

# Miramag 8

A free magazine by Modern Language students, La Sapienza University, Rome



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**Miramag is a free magazine in English by Modern Language students at La Sapienza University, Rome, Italy.**

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Do you have something to say?  
Would you like the opportunity to say it in English?

You can reach the editors by email, on Facebook, and on the MiraMag moodle at <http://elearning.uniroma1.it/course/view.php?id=1092>

All proposals for articles are discussed at our meetings on Fridays at Villa Mirafiori (room 4 16.30-18.00).



Planning meeting for Miramag 9. Some of the eds at work in room 4, 26/11/2010. Photo by Mirapix

*Have you noticed how fast things are changing?*

*The faculty has changed, the political situation is changing and so has Miramag: new sections, a new iTale (in comic format), and a brand new editors' group - except for a couple of old hands from last year's team.*

*And, joining us as proofreaders for this November issue and as editors starting from December are Raffaella and Ilaria.*

*Last month we were four, and now we are ten... a kind of a team, but as Aurora the other old hand says, "communication isn't always easy". Just imagine ten or more people all talking together in a dimly-lit room the size of a chicken coop where the echo is louder than their voices!*

*But hey, at least we have a room of our own for two hours a week!*

*MM8 - a sort of baptism by fire for some of us - focuses as usual on students' experiences: face to face with other cultures (Erasmus and trips abroad), and with artists, filmmakers and writers, also providing interesting reports and comments on events and issues, past, current and future.*

*The creativity of the eds and all contributors is important to us, and you'll find this expressed not only in the iTale comic - your contributions to the development of the story are very welcome! - but also in Knots, which will make you want more.*

*Nothing more to say, just enjoy the Mag and join us on Moodle and Facebook, too!*

*Chiara Guida, senior ed*

# A Parisian In Rome

## An Erasmus Experience

by Stéphanie Magalage

Finally, after all these months of extremely irritating bureaucracy and waiting, here I am for my Erasmus year in Rome. This is the city where cars and bikes seem to fly, where history and culture walk down every street, where coffee and pizza rule, where you forget global warming and the economic crisis and all your everyday worries in the alleys of the *centro storico*, among the churches and surrounded by hills. This is also where the Pope lives, where one particular fountain has more coins thrown into it than any other in the world, where even the squares are famous, where people like Michelangelo, Julius Caesar and Fellini used to hang out (not together though), where buildings cheer you up with their bright colors, even on a rainy day...

Rome has always sounded impressive to me. And the Erasmus experience sounded incredible. So imagine the two together: simply fan-freaking-tastic.

I don't need to introduce Rome to anyone but I must say that it was quite amazing to see all the memories I had of my classes on Ancient Rome coming to life, making my mind travel back in time and enabling me to imagine what it looked like. History has never been more alive than in Rome.

Alongside this, however, breathes a modern and dynamic society, with its institutions, habits and flavors. And it's in this great setting that I get to spend my Erasmus Year. Erasmus immediately rings some bells: change, a unique experience, discoveries, meeting people from everywhere, incredible fun, independence ... basically, it's the ticket for a tremendous personal, human and cultural journey, that I know will mark me forever.

Well, after just a short time, I can already confirm that the promises were true. Every day I discover something new: a place, a street, a shop, a drink, a story. I inhabit the city and yet have the eyes and the genuine curiosity of a visitor. I'm getting to meet so many different people, from all over Europe (and elsewhere), who quickly become my new friends, sharing with me great parties, trips, travels and laughs. I'm getting to know the city and noticing the differences between it and Paris, my hometown, but I'm also starting to appreciate it - aside from the rarely empty trash cans, the crowds, the never-ending

stairs and corridors of Termini, and the tiny two-line subway network.

Opportunities, new plans and possibilities are popping up from everywhere, and I'm grabbing and enjoying them all. My mind is opening up like never before, and my appetite for life is greedier than ever: that's Erasmus. If it had a motto, I believe *Carpe Diem* would fit perfectly.

But not everything is easy for Erasmus students. I think that, like me, everyone misses their family, friends and city; I sometimes feel lost, out of place, and sometimes I even feel stupid when I don't understand some of your customs – like paying for your coffee **before** you get it, or not knowing what to call the particular sandwich I want because there are so many different kinds of bread!

The university strikes didn't help my general disorientation as a foreign student, and I found both useful and useless information everywhere and nowhere at the same time. My search for the classes I need to attend is like the ultimate quest (I swear). Still now, many Erasmus students haven't sorted out their classes and are starting to feel homesick for the time they used to learn things at university.

But guess what, even these difficulties are actually good points: thanks to them, we can become more autonomous, more patient, more pro-active in getting what we want: it's a way of growing up.

Anyways, the most important thing is that I know I'm not here forever, which is why, trust me, with or without problems, I will make this year legendary! How about you guys come and share it with me and my Erasmus friends?



Roma by night. Photo by Cinzia Bianco, 2010

# Alessia in Wonderland

by Irene Pellecchia

**Alessia talks to MiraMag editor Irene Pellecchia about her four-month stay in Moscow: the terrorist attack of 29 March, the Parade on 9 May... and her love of this city.**

**IRENE: Is there a big difference between living in Rome and living in Moscow?**

**ALESSIA:** I didn't see any differences that shocked me. I think it's obvious that you're going to find lifestyle differences in a new country, but you get used to them easily. The first thing you notice is that there are few very rich people but lots of poor people: there is a huge gap in this respect among the population. In the city centre there are lots of shops but they're really expensive: some Russian people are willing to spend up to 12,000 roubles (about €300) just for a drink! Some people think that if something costs a lot, it's necessarily good. I don't see any point in this! There are lots of cool cafes with excellent tea and cakes (although Russian cakes are not that good). There are also plenty of Italian restaurants if you don't like Russian food. And many pubs and clubs too. Once I went to a disco and it was a wonderful experience: the podium dancers were all really beautiful and the DJ was great. Suddenly a real horse appeared: it was part of the show, and we were all amazed! The streets are enormous and the buildings are really high. There are a lot of skyscrapers - even the University has thirty-two floors. The only thing that can make you feel lost is that everything is so big! But then you start to love everything in the city.

**IRENE: Can you tell me something about the attack at the underground?**

**ALESSIA:** Fortunately, I was in my bed sleeping when the underground exploded. The attack took place early in the morning when people were on their way to work. It was a total shock, also because the Moscow underground is very beautiful - it's like a museum. The terrorist attack was on the line that I usually took to go to university. They made the coaches explode by using a telephone linked to the bombs. One of the terrorists was a 17-year-old girl.

The President's first reaction was to say: "We have to destroy these beasts."

**IRENE: Was there an increase in security measures because of the fear of terrorism?**

**ALESSIA:** Of course. Policemen were often in theatres, stadiums and public places to check you and your bags. For example, you couldn't enter the University if you didn't have your student ID with you. Your parents couldn't enter if they didn't sign a statement attesting their status as family members.

**IRENE: What was the best experience you had there?**

**ALESSIA:** The 9 May Parade. It was a wonderful day and I really enjoyed it. It was the 65th anniversary of the liberation from Nazism, and the entire city was in celebration. There was a huge military parade, an exhibition of tanks and weapons. There was also an open-air museum showing what a real trench war was like. At night there was an enormous karaoke session with war songs, and a firework display. I have never seen such beautiful fireworks!

**IRENE: Is there a stronger patriotism than in Italy?**

**ALESSIA:** Yes, definitely. Russian people have a strong bond with their culture, habits and beliefs. They have limited freedoms as their political system is more authoritarian than ours. For example, in Italy Gay Pride

can demonstrate freely. In Russia it is strictly controlled by the army. They also hold their president in high regard: when he has to go somewhere, they close all the streets in order to allow him to travel safely and without traffic. In spite of their strict policies, the police are easy to corrupt: you can simply pay if you don't want to be reported for something.

**IRENE: Would you recommend going there?**

**ALESSIA:** Obviously yes! If I could, I'd go back immediately. I really liked living there. The Russian people are really hospitable and kind and they like to have fun. Moscow is wonderful. If you go, I suggest going out often and visiting all the beautiful places that the city offers. It's a really wonderful adventure.



A view from Moscow city centre, 14 February 2010. Photo by Alessia.



# Empire State of Mine

Diary of a visit to NYC

by Federica Mancuso



**Finally, after nine hours in the air, I could see the lights of this beautiful city: I was standing on the Big Apple! At the airport with my boyfriend, I could feel the USA spirit in the air and was totally overjoyed.**

**Day 1:** Jet lag woke me up at 4 am. I was tired but that didn't stop me since New York is the city that never sleeps. At five am I was in the subway, ready to discover the wonders of Manhattan! The first attraction I saw, and one I'll always carry in my heart, was the statue of Liberty or rather Miss Liberty, the giant breathtaking statue which has represented the US since 1886. Then I started on my downtown visit, which included Wall Street, Chinatown, Little Italy, Soho and Noho. Chinatown was full of Chinese restaurants with shop windows showing live fish in aquariums, ready to be cooked and eaten - maybe tempting for some people, but personally I felt sad for those poor little minnows. The food stores also had bags containing dry shrimps which at first looked like peanuts, but I found the smell offputting.

**Day 2:** I started out for Central Park bright and early. Delacorte Theatre is one of the park's major attractions, hosting productions of Shakespeare's tragedies during the summer, with famous actors such as Robert De Niro. Since the afternoon was particularly sunny, we decided to go for a walk on the Brooklyn Bridge, where we were able to observe the city's majestic skyline. The Bridge seemed longer seen from Manhattan, but we crossed it in just 15 minutes.



Me in Brooklyn Bridge Park, right next to the bridge

**Day 3:** Museum day (raining!). First the Guggenheim Museum of Art to admire the masterpieces by Picasso and Kandinsky, then on to the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) where I saw some of the strangest sculptures ever, including a giant helicopter hanging from the ceiling, as though it was flying. Although exhausted, I also visited the solemn Metropolitan museum, which boasts a fascinating Egyptian gallery.

**Day 4:** The morning was beautiful, perfect for going up to the 86th floor of the Empire State Building. Once on the observation deck (it took less than forty seconds in the elevator), I was dumbfounded by the view. It felt like the city was mine, that I could control everything from that height! The day continued with a tour around New York City's streets, looking out for the most famous ones, including Broadway with its sparkling theatres. Unfortunately I didn't see any plays because I found them really expensive, but I consoled myself by going to Fifth Avenue to do some shopping at its fantastic shops.

**Days 5-6:** We got up early to catch a bus to the Niagara Falls. They were gorgeous in the dark, lit up by rainbow colours projected onto them. In the morning we boarded the Maid of the Mist, the boat that takes tourists right under the Falls. In spite of the splashes, I managed to take some pics.



Niagara Falls seen from New York side

**Day 7:** Half the day was dedicated to sport (because of my boyfriend). After visiting the US Open Stadium, we went to see the famous Yankee Stadium and in the afternoon had a quick lunch on campus at Columbia University, where I chatted with an Italian girl who was studying literature there. She told me that studying at Columbia is amazing: you can choose from hundreds of activities and there's a team for every sport! However, you have to study really hard because the professors are very demanding of their students. I spent the rest of the day in Times Square, dazzled by the millions of billboard lights illuminating the dark sky as though it were daylight!!

**Day 8:** I reluctantly returned home after eight unforgettable days in the fabulous New World. I would have loved to stay, but my life was calling me back to Italy!





11 November 1888

November 2010, MIRAMAG 8





# Back to the Past

by Veronica Saputo

**On 11 November, 1888, Jack the Ripper killed his last known victim.**

Jack the Ripper was more than an ordinary murderer. He was the first serial killer of the Modern Age, and the aura of mystery shrouding him right from the start led to the creation of a myth. Almost everyone knows the name but few people know much about his real story. Interest in this figure has nonetheless continued. Why?

First of all, it should be noted that the press played a prominent role in creating the myths surrounding the Ripper. All his activities and grotesque murders were chronicled in the newspapers, which helped bestow national and even international notoriety on the case. The story of the mysterious killer certainly aroused curiosity, but it also caused panic among people, especially on account of the horrible way he killed his victims. He allegedly committed five horrific dreadful murders in ten weeks, and this figure may only be a rough estimate.

The murderer was an unknown man, apparently dressed in black, who also wrote scary letters in red ink, defying the police to find him. He was never caught. After his last victim, he completely disappeared, dragging his terrible secret with him to the grave. Criminologists and experts (known as Ripperologists) are still trying to solve the puzzle of who he was.

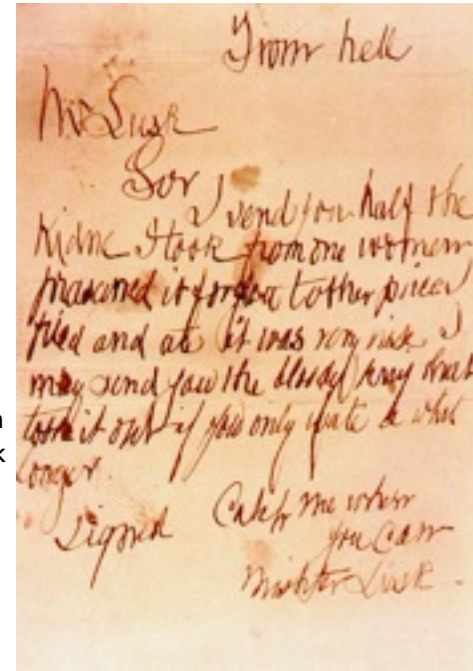
Several hypotheses concerning his identity have been put forward over the years, some rather improbable (Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde, just to mention two well-known ones), and others more founded, such as those of Dr. Druitt and Ostrog (both doctors, one from London and the other Russian). But it seems unlikely that the truth will ever come to light.

Would he be caught if he was murdering today? It's difficult to say. While it's true that there is better security and street lighting nowadays, the Ripper never left any clues behind. If he were alive today, he

might not have made his murders so public, and he would certainly have known all about DNA analysis and contemporary forensics.

Over the past century, the Ripper has been the focus of innumerable books, plays, musicals and films, including *From Hell* (dir. by Allen Hughes and Albert Hughes, 2001), a title taken from a letter posted by a man claiming to be the murderer. There is even a game entitled *Sherlock Holmes versus Jack the Ripper*. In addition to London's Ripper Tours for tourists, there are many in Ripper fan clubs and pubs.

The name itself no doubt plays a role: the name *Jack the Ripper* is said to have been invented by a journalist. In the collective imagination, the name is certainly associated with fear and terror: an unseen killer in a top hat and a dark cloak, a terrifying creature "from hell" ready to rip his victims apart. The press, or mass media in general, continues to play a significant role in driving people's morbid curiosity towards the murders of today, but the Ripperologists who dedicate their lives to their subject, together with the culture industry and tourism will ensure that he is one murderer who will never be forgotten around the world.



**Above: photograph of the "From Hell" letter:**

*Sir I send you half the Kidne I took from one women prasarved it for you tother piece I fried and ate it was very nise. I may send you the bloody knif that took it out if you only wate a whil longer.*

The letter has no signature, just the words "signed Catch me when you can Mishter Lusk".

It is thought that the author of the letter was trying to fool Lusk (Chief of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee) by appearing semi-illiterate.





# The Silent Mafia

by Salvo La Ferla

When the word *mafia* is used, most people associate it with American films such as *The Godfather*, or with the Sicilian criminal organization called *Cosa Nostra*. Many people, including journalists, rarely use the *Cosa Nostra's* real name; they just use the word *mafia*, even though this is not the name of the Sicilian criminal organization but the name given to any secret criminal organization.

So *Cosa Nostra* is not *the* mafia but *a* mafia, like the *Camorra* and *'Ndrangheta*. These are the most powerful criminal organizations in Italy, although there are many others. These organizations are made up of several families, each with its own boss and so-called soldiers (they are obliged to do anything ordered by the boss), and the most powerful families are connected to politics. A criminal organization that is not connected to politics could not be called *mafia*: they would only be simple gangsters.

There's one organization that throughout the years has become really powerful, and right now is the one that holds more power than any other: it's the mafia of Calabria, known as *'Ndrangheta*. At the moment, they are the main source of weapons and drug traffic in Italy. How did it become so powerful? It's simple: because the media have never talked about it, and they're only starting to do so now.

Recent history has shown that Italy's government decides to take serious measures against a criminal organization only when a tragedy happens, or only when it's in the news. This is not because they didn't know about it beforehand, but because if everything is silent, they prefer to let it be. That's really sad, but true. *'Ndrangheta* has been able to act silently with no opposition by the state (maybe only by few local politicians). Meanwhile, all the effort has

gone towards fighting *Cosa Nostra* in the last twenty years, and the *Camorra* in the last decade.

The government recently decided to send the army into Calabria, after a bazooka was sent to the public procurator Giuseppe Pignatone as a threat on October 5th. At least this time they didn't wait until someone got killed! In Sicily during the 80s, about one thousand people died in the war among the *Cosa Nostra* families, and the government decided to send the army only in 1992, after magistrates Falcone and Borsellino were assassinated. Since then, many things have changed in Sicily, although the mafia obviously still exists.

So far, the *'Ndrangheta* has not assassinated any magistrates or politicians. But do we really need to wait for a tragedy to happen? It seems like there's a lack of interest on the part of the government to fight criminal organizations until they show themselves to be a serious threat. By sending the bazooka to the public procurator's office in Reggio Calabria, *'Ndrangheta* is telling the government that they are prepared to fight the state, if necessary.

With all the problems Italy has at the moment, the last thing we need is another war of the state against a criminal organization. As shown in the 90s, if the state really wants to defeat the *'Ndrangheta*, they can do it, and must, before things get worse (for example before some local politician gets killed).

Since these organizations wouldn't be so powerful if they didn't have some connections inside political parties, the government should start by getting rid of corrupt politicians. Unfortunately, however, the corrupt appear to be untouchable. So let's just hope that history doesn't repeat itself.



# Girl Pride

by Salvo La Ferla

**Report on *Immagini di donne sullo schermo (Images of women on screen)*, a conference held at Scienze Della Comunicazione, La Sapienza University on 18 November 2010**

The word *image* means representation of the external form of a person or thing. In modern society, the media play a very important role in giving us impressions about all aspects of life, so the main point of the conference was the image given as regards women. The conference was divided into two main parts; the first focused on *gender studies*, and the second on how the media represent women.

What are *gender studies*? As explained by Marisa Ferrari, La Sapienza Director of Equal Opportunities and Gender Policies, this discipline examines the relationship between gender and society, and started in the US in the 70s. There are currently several research projects being carried out in Europe, also in the universities.

Claudia Padovani is a member of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), created in 1994 at a meeting where four hundred women realised that there was no international project that examined the relationship between women and media. The first official meeting of the GMMP was held in 1995, and since then has taken place every five years. The project analyses TV and radio programs, the press and web sites of various countries, with the goal of promoting greater participation by women in the media, and of ensuring that they are not represented as stereotypes. It seems to have attracted a lot of

interest, since more and more countries are joining in: in 1995, seventy countries participated, while at this year's meeting there were 108. There are similar projects that analyse the role of women specifically in the Italian media, such as the EU-funded GEMMA (Gender and Media Matter).

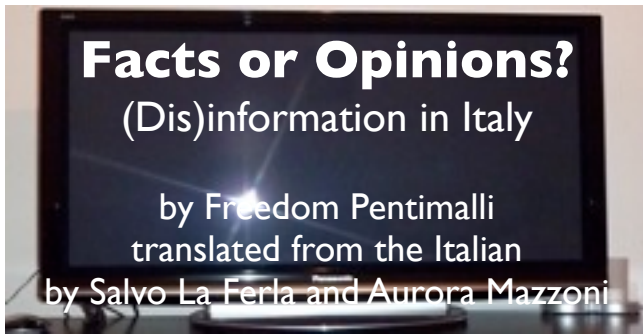
The fact is that not enough women participate in the media. Loredana Cornero (a member of GEMMA) used to work for RAI, Italy's state-owned broadcaster, and wondered why there is only *one* woman on its board of administrators. She pointed out that women need to show the world how important they are for society: "Many of my colleagues, when they talk in public, like to specify that they're not feminists. Well, I am!" She is really proud of being a woman, and she would like to see all women in the world fight for their dreams.

Through an analysis of different points of view, it was shown how entertainment programs represent women mostly as sex objects (especially on Italian TV), and in TV serials they rarely have an important role since the main character is usually male. On pay TV, there are some channels only for women, but that wasn't perceived as positive by the conference participants, but just another way of setting up distinctions between men and women.

In her talk on the importance of women in information, Nella Condorelli (journalist and member of the Lazio Region's Equal Opportunities Council) claimed that in Italian information, women are almost invisible, and that most journalists (including women) prefer to talk about facts regarding men, because they (the men) play a more important role in society. I suggest she take a look at **Miramag!**

**WHO  
MAKES THE  
NEWS?**

For more information on  
GMMP, see  
[www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)  
/ For GEMMA see  
[www.gemmaproject.eu](http://www.gemmaproject.eu).



When talking about information, people should bear in mind the basic idea of a process in which someone gives information and somebody else receives it through some kind of medium, namely TV, newspapers, blogs or radio.

Let's now transpose this process on contemporary Italian society, starting from a fundamental point: two-thirds of the Italian population access the news through the TV. It follows that newscast quality has a decisive influence in guiding public opinion with regard to facts, and this is why newscasts should be as unbiased as possible.

Unfortunately, in Italy (and elsewhere) this reality appears to be too far away. It's easy to see that each political alignment has its faithful newscast, due to the influence that politics has on the media business.

Among the newscasts with the highest viewer ratings, the newscasts TG1, TG4 and TG5 are pro-government (centre-right), while the more critical TG3 and TGLa7 are considered to be centre-left. This may lead people to believe that the actual news is the *opinion* on the fact and not the fact itself.

Newscasts are becoming the loudspeakers of one or the other political party, continually issuing statements and opinions. But when will they talk about the facts? Well, actually, Italian information is characterized by the disappearance of the facts! Another worrying element is constituted by the viewers who often watch only their favourite newscast, and with no critical spirit, taking everything for granted.

But not everybody lets Tv news mould her or his mind. Fortunately, a large proportion of the younger generation gets its information from other sources such as blogs and websites, trying to build on knowledge.

I carried out a small-scale survey with twenty people under 25 to find out how they got updated on worldwide events: just over half of them consult mainly the Internet, while a small group stated that they vary between the web, newspapers and TV.

One out of ten only reads newspapers and only 5% prefer TV. Those who stated that they choose TV to get information said that they also rely on international newscasts such as the BBC, confirming, in my opinion, a request for real information, or at least some alternative to the information given on Italian TV.

Even if the medium through which news is sent and received changes, the fundamental thing which determines the quality of a democracy is the critical sensibility of the receivers (whether they are readers, viewers or listeners), a sensibility which stems from a strong awareness of the need for peaceful coexistence and a sociocultural growth.

When Noam Chomsky said that the mass media are a way of "**manufacturing consent**", he surely had his reasons!

## A Farewell to Arms

by E. Hemingway

revisited by Pablo Sanchez Arias

***In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains.[...] Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees.[...] Beyond the plain the mountains were brown and bare. There was fighting in the mountains and at night we could see the flashes from the artillery. In the dark it was like summer lightning. (Ch.1)***

What comes into your mind if I say *A Farewell to Arms*? is it a song? is it a film? No! it is one of Ernest Hemingway's most famous novels! Perhaps the work that gave him his reputation as writer. Published in 1929, this semi-autobiographical novel is about lieutenant Frederick Henry's World War I experience as an ambulance driver at the Italian front, and his love affair to a British nurse named Catherine Barkley.

You may think this is the usual stuff about war and love, but once you begin reading you'll get into it in the twinkling of an eye. Both for its intriguing story and for its simple and rather unadorned language. Hemingway found in his war the perfect setting for an unforgettable novel, based mainly in Italy and describing a country torn apart by war.

***There were troops on this road and motor trucks and mules with mountain guns and as we went down, keeping to one side, and across, under a hill beyond the river, the broken houses of the little town that was to be taken. (Ch. 8)***

The story itself is based on Hemingway's actual experiences in 1918 as he recovered from a shell wound in a Milan hospital (as happens to Henry), and his engagement to a nurse named Agnes von Kurowsky (like Henry's engagement to Mrs Barkley). Hemingway's wife Pauline Pfeiffer was actually giving birth as he was writing about Barkley's childbirth.

The title itself symbolizes Henry's departure from the cruelty and futility of war, in order to satisfy his need for human relationships, but happiness seems to be temporary.

Love, war and death are the backdrop to this masterpiece. The relationship between the main character and his wife is interwoven with the war itself, and death is represented by the falling rain throughout the tale. This novel proved to be a breakthrough in modern literature. Something really worth reading even today!

The Italian edition of the novel, entitled *Addio alle Armi*, was translated in 1943 by Fernanda Pivano, herself a successful writer and journalist, together with her professor Cesare Pavese. The Italian text, however, could not be read in Italy until 1948. Pivano was sent to prison after it was published, and the Italian text was banned by the Fascist government because it describes the defeat at Caporetto.



# This is England

reviewed by Martina Meloni



Written and directed by: Shane Meadows  
Country: England, 2006  
Starring: Thomas Turgoose, Joe Gilgun, Andrew Shim, Stephen Graham, Rosamund Hanson and Vicky McClure.  
Awards: 'Best Film' and 'Most Promising Newcomer' at the British Independent Film Awards; 'Winner of The Special Jury Award' at Rome Film Festival.

AVAILABLE IN THE LANGUAGE LAB,  
VILLA MIRAFIORI

**England, 1983.** If someone had just a little scrap of knowledge of what this bunch of letters truly means, they wouldn't probably need to watch this film. Actually, the opposite is also true: having direct experience with that era or simply being an enthusiast for Toots and the Maytals or The Cimarrons means having to watch this pic, because rarely has a director succeeded in drawing such a perfect, poignant and sometimes painful portrait of a culture.

Because this is what we're talking about: the cultural and social background of England of the 1980s. A critical period for the nation, a time when mods, skinheads, suedeheads and punks were raging, precisely those who would later make up today's country. But not just people are part of this powerful

film: music could be considered among the main characters as well, since it is through Jamaican ska, rocksteady, reggae and soul music that this film comes to life and manages to show the true face of an era.

The opening scene makes it clear what I'm talking about: a chaotic and yet potent mixture of images whizzes us back to the past, where we find Margaret Thatcher desperately trying to keep hold of a nation unjustly plunged into the dramatic Falklands war (no wonder then about the graffiti on a church wall that says "Maggie is a twat"), where unemployed miners and National Front marches, together with the episodes of growing violence against the Pakistani community, make the headlines, while some English people still dream about Diana's marriage.

It is in this background that we get to know 13-year-old Shaun (Thomas Turgoose), a lonely and fatherless teenager who strives not to be the butt of bullies' jokes at school, and whose existence is basically dull and run-of-the-mill until he bumps into a gang of skinheads, Woody (Joe Gilgun) and his friends. From now on, Shaun lives in the world of the English white working class of the early 80s, where a young boy's must-have is a Ben Sherman's, a pair of Doc Martens and a cropped head.

At this point the director's aim is to show how skinhead culture was in no way related to extreme right-wing movements or racism. This culture blossoms through a close bond with its Jamaican heritage, with black music - thus denying the possibility of hatred towards Blacks.

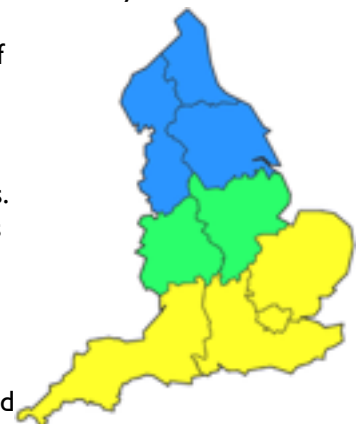
At the start, skinheads were young people who idolised West Indian music, who just tried to get by in the not-so-well-off and possibly gloomy parts of England. They were not thugs, they didn't stand for violence.

However, Shaun's experiences through the film will reveal to him the dangers behind the surface: there is a half hidden segment of the same society, represented by Combo (Stephen Graham) ready to take advantage of what reviewer Peter Bradshaw calls the boy's and nation's "fatherless culture", and to drag him - and England - into the darkest scenario possible, that of overt racism and random violence (in *The Guardian* online, 27/04/2007).

Will Shaun make a choice? If so, what will it be: THIS England or perhaps some other identity?

Most of the beauty of this film stems from the director's precise choice and its consequences: Shane Meadows wanted to set his story in the Midlands (and much of the film was shot in Nottinghamshire, including the inner city area of Nottingham known as the Meadows) not only because this is obviously the heart of the society depicted, but also to give us the opportunity to experience first-hand the atmosphere of the places, the landscape, the sights that make up the characters' lives. Hence, the decision to let the characters speak with their genuine accents, as well as slang and personal idiolects. In this way, the viewers' immersion in this England becomes complete.

*This is England* accomplishes a tough mission: restoring the historically objective truth about the development of one of the major social groups of the 80s, and representing the main social and cultural influences of a difficult period, when England had to face a new, revolutionary time. This is yesterday's England, a country that speaks from the past, and to which the English owe a cultural debt. In some respects, it is also today's England.



Blue: Northern England  
Green: the Midlands  
Yellow: Southern England

# Mexico. Pictures of a Revolution

exhibition review by Chiara Guida



Garduno, A nine-year-old trumpeter

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the political situation in Mexico changed and so did the economy of the country. The modernization represented by the railway – “the revolution was made on the railways”, Guillermo Treviño – and the increasing WEALTH created a huge gap between the social classes.

As written in the accompanying leaflet: “The Mexican Revolution, the first great social uprising in the modern world, began as a political movement seeking to establish genuine democracy, with peasant farmer participation in the share-out and working of the land. The country’s heady modernization before the revolution was based on the ongoing expansion of large landholdings, thus forcing hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers into the role of *peones*, salaried workers with no say in anything, or else driving them to emigrate in search of gloomy jobs in the cities. The huge gap between the social classes [...] eventually sparked the outbreak of a bloody war that ended only in 1920”.



Anonymous, Opening of the electrified tramlines, Federal District, 1900. INAH National Photographic archives



J. Guerrero, Women learning how to shoot for self defence

Apart from the historical events themselves, what makes the exhibition peculiar and interesting are the revolution protagonists’ faces. Though in black and white, the pictures I saw revealed every single feeling those people must have experienced: the revolutionaries’ pride, the children’s fear, and most of all the strength of the women, who played an important role as *adelitas/soldaderas* (female soldiers), and as nurses, mothers and wives, providing their families with food even in the most difficult situations (see “Women cooking on the roof of a train”, anonymous, 1913).

Just like the historical events, the phases of the development of photography itself are chronologically organised, since this exhibition also aims to explain how photography and photographers changed during the ten years of the revolution. Every section is provided with panels explaining the Aesthetics behind the photographers’ works.

One of the most famous among them was the German Hugo Brehme, who arrived in Mexico when the US Army invaded Veracruz, one of the most devastating events of those years (see “US marines, their faces darkened with coffee beans or dirty water from the boilers to blend in with the Mexican prisoners”, Hugo Brehme, 1914). During this last period, the photographs became more realistic and spontaneous also thanks to the smaller size of the cameras, which helped to increase the number of direct testimonies.

Whether you are interested in photography or in the history of Mexico (maybe because you are taking courses in Spanish or Hispanic Studies) or you are just curious, this is a good exhibition to visit during these sometimes rainy and cold winter days.

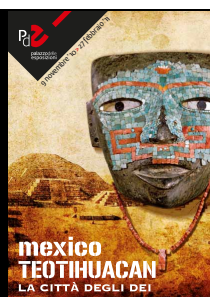
And don’t miss the section called “Sounds of the Revolution”!

## DON’T MISS THIS EITHER!

Once you are at Palazzo delle Esposizioni you mustn’t miss the opportunity to visit the other exhibitions related to Mexico (one ticket for three exhibitions): one about the Mexican artist Carlos Amoraes, the other about Teotihuacan. The City of Gods (both 9 November – 27 February). I visited the second of these and recommend that you do the same. It is a well organised exhibition, where sounds, images and archaeological finds are mixed together in order to make you feel part of this pre-Columbian society. Only two words are needed to describe this exhibition: amazing and absorbing.



Mexico. Pictures of a Revolution  
Palazzo delle Esposizioni  
5 October 2010 – 9 January  
2011  
Tuesday - Thursday 10.00 - 20.00  
Friday - Saturday 10.00 - 22.30  
Sunday 10.00 - 20.00  
Closed on Mondays  
Full price tickets: €12.50;  
reduced price: €10.





# Undo

di Jacopo Rinaldi

a cura di Daniele Pentassuglio

3.4.5 dicembre 2010

Il Laboratorio

Trastevere



November 2010, MIRAMAG 8

## IRISH FILM FESTA.4

CASA DEL CINEMA 24-28 NOVEMBRE 2010



to find out more, see [www.irishfilmfesta.org](http://www.irishfilmfesta.org)

### Undo

*This exhibition stems from the thesis project entitled "Ostensioni" carried out by Jacopo Rinaldi at the Rome Academy of Fine Arts.*

*It includes a photography section, several paintings and two video projects.*

*The exhibition covers various themes: from the display of the body as flesh, to female genital mutilation; from the oxymoronic processes of doing and undoing, to the theme of transgenerating.*

*The gallery will be open for three consecutive days, from 3 to 5 December 2010, from 18.30 till late.*

*The artist and the curator look forward to welcoming you on Friday 3 December at 18.30 for a vernissage drink.*

Il Laboratorio - Via del Moro, 49

Trastevere

# Where she ends and it begins

by Stella Bardani



Changes are the key to my life. Betty LaHaine

***“I lay no claims of giving messages to humanity. What would be the sense of my works when there are the works of Magritte around the world? I am not a genius, rather than an artist I am a worker. My works don’t need to be beautiful or not, they are just right. I wanted to study. I work on my canvas when I’m in the right mood, when I want; it makes me feel good.”***

Betty LaHaine studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, but at the moment she’s on a nine-month Erasmus visit to Granada, preparing her thesis on bodily alterations. Born in 1988 in Rome, she is also mother to a beautiful child. What strikes me most is the profound meanings of her words and the incredible power of her artworks. Her pictorial technique recalls that of children: instead of using canvas she uses bedsheets. First she wraps objects or people in sheets, and then uses a paint roller to cover them with acrylic paint. This technique goes beyond traditional painting methods and emphasizes the matter and form of each element used.

She sparks off a double game. Firstly, a game force within each element caught in its singularity: the independent functions become

connected to one another only during the production process.

Secondly, the game she plays as a means that decides only the disposition and the deployment of the components used. She just assembles the parts, acting as the frame for her works: respecting the authenticity of the objects themselves, without distorting the materials but following them. If the sheet gets folded at some points, she won’t straighten it out: it’s not necessary to force the elements. Soft colours rather than strong ones are used, so as not to divert attention from the shapes.

***“Figures come up and everything is exactly how it should be; that is the way I expected it. The elements themselves decide the final result of the work.”***



Clockwise from the top: L’agonie della Semillante; Le teste degli uomini; No name.





# Knots

by Stella Bardani and Aurora Mazzoni

- People just can't imagine how easily lives get crossed.

This was the thought that went through Sara's mind while as she stepped into the Lettere e Filosofia Faculty building. Sara was an Art History student at Sapienza University, Rome. She was twenty-two and had just had an unusual night, or at least for her it had been something out of the ordinary. She had met up with her friend and fellow student Giulia at Disarm, a club set in the heart of the city.

- I often come here on Friday nights coz my neighbour works here as a bartender and her roommate Lorenzo, he's so hot!!

That had been Giulia's explanation for inviting Sara to a gay event.

- Why are you chasing after someone who's unobtainable?

- Ok, I know he's not straight but I can't stop thinking about him.

- You'll get over it, but you'd be better off falling for somebody else! Let's drink to it!

- Hi Marina, how you doin'? Let me introduce a friend of mine. This is Sara.

- Hi there. Can I get you a drink?

- That'd be great! A Vodka Tonic for me and a Cape Code for Sara.

Sara found herself staring at Marina while she prepared the cocktails. Marina was captivated by Sara's appearance. One drink after another until the club emptied. Giulia got completely drunk to stop thinking about Lorenzo's absence, and Sara and Marina decided to take her home. After helping Giulia into bed, they smoked a cigarette on the couch. Marina went towards the door but Sara stopped her. She didn't know why but she kissed her. While they were kissing Marina realized that it was exactly what she wanted.

They spent the night together. In the morning they were woken up by Marina's mobile. It was Elisabetta, Marina's girlfriend.

- You bitch! Where the fuck are you? she shouted from the other end of the line.

- Hi honey! Giulia came to Disarm and I took her home coz she felt sick. I stayed over to make sure she was alright!

Sara gave Marina an astonished look, and was also kind of pissed off. Marina hung up and left. All she said as she went out the door was "Sorry."

Sara went home and found Simone waiting for her, with breakfast ready on the table for both of them, and worrying because she hadn't come home the previous night.

- I spent the night at Giulia's.

- Are you sure you're all right? You look like a ghost.

- I'm fine, just a little bit tired, but I'm not a child and there's no need to be so worried. I can look after myself.

With that, she went off to the bathroom to have a shower. Simone had been in love with her since he was twelve, when they lived in a small village in the countryside, and when they had decided to come to Rome to study he had hoped that she would fall for him, too. This had not happened, obviously. But he knew her well and was sure that something had happened the previous night. He knocked on the bathroom door, but didn't get an answer although he heard her crying. He opened the door. Sara was sitting in the bath, naked. She was sad like all people who are unable to find explanations. She needed to talk, she needed to hear something that Marina hadn't said. She started to tell Simone everything in detail. He listened to her silently but felt like he was dying inside.

- I gotta meet the guys now, sorry.

Simone decided to go on over to Francesco and Alessandro's. They were the other members of their rock band, the Red Carpet. A few minutes after getting there, he started spewing out everything he had inside. Francesco suggested they start playing in order to take his mind off things.

(Stay tuned...)



# iTale comic

by Aurora Mazzoni and Giovanni Fubi Guida









