

MIRAMAG

5

A magazine by Modern Language students, Lettere e Filosofia, La Sapienza University, Rome

UNIVERSITY CHAT

A "holiday" called MGY: Interview with Viktorja Andreevna Kudinova (p. 2)

Future Erasmus students, stay tuned: Interviews with current Erasmus students (pp. 3-4)

A Multilingual Experience (p. 5)

Scholarships for sale (p. 5)

CULTURE CORNER

Art: Tidying up Van Gogh's Room; For Lovers of the Classics (p. 6)

Two perspectives on Screen translation: Bye Bye Bad Translations; Doing the Dirty Work (pp. 7-8)

Young people's views on reality shows (p. 9)

Film & Book reviews: Sunshine Cleaning; Dracula; The Dying Animal; The Shakespeare Secret; (pp. 10-11)

Cosa Nostra is Not Dead! Stereotypes and the Italian-American Cosa Nostra (pp. 12-13)

MORSELS

Acid (pp. 14-15)

Carpuccino (p. 15)

An Interactive Tale, episode 5: 'The Chase' (pp. 16-17)

April Horoscopes (p. 23)

The Back Page

Students' Experiences: A Tour of Mexico's Mayan Coast; Diplomat by Day, New Yorker by Night; Sailing on the Vespucci (pp.18-21)

Anyone for tennis? (p. 22)

MiraMag logo by Martina Puglisi

A HOLIDAY CALLED MGY

Currently on Erasmus in Moscow, 3rd year Mod Langs students Alessia Bianco, Florentina Constantin and Fabiana Scacchi interview Viktorja Andreevna Kudinova, lecturer at the Russian State University in Moscow (MSU - MGY)

Can you say something about yourself and your work at the MSU?

I live in Moscow and teach Italian. I've been teaching here at the MSU since I graduated in 1999. My work focuses on Italian grammar and explaining the problems of translating between the two languages and cultures. I'm also the person who guides Italian students during their stay in Moscow. My mission is twofold: to improve multilateral cooperation between these two institutions and to make it easier for the Italian students to get used to the conditions here, which are so different from those in Italy. Going abroad for is not always easy for young people, especially if it's their first time away from their family or their first time living with other young people they did not know before.

What do Russian students have to do in order to be admitted to MSU?

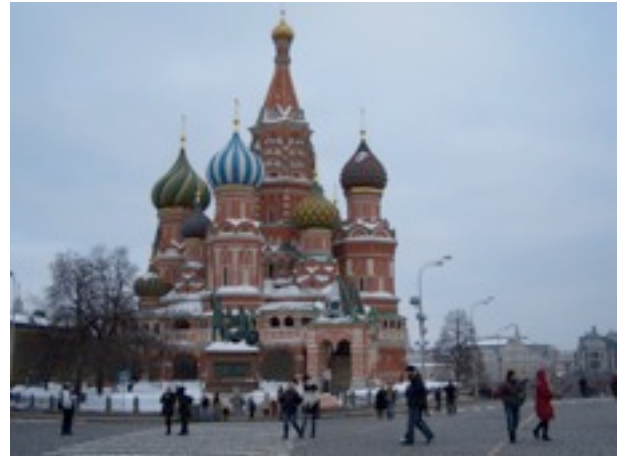
There is an exam which includes first of all a language test for one of the two languages that students will study. Meaning that they have to have studied that language at least for a couple of years, considering that this university is one of the most prestigious and for that same reason the competition is very tough. There are also two tests on Russian literature and history, both written.

What kind of language lessons do you have?

We have few mother tongue teachers, but when Italian students arrive here at the MSU, we organise a couple of weekly classes in which they teach grammar and conversation to our Russian students. I personally think that these kinds of lessons are very important and useful for them because they can get in touch with Italian culture and the spoken language. I would point out that it is an educational experience also for the Italian students not only because they have to make an effort to explain how the Italian language works but also because this is their first step towards their future profession.

Is it possible to study here without paying fees?

There are some students who don't have to pay for their studies, because they have won the state competitive examination, but most pay regular fees. However, I must say that nobody here would



ever think these are fees. What actually happens is that the student agrees the amount with the university. The student commits himself/herself to paying and the university commits to teaching him/her in the best conditions possible.

An obvious question with an obvious answer: have you been in Rome and visited our University? What can you tell us about the differences you've noticed?

While I was studying at university, I participated in the mobility programme by going to Florence University. I studied for four months there and so had the chance to improve my knowledge of Italian and to notice the main differences. Since I actively collaborate with my partner in Rome, I often visit La Sapienza. I would say that your *piano di studi* is the most obvious difference. At the MSU, the faculty decides which exams students must take, not the student. Another difference is that only our students can attend our classes. At the end of the third and fourth year, students have to write and discuss an essay, and in the fifth year, for the thesis discussion, the candidate first presents his/her work and then has to answer the supervisor's questions and also those by the opponent, a teacher who points out the work's weaknesses.

Considering our own Faculty's "weaknesses", the other differences are very obvious to us: here at MSU the students receive a very solid grounding, the result of this university's excellent work.

Special thanks to Viktorja Andreevna Kudinova

FUTURE ERASMUS STUDENTS, STAY TUNED!

Two students talk about their experience of studying abroad.
Interviews carried out in English on Facebook by Martina Puglisi (3rd year Mod Langs)

Interview with Ilaria Carcereri, 3rd year student of Cooperazione e Sviluppo, Political Science Faculty, 3rd University of Rome.) On Erasmus at Hogskolan Dalarna University, Sweden, from January 2010 to April 2010.

Why did you decide to go on Erasmus?

Because I was thrilled at the idea of going away to improve my English, meeting new people and living in a place far from home.

What country did you choose, and why?

I had to choose among three countries: Norway, Sweden and Holland. I wanted a country where everyone speaks English. In the end, I didn't choose the country, it chose me. I received an email from Hogskolan Dalarna University welcoming me there in January.

What about the university? How did it welcome foreign students? What about the teachers?

The university was absolutely amazing and very well-organized. For foreign student, it provided a free pick-up service. It also organized a "welcome week" to give info and help incoming students to cope with administrative matters. I also met students from all over the world: China, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, Japan and Italy of course. The teachers were were good and lots of them very young too.

What was the teaching like? What languages were used for the lectures?

The lectures were in English. I chose the distance courses so I had online lectures. My lecturers posted the lessons on the university website and one day per week we had online meetings to discuss our studies. The exams were by essay.

Did your stay abroad help you improve your English?

I hope it did. As I said above I met lots of international students and naturally the language we used to communicate was English. The Swedish

speak English quite well, especially young people. Nevertheless I think I should go to the UK to learn to speak English fluently.

What is the town itself like?

I lived in a small town called Falun with 36,447 inhabitants, 233 km from Stockholm. It's a pretty little town, but quite boring. Ordinary Swedish life is completely different from life in Italy. My impression is that Swedish people live a more relaxing sort of life.

Where did you live? What kind of accommodation?

I lived in a furnished single room located in a residence run by the State, not by the University. The residence was cheap, clean and well-organized - only thirty minutes' walk from the University and the town centre. The residence has common kitchens, lockable private pantries, a dining room in each hallway and also a sauna, a TV room and laundry. Nearby, there were shopping centre, cash dispenser, health-care centre, etc.

Tell us about the cost of living.

Extremely expensive and the Erasmus allowance was completely inadequate.

Did you miss your family/friends? How did you deal with this?

I missed them a lot. To keep in touch I used Skype, email and Facebook. Thanks to the solution of online lectures it was possible for me to go back to Italy sometimes.

Would you repeat your experience?

Why not? Maybe after my degree, but not as an Exchange student, as a free mover.

What advice would you give to future Erasmus students?

Use this experience to grow up and give yourself a challenge.

Interview with Arianna Cavagna, 3rd year Mod Langs, on Erasmus at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, from September 2009 to June 2010

Why did you decide to go on Erasmus?

I decided to go because I felt that I needed to experience another reality, especially university-wise, to get to know other cultures, new people, and most importantly to improve my English.

Which country did you choose, and why?

I chose England because I've always liked this country, but till now have never had the chance to live there for more than a very short period.

What about the university? How did it welcome foreign students? What about the teachers?

The University is absolutely awesome. The first impression you get is that you have landed in Hogwarts. It is a huge campus: it has two libraries, a college shop (where they sell university gadgets and food of every sort), a Students' Union where students can meet and twice a week it turns into a club. Regarding the teachers, all I can say is that they are always there when you need them, and place a lot of importance on us students. Foreign students are welcomed very nicely, especially in the first days of settling in, when they organize various activities for us.

What was the teaching like? What languages are used for lectures?

There are two kinds of teaching: lectures where all the students go to listen to the teacher, and seminars where the students get to talk and discuss certain topics.



On campus at the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College



Me and my Erasmus friends

Is this experience helping you to improve your English?

Well, yes.

What is the town itself like?

I live in a small town near London and unfortunately there isn't much to do around here.

Where do you live? What kind of accommodation, and how did you find it?

I live on campus, in comfortable accommodation five minutes' walk from my lecture halls. It is provided by the university.

What about the cost of living?

As we all know, England is not very cheap. You spend a lot on public transport.

Do you miss your family/friends? How do you deal with it?

Of course I miss all of them. It's part of the experience. It makes you realize how important some people are to you. I handle it quite well I think, better than I expected, to be honest.

Would you repeat your experience?

Certainly.

What advice would you give to future Erasmus students?

Be patient with yourself, let yourself go with the flow. Don't be afraid - don't think that you're not the sort of person who could go abroad alone for a while to study. At first it might be hard but... when you have an experience like this, you'll end up wishing that your time as an Erasmus student was longer.

Photos on this page by Arianna Cavagna, 2010

MY MULTILINGUAL EXPERIENCE

by Silvia Viglia (3rd year Mod Langs)

Last year I went to Alicante in Spain for a semester as an Erasmus student. I also spent the last week of August there with my mother, partly to spend time with my mother before my Erasmus experience, but also to look for an apartment to share with other students.

This was anything but easy! I was also very nervous about my first experience abroad, and it was unbearably hot (approximately 40 C°).

But eventually I found an apartment. Next I had to choose flatmates, but this wasn't hard at all. Alicante is a small town (about 300.000 inhabitants) and the University is a very important part of it so there are lots of foreign students.

I placed an ad on the internet and after three days found two girls from Belgium and a girl from Germany, all language students like me. My multilingual experience was beginning.

At first we didn't know each other and only had a very basic grasp of Spanish, so our conversations tended to be extremely simple: we would say all the time *me gusta, no me gusta, a ti te gusta?*... We really must have seemed a little silly! But soon we got closer, going out together and having a really great time. I really enjoyed living with them - we were a well-matched little group.

Spain is famous for its parties and its crazy nights and my experience confirms this. The weekend starts on Thursday, and by Saturday you are basically exhausted. We also used to drink a lot. It was fun, but I don't think I could live my entire life like that.

Besides the parties, what I liked most about Alicante - not a great city as far as architecture is

concerned - was the sun and sea. You can go to the beach whenever you want. My friends were even happier than me since they are used to grey skies.

But my life wasn't only *fiesta y playa*: I also attended lessons at University. At first I was a little worried about the lessons and the exams but it all turned out to be easier than I thought and the professors were pretty kind and helpful. I took four exams and passed them all, so my experience wasn't a waste of time academically speaking: what a relief! Students often have these kinds of worries, but you only need to work a little, and the professors are ready to help you. Of course this doesn't mean that you can take an exam without studying.

In November my roommates and I took a short trip to Granada, Sevilla and Cordoba. These are three amazing cities, I absolutely loved them, especially Sevilla. We visited a lot of beautiful places and had five great days together.

I really enjoyed my Erasmus adventure and I would suggest it to everybody. What I liked most was the fact that I had the chance to meet people from every country in Europe and beyond, including American and Argentinian students, and to speak Spanish, thus improving the language that I've been studying for three years. After all, studying abroad really is the only way of learning a foreign language. I now consider my ex-roommates good friends and we are planning to see each other during the summer.

Of course it's difficult to keep this kind of friendship alive, but we shared a special part of our life and we know it.

ERASMUS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SALE

By Jennifer Romeo (3rd year Mod Langs, currently on a part-time placement with the Interfaculty Erasmus Office at La Sapienza)

As readers no doubt know, every year our university provides scholarships for studying abroad at partner universities. But few students know that many of these scholarships are lost due to a lack of applications. To get a sense of the figures I'm talking about, check the table.

It seems hard to believe, doesn't it? Of course, the remaining scholarships may of course be assigned later, since there are three application sessions each year (in March, May and September).

So if you are considering the idea, check this website http://w3.uniroma1.it/lett.uman.so_erasmus/, or come directly to the Erasmus Interfaculty office, which is next to the Mirafiori copycentre.

FACULTY	SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE	
	PRESENTED	
Scienze Umanistiche	217	114
Lettere e Filosofia	175	41
Sudi Orientali	61	25
TOTAL	453	180

TIDYING UP VAN GOGH'S ROOM

By Giulia Sinibaldi (3rd year Mod Langs)

The picture on the right looks strange, doesn't it? It looks like Van Gogh's famous *Room at Arles* (1888). Sort of. But it also seems different. Can you guess what it is? The table and the chairs should be on the left of the room! They have been moved, together with the table, the pictures on the wall and the coat, and they're on the bed! How did this happen?

This is just one of the works of a curious Swiss artist and comedian, Ursus Wehrli, who decided to carry out an odd experiment, namely, to modify the paintings of famous artists which to him seemed far too chaotic!

He has collected most of the results of his work in a short book whose English version is entitled *Tidying up Art* (2003). "It's more or less a picture book, so the reading will be over very quickly", he says while presenting his work to an American audience, showing his pictures together with his skill as a comedian.

Some examples: he re-organized the squares of Paul Klee's *Farbstafel* into columns according to



colour; he separated the pieces of a work by Keith Haring and placed them in different groups, again according to their colour too; the many dots of George Seurat's *Models* were put into a plastic bag, and so on!

Even though it may seem like a sort of heresy for art lovers (and to be honest it was for me too at the beginning), the idea later seemed new and refreshing, especially since he presents everything with irony rather than with artistic pretensions.

It really made me laugh to see these new versions of paintings I had studied at school. For this reason alone, I really think his book is worthwhile!

You can sample his style here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57eeP3Is-Rs>.



Keith Haring, *Untitled*



Wehrli's tidied up version

FOR LOVERS OF THE CLASSICS
20 February - 13 June 2010

This month we suggest the exhibition dedicated to Caravaggio on the 400th anniversary of his death. All his most representative artworks are on display, such as *The Basket of Fruit* and *Bacchus*.

This exhibition, held at the Scuderie del Quirinale, has been organised in collaboration with the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, the Staatliche Museum in Berlin and many others.

Monday to Thursday 9.30 - 20.00 Friday 9.30 - 23.00
Saturday 9.00 - 23.00 Sunday 9.00 - 22.00

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON SCREEN TRANSLATION

Bye-bye Bad Translations!

by Chiara Gobbo (Bienni student, Interpretariato e traduzione editoriale, settoriale, Ca' Foscari University, Venice)

For language students, and indeed for anyone lucky enough to know foreign languages, watching a film in its original version is, or should be, quite normal.

By watching the original version, we can enjoy hearing the voices of famous actors and so appreciate their work better. The role of the voice is often underestimated, but acting clearly includes both body language and the voice. The human voice is an amazing instrument of communication, not just a way of expressing emotions, but the most important and purest way. For this reason, dubbing is a highly specialized activity carried out by actors. Dubbers could be considered *actors in someone else's body*.

But behind the scenes lies another highly specialized skill, also underestimated: translating. I often think of the saying *translators, traitors* when I see how badly some films have been translated. When you think of how much a translator can contribute to the success or failure of a film, maybe you can understand better what this saying really means.

Translators certainly have to know a lot, and not only grammar. They have to try to maintain the meanings in the film as a visual creation as well as in the script. But this is not always how the translated film turns out. To give you an idea of what can happen, I'll give you some examples of film titles, which are of primary importance.

Have you ever seen a translated film and wondered what the title had to do with it? Often, the answer is: nothing whatsoever. For instance, *Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind* is a psychological drama, whose title derives from a profoundly philosophical line by Alexander Pope. In Italian it became *Se mi lasci ti cancello*, which sounds like a superficial, lighthearted sketch, exactly the opposite of the original.

And what do you think of the Italian translation of *Dead Poets Society*, *L'attimo fuggente*? While the rest of the world kept the original title or at most made a literal translation (*Le cercle des poètes*

disparus, *El club de los poetas muertos*, *Der Club der toten Dichter*), was it really necessary for us to do something different in Italy? Luckily, the title *L'attimo fuggente* is not so bad; at least it summarizes the sense of the whole film, which is what the character played by Robin Williams said: "Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys". As you know, *Carpe diem quam minime credula postero* ("Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the future") is a phrase in Latin from a poem by Horace, and means that since the future is unknowable it's better to focus on the present.

I must also mention Almodovar. Poor Pedro: someone has got up to all sorts of mischief with the titles of his films! Sometimes the Spanish title has been kept (as with *Volver*), sometimes we find a personal interpretation, as in the case of *L'indiscreto fascino del peccato*, and sometimes we find a strange literal translation (*Carne tremula*).

In my opinion (and in Almodovar's) *Entre Tinieblas* should never have become *L'indiscreto fascino del peccato*. This no doubt happened because it recalls Buñuel's famous film *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*Il fascino discreto della borghesia*), in spite of the fact that Almodovar's film has nothing in common with Buñuel. I suppose the translator must have been a fan of Buñuel.

Neither do I understand why the Spanish *Volver* was maintained, given that it is equivalent to *ritornare* and *to go back*. In an interview, Almodovar said that in this film he went back to comedy, to the universe of women, to working with Carmen Maura after 17 years, to La Mancha (his home region) and consequently to his mother and to his childhood. So for him it really was going back into his past. (See <http://www.clubcultura.com/clubcine/clubcineastas/almodovar/volverlapelicula/enpalabras02.htm>, last retrieved on 26 April 2010.)

Woody Allen's films are another curious case. Take *Cassandra's Dream*, a thriller directed by Woody Allen in the UK. The protagonists (played by Ewan McGregor and Colin Farrell) decide to

buy a sailboat, which they name *Cassandra's dream*. In the film, Cassandra is the name of a dog and it alludes to Greek Mythology, to the ancient prophetess Cassandra, whose prophecies of doom went unheeded by those around her. If you haven't already figured it out, this film is full of references to classical Greek tragedy, and the name Cassandra - which has many meanings, but certainly not *Sogni e delitti* - is the key to Allen's work. In this case, I think it would have been better to keep the original title or translate it literally, as the French, Spanish and German translations (*Le Rêve de Cassandre*, *El sueño de Casandra*, *Cassandras Traum*). The Italian title *Sogni e delitti* is just an insult.

At least Italy can boast of very polite translators. Italian translators hate swearwords and, for this reason, *Troy* wasn't translated into *Troia*.

However, as I mentioned at the start, people who know foreign languages are lucky: as modern language students we have the tools we need to think and reflect freely. We can enjoy films in the original version, and thus grasp the real work of actors and directors. We can also recognize translation mistakes, laugh at them or get angry. But the important thing is that we don't need to rely on someone else's (bad) work.

Doing the Dirty Work

By Simona Di Giustino (graduate in Traduzione Letteraria e Tecnico-Scientifica,
Lettere e Filosofia, La Sapienza, Rome, 2008)

I once heard somebody say that the translator's job is one of the most difficult of all.

I personally agree with this, especially when it comes to audiovisual translation.

My experience in this field dates back to about one year ago, when I translated and adapted four episodes of the successful *True Blood* TV series, based on Charlaine Harris' books. After just one year from my graduation in translation, I was doing exactly what I had always dreamt of: translating for the cinema.

I have translated a lot of different kinds of texts in my life, from English into Italian and vice versa, but that translation was definitely the hardest I've ever done. On the other hand, it was also the most exciting thanks to the fact that I got completely hooked on the story of the vampire protagonists of *True Blood*.

Since this was my first experience in the field of screen translation, I ran into a lot of difficulties, of course. Finding the right compromise between the need of being faithful to the original script and that of sticking to the principle of labial synchronism is not always easy.

But as soon as I started working on that script, I realized that the translator does only the dirty work... Besides translating the dialogues, I also worked on the screen adaptation but the final

decisions always rest with the dubbing director and, obviously, with the distribution company, and these decisions are taken inside the dubbing room. In my experience, the dubbing director is without a doubt the essential figure in the whole process.

I had the good luck of being able to work on the dubbing of the first episode of *True Blood*; the English title was *Strange Love*. Pretty easy to translate into Italian, right? My suggestion, a little too trivial perhaps, was *Stranamore*. Rejected. The title of the first Italian episode is *Uno Strano Incontro*. A title that on the one hand anticipates part of what the viewer is about to watch, but on the other hand strikes me as a little less appealing than the one I had suggested. But this was the director's choice and I obviously had to accept his decision.

This is just one of the numerous examples I could give to confirm my idea: the final choices are always left up to the dubbing director, the production or the distribution company... anyone but the translator.

In any case, hearing Sookie - the series protagonist - speaking Italian and actually saying the words I had written for her after so much work, was definitely the greatest satisfaction I have achieved in my translating career so far! In spite of all the changes imposed by the director...

A survey of young people's views on reality shows

By Marina Brunetti (Biennio student, Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Traduttivi)

In Giovanni Veronesi's latest film, *Genitori e figli*, a good-looking university student announces to his parents that he is going to take part in an audition for *Grande Fratello*, arguing that six million Italians watch the programme. Why is this programme so popular? I mean, ten years ago reality shows were a novelty, but now, what is the reason behind their success? This survey report attempts to provide some answers.

I interviewed one hundred people aged 20-28, both working people and university students. Finding students was straightforward: I only had to go to the main campus and speak to the crowds of people waiting for their classes. To interview working people I went to my friends' workplaces, which included pubs and restaurants in Rome, and Ciampino airport.

I asked my interviewees short and simple questions (in Italian) to find out if they watch reality shows, why (not), and if they have a favourite reality show or a favourite reality show contestant.

I expected most to admit, perhaps with some embarrassment, that they watch reality shows. My survey would then have concluded that this was a natural consequence of the fact that our generation has grown up with programmes of this kind. But that's not how things went. In actual fact, only 34% of those interviewed said they watch reality shows, and most of these said they are curious to know what will happen in, for example, the *Grande Fratello* house, or in the huts of the contestants of *Isola dei Famosi*. One group of girls told me they sometimes watch *Grande Fratello* together, exchanging comments about events and contestants. For them, it's just a way of passing time together.

Some other interviewees say they find the stupidity and sometimes pathetic behaviour of the competitors quite entertaining. As one student put it: *It's funny to see their smiling faces when they manage to produce a sentence using the right tense.*

Some watch reality shows to avoid worrying about serious things. One boy stated that he considers TV programmes that claim to be serious as more dangerous than reality shows. *If it's culture you're looking for, television is not the right place to look*, he said. Only a few people said they watch reality shows because there is nothing better on TV.

The main reason given for not watching reality shows is lack of interest in other people's lives. One girl said that if she wanted to see people fighting and yelling insults, all she had to do was peep out of the window during the rush-hour. Some interviewees also said they don't consider reality shows that real.

A small group of interviewees said they're bored with reality shows. Some students provided this description of *Grande Fratello* housemates: *We have seen everything: the macho, the mild-mannered, the geek, the illiterate, the aristocrat, the poor, the bimbo, the not-much-to-look-at, the homosexual, the transgendered... is there anything we haven't seen?* A small percentage also pointed out that the low cultural profile of these programmes promotes a passive attitude in viewers.

The few who mentioned the poor quality of reality shows didn't provide any particular reason, although some criticized the way these programmes exploit human feelings.

A small number of people, mainly men, also said they have better things to do at night than watch TV.

A couple of people ran off as I approached them. Maybe they didn't believe that I wasn't selling anything.

On the basis of the data collected, reality shows don't have a large following among students and other young people, and those who do watch them certainly don't perceive them as a true reflection of our society.

'If it's culture you're looking for, television is not the right place to look'

'I don't need to watch Grande Fratello. If I want to see people shouting, fighting and hurling insults, I only have to peep out of the window during the rush hour'

'We have seen everything: the macho, the mild-mannered, the geek, the homosexual, the transgendered... Is there anything we haven't seen?'

FILM & BOOK REVIEWS



Sunshine Cleaning, dir. Christine Jeffs (2008)

Reviewed by Chiara Petrilli,
3rd year Mod Langs

Life is a messy business, guys... that's what you learn by watching *Sunshine Cleaning*.

This dramatic comedy shows us how ordinary lives are sometimes quite desperate, and how people make an effort to wipe the slate clean.

The clean-up crew is made up of two sisters: Rose and Norah Lorkowsky, played amazingly well by Amy Adams and Emily Blunt.

Rose is a optimistic and responsible single mom looking for money to send her trouble-making son Oscar to a private school. She's also having a sordid affair with Mac, her married high-school sweetheart. Mac is a cop who suggests that she take on a lucrative job as a bio-hazard crime-scene cleaner. She also brings her younger cynical and vulnerable sister to the business enterprise.

As the sisters work to clean up what people have left behind of their chaotic lives, they start facing up to their own chaos from the past, linked to their mom's suicide.

This is an entertaining and touching movie which I would recommend to those who like realistic, bitter-but-entertaining films. Definitely a tear-jerker, but optimistic too!



Bram Stoker, Dracula (1897)

Reviewed by Valeria Testa,
3rd year Mod Langs

When Bram Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897, he probably couldn't have imagined that novel would be so successful. Many critics consider it one of the last examples of Gothic literature, and it is certainly not the least!

The idea itself of the vampire has been very popular, and still is, but with a difference: while Stoker clearly wanted to show that Evil can be defeated through the rational search for truth, current vampire stories tend to focus on poignant love affairs.

Stoker's choice of setting on the edge of reality lends a mysterious aura and charm to the book.

The author takes us to the Carpathian Mountains, where Dracula lives. At the beginning, the descriptions of unknown places are rather disturbing. Each element is charged with strong symbolism: the lack of light alludes to the absence of God, therefore of Good. But in this novel, Good corresponds to Reason.

Dracula is an emblem of Evil and irrationality. He is a monster, often referred to as Demon, conquering his victims with the magnetic power of his eyes, and so without reason. A monstrous character, but at the same time mysteriously charming.

His victims become the reverse of their true selves. Women are deprived of female features: they lose their maternal and domestic dimensions as though attracted by a demonic whirl. This aspect of the female characters is significant, and probably due to the fact that the novel was written at a time when women had begun fighting for their rights. In this respect, the author was clearly influenced by his historical context.

The novel isn't only characterized by darkness and anguish. A new character is introduced in the second part: Van Helsing. He is the opposite of Dracula and symbolizes faith in God, the only light that can defeat darkness.

Van Helsing is not alone, however, for the story is narrated through the diaries of all the characters: Harker, Mina Murray, Doc. Seward, Quincey P. Morris, Lord Arthur Holmwood. Clearly, the defeat of Evil can be achieved only through cohesion and unity: only choral dedication and faith in God can dominate the horror of irrationality and Evil.

These diaries also help the story to flow. The simple language used also helps to empathize with the characters. The descriptions are so realistic and detailed that they come across almost as actual images.

The entire novel is the result of oppositions, not only of Good and Evil, but also of man and woman, Eastern and Western culture, light and dark, with profound and eternal meanings. The opposition between rationality and irrationality also reinforces the idea that everything has two sides, that every human being possesses reason and animal irrationality at the same time. Two dimensions, each in need of the other.



Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal* (2001)

Reviewed by Giulia Lea Giorgi,
3rd year Mod Langs

ABOUT PHILIP ROTH: Born in 1933 in Weequahic, a neighbourhood in Newark, New Jersey, the son of first-generation American Jewish parents; retired from his position as a university professor in 1992.

The Dying Animal is a short novel about David Kepesh, a famous literature professor who resembles in some ways the author himself. He grew up during the sexual revolution of the sixties, and, after a failed marriage, decides to avoid any emotional commitment in his (mainly sexual) relationships. But his life and his beliefs are overturned by Consuela Castillo, a 24-year-old Cuban student who attends one of his courses. Despite his emotional involvement, he is unable to develop their relationship into something deeper than something merely physical. But some years after they leave each other, she returns, upsetting his life again.

The plot is not particularly enthralling nor breathtaking, but this does not mean it is boring. What really strikes me about this very short book (about one hundred pages) are the observations and witty remarks made by the protagonist, who is at the same time the narrator. He focuses on life, love and even American history and society, but most of all on how love is the engine of the world, despite the risks it entails:

The only obsession everyone wants: 'love.' People think that in falling in love they make themselves whole? The Platonic union of souls? I think otherwise. I think you're whole before you begin. And the love fractures you. You're whole, and then you're cracked open.

He considers how desiring a person can keep you alive, can help you to struggle against death or, better, against the fear of death. And of course against time passing:

Can you imagine old age? Of course you can't. I didn't. I couldn't. I had no idea what it was like. Not even a false image - no image. And nobody wants anything else. Nobody wants to face any of this before he has to. How is it all going to turn out? Obtuseness is de rigueur.

Roth's style is straightforward. Basically, the sentences are quite short and easy to understand, even for a non-mother tongue reader.

Some critics see this as one of Roth's worst books: "it feels curiously flimsy and synthetic", said notoriously severe *New York Times* literary critic Michico Kakutani (8 May, 2001). Nonetheless, I would recommend it as an introduction to a writer who cannot be ignored by anyone who claims to love literature. A movie adaptation also exists: *Elegy*, directed by Isabel Coixet and starring Penelope Cruz and Ben Kingsley.



Jennifer Lee Carrell, *The Shakespeare Secret* (2007)

Reviewed by Rosanna Damato, Biennio student, Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Traduttivi

We may think we know all about Shakespeare's theatre, life and plays, but there is something about him that we cannot find in a canonical volume about him. This is the secret that forms the basis of Jennifer Lee Carrell's first novel, *The Shakespeare Secret*. It is a literary thriller about Shakespeare's last and lost play, *The History of Cardenio*, and quickly became an international bestseller. In a note at the end of the novel, she explains what is fictional and what is factual in her story.

The story starts with the fire at the Globe, a small gold-wrapped box and a murder. The main character is Kate Stanley, who received the box from her former Professor of Shakespeare, murdered before the fire. "If you open it, you must follow where it leads": the last words of the eccentric Professor become the beginning of a Shakespearean treasure hunt.

The plot captivated me from the first page, especially because each chapter stopped when I felt that something was going to happen. I collected clues along with the heroine, wanting to know where this lost play was, but above all, wanting to know Shakespeare's true identity!

The Shakespeare Secret is a novel which asks a question: ***Is William Shakespeare really what we know of him, or he is someone else?*** If you want to know the answer, follow Kate in her hunt!

COSA NOSTRA IS NOT DEAD

Stereotypes and the Italian-American Cosa Nostra

By Carla De Pascale (Biennio student, Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Traduttivi)

The joint efforts of the FBI and Italy's DDA have finally led to the arrest of three Gambino Soldiers (ed: a soldier is a simple executor who doesn't make decisions) Gaetano Napoli Sr, Thomas Napoli and Gaetano Napoli Jr. They have been charged with bankruptcy, money laundering, extortion, and association with NY crime families.

The FBI agents dealing with the case, using wire-tapped conversations and video surveillance, also discovered that Napoli Sr had schooled a Grand Jury witness to influence the witnesses' testimony. He was also found to have links with the Italian Cosa Nostra, linked through Settineri. Under the Cosa Nostra commandments, you don't simply enter into a crime family: you must be introduced by a Man of Honor who guarantees for you. It was Napoli Sr who helped Settineri to enter the Gambino crime family.

All this might seem like a movie, but it's real, and associating Italian people with the Mafia is an unconscious process, something that has become embedded within all other stereotypes of Italians over the years. Maybe it is due to the artistry of movie directors whose films are real works of genius on the one hand and on the other hand have emphasized this plague. These movie directors have simply taken our customs and recurring behaviours and linked them to what we are famous for: the Mafia.

Gangsters movies simultaneously show our attachment to family, our way of showing off and speaking loudly, our love for food and sport cars and frequently also our bad habit of being cunning.

The FBI is in the habit of placing bugs in mobsters' houses. This is a good way of finding out how these Italian-Americans talk. A very famous Italian-American phrase stemming from this strategy is used in several Internet parodies: *forget about it!* or, in Italian, *che te lo dico a fare!*

Below is a movie extract from *Donnie Brasco* (1997), starring Johnny Depp as the real FBI agent Joe Pistone and Al Pacino as the real Mafia Soldier Angelo Ruggiero from the Bonanno family. This is an extract from a dialogue between Donnie Brasco and another FBI agent upon hearing a wire-tapped conversation:

FBI TECNICIAN

What is forget about it? What is that?

DONNIE BRASCO

Forget about it is like if you agree with someone, you know, like Raquel Welch is one great piece of ass, forget about it. But then, if you disagree, like a Lincoln is better than a Cadillac? Forget about it! You know? But then, it's also like if something's the greatest thing in the world, like mingia, those peppers, forget about it. But it's also like saying Go to hell! too. Like, you know, like "Hey Paulie, you got a one inch pecker?" and Paulie says "Forget about it!" Sometimes it just means forget about it.

[source: IMDB]

The expression *Forget about it* is supposedly a free translation of the Italian *Che te lo dico a fare?* Or the Sicilian *Chi tû dicu a fari?* You can see this *Forget about it* scene at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf0ZyoUn7Vk>.

Italian-Americans are also stereotyped for their dress sense, pomaded-hair and strong family bond, as we can see in this statement by Senator Geary of Nevada in *The Godfather 2* (1974):

I don't like your kind of people. I don't like to see you come out to this clean country in your oily hair, dressed up in those silk suits, and try to pass yourselves off as decent Americans. I'll do business with you, but the fact is, I despise your masquerade, the dishonest way you pose yourself. Yourself and your whole fuckin' family.



The (slang) terms used by Americans to refer to Italian-American people are also based on stereotypes. As Deanna, Fredo Corleone's American wife, says, also in *The Godfather 2*:

(00:29:13) **You know something? Those dagos are crazy when it comes to their wives**

(00:29:21) **Never marry a WOP! They treat their wives like shit!**

WOP? This is an epithet used for people of Italian descent. There are two possible derivations for this word: it could stand for the acronym WithOut Papers (Italian emigrants didn't have any ID papers such as Identity cards or passports), although the actual acronym for Without Papers is WP. It might also stand for a transcription of the Italian word sound *Guappo*. A *guappo* is someone who belongs to the Mafia from Campania: the Guapperia or Camorra.

Dago, on the other hand, probably derives from the proper name Diego and is used for people of Italian, Spanish or Portuguese descent.

Italian-Americans often changed their original names into more American ones. The movie *The Untouchables* illustrates this phenomenon as character Giuseppe Petri modifies his name into George Stone.

All these stereotypes seem to me to be fairly widespread, but let's have a look at how everything began.

Professor Frank Sorrentino, who teaches Political Science at St Francis College, Brooklyn Heights, NY, provides some historical background to Italian-Americans affections (lecture of November 17, 2008 on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7BkvzcuQpo> last retrieved on 26 April 2010).

As Sorrentino points out, most Italian emigrants were from small isolated mountain villages in Southern Italy. They had formerly lived under the thumb of the ruling class of the time, namely the Mafia, which had emerged as a movement against subjugation. This movement didn't disappear when the people moved to the USA because while starting their new life in a new country they also found poverty, existing crime organizations (Jewish and Irish) and a corrupt police force.

Immigrants had to tell government officials that they had a job, or else they had to go back to their own country. They had

to make a choice; their country didn't have the resources to enable them to earn a living, so they joined existing crime organizations that helped them to find work. Speaking loud may in fact have been a reaction to a sense of submission.

But Italians don't always speak loud. If they do, it is just to give more emphasis. It should not be seen as rude.

Nowadays, fewer than 0.0025% of Italian-Americans belong to the Mafia. The vast majority of people with Italian ancestry have improved their social standing through study and hard work, and are now fully integrated within US society. Cosa Nostra may not be dead but the battle against it is still on. Meanwhile, a challenge for readers: try to look upon Italian-Americans as positively as you can. **This is an offer you cannot refuse!**

MAFIA

APPLICATION FORM

Watsa U Name: _____		U Age: _____	
Stritta Name: _____		U case numbac: _____	
Isa u girl or boy ? (Justte chuza one) _____			
Putta downa werra u werka now _____			
Wasa u ever inna bigga case ?		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
For whatta wazza u inna big case for ?		<input type="checkbox"/> U shotta one guise <input type="checkbox"/> U keednappa somebody <input type="checkbox"/> U bomba somebody's case	
U wanna be de bigga shotza someday ?			
U likka eat... Garlic		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Pizza		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Salami		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
U know ow maker ciment shoos ? Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
U driva de car ?		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Whatta kine	
		<input type="checkbox"/> De Falcoa G.T. <input type="checkbox"/> De Charger <input type="checkbox"/> De Fiat 500 <input type="checkbox"/> De Olden (Fasta Oac)	
U see de Got Fadda (or justte de movie) ?		Si <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Iffa u application isa approved, u willa gotta desa benifets			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + I pair darka glass + I appy face button + I pair ciment shoos + I pair pointie shoos 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + I blacka shirt widda white + I kilo mozzarella cheeza + U moeta de Got Fadda + Free berial 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + 18 x 10 picha Franka Sinatra 			
Joinse de clubba now (while u stilla can write)			
De MAFIA isa an equil oppertunini organnasitioni			
Maka u marka: _____			

ACID

By Krassimira Usheva



It was five months since her divorce. She had just finished work and was getting ready to go back home. She put on her coat and picked up her bag. Then she went out and started walking home. One her way home, she got the strange feeling that someone was following her. She stopped and looked around. The street was empty, but she knew that somebody was there. She could feel it, the eyes that were following her. She quickened her pace, constantly looking around.

She thought about her husband. What if he had found out where she was? After the divorce, she got many threats from him. He was a vindictive and vicious man and she knew she could expect anything from him. That was one of the reasons she had left him and come here, to this little village, hoping he wouldn't find her.

Approaching the doorsteps of her house she heard a voice calling her name. She turned around and for a split second she saw a man wearing a black mask. Before she could understand what was happening, the man in front of her lifted an object he was holding and splashed some kind of liquid in her face. That moment changed her life forever. She was in hell.

The pain was so intense she almost passed out. At first she couldn't understand what was happening to her, but then the pain took over and she started screaming. Her skin was burning. She fell on the ground and from that position she saw her attacker running away. She closed her eyes and lost consciousness.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw white walls and medical machines beeping in rhythm around her. Now the pain was gone, but she couldn't forget the horror she had experienced in those brief moments that had changed her life. She felt the bandages around her face and neck and thought about the amount of damage to her skin. The door opened and she saw her mother and daughter standing in front of her. Her mother's eyes were red from crying and the look on her face was like nothing she had ever seen before. Her mother took her hand; she hugged her mother.

Later the doctor came to see her and explained what had happened. He told her that she has been attacked by a man who had splashed sulphuric acid on her face. He told her that her body had experienced such a shock that his medical team had saved her with great difficulty. The skin of her face, neck and part of her back was severely damaged. He told her that with plastic surgery she would be able to regain some of her former appearance.

She knew that she would never be the same again.

The police came to see her too. They asked questions about what had happened and told her that they would do everything they could to find the person who had done this to her.

Now she was lying in her bed, thinking. A huge battle, a battle for her life, awaited her. Whether her strength would be enough to cope, she wasn't sure... The only thing she was sure of at this moment was that she felt more dead than alive.



Photo credits to Bethan Davies - Thanks again Bethan!

Krassimira Usheva (3rd year Mod Langs) comments on her story, 'Acid':

I wrote this story because I was greatly disturbed by a report I saw on television. It was about violence against women in Europe and in particular cases of women being splashed with acid on their faces by their ex-husbands, relatives or ill-wishers. I was extremely alarmed to discover that such things still happen within the EU and that in many cases the Police don't take adequate steps against such crimes. I believe we must not leave these events unsaid because breaking the chain of silence might stop them from happening in the future.

CARPUCCINO

By Giulia Sinibaldi (3rd year Mod Langs)

Can you imagine waking up in the morning and making two cups of coffee: one for you and the other... for your car?

According to Jem Stansfield, an eccentric young British engineer, it is possible! Mind you, he once adapted a vacuum-cleaner into gloves specifically for the purpose of climbing a sky-scraper!

While surfing the web I found some interesting articles about his new invention, presented on the BBC programme *Bang Goes The Theory*.

After buying an old Volkswagen Scirocco on e-bay for £400, he adapted it to use coffee instead of petrol. This didn't remain just a simple experiment, since the car was tested on the road. But it took seventeen hours to drive from London to Manchester (400 km), using the equivalent of more than ten thousand espressos!

It wasn't really a relaxing trip either, since the drivers had



to stop every 100 km or so to check the filters.

It's difficult to imagine a standardization of this prototype since there are still a number of problems to be solved, so it might remain just a curious invention for people's amusement.

Nonetheless, in an era in which scientist are doing everything they can to find ecological alternatives to petrol, the idea of such a car really tickles my mind.

Who knows? Maybe in a few years, the carpuccino will become an everyday vehicle, filling our streets with a wonderful coffee aroma!



**LOGO CONTEST
WINNER!**

Congratulations to Martina Puglisi on winning the MiraMag logo contest!

Readers' artwork is always welcome.

If you want to suggest a cover page or illustrations, don't think twice - get in touch now!



Before he could tap on the Atlantis Corals logo, he heard someone running towards them. This was no time for research: they had to get out of there, and fast. They started running through the labyrinthine corridors, but the lab seemed to have no way out. They felt like mice in a cage, running around blindly, opening every door they came across. One, two, three... Finally, the right one. They jumped into the Agent's van and a few seconds later were on the road, racing through the streets, the Corals chasing them on a motorized unicycle, closing in on them fast, getting closer by the second.

The two Sams were somewhat stunned: they had no idea where they were going, nor who the man who'd set them free was. They noticed too that it wasn't a simple van they were in. There were hi-tech devices everywhere: a CCTV system, electronic map, monitors and countless unfamiliar objects. A metallic voice came from the radio:

"A015...can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear."

"Give your position."

"52°32' N 0°5' W... Lancaster street, I'm being followed..."

The communication was interrupted by gunfire: the Corals were now shooting at the van, trying to hit the wheels. Again the metallic voice:

"A015 What's happening? We heard shooting!"

"They're trying to shove us off-road."

"Do you need reinforcements?"

"No, I'm bringing the targets to headquarters."

After this brief conversation between the Agent and the man on the radio, 1950-Sam asked "Headquarters? Where are you taking us?"

"To the MI6 headquarters, the Queen's intelligence bureau."

Gunshot hit the door handle at the back of the van and the door flew open. To throw the Corals off track, A015 veered sharply to the right. Before anyone could catch hold of him, 1940-Sam fell out of the van with a loud thud.

"Stop! Stop this damn van! We've lost the other Sam!" yelled 1950-Sam.

"We will deal with that later. We have to move on. They won't kill him - they still need him."

The Corals picked 1940-Sam up and took him back to the lab again. From his cell, 1940-Sam observed them as they worked on their experiment. The awful truth finally dawned on him. In front of his very eyes were three glass containers: liquid lead from the smallest one was being piped to the refrigerator cell where it was frozen and then turned into a capsule. The capsule was then fired into a 3-D model of terrain which strongly resembled that of mainland Britain. A few seconds later, the monitor displayed figures indicating density, volume, altitude and weight. All the figures were preceded by a plus or a minus sign.

"Do you understand, you moron? Or is this too advanced for your tiny brain? Your beloved country is about to take a journey deep down into the sea!"

"You are all insane, how do you think you can manage that?"

"With lead" he answered firmly.

"Lead?" 1940-Sam asked.

"I thought you were supposed to be smart, but it looks like I was wrong. Seems your brain must have developed in the 1950s, doesn't it?"

“We're going to sink the UK, Sammy,” said Marianne coldly. Then she pressed a button which started to spread chloroform into Sam’s cell.

Meanwhile at the MI6 headquarters, 1950-Sam learned from Agent A015 that Marianne was involved with a terrorist organization, ever since childhood, apparently. There was no trace of her in any State database, no file, nothing. Her biological parents never to have existed. Sam showed the agent what he had found in Marianne's home: the numbers on the paper and the small bottle. The agent wondered for a moment about the numbers, but then seemed more concerned about the bottle, especially the Coral logo on it. Sam added that in the fountain he had seen the icon ‘Atlantis Corals’.

“Atlantis? What are you talking about?”

“I'm sure that's what I saw" Sam replied "Do a search!”

They typed the word Atlantis into an images search engine and a familiar-looking picture came up. They both recognized the likeness between the city and the green circular shape on the Coral logo.

“Atlantis... So all the terrorist attacks in my time... you know, I'm from the future...”

The agent interrupted 1950-Sam.

“Future? What are you talking about?”

“Yes... the future! I invented a machine that would enable me to travel back in time and find Marianne again. I haven't seen her in ten years. Plus, my world is devastated by earthquakes,



A familiar-looking image came up: the lost city of Atlantis



The Coral logo

tidal waves, volcanic eruptions - an endless series of calamities. Terrorist attacks are on the agenda too. The police are so occupied with these problems that corruption and criminality have risen to unprecedented levels.”

“And you wanted to find out what was going on...”

“Yes... and now things are starting to make more sense... These people are from Atlantis - they want to bring their land back to the surface...”

“But how?”

“You know Archimede's Principle?”

“Of course! A body immersed wholly or partially in fluid... ”

“This is no time for quotations! We need to get to the TIME-GATE! Now!”

Back at the lab, 1940-Sam is led into a dark room and tied to a hospital bed surrounded by monitors...



MY TOUR OF MEXICO'S MAYAN COAST

By Luna Proietti (3rd year Mod Langs)

Last December, along with my mother and two sisters, I spent fifteen days in Mexico, on a trip that included a tour of the Mayan coast! It took me a month to plan our trip, including our flights and all the things that would help to make it a fantastic experience.

After arriving in Mexico City - following an eleven-hour flight from Milan - I spent a few hours visiting the city itself. In Garibaldi square in the city centre, I saw the Mariachi (people wearing traditional costumes and singing Mexican songs) and had some Corona in a local bar. I then took the last flight to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of the Chiapas state.



Everyday life in San Cristobal de las Casas

Chiapas is the poorest state in Mexico. You can see this poverty all around you: children forced to work daily as street sellers from an early age to help their families to survive. They live in mud huts, exposed to infection and disease. There were ten people living without sanitation in one tiny house I saw.

From Tuxtla Gutierrez we travelled on to Cañon Sumidero, a spectacular canyon which runs northwards. In Chiapa de Corzo, I took a boat to visit the new Ecological Park called Amikuu, situated in the canyon. My next five days were spent at San Cristobal de Las Casas, a very pleasant city with a wonderful local market.



Agua Azul Waterfalls

One wonderful excursion took me to the water park of Xel-Ha, the Agua Azul Waterfalls and the Mayan ruins of Palenque. I then travelled by bus (a very long trip!) to the Mayan East coast of Yucatan, a very beautiful place with white sand and turquoise-blue sea, where I spent my last six days drinking cocktails, sunbathing and snorkeling off-shore. Another excursion took me to Playa del Carmen, a small town where I discovered Avenida 5 (two minutes' walk away), with its many restaurants, bars, cafés and shops.



Isla Mujeres after the storm

On my last day I had a very enjoyable trip to Isla Mujeres (Island of Women). According to legend, Mayan women would come here to increase their fertility when they wanted to have children. I had great fun that day exploring the tiny island on a golf cart. But really, the whole trip was fantastic. When I left, I left a piece of my heart behind, but also lots of money since I had bought so many things.

Photos on this page by Luna Proietti.

DIPLOMAT BY DAY, NEW YORKER BY NIGHT

A journey that may have changed my life

By Cinzia Bianco (3rd year Mod Langs)

“Leaving New York, never easy” goes an REM song. I have myself experienced how true this statement is. Why? Because New York City, especially for an Italian young student like me, can open your mind, and because today, as centuries ago, it is the symbol of the New World, the embodiment of opportunities, and a new start. I could simply describe my experience and yet it wouldn't be sufficient, so I'd rather write about my feelings while living that experience, and how unique it is to breathe the city that never sleeps.

I was in New York only for ten days, to work in a project called National Model United Nations, with the National Collegiate Conference Association, a nonprofit and non-governmental organization affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. It is mainly a simulation of UN debate, during which students work as delegations of the UN Member States in one of the numerous Committees existing within the UN.

I represented Belgium in the UN High Committee for Refugees. Before the New York simulation, I had to attend a preparation course to study the workings of the entire UN (the so-called and hard-core Rules of Procedure!), the UNHCR and the topics we had to deal with, always bearing in mind the foreign policy of my country, Belgium. But when I attended the first Working Session, after the moving and motivating Opening Ceremony, I felt like I knew nothing about what we were about to do. Panic. Dozens of mother-tongue students in formal dress staring in front of me, self-confident, well prepared, fierce. I forgot to say that it was a competition, too.

I tried to calm down and recalled the words spoken at the Opening Ceremony by *Under-Secretary-General* Mr. Sha Zukang: “Work hard, don't ever give up and be aware that it's your chance to give a contribution to the real global challenges we face. We need your ideas, because you can be our future”. I decided to give it a try, to give my best and see what happened.

At the end of the first Session, I managed to be included in a workgroup on a Resolution. How? I simply walked up to a group and started explaining



Cinzia by day

my ideas, and even if at first they weren't so willing to listen to me (because, as I realized later, they were veterans of the project), I continued making my suggestions until somebody said “That could work!” That's how I gained a seat and I was proud of myself.

I didn't know that the hardest part had yet to come. The real work, during and after the Working Sessions, even for ten-twelve hours a day. And what I found out is that the people I worked with believed in what we were doing at least as much as I did. We worked tirelessly, diligently, collectively. It gives hope to look at a group of youngsters who “deliver as one” toward a common aim, exchanging ideas, struggling to make those ideas work and cooperating in the true UN spirit.

As you may imagine, there were political tricks and unfair strategies and yet, in the end, during the Voting Session, coherency, seriousness and fair-play prevailed. I had my strategies too, it's the heart of policy. That, and the art of negotiation, as I definitely learnt at the NMUN. Together with patience. You'll never know how many times I was about to freak out (I'm still a Southern Italian girl), but I tried to stay calm. Imagining repeatedly banging your head against the wall may help. I remember looking at myself in the mirror that morning, wearing my necklace and feeling excited and scared at the same time. After all that work, the possibility that our paper, our baby, might be rejected was unbearable. That's why, when I heard the sentence “With fifty-nine votes in favour, eight

abstentions and eight votes against, this Resolution is now adopted by this Committee”, applause could be heard coming from where I was sitting. Embarrassing. Not-shared. Definitely not UN style. At that precise moment, I became myself again, and the by-day version of me was kicked out by my by-night side...who couldn't wait to celebrate.

Thursday night, running around the room to get ready and stumbling over my room-mates busy with their make-up and changing clothes every five minutes. “There aren't enough mirrors in this room!” I imagine you've heard the same complaint thousand of times! Still, in the end, we are ready to go out.

And when you walk out from the hotel and you find yourself in the middle of Times Square, your feelings overwhelm you. Blinding lights everywhere, the square is crowded at all times of the day. Faces from all races, all colours, smiling, chatting, or simply walking and breathing the New York atmosphere. Suddenly you lose yourself in the sparkling colours, and the insignia all around seem to invite you into an unknown world where, even if you may feel disoriented or alien at first, you will certainly feel a part of it after a while.

The melting pot is cozy, like a harbour. A Cuban restaurant, themed, with fake palms and colourful birds, Cuban food and the inviting rhythm of Cuban music. How could I resist dancing?

The next night we decided to go up the Empire State Building, to have a breathtaking view of the city. It was like being in a dream, with the fresh wind on my face and the feeling, maybe childish but yet exciting, to be on the top of the world, out of space, out of time.

Saturday night: towards an exclusive club, to take part in a hip hop, r'n'b party, and I go into a yellow cab, and wonder: “Why is it that in New York City even grabbing a cab is exciting?” We finally got there and we suddenly we feel like we are in a movie. Luxurious furnishings and coloured lights, resembling a firework display. An expert DJ produces incredible effects, inciting the varied crowd to dance wildly. We are captivated too.

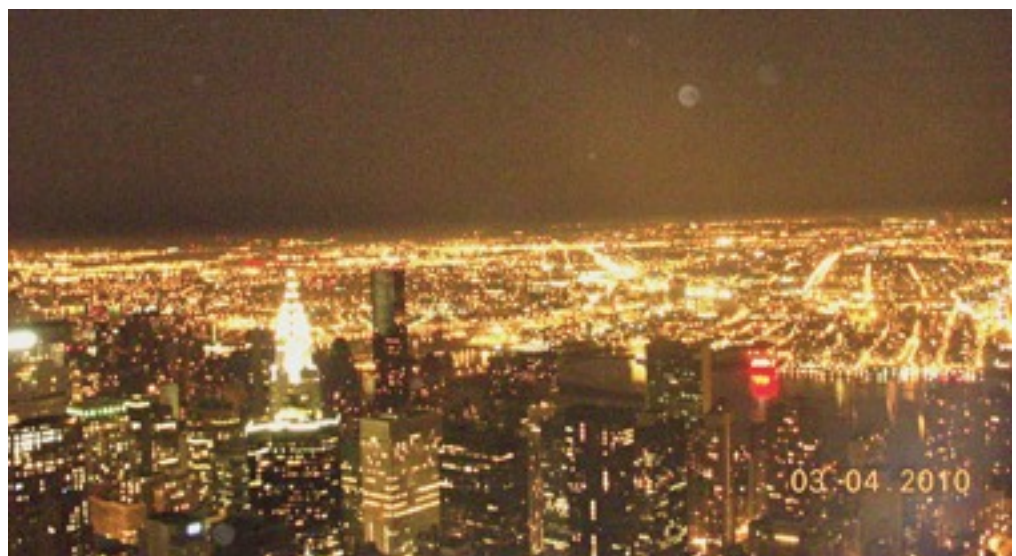
The night slips away fast and we welcome the sunrise from the Brooklyn Bridge eating huge cookies for breakfast.

By now we are exhausted but we decide to spent Easter morning in a Harlem church. It was the first time in my life that I've had fun at a service. People singing out loud together the joy of God and dancing to celebrate the day of festivity, and the sermon was so involving, passionate, intense, that we couldn't stop listening to it! Afterwards they invited us to have lunch together, because they eat together as a community in the lower part of the church on Easter and they welcomed us very warmly.

But we had different plans. We went to Central Park to have a picnic and enjoy some fresh air, evergreen trees, relaxing lakes and streams and the sunshine.

On the way back to our hotel to pack, we stopped at the Museum of Modern Art to see the masterpieces of eternal artists such as Picasso, Klimt, Manet. Standing in front of a picture painted years ago but you feel it so alive that it totally captivates you.

On the plane home, I found myself thinking about my trip with some nostalgia when suddenly I heard a song from my ipod, “Empire State of mind”. This isn't a poem and certainly neither Jay-Z nor Alicia Keys are poets, but I still think they manage to catch the New York spirit when they say: *Concrete jungle where dreams are made of, there's nothing you can't do...Now you're in New York, the streets will make you feel brand new, big lights will inspire you.* Or at least that's what happened to me.



A breathtaking view of New York by night

SAILING ON THE VESPUCCI

By Giulia Sinibaldi (3rd year Mod Langs)

Sailing can't really be considered a popular sport. It often lags behind more popular sports such as football or volleyball. But in my opinion it's one of the best sports you can take part in. I've had quite a lot of sailing experiences, but the one I'm going to talk about is definitely the most exciting.

As a member of the Lega Navale Italiana (L.N.I.), I had the opportunity three years ago to board an Italian Navy ship that was sailing from Ancona to La Spezia. I was so excited; I was going to spend eleven days at sea, living as a member of the crew, sleeping on a hammock. I can't deny I was a little afraid too. But as the days passed, my impatience to set sail grew. And at last the day arrived. I went to Ancona port, and for the first time in my life I saw IT with my very own eyes, not in newspaper page: the Amerigo Vespucci!

Some history

Amerigo Vespucci: everyone knows who he was, or has heard his name at least once in their lives. Unfortunately, not everyone knows that both a continent and a ship were named after him. Not an ordinary ship, but a special one, at least I think so, since it has always fascinated me. The most important Italian training ship, the pride of our Navy.

Few people know about its existence, but even fewer know its history: it was built in 1931 in the Castellamare di Stabia shipyards to substitute the old training ship of the same name. But it wasn't alone: Amerigo Vespucci is the sister ship of another important training ship, the Cristoforo Colombo, launched in 1928. The beauty of these two ships sailing together was unique. Inspired by the vessels of 18th and 19th centuries, they touched the soul of anyone who watched them opening their sails.

With World War II, the Cristoforo Colombo was given to the Soviet Union as indemnity, and was unlucky: deprived of its masts, it was used as a cargo boat. Then, damaged by a fire, it was abandoned and finally laid up.

Despite the loss of its sister ship, the Amerigo Vespucci is still doing its job, and a lot of young people, naval cadets, or simply lovers of sailing



Photo (c. 1935) of the Amerigo Vespucci and the Cristoforo Colombo. Source: Historical archive of the Marina Militare Italiana. Photographer unknown.

experience the unique emotion of spending some time on board, admiring its bow riding the waves.

Back to my experience

Summarizing those days and what the experience meant to me in just a few words isn't easy. Our life on board was highly organized, from the early hours of the day until late at night.

We were split into teams, and followed the program written on the blackboard in the common room. Our teams were of course supervised by the "official teams" made up of the real crew. Fifteen minutes before our turn began, we had to be ready by the bell. Then the boatswain would tell us what our task was: sort out kilometers of ropes, polish the brass, to be on look-out (during which once I saw dolphins swimming close to our ship's bow), scrub the main deck (the most hated job, since the deck is immense, and we usually had to scrub it on the 24.00-4.00 shift!) or help to open the sails.

Of course our life was a bit easier than that of the real crew (but not much) and we were also able to visit the engine-room and so on. The most exciting thing was when they had us climb up the main mast. What I felt looking down to the deck from that height is simply impossible to describe! I think that's the most amazing thing I've done in my life. Of course sailing isn't always like this. Let me just say that there is not another sport which can give you these emotions, enabling you to be so close to the sea and wind, making you feel part of the sea itself.

Anyone for tennis?

A catchphrase



Anybody on for a game of tennis? asks Johnny Tarleton in *Misalliance* (1914), by Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. The dialogue continues:

- BENTLEY. Oh, let's have some more improving conversation. Wouldn't you rather, Johnny?
- JOHNNY. If you ask me, no.
- TARLETON (Johnny's father). Johnny, you don't cultivate your mind. You don't read.

Said to stem from this character in Shaw's play, the catchphrase **Anyone for tennis?** has frequently been used to refer to a British cultural stereotype: upper-class, tennis-playing individuals unconcerned with matters beyond the confines of their own leisure activities. The text of Shaw's play is available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/943>.



Anyone for tennis? is also the title of a 1968 song by UK psychedelic rock band Cream. Here, songwriters Eric Clapton and Martin Sharp link the tennis stereotype described above with the crass commercialism of "jingle

bells" and "fluorescent Christmas cheer" in their strum against the social and political hypocrisies of the time. Lyrics at http://www.elyricsworld.com/anyone_for_tennis_lyrics_eric_clapton.html; video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB2f6-U72Zk>.

A 1970s Monty Python sketch entitled **Tennis, anyone?** provides a humorous take on this cultural stereotype and the language associated with it, simultaneously mocking the explicit violence found in US filmmaker Sam Peckinpah's films. You can see the sketch at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmcrrreUVBeo>, and read the dialogue at <http://www.ibras.dk/montypython/episode33.htm>.

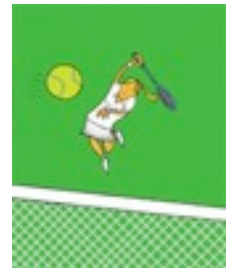


This *Anyone for tennis?* catchphrase has also been used as a title for films, plays and songs, for websites and blogs, and is the name of a contemporary Swedish rock band.

An Evergreen Sport

by Ionica Iordache

Some people believe that tennis derives from the ancient ball games played by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. Others maintain that it stems from a Roman game called *harpastum*. The word **tennis** itself is said to have originated in the 15th



century: when they were about to hit the ball, English tennis players warned their opponent by yelling the French word *tenez!* Given their less-than-perfect pronunciation, the word turned into the present-day **tennis**.

Since 23 February 1874, the official "date of birth" of modern tennis, a number of tournaments have emerged. The most prestigious are the four Grand Slams, namely, the Australian Open, the French Open, the USA Open and the UK's Wimbledon, which is the oldest. The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) carries out a world ranking of players, based on their tournament performances.

Held by many experts to be the most frequently watched sport on TV all over the world, tennis increased in popularity in Italy during the 1980s with players such as Adriano Panatta and Corrado Barazzutti. Both won the Davis Cup, a prestigious tournament for male players, but none of Italy's players have ever been among the ATP top ten. Italy has also won the Fed Cup twice (the equivalent of the Davis Cup for women), and player Flavia Pennetta is now ranked among the top ten by the Women's Tennis Association.

In the past two decades, the way the sport is played has evolved, with increasingly powerful players who are technically less accomplished than previous players. Federer is thought by many to be the greatest tennis player of all time, on account of his unique talent and the many Grand Slams he has won. When he came to Rome last spring, he also received a trophy as the Internet's best-loved tennis player.



ARIES: Emphasis on work and deadlines. Rome invites you to enjoy the sunshine, but be stoic; it's a good time to do more reading since your summer exams are in the offing. Drinking more than seven cups of coffee these days is probably not a good idea. Be English, drink tea! With milk, obviously!

TAURUS: In April something big will happen. It's time to use your hidden skills, don't leave them in your cupboard. You certainly need to spend some time meditating or philosophizing; action can come later. So go to Villa Mirafiori and contemplate upon our little pond: water can be a great source of inspiration. Don't get distracted by the funny frogs!

GEMINI: Big questions are in your mind thanks to someone close who can't stop asking 'why!' Tell that person *Ignorance is bliss!* Always use ancient wisdom to avoid giving precise answers! Your fantastic energy is just right for taking care of practical matters and setting things right. *Practice is better than theory.* Platitudes rule!

CANCER: Students these days are under a lot of pressure to live up to their parents' and peers' expectations, putting in a lot of effort to achieve their career dreams. But not all are lucky enough to get the desired results despite long hours of study. If you're among such students, just take it easy and think about yourself. Have fun!

LEO: You've got plenty to take care of! Your energy levels may be somewhat low, but that is no excuse for slacking off! If you really need to, take a nap on the bus...it's very fashionable these days! Try something new and daring this month, even if you feel more limited than usual.

VIRGO: You're studying a lot, your mind can't stay focused for twenty-four hours, after all! You may find a few answers lurking in the corners of your memory bank. A word of advice: to improve your memory, besides eating fish, listen to a tape of your lessons while sleeping. You may wake up a little confused, but then you will remember everything, or so Hollywood tells us!

LIBRA: Emphasis on thesis, work, classes, tasks waiting to be done, procrastination. Sounds like

you've been surfing too much on Facebook!! Yes, we know it's a place where you know when you log in but then you forget to log out! Depression not inappropriate at this time. Take the battery out of your laptop and hide it! It'll give you the strength to go back to work!

SCORPIO: Use your confidence and charm to shift to something better. Take your time, find the perfect fit and then make your move. Especially in love, study your strategies and then become your own soldier! You can't go wrong. Buy some new perfume and repeat silly phrases of self-encouragement in front of the mirror. They say it works! Long-term plans look particularly promising, especially after a few difficult days.

SAGITTARIUS: Don't believe everything you hear in the Faculty corridors! Do some sleuthing on your own before jumping to any half-baked conclusions. Once you see that the rumours are true, get ready to defend what you believe in! Just avoid violence: mean tricks can be more effective. *Gossip Girl* is a good handbook for such things.

CAPRICORN: Things at the Faculty today will seem about as clear as a muddy puddle, but don't let outdated thinking hold you back. Bureaucracy is your worst enemy, but it's there for a reason: it makes you appreciate that bureaucracy is not everything!

AQUARIUS: When asked if you're OK, you may feel tempted to respond with physical violence. Better to answer *Mind your own business!* Maybe a bit rude, but they won't bother you anymore! You might feel world weary, but the truth is that you're not doing anything worthwhile. This week may be a good opportunity for you to change that. For example take a couple of friends and organize a mad weekend... always worth it!

PISCES: If some things start to appear impossible, it may be time to invent robots. But as the Mad Hatter says: *It's impossible only if you think it is!* The older you get, the more you realize that everyone else is gibbering. When faced with life's problems you generally prefer to use the *cut and run* strategy! It may have some advantages!

THE BACK PAGE

THE EDITORS

Aurora Mazzone (all topics, fiction, proofreader)

Chiara Guida (art)

Cinzia Bianco (all topics)

Dario Fanara (cinema)

Federica Pittori (reviews)

Jennifer Romeo (Erasmus)

Ludovica Tranfaglia (personal experiences)

Silvia Magazzù (PR; articles related to translation)

To contact us on Facebook, see Mira Mag, or look for us under our own names.

If you are registered on La Sapienza elearning, you can also post a message in the Discussion Forum here:

<http://elearning.uniroma1.it/mod/forum/view.php?id=38934>

Banksy's Flower Chucker

To propose material for **MIRAMAG**, get in touch with the editors.

During term-time (2009/10), you can speak directly with one of the eds in room 5 on Wednesdays, approximately 11.00-12.30.

The deadline for our next issue is Saturday 15 May (12.00), but first you should speak with one of the editors about your proposed topic and the content and style of your article.

Prospective authors are strongly advised to read the Guidelines for Contributors (in issue no 3).

If you want to write a film or book review, ask the eds also for a copy of the Guidelines for Reviewers. Read BEFORE writing your review.

Once you've written your article, see your editor for comments. After making any changes suggested, take your article in

person to your English language lecturer for advice on possible revisions and corrections.

Don't send your masterpiece after the deadline - it won't get to our layout people in time!

Publication of material in **MIRAMAG** does not imply that the editors share the views expressed.

Contributors are individually responsible for the accuracy of information in material they provide for publication in **MIRAMAG**, as well as for copyright matters.

The last issue of **MIRAMAG** for 2009/10 comes out on Saturday 22 May 2010.

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD THE PDF VERSION HERE

<http://w3.uniroma1.it/LingueLetterature/>

by Modern Language students. Lettere e Filosofia, La Sapienza University, Rome