

Bologna, August 6, 2005

I saw a movie this evening, "*La Guerra dei Mondi*" or "*War of the Worlds*" as the title is written in Italian. I saw the movie by myself after having a weird day in Bologna. I was completely alone. I am the only one left here in Bologna because all of my American friends have returned home. My other foreign friends have returned home as well. The BCSP office is closed. My Italian friends and roommates have gone to their respective homes instead of staying in their apartments during the hot humid summer in Bologna. I'm alone. Solitudine!

So be that as it may, I spent the day alone. I made pasta in my deserted apartment, cleaned it a little bit, washed my clothes and then went into the center of town to just walk around. I ate dinner at a ristorante on via Belle Arti and then went to see the movie.

So how does this day relate to my year in Bologna? Well, on the walk home from the movie, I was a little neurotic. I had two caffè before the movie so my heart beat was high to begin with. I thought about how I have never been completely at peace while in Bologna. I mean to say, I have always had my guard up. I have always had to be ready. "Pronto" is the way to say it in Italian. Here in Bologna, unlike all other Italian cities besides Rome and Milan, the setting is very international. Because of this, I've realized just how sheltered, isolated, cradled I have been in the USA. In Wisconsin, the word "world" was a foreign idea to me. I read about it, watched the world on TV, but never really interacted with the world until Bologna during my study abroad.

So on my walk home, I had a panic or anxiety attack. No joke. At the height of my panic attack, I had to stop near the main Porta in Bologna and lean against it. I thought to myself, I need to be a history teacher. Why wasn't I prepared for the history of the world? I need to inform and teach and inspire kids not to grow up and fight amongst themselves. Then I thought about Professor Bonazzi crying during a lecture in which he was discussing his father and socialism in Bologna. Then I thought about my BCSP friend Dave who went to work on a kibbutz after studying in Bologna. I thought and thought and thought.

Education is a pain. You can quote me on that. 'Knowing' hurts. Sometimes I'd rather not know. This is what I said to myself as my panic attack lessened and died down. Then I thought about my BCSP director and the class I took with him. I thought about Moraldo in the film "*I Vitelloni*" and his dilemma with accepting responsibility. I thought about the limitless range of realities pressing on my subjective awareness and about experiences presented to myself and the way I interpret them. Life is mystical. Bologna is opening my eyes.

So, where does this take me? This takes me to ask myself, "who am I, really?" What is my purpose in this world? Do I even have a purpose? Does my life even matter? In Bologna and thus far in my traveling to Spain, France, Slovenia, Croatia and the Netherlands, I've seen that there are a lot of people in this world. That's right, I used the word 'world.' I'm beginning to understand this word better. But because of this traveling, as the Italians would say, I've become more 'impegnato'. The word doesn't have the same translation or feel in English, but it means occupied, or weighted down consciously.

My walk is over, I've arrived in my apartment. I've begun to write. The worlds are not at war, but many places in this world are in fact at war. I must do what I can to live at peace, and along the

way, help others live at peace. We can't imagine ourselves as unimportant and insignificant as I felt during my panic attack. I felt like my life didn't matter. We must think that we are important and can make a difference...it's like what they tell you on air planes, in case of an emergency, as soon as the yellow mask falls, put yours on first, then assist others. So that's my advice to you after studying abroad in Bologna, Italia. Abbiamo finito, andate in pace.