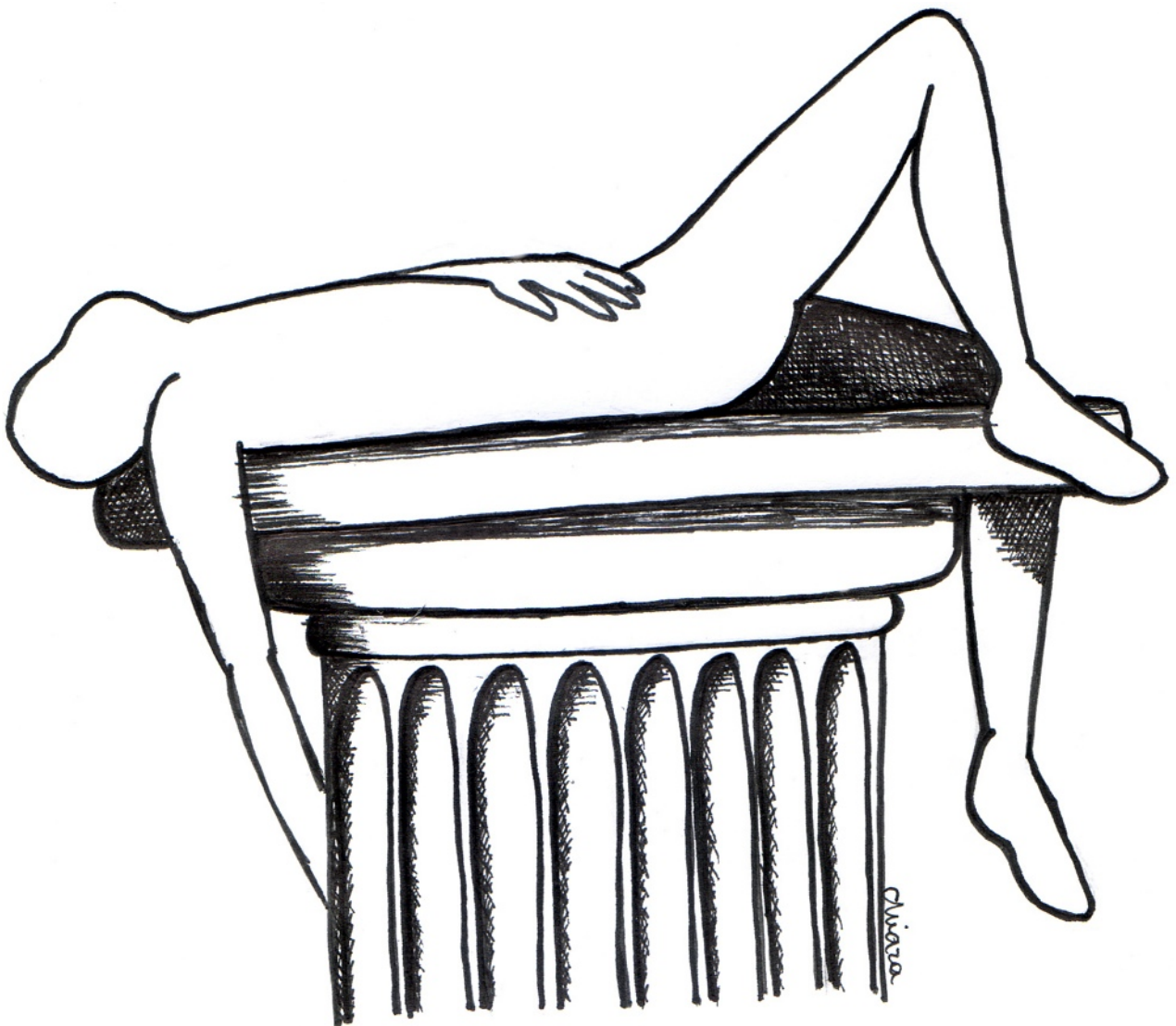


December 2010, MIRAMAG 9

# Miramag 9

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



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

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to say it in English?

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All proposals for articles and  
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Mirafiori (room 4  
16.30-18.00), on Facebook  
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Cover: Drawing by Chiara Guida,  
2010. See article on page 3.

### What they wrote about MiraMag 8...

**Stéphanie Megalage:** *The new MiraMag is ... brilliant! I loved it, so many interesting articles and ideas!*

**Linda Lappin:** *Looks good!*

**Isabella Imperiali:** *Complimenti!!! è davvero un lavoro straordinario.*

**Raffaella Sette:** *devo dire che siete molto bravi!*

### Welcome back Ladies & Gentlemen,

*This is the last issue before a long break and I'm sure for some of you living without MM until March will be hard, but we are leaving you a lot to read and to play ~with.*

*This issue has: Knots part 2, articles about cinema, art, about Xmas of course, some great interviews, all ~with special people and one with someone really special... And, please don't forget the Song Game!*

*I'll stop here with the spoilers, and I just want to wish you all the best, for the New Year, and good luck in your exams!*

*Chiara Guida, senior ed*

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## When Contemporary Means Ancient

by Chiara Guida

A few days ago, while channel-hopping, I heard the host of an Art programme comparing Italy's contemporary students to the ancient Stylites. Unfortunately I wasn't able to listen to the rest, but still I wanted to learn more, and this is what I found.

The term *stylite*, derived from the Greek word *stylos*, meaning "pillar", refers to a type of Christian ascetic, also known as a Pillar-Saint, who in the early days of the Byzantine Empire stood on pillars while preaching, fasting and praying.

Of course no student is in the habit of climbing pillars to pray - well, maybe some do before an exam -, but to me the comparison is successful if based on the concept of **appropriation**.

The process of appropriation, or cultural borrowing, which includes art and urbanism, is studied by anthropologists as part of cultural change and contact between cultures.

The students who recently climbed on to the Torre di Pisa and on the pillars of the Colosseum must have thought that the best way to stage their protest was to fall back on each city's longstanding symbols, since the present couldn't exist without the past. In this way, they established contact between two different cultures, one leading to another.

Just like a child who feels lost and runs into a mother's arms, people in all periods know they can take shelter in what their ancestors built for them. And I bet none of these students' ancestors would have wished such a present for them...



Students on the second tier of the Colosseum in Rome protesting against the Gelmini Reform

## Dear Italy: Looking at Italy through the new generation's eyes

by Marina Brunetti

If I had to choose a cover picture to end Italy's calendar for 2010, I'd pick out the image of the students standing on Italy's iconic monuments. From these buildings, Italy's young generation shouted that they want their rights to be respected, that they want to be considered a resource for their country. Maybe from that frightening height the echo of their voices sounded louder.

It seemed like students felt like they hadn't been taken into consideration for far too long, even though many influential people had talked about their future, their fears and their feelings, last but not least being Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi who stated that young people should go abroad to find work, encouraging them to look at Italy from New York, London or Moscow.

Actually, I find myself struggling to remember the last time I saw somebody talking to students and asking for their opinions about Italy, asking about what perspectives they are looking at Italy from, and what perspective they would like to look at it from.

By interviewing two students, Leonardo and Aleksandra, I wanted to give space and voice to the new generation's hopes, thoughts and points of view. Through their voices it's also possible to understand better the reasons why some such as Leonardo have decided to move away from Italy, and why others such as Aleksandra have decided to come to Italy.

### Interview with Leonardo

**Age:** 23

**Occupation :** Student

**Nationality:** Italian

**Where do you study?** London, UK

**When did you decide to study in England?** Soon after my Erasmus in 2008

**Why did you decide to study in England?** To reach the highest academic standards possible. To achieve a good education, in order to pursue a professional career around the world.

## Interview with Aleksandra

**Age:** 26

**Occupation:** Student

**Nationality:** Bulgarian

**Where do you study?** La Sapienza University, Rome, Italy

**When did you decide to study in Italy?** In 2003

**Why did you decide to study in Italy?** I wanted to learn more about Italian culture and language and I also wanted to have a new experience

**Pros and cons of studying abroad?** From an institutional point of view I don't think there are many advantages, but Italy is full of history and culture, and a country where you can still meet people who want to study

**Three adjectives to describe Italy?** Beautiful, messy and above all bureaucratic!

**Three adjectives to describe Bulgaria?** Not that pretty but so welcoming!

**Things you miss about your country?** My friends and the freedom to be completely myself.

**Would you like to remain in Italy?** Yes and no. I've got so many doubts!

**I'd remain in Italy if...** It was better organized, less bureaucratic and if it gave young people more opportunities to achieve their goals

**Your opinion of Gelmini's university reform?** I don't have a definite opinion on this. I think that the university system doesn't work and it needs to be completely reformed, but this doesn't mean razing it to the ground or turning it in a private institution.

**In the future I hope to...** See more young workers, not only at the AMA (Aleksandra is referring to the employment scandal at Rome's waste disposal company involving the relatives and friends of public figures close to Gianni Alemanno, the Mayor of Rome)



Students on the Leaning Tower in Pisa protesting against the Gelmini Reform

**Pros and cons of studying abroad?** Studying abroad is an amazing experience. First of all because it enables me to meet new people from all around the world. Secondly, it is a very good way for me to improve my English. Thirdly, getting a degree here will enable me to study further, in the best colleges and schools. However, sometimes I miss my family and friends, and I am a little bit stressed due to the workload.

**Three adjectives to describe Italy?** Wasted, wonderful, immortal

**Three adjectives to describe England?** Crowded, efficient, modern

**Things you miss about your country?** Family, friends, food, sun, heat, lifestyle.

**Would you like to come back to Italy?** Not just now, and probably not within the next 3-4 years.

**I'd come back to Italy if...** There was the chance of a good job. I would like to come back if I knew I could go on with my studies and achieve an internationally recognised education.

**Your opinion of Gelmini's university reform?** It is a set of institutional changes that will make Italy's students even less competitive in Europe. Financial restrictions will lead to a substantial decrease in research. As it stands, DDL 1905, passed by Parliament on 30 November, has unfairly disregarded students' needs, and in my opinion, an institution is made up of those who actively participate and contribute to its reality. The entire Reform thus reflects an increasing tendency to avoid taking into consideration the importance of education and culture. Moreover, due to the merging of some faculties, some students will lose their academic and professional identity (for instance, the Psychology Faculty is to be part of the Medical Faculty).

**In the future I hope to...** Pursue my interests and ambitions professionally. I would like to get the most out of my experiences, and be part of an exciting working environment.



Students on the streets of London protesting against the increase in university fees in England and Wales

# My Internship Experience

by Laura Di Niro

Last year I was attending the first year of the post-graduate degree course and, as usual, I was thinking about the future, especially about the internship I was to do in my second year.

The word *internship* itself was quite intimidating and made me feel rather inept. Although I was quite shy and timorous, I had a bright idea: How about working in tourism, for example in a hotel?! Receptionists working at the front desk need experience in languages.

After obtaining Professor Scandura's approval, I started my exciting experience as a trainee at the Courtyard by Marriott Rome Airport Hotel, in Fiumicino.

Courtyard by Marriott is an American hotel chain, famous in the US. Considering its proximity to Leonardo Da Vinci Airport, the natural consequence was that 80% of the people I dealt with were foreign, mainly from the US and South America.

Only 150 hours were required for the university internship, but it was such a wonderful experience that I continued for four months, in agreement with the hotel manager.

I had to wear a uniform: white blouse, blue or black trouser suit and a foulard around my neck.

At the beginning, I felt a bit useless because all my experienced colleagues were always too busy checking the hotel guests in and out to waste time teaching me things. So I started to take notes in a personal notebook about their complex software and the most frequently-used English expressions.

At the end of the day I felt exhausted because of the strict hotel rules: they didn't care about the 150 hours I needed; they needed my help five days a week, and the shifts were eight and a half hours long.

I had no free Saturdays or Sundays and no festivities guaranteed. I also had to stand all day long (no seats at the front desk), wear a perennial smile, and needed constant patience. Answering phone calls in English all day, in view of the dozens of voices and noises in the background which made communication even more complicated, was hard.

However, despite the over-exploitation, I accepted the rules because I knew inside that I had made the right choice, and was certainly improving my knowledge of languages.

# Working Student

by Anastasia Greco

In many ways, working students have harder lives than ordinary students. If you have to work every day, it's not always possible to attend lessons, and that can affect your progress. If you don't have enough time to prepare exams, your marks may not be as good as they could be. Although all this is important, the university system seems unable to provide a satisfactory solution to such problems.

It is not easy to study and work at the same time; in fact it's very hard to balance the two activities. In many cases students work in order to be independent from their families, but some families are just unable to pay university fees so students have no choice but to work. In my case, I work to be independent from my parents since I don't want to be a burden on them.

In any case I have to cope with all the problems that this kind of life brings. Attending university classes is not always possible because tiredness may divert my attention during lessons and going to lessons would be just a waste of time.

This University helps by offering a part time study plan that enables working students to do half the number of exams generally taken in one year. But this means that my three-year degree will take six years, which is an incredibly long time, and certainly not good for me since I want to join the job market as soon as possible. When I say the job market, I'm not referring to part-time jobs like mine, but to a steady job with a real contract and a good monthly salary - the kind of job you can't be fired from unjustifiably.

Even though working students make a lot of effort, they're often marginalized because they can't attend all the lessons or because they can't deliver assignments on time. It's a sort of hell, a necessary hell if you want to be someone, if you want to be independent.

Working during the year is great for learning new skills, including leadership skills. You learn how to deal with different sorts of people, how to interact with them, and you get better at managing your own money. So, even though a working student has to cope with lots of problems, in my view, she (or he) will be more aware in the future about work and its complexities. It would be good, however, if the University could provide more incentives to help working students, for example by offering ten optional credits in recognition of their experience.

# Christmas around the World

by Federica Mancuso and Salvo La Ferla

***Finally Christmas is coming and we're all ready to celebrate it in our own way, but let's see how it is celebrated in some other parts of the world!***

## Christmas in Bethlehem

Today, the majority of the population in Bethlehem is Muslim, although the population includes Christians too. Despite the difficult political climate in the Middle East, celebrating Christmas in the town of Bethlehem - where Jesus is said to have been born - is a must, not only because of the Christian minority that lives there but especially because of the many visitors to the city. Fadi, a 24-year-old from Bethlehem that I got in touch with through Facebook says that in this period there are a lot of people from all over the world, and the main attraction is the Church of Nativity where on 24 December there's a big celebration attended by the President of the Palestinian National Authority Abu Mazen. The great thing about this Church is that it's built on the site where Christ was born. According to Muhammad, a Muslim from Bethlehem that I also met on Facebook, these celebrations are not limited to Christians, for some Muslims also participate with much happiness and peace. Every real Christian should go celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem once in lifetime!

## Christmas in Mexico

The wonderful thing about celebrating Christmas in Mexico is that it starts on 12 December and goes on till 6 January. From 16 December to Christmas Eve children perform the Posada procession which celebrates the story of Joseph and Mary looking for a room in an inn. In the Posada (which means inn), each child holds a candle and statues of the Holy Family and knocks at their neighbours' doors. If they are welcomed in, they'll start singing holy songs and have a little party with food and games. If they are not accepted in they'll go ahead knocking at other doors. On Christmas Eve the statue of Jesus is put in the manger and then people go to the midnight Christmas celebration.

*Right: Christmas in Rome: Piazza Navona. Photo by Pablo Sanchez Aria, December 2010*

## Christmas in Australia

In Australia, 25 December is right in the middle of summer so you might think that it's celebrated very differently from in Europe, but since we're talking about a country with an enormous mix of foreign cultures (and a large Italian community), you'll still find Christmas trees, cards and gifts. Christmas carols by candlelight are the biggest event of the season, especially in Melbourne. People sing them at open-air concerts in which they sit on blankets and light candles. So if you go there, you can forget about the snow, but not about the Christmas spirit!

## Christmas in China

In China only about one per cent of the population are Christians so most know little about Christmas. Do you know what Chinese people call Santa Claus? Shen Dan Lao Ren - sounds curious right? Christmas is in fact celebrated only in major cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, where a few houses, have trees decorated with paper chains, paper flowers and paper lanterns. The strangest thing is that the decorations used by Europeans are in most cases made in China by people who don't know what they are for. Some carols are known in China, but few understand their meaning or know the story of Christmas. The best-known song is Jingle Bells. Going to midnight celebrations has recently become very popular among Chinese Christians and it seems that more people are celebrating Christmas Eve too.



**Now let's see a more detailed explanation of how Christmas is celebrated in South America, based on Pablo's experience in Argentina.**

## Sandballs at Christmas

by Sanchez Arias Pablo

Have you ever spent your Christmas vacation sunbathing at the seaside or on a river bank or eating cold dishes and ice-cream to keep down the hot temperatures?

Well, this is what happens down in the southern hemisphere, just below that imaginary line called the Equator which splits the earth in two halves.

It might seem strange to picture Christmas on a 35°C sunny day but if you're in touch with somebody from South America, Oceania or Southern Africa they'll probably tell you that this is ordinary life!

Nowadays, it's becoming easier to reach any corner of this beautiful world because of globalization, so it's easier to have experiences like this one as well!

Since I have relatives in Argentina, I have spent many Christmases and New Years over there. Let me introduce you to some of the country's traditions.

South American countries have a strong Catholic tradition dating back to the Spanish and Portuguese colonization, so this time of the year is celebrated as an opportunity for everyone to gather together with their relatives right up to the coming year. Big parties are held on Christmas Eve with loud music, dancing, singing and people banqueting in patios or gardens.

A typical main dish is pork with spices and fruit slices, and as dessert a sweet circular shaped bread called *Rosca de Reyes* (King's Ring) with cream on the top and dried candied fruit inside. However the majority of people of Italian origin have brought with them to Argentina traditions such as eating *Panettone*, *Pandoro* and *Panforte*.

Christmas is usually spent unwrapping presents, going to church, eating with the family and wandering around the city or the countryside or even enjoying the hot sunny days on the beach! In any case having fun is a must!

New Year's Eve is usually spent at home, but be careful! After the New Year toast, young people go clubbing in the city centre or begin to dance in the streets involving everybody while the city becomes a world of sparkling lights due to the fireworks!

In Argentina children put their shoes next to the window or underneath the Christmas tree in order to receive presents and delicacies from the three Magi on the night between 5 and 6 January, also providing water and grass for their camels as the Magi have to travel to Bethlehem for the Christ Child! Every child looks forward to this evening because it means a second round of presents after Christmas day!

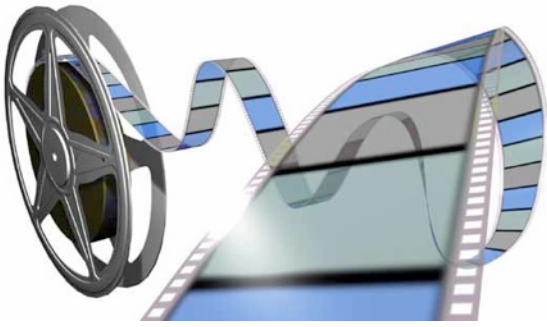
Decorations play a key role in every home. Christmas trees with hanging balls and candles or garlands are the main attractions in every living-room. Usually a crèche (nativity scene) is placed under a brightly lit tree. These decorations clearly derive from European folklore but have the added dimension of local culture in the tradition of carving the nativity figures with the typical appearance and clothes of the South American Indians. This is a way of merging two different cultures, converging European, American and Hispanic features.



Santa Claus chilling out on a South American beach!

The warm weather and the long hours of daylight enable people to discover new places, take walks, go swimming to keep cool or just relax and chill out at home or outdoors. From the tropical forests and flatlands in the north to the cool and windy Patagonia in the south of Argentina, enjoying these days of cheerfulness is not difficult at all!

This is just a sample of how the Christmas period feels. Don't miss the chance to experience it some day!



# A Clockwork Orange revisited

by Irene Pellecchia and Ilaria Vitali

***Does God want goodness or the choice of goodness? Is a man who chooses to be bad perhaps in some way better than a man who has the good imposed upon him?***

Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*, 1962

In an essay of 1986, 'A Clockwork Orange Resucked', Burgess explains the title of his novel, linking it to the concept of free will. A clockwork orange, he explains, is a person who "has the appearance of an organism lovely with colour and juice" but who is in fact a mechanical object that society takes advantage of. It is this concept that Kubrick deals with in his most controversial film, inspired by the novel by Burgess.

*A Clockwork Orange* is the story of the forced rehab of Alexander DeLorge by society. The authorities attempt to correct his perversion and he is deprived of every kind of freedom, himself becoming a victim of violence.

All the events are narrated from Alex's point of view. The film does not give an objective vision of violence, but one that is mediated through the main character.

Alex lives in the near future, in England. He is an eccentric, smart boy, leader of the Droog gang, which spends its time on violence, sex and stealing. Because of an unintentional murder and the betrayal of his friends (who become policemen at the end of the film), Alex is arrested and is sentenced to fourteen years in prison.

He is chosen to test a rehabilitation program, called Ludovico (a Latinized version of Ludwig van Beethoven, the composer Alex loved) which, instead of showing him why his behaviour was wrong, oppresses him through psychological violence. The Ludovico Technique is a form of aversion therapy that makes the patient associate extreme pain, nausea and suffering with the thoughts and sights of committing acts of violence. This technique takes away the ability to choose.

After aversion therapy, Alex behaves like a good member of society, but his goodness is involuntary;

he has become the clockwork orange of the title - organic on the outside, mechanical on the inside.

The director tried to find a way to reproduce the literary style of the novel as well as Alex's point of view. For these reasons he used technical procedures that break the illusion of reality. He tried to depict a character that was wicked inside but that unconsciously represented us, thereby



Right: Poster for *A Clockwork Orange*. Artwork by Philip Castle. Design by Bill Gold. Source: [http://www.impawards.com/1971/clockwork\\_orange.html](http://www.impawards.com/1971/clockwork_orange.html). Copyright: Warner Bros. 1971



creating psychological identification with Alex. People's hostility towards him derives from their inability to accept their true selves.

Kubrick was the first director to use digital sound technology (Dolby Sound). *A Clockwork Orange* is full of pieces of classical and contemporary music, with a soundtrack that includes works by Purcell, Rossini and Beethoven and songs such as 'Singin' in the rain'.

The director uses a lot of innovative techniques. One of these is the hand-held camera. It can be seen as a transgressive element as it is sensitive to every movement and thus contrasts with the geometric style of other scenes. Using a hand-held camera also creates an extraordinary sense of reality, enabling viewers to identify with the character.

Another technique used is the wide-angle lens to emphasize objects in the foreground, which has the effect also of distorting the edges of the image. Kubrick also decided to intensify movements in some scenes with fast-motion. This technique may also be satirical, for example when the director shoots the sex scene between Alex and the two girls, the acceleration of mechanical movements portrays Alex as a sex maniac.

The script of the film is characterized by a language called Nadsat. This is an artificial dialect spoken in the future and featuring a misuse of Russian words mixed with English. For example, *Droog*, the name of the gang, is inspired by the Russian word *друг* (*drug*, which means *friend*). The *Korova* Milk Bar, where Alex often goes, is named

after *корова* (*korova*, meaning *cow*) In one scene Alex says that in this bar he and his friends sit and make their *rassoodocks* (from the Russian *рассуждать*, *rassuzdat'*, to reason). Other words used are *devotchka* (*girl*, from *девочка*), *malenky* (*little*, from *маленький*), *viddy* (*to see*, from *видеть*). These are just a few of the many Russian-derived words used by Alex in the film.

Some invented words, not derived from Russian, are also used, including *vellocet*, *synthemesc* and *drencrom*, all referring to drugs.

This new language is used in the film to distance the viewers from the whole story. There is an alienation involved. In this way it's easier for viewers to remember that they're in a different situation from the one described in the story: they are not in the future, not using 'ultra-violence'.

Another reason for the use of this language is to represent the characters' strength of mind. Burgess believed that there is a connection between language and mind: if you narrow your vocabulary, you narrow your mind.

*A Clockwork Orange* gained a place in cinema history because of all these many innovative techniques and because of the topics it deals with. It seems strange now that at first it created so much controversy and was perceived as a story against society. It was broadcast on Italian TV only in 2007. The success it enjoys nowadays has been in spite of a groundswell of opposition over many years, and maybe, for this reason, it is a film everyone should watch.



## Possible Interviews: The One with Eva Green

by Stéphanie Magalage

**STEPHANIE MAGALAGE:** *First things first, can you tell us about the plot of your new movie, Cracks?*

**EVA GREEN:** The story takes place in the 1930s, in England in an elite girls' boarding school. The character I play, Miss G, is the diving teacher of a little group of young girls who have deep admiration and respect for her. She manages to take them out of the strict and austere atmosphere of the school with marvelous stories, forbidden activities and most importantly, by insisting on how essential it is to listen to their

desire. The pupils' leader, Di, is the most fascinated by Miss G, and appears to have a crush on her while she also seems to be Miss G's favourite, till a new girl, Fiamma, arrives and catches the teacher's attention. A tense and insane love triangle develops: Miss G loves Fiamma, but she rejects her love; meanwhile Di is horrified and deeply angry to be left out. Its dark consequences will change the girls forever. These themes, obsessive love, the loss of innocence, jealousy as well as the presence of disturbed personalities really made the plot of *Cracks* uncommon, which is why I agreed to do it.

**SM: Aside from these themes, what else motivated you to be part of this adventure?**

**EG:** The fact that it was an independent movie, directed by Jordan Scott. Even though at the beginning, most people were very scornful and sceptical, I never had doubts about how talented this woman is, and she proved it with how brilliantly she directed *Cracks*. Also, the character she offered me: Miss G fascinates me as much as she amazes her girls in the movie.

**SM: Can you tell us more about this Miss G? Who is she?**

**EG:** That's a good question! (*laughs*) She's a real mystery! No, more seriously, Miss G has a complex yet very interesting personality. She wears multiple masks. With her girls, she pretends to be this free, strong and fearless woman, who has lived so many adventures, and has always listened to her desire. But the truth is she has never left the boarding school, where she was once a pupil too, a long time ago. It is precisely because she hasn't experienced anything in life that she has so much ardour and passion when she tells her stories: she wishes so hard it was true. However, by letting her team know about sex, desire and freedom, she feels like she is freeing herself a little bit. But when the new girl, Fiamma, who has "lived" for real, arrives, Miss G becomes vulnerable as she is fascinated and confused by the young girl. She develops an obsessive and insane love for her, trying first to become her friend, so that Fiamma could share her "lively flame". But rejected by the Spanish girl, Miss G falls into a madness that will do no good ... Oh, one thing I forgot to mention: miss G is very elegant and appealing... that also persuaded me to accept the role! (*laughs*)

**SM: At some point, there is a very "hot" scene that might shock viewers as you start to undress Maria Valverde (Fiamma) and kiss her ... How did you manage to work with Maria on that scene?**

**EG:** The young actresses in *Cracks* were all very professional. And even though it was quite disturbing when we knew we had to do something like that, we are professional actresses and we had decided to be in this movie. Maria and Jordan and I talked a lot about it, and in the end we did our job, as it was just about *acting*. We did not want to hide anything as the idea was precisely not to be as puritanical as the boarding school...

**SM: The scene might shock not because it is not puritanical but mostly because it deals with molestation...**

**EG:** Precisely. How could something be denounced if it is not shown? This scene also represented the young girl's loss of innocence and the ultimate step for Miss G in crossing the line. The drama is at its best as Miss G really falls into madness when she listens to her greatest desire and lets herself go. This scene was essential to depict these evolutions, as well as for the plot, because that event triggers Di's rage, Fiamma's complete disgust towards Miss G and all the events that follow.

**SM: When we look at your career, we cannot help but noticing your choice of playing mainly quite dark and complex personalities. Can you explain?**

**EG:** Indeed, I love it, I just think that darker people are more interesting than the ones who are all "bright and shiny". As you so aptly put it, "dark and complex personalities", they have so much more to say, with a wide range of emotions, and that fascinates me. Also, I believe the work is much more appealing and challenging for actors when it deals with a "dark and complex personality": precisely because they are dark and complex, we take more time trying to understand them, to read their minds, to observe how they ended up the way they are. Personally, I also feel more committed. At the end of the day, there is nothing more rewarding than having worked hard in order to interpret an uneasy personality and to see that you did it pretty well, if I may put it that way.

**SM: Even though it's not contradictory, how come a French actress such as yourself has been in so many British and American movies?**

**EG:** I can't explain it really. I love French movies and French movie directors but I guess I've just been given more interesting projects by people from the other side of the Channel and the Atlantic! (*laughs*) Also I have been studying drama at schools in London and New York, in close contact with their cultures and ways of doing things. That might have influenced me a little bit, but mostly, I think that as we say in French, it's *pur hasard*. It has never been on purpose. But if you're really worried about this, let me reassure you this instant: I will be back very soon in the French movie theatres with... an actual French movie!

[ED: *Cracks* is available for viewing in the language lab at Villa Mirafiori.]

Poster from <http://www.empireonline.com/news/feed.asp?NID=26135>.



## Film review by Irene Pellecchia

Dir. Rachid Bouchareb. With Brenda Blethyn and Sotigui Kouyaté. Written by Zoé Galeron, Rachid Bouchareb and Olivier Lorelle. 87 minutes. Production country: Algeria, France, United Kingdom, 2009.

7 July 2005. Terrorist attack on London. Two strangers can't get in touch with their son and daughter and come to the city to try to find them. They both discover that they really don't know about their children's lives and find themselves in a tragic situation.

A tragedy seen through the eyes of two people. This is how the director decides to represent the attack of 7 July 2005. The whole story revolves around private experience, rather than around an event that affected a lot of people. A man (Ousmane) and a woman (Elizabeth) are desperately trying to find someone they don't really know.

Ousmane hasn't seen his son since he was a child and now can barely recognize him, while Elizabeth doesn't know anything about her daughter's studies and relationships, as her daughter has kept them secret. During the whole film they are waiting for them, for their news, hoping to see them again. It sounds like they are *Waiting for Godot* as they are in London waiting for something or someone that never appears in the film, not even at the end.

The main characters have different personalities as shown in their reaction to the dramatic situation in which they find themselves. Ousmane is stoic, he accepts his son's destiny without being destroyed by the pain. Elizabeth is fragile, maybe because she has already lost her husband, but she doesn't show much faith in life or in people. A man and a woman that are completely different also in appearance, black and white: they are opposites.

Through these characters the director deals with the topic of racism. This theme is depicted in a soft way, through the actions of Elizabeth who refuses to shake hands with Ousmane and that is upset when she discovers that her daughter is studying Arabic. It seems quite ridiculous when she cries because her daughter may have been converted and not because she may have died. But slowly Elizabeth's pain and fear exceed her racism and the sense of loss brings the two lonely people together. As Zoé Galeron says in an interview for Birds Eye View blog (see link 1 below), this is "the best way [...] to resist and fight chaos."

In this way, they discover they have something in common: they both work the soil and they both love doing it. This is the real irony of life. People can hate even when they know nothing about each other and they can start to appreciate each other through hate.

Rachid Bouchareb decided to deal with this topic as he is a Muslim living in France and the problem of differences between people and distrust touches him personally. Maybe this distrust is caused by a lack of communication between people. He believes that this is the great problem of our time and that it's easier to find people at war rather than round a table conversing.

Moving and sad at the same time, it's a new way of portraying a tragedy like a terrorist attack. The world is composed of people and the director's attention is on people and personal feelings. Rachid Bouchareb said in an interview (see link 2 below):

***My film is less about the bombings themselves, and more about the meeting between these two people that takes place in their wake. That's what's important to me, that these two people who meet are united by the same problem.***

Absolutely recommended (and available for viewing in the language lab at Villa Mirafiori).

1. <http://www.birds-eye-view.co.uk/news/2010/07/05/>

2. [http://www.londonrivermovie.com/film\\_info/interviews](http://www.londonrivermovie.com/film_info/interviews)

Image source: [MoviePosterDB.com](http://MoviePosterDB.com). Copyright: Universal Pictures 2009

# The Film Justifies the Means \*

by Raffaella Sardella

Andrea Di Iorio and Massimiliano Delfino met about a year ago at Sapienza, University of Rome, where they were both studying Letteratura, Musica e Spettacolo. They became friends while working together with other students on a short film that was meant to be an assignment for an exam, but developed into something more, leading to what was a great opportunity and an important experience.

The short film (about twelve minutes) entitled **Una Bella Trovata**, written by Massimiliano Delfino and Gualtiero Titta and directed by Andrea Di Iorio and Valerio Desirò, was chosen by the jury of the Tulipani di seta nera Festival and was among the short films that were shown on 22 March 2010 at the Embassy cinema in the Parioli district of Rome, where the Festival took place (see [www.tulipanidisetanera.it](http://www.tulipanidisetanera.it)).

The aim of the festival was to encourage dialogue on the many meanings of the word **difference** in society. The works of unknown directors and actors were to deal with themes such as disability, racism and mental illness in a new and original way.

The film was inspired by Aldo Palazzeschi's poem 'Una Casina di Cristallo', an ironic representation of poets at the beginning of the twentieth century. Previously seen as representing one of the highest forms of art, poets lose their aura of sanctity and are seen for what they really are: people, just like anyone else. In the film, the poet is replaced by a clown (played by Fiorenza Bartoli) who leaves the circus in order to live among ordinary people. Some people realize that she is still a clown but others judge her only by her appearance, seeing her as strange and different.



Make-up time for *Una Bella Trovata*. You can watch *Una bella trovata* on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=279658806371>

Andrea, Massimiliano and their friends were the only young people presenting a short movie at this festival. The other candidates were more experienced and proposed professional short films which had required quite a budget, whereas, as Andrea said to the audience in the hall, their short movie didn't cost anything except the price of a new tape for the camera!

**Una Bella Trovata** was filmed in only four days in several locations in Rome including the Gianicolo and Villa Borghese, and in three weeks the editing was over. Even if they didn't win a prize it was still a great recognition to see their work considered among the others.

When I asked Andrea if he thought it was difficult to enter the Italian film industry, he replied:

**Anyone can try to be a director, the real problem is to assert yourself in a closed world like that of Italian cinema. I'm not saying that it is all garbage, but often they propose stale and lackluster solutions, instead of giving space to young people and new ideas.**

He is in any case determined to make his way in this world. A recent graduate (since 9/12/2010), Andrea believes that what really matters are ideas:

**Ideas can give value to a film even if it is made without a lot of money. Attending a university course based on cinema, like I did, can be useful because it helps to improve your creativity.**

Andrea and Massimiliano are currently working on a new short film, **In Fondo alle Scale**. Andrea had the basic idea but they have put their joint efforts into the screenplay and direction, and have also decided to invest their own money in this project, renting a professional camera, microphones and lights.

They also met some really talented and experienced actors (such as Lydia Biondi, Giuseppe Lorin, Giovanni Di Lonardo and Francesca Sanzari, recently seen in the box office success *Benvenuti al Sud*) who agreed to work with them for free.

The filming took four days, as in the case of **Una Bella Trovata**, but this time they filmed for about ten hours a day. **In Fondo alle Scale** is a short film about the stereotypes that society imposes on us. The main character, Daniele (played

by Giovanni Di Lonardo), realizes that his life is ruled by them and tries to break free.

This new film is now in post-production, with Alessandra Graziosi finishing the editing and adding an original soundtrack composed by Andrea Di Iorio, Gianluca Delfino and Massimiliano Delfino, and with Daniele Bartoli working on the visual effects. This time the editing is taking more than a month, but *In Fondo alle Scale* will soon be ready and it too will be posted on Facebook. Then what? Massimiliano's plans are clear:

**We are going to enter it for every short film competition that we can find! We will subtitle it in English so that we can enter it for international competitions too.**

Their expectations?

**I think we did a good job. We wrote a story in which everybody can see something of themselves. We hope that people will find *In Fondo alle Scale* entertaining and absorbing, and, why not, that it will leave the viewers with something to think about, which is not so common in recent short films.**

\*This article takes its title from another of Andrea's short films, *Il Film giustifica I mezzi* (also on Facebook), filmed in Campobasso, summer 2010. It deals with the obstacles a young director has to face.



Poster for *In Fondo alle Scale*, sent to MiraMag by the directors. Photo by Federica Fuga; artwork by Francesca Sanzari; film logo by Andrea Di Iorio, 2010.



On a terrace in Trastevere, Rome, filming *In Fondo alle Scale*, 25/10/2010. From left to right: N. Santi Amantini, director of photography; Costantino Fazzari, boom operator; Giovanni Di Lonardo, lead actor; Andrea Di Iorio, writer and director; Massimiliano Delfino, writer and director; Alessandra Graziosi, first assistant director and editor.

Up early to meet

# DRACULA

by  
Veronica Saputo



**Finally here. After a long and unpleasant nocturnal trip in the Carpathian Mountains, I can make out the dark and angular towers of a medieval castle in the distance. Why am I here? Wouldn't it have been better for everyone if I had interviewed him via e-mail? Of course not. I wouldn't have missed the juicy opportunity to talk face to face with the Lord of Darkness: Dracula.**

**VERONICA: Count Dracula, I am grateful to you for giving me the chance to have this extraordinary experience. Honestly, I would never have imagined such a warm welcome in your home.**

**DRACULA:** I am trying to make you feel comfortable but I can tell by the look on your face that you are absolutely terrified, which is understandable and beyond dispute. You see my dear, it is all part of the game: I embody evil and the devil, and people are sometimes afraid of me, which is understandable since I could destroy their lives very quickly, if I wanted. You must have met some people during your trip. Did you notice their attitude? They avoid me like the plague, of course. I am sure they always portray me as a horrible figure, maybe even like some kind of rat. *(smiling)*.

**VERONICA: So, who is Dracula exactly?**

**DRACULA:** Well, as you see, I am different from the vampires of European folklore: I am not a monster and at the same time I am not a man. Simply, I have two sides: I can be a real gentleman, a charming and polite entertainer, but I also have a demoniac and bipolar personality, especially during the night. Oh, but there's no cause for concern, I have already had dinner.

**VERONICA: Speaking of which, what does the night mean to you? I mean, today's vampires are not proper creatures of the night. I don't know if you have heard of...**

**DRACULA:** ...of this new generation of vampires? Unfortunately I have. But please, don't misinterpret my words. I am not going to make an issue of it. To be honest, I don't think I am a pretentious vampire or whatever but I want to argue my point: I think that Vampires are losing credibility. Love, beauty and sentimentalism are the least of my worries! I only care about blood and that is why the night means a great deal to me. Vampires can't act during the day.

**VERONICA: Please, can you be more precise?**

**DRACULA:** Follow my reasoning: darkness has always had a certain fascination. It contains pleasure, forbidden dreams, and it is connected with black. Bats are black, my cloak is black, and black is the colour of death. On the other hand, what about the light? It is the exact opposite. You see, all this is part of everyone's personality, even yours. But you are a human being so it is quite normal. But think about me. I am a vampire, I can't be a good person, I don't want to be. There is always something terrifying about me, even when I seem to be kind and polite. I have to defend my reputation *(laughing)*.

**VERONICA: Have you ever met one of these modern Vampires?**

**DRACULA:** No, thank G.. ehm no. No, I haven't. Have I missed something? *(raising his bushy eyebrows)*.

**VERONICA: I gather that you hold them in low esteem, am I wrong?**

**DRACULA:** I don't want to think badly of anybody. Times have changed, for the worse, I suppose. The market has to adapt to the demands of the new generation, and as a rule teenagers prefer innovation, change. Okay, everyone knows Count Dracula through films or books, but Dracula belongs to the past, to the old boring tradition. It's time for something new, a mix of blood and love, of beauty and damnation - that is people's way of reasoning nowadays. If I may give you some advice, be careful: don't trust imitations. Original is always better. This sounds like a slogan, doesn't it? Perhaps I could work for an advertising agency if the new arrivals take my place!

**What more can I say about him? A cynical personality, a handsome, charming man. Was it all show? I suppose so. I am looking at myself in the mirror and putting my coat on before leaving. I can perceive his presence but I can't see him (as you know, his reflection doesn't appear in the mirror). I turn round and he is there, raising a smile, but there is a strange glint in his eye. Fortunately, the clock strikes 7.30. Almost sunrise. The Count wishes me goodbye with regret. Wonderful to meet you too Sir, but honestly, I really don't think I want to see you again.**

# Knots2

by Stella Bardani and Aurora Mazzoni



The Red Carpet were playing, but Simone was lost in thought and kept on making mistakes so they decided to stop.

'I need to go home and be alone for a while' said Simone, putting the bass in the case.

'I gotta go to the university because today my American Studies course starts and I can't miss the first lesson... Alex, are you coming with me? Alice will be there too.'

Alessandro was another band member, the lead voice, and also played the guitar, and Alice was his girlfriend and she did *Lingue e culture del mondo moderno* along with Francesco.

'Let's go dude!'

They went off to Villa Mirafiori, the place where the language courses took place, but before checking on the timetables they decided to go for a coffee. Everything seemed just the way they had left it the year before.

Students, places, and people walking their dogs. The bar was full of students as always and when the coffees were placed on top of the counter, Francesco picked one up and drank it, without realizing that it wasn't his. The young woman standing next to him stared amused and waited for him to figure it out. Alessandro saw what was going on, and he and the young woman started laughing at the same time. After a moment of perplexity, Francesco realized his blunder and smiled at her. By way of apology he offered her his own coffee. She drank it and left.

'Woow! I've decided! Tomorrow I'm coming to study here just to see her again!'

Meanwhile, Simone was back home and had flopped down onto his bed. Still he couldn't help but think about Sara's confession. Suddenly, the bell rang. Even though he felt like he never wanted to get out of bed or out of his musings, he had to put an end to that noise.

He opened the door and saw that it was Giulia, who was trying to get hold of Sara whose mobile was switched off.

'Can I get you a coffee?' he asked.

'Maybe tea would be better. I had a bad night' she answered.

'You can wait for her here with me,' he suggested, and, to kill time, they decided to watch a film. While looking among Simone's DVDs, Giulia picked out *The Man Who Cried*. Simone was surprised:

'I don't know how you did it, but you picked my favourite!' They smiled at each other and sat down on the couch.

'Oh! Before I forget, you guys are invited to my birthday party tomorrow - tell your band too!' said Giulia.

'Perfect!'

Marina managed to get hold of Lorenzo on the set of the TV series in which he was playing the leading role. In breaks during the shooting, they smoked and chatted together. Lorenzo wanted to know why she and Elisabetta were arguing and fighting like dogs at six in the morning.

Marina explained that they were quarrelling because she had spent the night out, and then confessed that she had spent the night with Sara, but that she obviously hadn't told Elisabetta about this.



'You've been cheating on her for a lifetime, don't you think it's time to stop?'

Before she could answer, the sound of an incoming SMS on Lorenzo's mobile distracted them. Giulia was inviting them all to her birthday party at her home the following day.

In the late afternoon, Francesco's American Studies course started. Room VI was crowded as always, and the lecturer was late. Francesco spotted an empty place in the first row and sat there. The lecturer arrived, but he only noticed who she was when she reached the desk. He felt simultaneously happy and flabbergasted to discover that his new American lecturer was the young woman at the bar, and couldn't help but stare at her, smiling, and she smiled back.

'Hello everybody, I'm Erin Castle and I'm the new Anglo-American Studies lecturer.'

On the day of Giulia's birthday, the first people to arrive were Simone and Sara. They helped her arrange the table for dinner. Marina arrived with Elisabetta and Lorenzo shortly after, and offered to prepare cocktails during the party - she had brought everything she needed for this, alcohol and tools included.

The last ones to arrive were the members of the band, with Alice. Francesco couldn't wait to tell everyone about his chance encounter with the beautiful Erin.

While everybody was in the kitchen talking, Marina asked Sara to help her slice fruit for the cocktails. Although she didn't really feel like it, Sara nodded that she'd help, but she was cold and didn't say a word.

In spite of Lorenzo's presence, Giulia found herself particularly distracted by Simone, and often thought about the beautiful afternoon they had spent together. They ogled each other and, pulling her aside, he gave her a package. She opened it. He had brought her the DVD they'd watched together with a little handwritten card that said *Felt good yesterday.*

The tension between Marina and Elisabetta, who was still pissed off, popped up often during the evening. Marina tried constantly to get talking to Sara, but Elisabetta's angry glances and Sara's coldness were insurmountable obstacles.

After dinner, Alice asked Alessandro to sing her favourite song by the band: 'The Morning Show Lovers' - it was the song he'd written to get her attention. Everybody was spellbound by Alessandro's voice.

Once the song was over, Elisabetta told Marina they were going home, and they went off.

'Shit! I left my mobile at Giulia's' exclaimed Marina.

'Ok, go and get it. I'm going to bed.' Answered Elisabetta.

Back at Giulia's, everybody was chatting in the dining room except Sara. Marina thought that she might be in the bathroom. She took pen and a scrap of paper, wrote down some words and waited for her outside the bathroom door. As Sara came out, she pushed her back, against the wall. The two looked straight into each other's eyes for a moment, and then Marina kissed her. Before rushing off, Marina thrust the piece of paper into Sara's hand. It read:

*You understood it and ignored it.  
As you ignore my glances which consume you  
As you ignore my words  
and pretend not to understand them.  
And then you accept my hand,  
pretending not to perceive the shiver  
running through my body.  
You're confused, maybe scared.  
You say it and I see it.  
I read it  
in the most beautiful book ever  
But you know that.  
And you say you prefer running away  
But please,  
Stop.  
You know I won't let you do it.*

# The Song Game - by Chiara Guida

Fill in the spaces while you listen

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbKsgaXQy2k>

## Happy Christmas (War is Over) by John Lennon

So this is Christmas  
And what have you done  
Another .... over  
And a new one just begun  
And so this is Christmas  
I hope you have ...  
The .... and the .... ones  
The old and the young  
A very merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year  
Let's hope it's a .... one  
Without any fear  
And so this is Christmas  
For .... and for strong  
For rich and the poor ones  
The road is so ....  
And so Happy Christmas  
For black and for white  
For yellow and ... ones  
Let's stop all the ....  
A very merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year  
Let's hope it's a good one  
Without any fear  
And so this is Christmas  
And what .... we done  
Another .... over  
And a new one just begun  
And so Happy Christmas  
I hope you have ...  
The .... and the .... ones  
The old and the young  
A very merry Christmas  
And a happy New Year  
Let's hope it's a .... one  
Without any fear  
War is over  
If you want it  
War is over  
Now



John and Yoko photo. Source: <http://www.strawberrywalrus.com/warisover.html>