halloween.
- The Scottish New Year celebration.
- A special Scottish festival.

**12. Saint Patrick**, the Patron Saint of Ireland, is recognized for bringing Christianity to Ireland. Do you know when he is celebrated?

- On 17 March.
- On 17 April.
- On 19 March.
- On 23 April.

**So, how did it go? If your final score is too low there's just one thing to be done: book your flight and enjoy an authentic Anglophone atmosphere!**

**Quiz authors:** Roberta Buscema, Micaela De Filippo, Diletta Giordano, Laura Petrella, Alida Sanzari, Bedrana Shurdha and Andrea Sudano. For the answers, see page 19.

**13.** Saint Patrick used a plant to explain the Holy Trinity to the pagans. Which plant?

- Four-leaf clover.
- Shamrock.
- Wild sorrel.
- Orchid.

**14.** The word **kiwi** can refer to a species of birds, a fruit or a country. Which population is also known as Kiwi?

- New Zealand.
- Australia.
- Canada.
- Chile.

**15.** Some political parties in Anglophone countries use animals as symbols. Which of the following is represented by a donkey?

- Irish Republicans.
- The American Democratic Party.
- The House of Commons.
- The House of Lords.

**16.** 'A wall is a very big weapon. It's one of the nastiest things you can hit someone with.' This quote is from a popular English street artist known for his unconventional guerrilla art works. Do you know his pseudonym?

- Blu.
- Slinkachu.
- Roa.
- Banksy.

**17.** In 2009 the BBC reported that nearly 25% of British adults were obese. What is the government doing to tackle obesity?

- It has imposed a tax on unhealthy food.
- It's collaborating with food companies to solve the problem.
- It has banned the selling of sugar drinks.
- It has doubled the price of snacks in vending machines.

**18.** The American Census Bureau tells us that the number of Hispanic people in the US has grown. Which state has the largest Hispanic population?

- Alaska.
- Connecticut.
- Nevada.
- California.

# Sweaty Love

By Giulia Garufo and Zaira Spinello

How often have you heard friends say “There was no chemistry!”? Well they weren’t completely wrong! Although physical appearance in today’s society basically predominates, the thing that makes us fall in love passionately, makes us feel a strong attraction for somebody, and makes them unique in our eyes, is their smell!

According to **PLOS Genetics**, choosing a partner has something to do with the sense of smell that is linked to the immune system. The Sweaty T-shirt Experiment carried out by Swiss zoologist Claus Wedekind has provided a scientific basis for this.

In each person’s immune system, a unique set of genetic cellular markers, aka the Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC) helps to identify the chemical odour of pheromones. In the experiment conducted by Wedekind, some men were asked to wear a T-shirt for two nights and then to put it into a sample-bag. Then some women were asked to sniff these T-shirts and describe the scent of each one. The aim was to understand which T-shirts had an unpleasant or appealing or sexy smell for each female sniffer.

The upshot? Well, the experiment shows that the women concerned preferred the smell of T-shirts worn by men with the MHC system most different from their own.

This experiment belongs to quite a new field called Evolutionary Psychology. The approach explains certain psychological traits as natural or sexual selection, according to which reproduction between genetically similar individuals is avoided. The diversity of the MHC system also predicts reproduction success because the offspring will have a more varied genetic makeup thus improving their immune response to pathogens: they will be stronger in facing diseases.

In short, the more genetically different the mate is, the more attractive he or she will be. As is well-known: opposites attract!

Horoscopes, character compatibility, common interests, appearance, professions... Forget about all this stuff! All we have to do now is just sniff each others’ sweaty T-shirts!



Photo by Rocky Cannia, 2012.

## Answers to the Culture Quiz:

**1 C:** Before John Lubbock founded Bank Holidays, there were only two national festivities: Christmas and Good Friday. The first August Bank Holiday was introduced in 1871 by a parliamentary act.

**2 A:** Bank Holidays are generally on Mondays. If a Bank Holiday falls on the weekend instead of a weekday, a substitute holiday is made on Monday or on Friday.

**3 A:** In 2012 Honey Week took place from 7 to 13 May.

**4 C:** Honey is a natural sweetener and can be used with almost everything: from meat to vegetables to desserts.

**5 C:** Competitors race downhill trying to catch a round of cheese. The speed reached by the cheese is so high that it can knock over heedless spectators.

**6 A:** Plough Monday originally celebrated the beginning of the new ploughing season after the Christmas holidays.

**7 B:** Ploughmen used to go around the town asking for money and would blacken their faces with soot in order not to be recognized by future employers.

**8 D:** Oak Apple Day takes place on 29 May and celebrates Charles II’s becoming King of England in 1660. This event marked the restoration of the monarchy after Cromwell’s Commonwealth.

**9 C:** According to the Christian faith, the colour red is the symbol of Christ’s blood.

**10 D:** Father Christmas, or Santa Claus, was inspired by the figure of St Nicholas of Myra, whose feast day is on 6 December.

**11 C:** Hogmanay celebrations usually last until 2 January. One of the customs associated with this festival is singing the traditional song (and poem) ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

**12 A:** St Patrick is celebrated on 17 March, the anniversary of his death, which occurred in 461.

**13 B:** The shamrock is also the symbol of Ireland.

**14 A:** Kiwi birds are characteristic of New Zealand and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they became the country’s national symbol. The word **Kiwi** is still used today as a nickname for New Zealanders.

**15 B:** Andrew Jackson was given this derogatory nickname by Republicans due to his populist beliefs. He decided to take this definition as a compliment on his stubbornness and use the donkey as a symbol for his party.

**16 D:** Banksy began his career as a street artist in the Bristol underground scene at the beginning of the 1990s. He tries to convey his alternative point of view through his work, which consists of ironic attacks on consumer and conformist society.

**17 B:** Instead of raising taxes on unhealthy food, the UK government is trying to work with the food industry in order to reduce sugars and fats. Schools are also promoting discussions on healthier dietary options.

**18 D:** In 2010, there were 14 million Hispanics in California.

## Body Worlds

Exhibition review by Grazia Maietta



From *Body Worlds* exhibition catalogue, ed. Angelina Whalley

Seeing the **Body Worlds** exhibition in Naples was an amazing experience that went beyond my expectations. This exhibition, now in Milan until 17 February 2013 at **Fabbrica del Vapore** in Via Procaccini 4, was also in Rome from 14 September to 31 March 2012.

The works exhibited were created by German doctor von Hagens and his wife Angelina Whalley. This is in no way a traditional kind of display of the human body but an exhibition of bodies, or body parts, conserved through the technique of plastination. This is an innovative method created to preserve the body. It dissolves the water and soluble fats in the body by placing them in a solvent bath and keeping them from light and air.

Each **Body Worlds** exhibition contains around twenty-five bodies with expanded or selected organs shown in a range of positions and treated with the plasticization method. All the bodies came from donors who decided they wished to achieve give immortality in the form of tennis players and dancers. There are also organ systems in glass cases which show various medical conditions, for example a liver with cirrhosis and the lungs of a smoker.

While I was visiting this exhibition I wasn't afraid or scared in any way by these bodies. On the contrary, I felt curious and attracted by them. The experience was unique and unforgettable.

This extraordinary show is suitable for anyone curious about seeing inside our bodies and interested in finding out how we breathe, dance and walk.

But in the end this is art! An extraordinary opportunity not to be missed!

## Made of Music

EMAS 2012 by Clara Capogrossi

Once again the curtain has fallen and the lights have gone out on the event of the year for European music, namely the MTV Europe Music Awards, with its special guests and amazing live performances on the Festhalle stage in Frankfurt.

Although often considered a simple consumer event in the world of entertainment, the MTV Music Awards is definitely much more than this! Almost every year a special award goes to people and non-profit organizations that fight for human rights, the environment, and against all kinds of violence - Greenpeace, Treatment Action Campaign, Bono Vox, Aung San Suu Kyi and Bob Geldof.

The stars of this year's EMAS were Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift who won three awards each.

Best Hip Hop award went to Nicky Minaj, Best Rock to Linkin Park and Best Electronic to dj and producer David Guetta.

The second most important prize, Best Video, went to the revelation of the moment: Psy and his hit '**Gangnam Style**', which had people dancing all over the world.

Rihanna, with her seven nominations went back home without any award!

During the show a very emotional moment was dedicated to Whitney Houston. The great recently-departed singer, was awarded the Global Icon Award for her talent and unique voice.

Live performances were accompanied by coloured lights, lasers and special acrobats in the circus scenery of the Festhalle stage. The Killers performed their new single '**Runaways**' with 3D choreography, while Muse didn't disappoint the public by delivering a musical '**Madness**' with Matthew Bellamy's sunglasses reflecting the word "madness". Alicia Keys was more audacious, with her fiery performance of '**Girl on fire**'. Fun had everyone singing along to their anthem '**We are Young**'.

I was really impressed by the performers' outfits. I think it's impossible to perform a song well without the right style, and nowadays singers such as Lana del Rey, Rihanna and Katy Perry are also fashion icons. The most elegant artist on and off stage is without a doubt the award-winning Taylor Swift.

The show ended with her performance, but this was just a temporary "goodbye" until the MTV Europe Music Awards 2013!