

**INDELIBLE (ENG) / INDELEBILE (IT):
REPRESENTATION IN THE ARTS OF
(IN)VISIBLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR RESISTANCE**

Interdisciplinary Conference
Flinders University, Adelaide, 23-25 October 2019

PRESENTERS AND ABSTRACTS/SYNOPSES
(in programme order)

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER

ANNOTATED PERFORMANCE

***Daphne* and the performance of violence**

Fleur Kilpatrick

Female performers enact their own death and victimhood nightly for the entertainment or edification of others. Their bodies become the site of the performance's dramatic conflict and their audience's resolution. In a performance of the new work *Daphne* - composed by Joshua van Konkelenberg and sung by soprano Bethany Hill - librettist Fleur Kilpatrick will provide annotations to the opera based on an age-old tale of male violence and the damage it leaves in its wake. Fleur's libretto reappropriates the story and her annotations to the opera call for a re-examination of staged violence, beginning with the words on the page. The societal burden of enacting our darkest moments can be eased by the words the writer chooses; what they ask performers to do and say to each other. Through the performance and language of *Daphne*, this session examines the opera/play as both a place of violence and a safe workplace, as well as the script as a framework for collegial relationships.

Fleur Kilpatrick is an award-winning playwright, a director and arts commentator, as well as Lecturer in theatre history, performance and writing at Monash University. She co-founded Lonely Company, working to support emerging playwrights to create sustainable careers. Fleur's plays have won the 2018 Max Afford Playwrights Award (*Whale*), 2016 Jill Blewett Award (*Blessed*) and 2015 Melbourne Fringe's Emerging Playwright Award (*The City They Burned*). In 2019 she is artist in residence at Southern Cross University, exploring climate crisis, decision making and ethical responsibility through her play *Whale*.

Joshua van Konkelenberg received the degree of Master of Music with distinction in 2012, and completed the PhD in Composition (at the University of Adelaide) in the same year. He won the Walford. E. Davies Prize as Dux of the Organ Faculty at the Royal College of Music, London, and has received grants from the Australia Council for the Arts and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust. Joshua is currently Musical Director for Co-Opera, and has also toured with Opera Australia as a pianist for their school's production of *La Cenerentola*, and as regional Chorus-Master for their 2016 and 2017 seasons of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

He has previously held the position of Principal Organist at St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide, and is a passionate teacher of the organ, piano, and classical improvisation.

Bethany Hill is a versatile and critically acclaimed operatic soprano based in Australia. She aspires to approach a variety of musical genres with fresh ears and an open mind, and delights in the evocation of emotional response from audiences through her performances. Bethany has performed with State Opera of South Australia, The Song Company, Co-Opera, Gertrude Opera, Various People Inc., Mopoke Theatre, and the award-winning Adelaide Chamber Singers. She is a regular artist for the Adelaide Festival and Fringe.

PAPER - Seeing through the bars; speaking our way out: How creative work helps us confront in/visible violences in tertiary education and beyond

Corinna Di Niro and Amelia Walker

Montesanti and Thurston (2015, p. 2) emphasise the need to examine gender-based violence in ways that recognise the "interplay of personal, situational, and sociocultural factors" including education as a social institution through which systems of violence are reinstated. Our presentation responds to this need by focusing on operations of symbolic and systemic gender-based violence in the contemporary Australian tertiary education system. We consider the ways in which theatre and creative writing can help us perceive these forms of violence, which are often invisible. Once the violence is perceived, we are able to speak out, raise awareness, open dialogues about other ways of working and/or argue the need to change - all of which may also be pursued via creative practices including but exceeding writing and theatre. Our presentation deploys a creative duoethnographic methodology of transformative dialogue and exchange. We draw on our personal experiences and observations, and on our past reading and/or engagement with creative and scholarly works regarding gender-based violence in and beyond educational institutions - particularly the play *Bone Cage* (Gillham 2011), the novel *That Long Silence* (Deshpande 1989) and a recently published anthology of writings about women's experiences in academia (Black and Garvis eds 2018). Through dialogue, we seek to recognise how the personal examples we discuss connect with a larger political picture, and thus to re-perceive the issues in transformed and deeper ways. Importantly, we aim to demonstrate how engaging with the work of other creative practitioners assists us to recognise the real-but-insidious problems we and people like us face. We also show how our own creative practices in writing and theatre provide ways to confront the problems, forge alliances, and keep pushing for meaningful change. We invite attendees to our performance of and workshop on *Bone Cage*, which explores topics within our paper in theatrical ways.

Corinna Di Niro is a creative academic researcher-director-performer and TEDx speaker, who lectures at the University of South Australia in the School of Creative Industries and guest lectures at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA). Her current project "The Virtual Actor", involves research into ways of enhancing the audience experience through virtual reality in live stage shows.

Amelia Walker completed a PhD in creative writing in 2016 and has published four poetry collections - most recently *Dreamday* (Campbelltown ArtHouse 2017) - and

educational books on poetry (the *All You Need to Teach Poetry* series, Macmillan 2010). She is on the editorial team for *Writing From Below*, a peer reviewed journal of gender and diversity studies.

PERFORMANCE

***Bone Cage* by Geoff Gillham**

directed by Corinna Di Niro

performed by Hannah Humzy, Robert Donnarumma and Suzanne Bleeze

Bone Cage by Geoff Gillham (first performed in 1996) is set in a fictional landscape with a war raging. A man is hauling a young girl to the bone yard. Another girl, who escaped into the hills while the man was asleep, tries to persuade her to leave him and come with her. The bone cage refers to her head that imprisons her and prevents her from leaving - or does it?

Please note: this performance includes sudden loud noises and confronting scenes that some people may find uncomfortable and/or distressing.

WORKSHOP

Opening the Cage: A creative writing workshop in response to Di Niro's staging of *Bone Cage* by Geoff Gillham

led by Amelia Walker and Michele Fairbairn

In this workshop we use the play *Bone Cage* to physically represent 'cages' that imprison us as PhD candidates and early career researchers. The workshop allows the audience to discuss and share, in a safe environment, their own cages - themed around the conference.

Michele Fairbairn is a naturopath, manual therapist, counsellor, psychosynthesis practitioner, art therapist, freelance maker/presenter, playwright, visual/experimental artist, published writer, theatre deviser and provocateur at the intersection of arts and psychology, with over 20 years of experience in mental health, arts and community development. Michele is fascinated by the alchemic quality of story as a personal and political tool for creative (inner-, intra-, inter-)connection and transformation.

DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

Processo per stupro / A Trial for Rape (1979) directed by Loredana Dordi; filmed by Maria Grazia Belmonti, Anna Carini, Rony Daopoulo, Paola De Martiis, Annabella Miscuglio, Loredana Rotondo

In 1978, 18-year-old Fiorella (her family name was not made public) reported four men to the police for rape. A feminist collective from Rome used video cameras to film what happened in the courtroom and in 1979 the Italian State Television RAI-2 broadcast their

documentary to 12 million viewers. The cameras pick out how a wall of male complicity forms and how Fiorella shifts from being the accuser to the accused. The documentary had a major effect on Italian public opinion at the time, but it took many more years to get the law changed. Until the 1996 law on sexual violence, rape remained an offence against public morality rather than a crime against a person. *Processo per stupro* won the international prize Premio Italia for the best TV documentary of 1979.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

KEYNOTE PAPER

Experiences of participation in research interviews for women who have survived domestic violence

Sarah Wendt

Qualitative research into sensitive and emotionally laden topics can pose a number of challenges for researchers. This presentation offers reflections from a social work researcher who has led multiple feminist-based qualitative research studies enabling positive experiences of participation for women who have survived domestic violence. It is argued that women can identify new insights, find alternative ways of looking at their experiences, and access opportunities to debrief in a unique way in the research interview setting that differs from counselling experiences.

Sarah Wendt is currently Professor of Social Work at Flinders University. Prior to academia Sarah practised in the field of domestic violence. She has taught in social work for over a decade and published on violence against women and social work practice. Her current research projects explore the impact of domestic violence on women's citizenship, service provision in the field of domestic violence, young women's experiences of violence and abuse, and engaging men to address domestic violence. In particular, Sarah has been researching rural women's experiences of domestic violence for over a decade in Australia and more recently how domestic violence work shapes practitioners living and working in rural communities.

PANEL - Responding to gendered violence in visual and public art

Imaging affront, crisis and survival

Lucienne Fontannaz

My research and artwork address stereotyped and objectified representations of the female body and propose that visual art can play a vital, likely unique role in responding to these issues. Images in this domain are highly visceral, affective and effective, readily able to impact powerfully upon individuals and the broader public. To express the complexity, intensity and violence of the images, my chosen artistic process is appropriation, collage, juxtaposition and over painting. In this way I facilitate a direct physical, visual and conceptual response to the subject matter which evidences my concern and discomfort. My artworks are created from the layering of images obtained from popular weekly, fashion and pornography magazines, as well as from historical paintings and the internet. As most of these images of the body are intentionally

seductive, the challenge is to create original works that visually critique their violent aspects, are not in themselves titillating and yet are celebratory of women's sexuality, identity and empowerment.

Lucienne Fontannaz holds Masters degrees in Art Education (Concordia University) and Art Administration and Fine Arts (University of New South Wales) and is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Visual Arts (Griffith University). She has taught art, curated major touring exhibitions, published books and exhibited her paintings in Switzerland, Canada, Australia and China. Over the past decade her artworks have addressed violence towards women vis-à-vis stereotypical portrayals and media representations of the body, sexuality, and pornography.

We are grateful to Lucienne for her kind offer of a selection of her artworks for use in the PPT slides introducing the conference sessions.

Red bench seats: Indelible messages of love in the prevention of violence against women

Karen Morgan

If violence knows no boundaries, the same can be said for love and art. I will present a short video focusing on the *Panchine rosse* project in Italy, showing examples of red benches and reporting on the level of community engagement and especially the involvement of schools. The video also touches upon how other countries, including Australia, are contributing to the prevention of violence against women using similar public artworks. It includes comments from inspiring artists and young people who have participated in the Italian projects.

Karen Morgan is a PhD candidate at Griffith University, examining the effectiveness of campaigns for the prevention of domestic and family violence that use narratives of love and art. Prior to this, in her MA in Arts and Media project she applied a philosophy of developing projects using positive narratives for challenging social problems.

PANEL - Violence in the works of Dacia Maraini

'Discipline and punish' in Dacia Maraini's militant dramaturgy

Maria Morelli

Dacia Maraini's 1970s dramaturgical oeuvre, which the author has identified as her most politically engaged ('barricade') theatre, evidences an undisputable commitment to the cause of the coeval feminist movement, espousing the move from the emancipationist intent of the previous decade to the denunciation of the plight of women in society and the articulation of a new female symbolic. This paper analyses two works belonging to Maraini's first and most militant theatrical phase, *Il Manifesto* (1969) and *La donna perfetta* (1974). From a gender perspective, both are exemplary in their illustration of the mechanisms of power played upon the (female) body, that is, the in/visible forms of violence through which femininity is contained - or, in Foucault's formulation, made 'docile'.

What interests me about these plays is their staging of insidious forms of control operated by a set of institutions (prisons, schools, asylums, hospitals, the workplace or the family) that exercise their influence, both physical and psychological, on the female protagonists and their coping mechanisms - or lack thereof. According to the Foucauldian theory of power, we are controlled by ubiquitous regulatory *dispositifs* (apparatuses) that, while monitoring us, are also responsible for defining us as subjects. In Maraini's plays under consideration such devices can sometimes be more obvious ones, as in the case of the mental institution (in *Il manifesto*), or they can take the form of stage props, such as mannequins standing as substitutes for women (in *La donna perfetta*). These are powerful images, since they foreground the disavowal of women as subjects and their social construction as Lack, or Other.

The question of (self) representation is an exigent one for feminism, for it allows for a readdressing of the gender balance through the re-signification of existing cultural codes. Although the systematic destabilisation of current representations of gender occurs only later on in Maraini's theatrical opus, her early dramaturgy does nonetheless succeed in giving visibility to, and raising awareness of, the struggles of women in patriarchal society and the relentless forms of violence and control to which they are subjected - the first step towards disrupting conventional modes of signification.

Maria Morelli is Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the University of Milan and a member of the Interdisciplinary Gender and Sexuality Research Cluster at the University of Leicester. Her research and teaching focus on issues of gender and embodiment in Italian women's literature and theatre. She co-edited the volume *Women and the Public Sphere in Modern and Contemporary Italy: Essays for Sharon Wood* (Troubadour 2017) and edited the essay collection *Il teatro cambia genere* (Mimesis 2019). Her monograph *Queer(ing) Gender in Italian Women's Writings* is under contract with Peter Lang Oxford.

Femminicidio and crime fiction: The case of Dacia Maraini's Voci

Barbara Pezzotti

Crime fiction has long been accused of being a conservative genre that reaffirms the social order (Porter 1981; Priestman 1991) and endorses a patriarchal society (Gregory Klein 1988). Yet crime fiction has been used to expose a pervasive evil of contemporary society - the crimes against women in Italy and in Western society. The most notable example in Italian crime fiction is Dacia Maraini's *Voci* (1994). Scholarship of *Voci* has gone to great lengths to distinguish this novel from the crime genre. In this article I will show how reading *Voci* as a crime novel is actually important for understanding it in new and innovative ways. Firstly, I will position Maraini's novel in the context of the Italian crime fiction tradition of *impegno* and the American feminist crime fiction tradition. I will then highlight how the investigative act and the representation of three key figures in crime fiction - the (female) detectives, the (equally female) victim and the (male) villain - are pivotal in identifying patriarchy as the real culprit of a phenomenon that, more than twenty years after the publication of Maraini's book, still occupies the front pages of Italian newspapers.

Barbara Pezzotti is a Lecturer in Italian Studies at Monash University and an Honorary Research Associate of the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies (ACIS). Her research interests include crime fiction and popular culture, literary geographies and Utopian

literature. She is the author of *The Importance of Place in Contemporary Italian Crime Fiction. A Bloody Journey* (FDU Press 2012); *Politics and Society in Italian Crime Fiction. An Historical Overview* (McFarland 2014); and *Investigating Italy's Past through Crime Fiction, Films and TV Series* (Palgrave McMillan 2016).

Kubra and her sisters: Female genital mutilation on the international stage

Daniela Cavallaro

For the Australian premiere of *Passi affrettati* (*Hurried Steps*) in November 2016 in Sydney, Dacia Maraini wrote a short piece on female genital mutilation (FGM) to add to the other stories of violence against women and children which make up this theatrical work. The protagonist, Kubra, is a young woman, brought up in Australia in a migrant family, reporting to a judge about the genital mutilation that was inflicted upon her when she was a child. Maraini chose the court setting and the modality of a judiciary testimonial (together with the oratorio style which is typical of *Passi affrettati*) to bring to the stage an unrepresentable act.

Using "Kubra" as my primary example, in this presentation I will discuss the staging styles that several playwrights have chosen in the last few years to bring to the stage the topic of FGM, as a way of raising awareness of the practice. Further texts discussed will include *Cuttin' it* (2014) by Charlene James, structured as school bus secrets shared by two Somali-born British teenagers; and *Little Stitches* (2014), consisting of four pieces by four authors who explore the ways FGM affects women and girls.

Daniela Cavallaro is a Senior Lecturer in Italian at the University of Auckland. She has published extensively on Italian and non-Italian women playwrights, and has written several articles on Dacia Maraini's works.

SHORT STORY READING

"Vagina Protest" by Elaigwu Ameh

Elaigwu Ameh is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University. He holds an MA in Performing and Media Arts from Cornell University and an MA in Development Communication from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. His doctoral research explores the lived realities of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. His publications include plays, poems, short stories, social commentaries, and academic essays. Elaigwu's short story "Vagina Protest" won the 2010 Centre for Human Development/Ford Foundation Writing Competition (prose category), while his play *Climate of Change* was awarded a production grant from the United Nations Development Program. In Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India and the US, he has employed theatre as a laboratory for promoting positive change in society. Inspired by his work with under-represented populations such as prisoners, refugees, leprosy patients, and immigrant farmworkers, Elaigwu now aspires to a career in research and teaching in which he will use theatre to promote societal reorientation and the common good.

PANEL - Retrieving, rewriting, revising

Rejected seductions: On some medieval representations of Potiphar's wife and Susanna

Benedetta Viscidi

Taking a medieval Latin text as my starting point, I propose the study of two motif representations of an attempted - and then rejected - seduction, which appear as mirror images of each other: the first usually pursued by a woman, the second by a man. In his *De nugis curialium* (III, 2), Walter Map (Twelfth Century) tells the story of a friendship between two knights, Sadius and Galo. Galo is wooed by his lord's wife (Sadius's aunt) whom he rejects out of loyalty to his sovereign; the queen then takes her revenge by forcing the knight to reveal his thoughts during a public banquet. The young man tells how one day, a year earlier, after a solitary ride in the forest, he arrived at a deserted castle, where he found a girl under a mastic tree and raped her. Both scenes of seduction refer to biblical episodes known to the author (there are textual quotations from the *Vulgata*). The first scene refers to the episode of seduction of the chaste Joseph by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), a figure who lent her name to a literary motif of world-wide diffusion, catalogued in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index* of Folk Literature as K2111 (Potiphar's wife. A woman makes vain overtures to a man and then accuses him of attempting to force her). The second refers to the story of Susanna threatened by the elders, who, once rejected, accuse her of adultery (Daniel 13); this episode refers to the motif catalogued as K2112 (Woman slandered as adulteress. Usually by unsuccessful suitor).

In this paper I compare the two biblical episodes and the subsequent medieval rewritings. I seek to demonstrate how the texts analysed use misogynist as well as gynophobic lenses to depict the female character: the presumed insatiability of her sexual appetite is both a cause of contempt and a source of frustrated fear for men, which leads her to be always represented as lewd and willing, whether she plays an active or a passive role in the seduction process.

Benedetta Viscidi is a PhD candidate in Romance Philology at the University of Padua. Her research focuses on the representation of violence against women in medieval French and Occitan Literatures. Her most recent publication analysed the Old French *Lay of Yonec* and two folk tales, focusing on the presence of traces of ancient female initiation rites and shamanic other-worldly travels.

Fable motifs and patriarchal ethics: Case study of the persecuted maiden

Matteo Cardillo

Through a feminist, comparative and anthropological approach, my aim is to highlight female subjectivity in the fable motif of the persecuted maiden, in a dialogue between the European folktale tradition and feminist postmodern rewritings. I will mainly refer to Giambattista Basile's Handless Penta from the Tale of Tales. Penta cuts off her hands as a protest against her brother's incestuous desire to marry her, sending them to him as a bridal gift. This brings Penta to leave the court and begin a picaresque journey out of her mainstream social role, by rejecting her family, until she meets her husband, a positive example of masculinity, who pushes her to rejoin her brother. With reference to Levi-Strauss and feminist criticism (Gayle Rubin), the father-to-husband ritual passage

represents marriage in a tribal community, where women become the passive objects of exchange between two tribes. In this context, incest between brother and sister or father and daughter would not be functional to create tribal alliances.

In Margaret Atwood's writing, hands represent an extension of the brain, their mutilation meaning a suppression of female freedom of thought, as we can see in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where women who dare to read have their limbs amputated. In the 1995 poem "Girl Without Hands", Atwood represents handlessness as a symbolic lack, investigating the subjectivity of a present-day silenced woman who is alienated from life. Furthermore, in Atwood's works the fable motif of the mutilated woman becomes a solipsistic reflection on female agency and women's struggles to escape from phallogocentric compulsions. If strategies of resistance to gendered violence are applied to the motif of the persecuted maiden, either divergently or convergently with respect to its retellings, it is possible to perceive how such strategies have a limited chance of success, since the runaway maiden must restore her initial status in order to be finally reconciled with her patriarchal authorities.

Matteo Cardillo is a first-year PhD candidate at the EDGES Women's and Gender Studies Programme at the University of Bologna. He has a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Bologna and a double Master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies and Comparative Literature from the Universities of Bologna and Granada. His main research interests are critical dystopias and English-language postmodern literature.

Retrieving or revising? Using theology and Greek mythology in contemporary Italian literature against femicide

Nicoletta Mandolini

Feminist theories are conflicting in describing the relationship of women's thought and writing to mythology. On one side, scholars such as Monique Wittig (1969) and Luce Irigaray (1974) consider myth as a product of phallogocentric Western civilisation and, consequently, as a cultural tool used to legitimise patriarchal hierarchies. Following this school of thought, only a revision/rewriting of mythology can serve a feminist ethos. On the other side, thinkers like Hélène Cixous (1975) look at myths as stimulating creative spaces from which to draw in order to retrieve models of female subjectivity (e.g. Judith, Philomela and Procne, Demeter).

This paper investigates two contemporary Italian novels on the topic of femicide (*femminicidio*): *Undicesimo comandamento* (2011) by Elena Mearini and *Padreterno* (2015) by Caterina Serra - drawing on feminist insights that consider both practices of revising and retrieving mythology as an opportunity to start a process of re-symbolisation that could challenge patriarchal discrimination and violence (Pollock 2006; Cavarero 1990). In particular, Mearini's decision to re-write the Christian myth of the cross, in order to tell the story of a woman annihilated by her partner's violence, and Serra's use of the Greek myth of Aristaeus, to retrieve a story of femicide told by a male offender who undertakes a process of self-awareness, will be considered as part of the same Italian contemporary tendency to tackle lethal gender violence against women by means of literary representations and storytelling.

Nicoletta Mandolini's doctorate project focused on the representation of gender-based violence and femicide in contemporary Italian journalistic and literary narratives. She has published extensively on sexist abuse in contemporary Italian literature and on feminist discourse on femicide in Italian blogs, and co-edited the volume *Rappresentare la violenza di genere. Sguardi femministi tra critica, attivismo e scrittura* (Mimesis 2018). She is currently FWO (Research Foundation - Flanders) junior postdoctoral fellow at KU Leuven.

SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF PLAY

Processo per stupro / A Trial for Rape

by Renato Chiocca (2018)

Forty years after the broadcast of the documentary *Processo per stupro/A trial for rape* (1979) by Italian State television RAI, Renato Chiocca adapted the filmed proceedings for the theatre. The trial that followed 18 year old Fiorella's reporting to the police of four men for rape should have changed court proceedings and the law, as it showed how words in the courtroom turned the accuser into the accused. While the law was changed in 1996 in Italy, rape trials still seem to be stuck in the past, so much so that the need was felt to bring this testimony back to public attention.

Come to see the performance - in Italian, recorded live in Rome in 2018 - and hear the writer and director Renato Chiocca talk about his work (in Italian, with English subtitles), then take the opportunity to ask him questions in English via video-link.

Renato has kindly given us permission to distribute the English translation of the script to those who wish to read it during the screening of the performance.

Renato Chiocca has a degree in Communication and studied directing at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Italian National Film School) in Rome. He has been assistant director to Mimmo Calopresti and assistant to Daniele Luchetti. He has also worked with Paolo Sorrentino, Alessandro Piva, Mario Balsamo, Gianfranco Pannone and Sergio Rubini, among others. Productions he has directed for the theatre include *Tracce - scritti e letture da Cesare Battisti* (*Tracks - Readings from the Works of Cesare Battisti*), with Pier Giorgio Bellocchio (2003), and *Fulvio Falzarano non compra nulla, ma viene a prendere un caffè con me* (*Fulvio Falzarano Never Buys Anything, but Comes for a Coffee with Me*) adapted from a story by Vitaliano Trevisan together with the author (2004). Chiocca has directed commercials, video clips and television programmes. His short films and documentaries, among them *Il principiante* (*The Novice*, 2004), *Mattotti* (2006), *Nanga Parbat - La montagna nuda* (*Nanga Parbat - The Bare Mountain*, 2008), *Differenti* (*Different*, 2009), *Chance Encounter on the Tiber* (2010), *Una volta fuori* (*After Getting Out*, 2012) and *Maamoura* (2015), have been screened and won awards in Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, the UK, Tunisia, Turkey, Brazil, South Korea, the USA and China. His graphic novel, co-authored with Andrea Ferraris, *La cicatrice. Sul confine tra Messico e Stati Uniti* (*The Scar. On the Border between Mexico and the United States*) was published in 2017 (Oblomov Edizioni) and the rights have recently been sold for translations in France and the USA.

PERFORMANCE

La Prima Donna by Fools In Progress (Bianca Bonino and Ben-Jamin)
(The performance is in English)

Inspired by the current #TimesUp and #MeToo movements, the Fools In Progress theatre company has developed *La Prima Donna*, a production focused on the story of the first woman to take to the stage, becoming the world's first professional actress. It is a light-hearted comparison between the life and times of early actresses and those of the modern female actor.

The show provides an excellent introduction to Commedia dell'Arte, as the Fools perform eight famous stock characters in a comic sequence: Il Dottore, Flavio, Colombina, Brighella, Pulcinella, Il Capitano, Pantalone and of course Arlecchino. If you have never seen a Commedia performance, this is the best way to get to know the main characters, the masks and the over-the-top acting style that Commedia requires. Not to mention that the content, although painstakingly and precisely planned, is no less than 80 percent improvised, relying only on the actors' extensive knowledge of the physicality and temperament of every character portrayed on stage.

La Prima Donna is a Fools In Progress original production.

Fools In Progress theatre company is a dynamic group of professionally trained actors who have come together, by diverse paths, to showcase the origins of modern comedy through traditional Commedia dell'Arte performances and workshops. Founded in 2009 by Bianca Bonino, the company aims to demonstrate the intense significance that Commedia dell'Arte holds in the mainstream media of the Twenty-first Century.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER

KEYNOTE PAPER

'*La vita possibile*': Imagining an alternative to domestic violence as life sentence

Bernadette Luciano

As films and docudramas dealing with domestic violence have proliferated on international screens over recent decades, scholarly works have considered how images and narratives of violence reflect social dynamics of power and subordination. In 2014, Silvia Lelli and Matilde Gagliardo began a long-term documentary project entitled *Violenza invisibile* which aimed to explore the many forms of 'less visible' violence against women, those embedded and indeed normalised in everyday cultural practices. The interviews that made up the project enabled women who had broken away from violent relationships and men who had abused women to talk about their experiences and to create a space to address a previously invisible social tragedy.

This paper looks at how fictional representations of domestic violence address these same issues and attempt to create a similar space for reflection; that is, how fictional filmic narratives expose and confront the violence that still oppresses and represses Italian women and seek ethical empathy and redress for female 'victims' of domestic violence. A number of recent Italian fiction films acknowledge the domestic space as a site of verbal and physical abuse where males claim their authority and impose violence as an excessive form of love. In the unravelling of these narratives the films ultimately challenge the conception of these realities as something immobile and unchangeable.

Central to all these films is the empowerment brought about by various forms of female solidarity that enable vulnerable and violated bodies to be reconfigured and liberated from the defensive history to which they have been consigned. Ferzan Özpetek's 2008 *Un giorno perfetto*, Ivano de Matteo's 2016 *La vita possibile*, Andr s Arce Maldonado's 2017 *Dentro* and Sergio Castellito's 2017 *Fortunata*, temporally, generically and at times geographically distant from each other, provide different perspectives on domestic violence, on the challenges and fears of women who try to reclaim their lives, and on deeply seeded cultural and political obstacles that obstruct female empowerment and dignity.

Bernadette Luciano is Professor of Italian at the University of Auckland. She has published articles and book chapters on cinema and documentary; film adaptation; women's autobiographical writing; the theory and practice of translation and subtitling; and issues of identity, migration and transnationalism in literature and film. She is author of *The Cinema of Silvio Soldini: Dream, Image, Voyage* (Troubador 2008) and co-author (with Susanna Scarparo) of *Reframing Italy: New Trends in Italian Women's Filmmaking* (Purdue University Press 2013).

PANEL - Framing systemic violence

Insult to injury: Women with mental health disorders in Italian photography and film

Sally Hill

This paper examines the ways in which women diagnosed or labelled with mental health disorders have been represented in photography and cinema in Italy. It analyses the relationship between these representations and the structural, gendered violence often perpetrated against such women. From photographs such as those collected by criminologist Cesare Lombroso in the late Nineteenth Century to those made by photographers like Carla Cerati and Gianni Berengo Gardin in the context of Franco Basaglia's psychiatric reforms in the 1960s, and from films such as Carmine Gallone's *Malombra* (1917) to Marco Bellocchio's *Vincere* (2009), representations of women with mental disorders are almost always framed and marked by forms of violence. The paper argues that such images need to be viewed in the context of the shared status of photography, cinema and psychiatry as contemporarily 'modern' inventions with interconnected scopic regimes that play an important role in either reinforcing or contesting violent systems of surveillance and oppression of women.

Sally (Sarah Patricia) Hill is Head of the School of Languages and Cultures and Associate Professor in Italian at Victoria University of Wellington. Her work focuses on intersections among Twentieth-Century Italian cinema, literature and visual culture, with a particular interest in photography and film and in the representation of marginalised experiences. Her current research is on representations of disability in Italian film.

Framing intermedially: Visual representations of the Italian colonisation and housewifization processes in *Department of Lavorare* (2006) by Carrie Mae Weems

Giulia Borrini

In this paper I will undertake a feminist Marxist reading of the picture *Department of Lavorare*, one of the photographs from the series *Roaming* (2006) by Carrie Mae Weems. Drawing upon Agnes Pethő's intermedial thinking, I correlate the layered meanings of the picture, displaying the architectural element of Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro in Rome, with the investigation of the expropriation of women's unpaid labour carried out by scholars Silvia Federici and Maria Mies. Indeed, their research has revealed that the general production of life, better defined as subsistence production, was mainly performed through the non-wage labour of women and other non-wage labourers such as slaves and peasants in the colonies for the sake of establishing a capitalist patriarchy. I argue that the black silhouette featuring in all the photographs of *Roaming* stands before the Palazzo della Civiltà, dedicated to the male actors of colonisation in Eastern Africa, to condense Mies' concept of the colonisation process as highly gendered. Weems' photograph denounces the violent application of patriarchal ideals in the former Italian colonies by interweaving an intermedial relationship between photography, sculpture and performativity. She shares Mies' (1986) notion of 'Colonialism and Housewifization' (whose formulation builds on Silvia Federici's analysis of the witch hunt which served the purpose of the accumulation of capital) whilst it considerably resonates with the motivation to position her body right in front of the architectural manifestation of Italian colonialist power. The photographer aims to avenge the creation of labour in the shape of slavery and exploitation based on a sexual division of labour that left women in the colonies dependent and vulnerable to further oppression, and the oppressed position of women in Western countries as housewives and consumers.

Giulia Borrini is a second year PhD candidate in Italian Studies at the University of St Andrews. Her doctoral project 'Stillness and Motion: Intermedial Photography in Italian Postcolonial Narratives' examines how photography, text, cinema and a wide range of other media including architecture interact in new narrative forms representing identities in contemporary Italy. Using theories of intermediality, visual culture, and close textual analysis, she analyses both literary and audio-visual works that originate from photographs. Giulia's investigation of the interaction between postcolonial subjects and innovations in verbal-visual representation aims to show how Italy is coming to terms both with its colonial past and the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean.

PANEL - The violence of borders

Gender, ethnicity and violence in Post-Yugoslav Cinema

Elena Spasovska

This paper will analyse representations of gendered experiences of violence in movies produced following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. The end of the Yugoslav Federation was marked by violent ethnic conflicts during which rape and sexual violence were used as weapons of war. Post-Yugoslav cinema has generally focused on depicting the struggles, dilemmas and conflicts of people affected by militarisation, ethno-nationalism, patriarchy, poverty and insecurity. Most of the highly awarded former Yugoslav movies are notably androcentric and they marginalise women's perspectives and experiences. Ethno-nationalism and patriarchy intersect in shaping the ways women

have been affected by the conflicts and social, economic and political insecurities in the region.

This paper will explore the power of cinema to reinforce or to challenge hegemonic representations and narratives of women's experiences of various forms of gender-based violence in the context of ethnic conflict and post-socialist transition. A textual analysis will be conducted of the following movies: *Before the Rain* (Manchevski 1994, N. Macedonia), *Cabaret Balkan* (Paskaljević 1998, Serbia), *Grbavica* (Žbanić 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Three Days in September* (Pejovski 2006, N. Macedonia), *Three Windows and a Hanging* (Qosja 2014, Kosovo). By examining how these movies tackle complex issues relating to war rape, sexual assault, domestic violence and honour killing, this paper will argue that there is a discursive potential in cinema to problematise simplistic representations of women only as 'passive victims' of the difficult social and political realities in the former Yugoslavia, and to acknowledge women as agents of meaningful acts of resistance against the misogyny, ethnic hatred, and militarism that have permeated many aspects of the social and political life in countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Elena Spasovska completed her PhD at the University of South Australia in 2017. Her dissertation explores the contributions and challenges of women's non-governmental organisations in building sustainable peace in the Republic of Macedonia. She also holds a Master's degree in Women, Gender and Citizenship from the University of Barcelona. Her interests intersect in the fields of women and gender studies; feminist IR, nationalism and ethnic conflicts; conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and nonviolent resistance. Her teaching at the University of SA includes Sociology of Gender and Intimacy. Elena is co-founder of the not-for-profit International Balkan Alliance for Sustainable Development Goals.

***Traspatio* (Mexico 2009) and the context and tropes of border femicide as portrayed on screen**

Robert Harland

Traspatio by Carlos Carrera was one of the great successes of its year, sweeping the Ariels (the Mexican Oscars). It deals with aspects of the *Femicidio* (Femicide), the unsolved murders of women in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico, just opposite the contrastingly non-violent US city of El Paso, Texas. This presentation will explore how *Traspatio* differs from other representations of the border, in such US productions as the film *Bordertown* (Nava 2007) and the TV series *The Bridge* (Stiehm, Reid 2013), in its portrayal of the city and region as a lived-in community, albeit a violent one where women and the violence done to them are commodified as much as the products of the maquiladora factories where they work. It will also examine how the tropes of cinematic violence and the thriller compare to the actual *Femicidio* itself and real-world violence, and how *Traspatio* rises above the clichéd thriller dichotomy pinpointed by Molly Haskell: do you show women as victims of grittily realistic violence or as progressive avenging heroines?

This paper will draw upon such critics of the Border as Rita Laura Segato (*La escritura en el cuerpo...*), and Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba's *Border Women*, and, in the case of *Traspatio* itself, Olimpia Arellano-Neri and Emily Hind. In addition, it refers to general, recent factual histories of the Juárez *Femicidio* and local narco drug gang violence by e.g. Oscar Martinez, and Diana Washington Valdez's *Cosecha de mujeres / Harvest of Women*,

a work itself advertised by its publishers as "the real story behind the [unnamed] Hollywood movie". In a world where fictional movie adaptations are used as a selling point for serious real-world studies of the worst sort of violence, *Traspatio* will be analysed here for how its fictional tropes portray the horrifying realities of the Juárez Femicide.

Robert Harland teaches Spanish and occasionally French at Mississippi State University, at all levels from Masters to beginners' language classes. His research interests include modern novels and film from Mexico and Spain, especially the detective story and the Mexican cineaste Chano Urueta. His PhD is in Spanish Literature from the University of Cardiff.

Institutional violence on regular female travellers at the border

Marinella Marmo

This analysis will address the case of systemic state violence on women travelling with legal documents at an external border. There are numerous records of internal, invasive, degrading and superfluous examinations at several western borders (examples come from the USA's southern and northern borders and from the EU); these cases demonstrate institutional violence on women, which is alarming and deserves closer examination.

These recorded incidents are abusive and demeaning. From internal examination to forced strip search and other abusive forms of interrogation, the border is used to assert power over the female traveller with legal documentation, even when holding citizenship, and to impose 'exclusion' and 'sovereignty' through humiliating practices. The search for the 'truth' via the body is deemed necessary by the immigration officer, because the woman's oral testimony of her intention regarding entry and her production of legal paperwork cannot be 'trusted'.

At the border each individual plays a role - willingly or reluctantly - in the "theatre of liminality" (Turner 1979), where 'otherness' is defined by sovereignty, patriarchy and post-colonialism. Therefore, this paper concerns the interpretation of these violent encounters as theatrical performance of repeated gestures, an artistic exhibition of post-colonial and patriarchal power. Reading this through the lens of 'representation' allows us to unmask its violence.

This paper does not consider gendered violence at the border through its representation in the arts; rather it argues the opposite: for the state, the border has become a theatrical space in which to project messages to us, the community. The paper highlights how the new 'sonics' constituted by "wall(s) of noise and quiet manoeuvring" (Welch 2013) is performed by the state to send a 'message of security' to its constituencies.

Marinella Marmo is an Associate Professor in criminology at Flinders University. She investigates victimhood across borders, with emphasis on transnational migration and human rights. Her work has been published in leading journals and appears in a number of books and edited collections.

PANEL - Gendered violence in literature from early modern to modern times

Representation of violence against martyred virgins in early modern religious plays

Luca Zipoli

Martyred women are the main protagonists of *Sacre Rappresentazioni*, the genre of religious

dramas that became popular in Florence in the second half of the Fifteenth Century. In these plays, women are both psychologically and physically violated by the masculine environment that surrounds them - as shown, for example, by the stories of Saints Agata, Apollonia and Domitilla. The heroines of those texts are persecuted in many ways: they are indoctrinated with patriarchal ideology, forced to marry pagan men, tortured, and ultimately put to an atrocious death. These religious plays are the first texts in the vernacular that consistently tackle the theme of gendered violence, and in so doing they play a crucial role in shaping this subject within the Italian tradition.

Recent studies have shed new light on this first form of Italian theatre, with outstanding contributions by American and Australian scholars (Judith Brice, Nerida Newbigin, Elissa Weaver). However, a specific focus on how those texts represent (in)visible violence against

women is still lacking in this field of study. My paper will try to offer a first insight into this

significant aspect. I will provide an overview of the many forms in which gendered violence is depicted in *Sacre rappresentazioni*, both in the text in the woodcut images that accompany the printed editions. I will also compare texts written by male authors with a unique example of a woman writer, Antonia Pulci, showing how differently violence is treated when viewed from these two different perspectives. Finally, I will discuss the great popularity of those stories, arguing that this obsession with female martyrdom mirrors a profound terror of women's agency in the patriarchal Florentine society, and that these stories provided a way for the authors to try to stifle any claim for liberty by women.

Luca Zipoli is a PhD candidate in Italian literature at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. His main research interests focus on Late-Quattrocento Florentine literature, with special reference to the production in ottava rima (*cantari* and *sacre rappresentazioni*) and the figures of Luigi and Antonia Pulci. In 2018 he was Visiting Graduate Student in women's studies at New York University. His essay on Antonia Pulci and her *Sacra Rappresentazione di Santa Domitilla* will be published in 2019 in a volume edited by Helena Sanson.

The silent victim: Representations of sexual violence in Luigi Capuana and Federico De Roberto

Annamaria Pagliaro

In this paper I aim to examine the representation of sexual violence in a selection of texts by Luigi Capuana and Federico De Roberto. The theme of sexuality in the Nineteenth Century constituted an emergent science and produced a number of studies where literature and empirical observations intersect. As Foucault well reminds us *scientia sexualis* incited and captured the imagination revealing its power politics. The authors I am proposing, particularly De Roberto, wrote extensively on the subject of sexuality and

engaged critically with theories espoused by the likes of Mantegazza and Lombroso. His quasi-scientific study *L'Amore. Fisiologia. Psicologia Morale* (1895), for example, presents the more regressive aspects of the late Nineteenth-Century debate on the nature of men and women, gender relations and sexual behaviour. I would like to take up some of these concepts and explore the way in which gender relations and sexual violence, particularly rape, are portrayed in some striking passages which to date have been only summarily considered or overlooked altogether by scholars of De Roberto, and consider how these examples compare with representations on these topics by Luigi Capuana. In light of theoretical work on the representation of sexual violence in literature, by Martin Alcoff and Higgins and Silver, among others, I will analyse extracts from *L'Imperio* by Federico De Roberto and *Giacinta* and *Tortura* by Luigi Capuana showing how encounters of sexual violence and rape against women are subsumed in political symbolism, or implicitly naturalised through scientific discourse. In these texts sexual behaviour constitutes the leitmotif; the analysis will reveal how sexual violence endured by the female characters depicts a particular masculinist perspective on sexual politics and silences the female victim.

Annamaria Pagliaro is Senior Lecturer in Italian Studies at Monash University. Her research interest is in Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Italian literature, literary theory and Italian theatre. She has published on the development of the Nineteenth-Century novel and Italian *Verismo*, particularly on Capuana, De Roberto and Verga. She is the author of *The Novels of Federico De Roberto: From Naturalism to Modernism* (2011) and a co-edited monograph *Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Unification Italy: The Case of Luigi Capuana* is forthcoming with Firenze University Press. She is a member of the editorial board of *Spunti e Ricerche* and has edited several special issues of this journal.

Violence and rape in the Italian *fin-de-siècle*: The case of Gabriele D'Annunzio

Michela Barisonzi

This paper focuses on the language and representation of rape and violence against women in late Nineteenth-Century Italian literature. At the turn of the century we see an increase in the production of fictional writings and *Galatei* dedicated to the female audience, with a strong pedagogic focus. At the same time, however, we find novels and medical treatises, such as those of Cesare Lombroso and Paolo Mantegazza, where women are still presented in a position of biological and moral inferiority. The rather contrasting female images that emerge from this literature reflect a divided society, marked by the crisis of bourgeois values, the birth of the nationalist movement and the rise of feminism. Following from the works of Gibson and Wanrooij on violence and prostitution in Post-Unification Italy, this paper analyses the representation of female sexual violence, looking at how rape is presented either as a terrible crime or as a consequence of female sexual agency in selected works by Gabriele D'Annunzio. Taking as its starting point Foucault's studies on the rise of the medicalisation of the female body, this analysis reflects on the attempt by the patriarchal society to control female sexuality and constrain female desire, with rape and violence becoming a punishment, disguised behind the image of the femme fatale and her deviancy. Paolo Mantegazza's and Cesare Lombroso's works on female love and deviancy, as well as some examples of *Galatei*, will be used to explore how the codification of female roles through the normal-deviant dichotomy influenced the

depiction of violence and rape in D'Annunzio's works, as well as how these themes are used by the author in an attempt to overtly critique Post-Unification Italian society.

Michela Barisonzi has a PhD from Monash University, a BA in Translation and Interpretation, an MA in Foreign Literatures and Cultures and an MA in International Relations. She has published several works on the *fin-de-siècle* nationalist ideology and female representation in works of this period. She is currently working on representations of sexual violence in Nineteenth-Century Italian authors, and D'Annunzio and the Great War. Other areas of her research include the juridical language of migration and political discourse. She has presented papers based on Nineteenth-Century Italian literature and contemporary Italian cinema at various international conferences.

PANEL - Representing gendered violence and resistance

Violence and women's resistance in Giorgio Scerbanenco's *Racconti neri*

Aidan Carter

The contemporary Italian detective novel, *il giallo*, has long depicted its female characters as helpless victims of their male counterparts. Whilst significant research has been conducted analysing the countless examples of fictional works in this genre in which women suffer at the hands of the patriarchal society (Pieri & Rinaldi 2011; Pezzotti 2013; Paoli 2016), and has also highlighted the auspicious change that female *gialliste* have more recently provided (for example Dacia Maraini, Grazia Verasani, Barbara Garlaschelli), the question of the origin of this commonplace characteristic in the *giallo* remains underexamined. This paper analyses the representation of violence against women and their little to no resistance in the early literary works of Giorgio Scerbanenco, with a particular focus on his collection of short stories entitled *Racconti neri* (2005). Through a close analysis of the portrayal of female characters in two of these short stories, "Più forte del killer" (1969) and "Un ragioniere, un'inchiesta, un suicidio" (1967), I highlight the standardised violent and derogatory actions and speech of men towards women and the latter's lack of resistance and agency in 1960s Italian society, before the emergence of second wave feminist literature in the following decade. Furthermore, this paper also reflects on the role that Scerbanenco, described by Jennifer Burns (2011) as the 'founding father' of the *giallo*, played in defining the genre not only in terms of structure and style, but also the aforementioned role of the female character. In doing so, I offer an alternative analysis of violence in Scerbanenco's writings, drawing upon his lesser known works as opposed to the more prominent Duca Lamberti series (1966-69).

Aidan Carter is an Italian teacher and independent researcher. He currently teaches at La Trobe University and works as a Research Assistant at Swinburne University of Technology. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Italian Studies from the University of Melbourne specialising in sociolinguistics and repressive language policies during Fascism in the Trentino-Alto Adige region. His research interests include: corpus-assisted language learning, L2 pedagogy, the contemporary Italian detective novel, and modern Italian history.

Ideas of primality: Rape, resistance, and representation in Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things*

Christie Fogarty

This paper explores rape myths, the false and stereotypical beliefs and assumptions that nevertheless are widely circulated in the popular realm, as manifest in Charlotte Wood's *The Natural Way of Things* (2015). As a newer work, *The Natural Way of Things* will be situated within the larger social context of rape mythology and recent public challenges to these myths. This larger picture includes the recent (re)emergence of online movements such as #MeToo and #WhatIWasWearing, with a focus on the victim-centric discussions surrounding rape prevention. Once situated, themes of primality and stereotypical rapist behaviour are explored within the work, with focus given to the portrayed rapists' adherence to or rejection of stereotypical behaviour. Rape myths pertaining to the conflation of human and animal are of particular note due to this novel's strong imagery and themes of primality as rebellion/reaction. Set in outback Australia, numerous women awake to find themselves on an abandoned sheep ranch. Having each experienced rape or taboo intercourse, the women are horrified to learn they have been imprisoned on the property at the mercy of their captors, Teddy and Boncer. The two female protagonists, Yolanda and Verla, experience a devolution of the human condition, reverting to primal instincts and - I argue - eventually regaining their agency through this return to primality.

Christie Fogarty is an emerging author from Queensland. Interested in confronting topics and uncomfortable themes, Christie is currently undertaking a Doctorate of Philosophy at Griffith University, focusing on rape myths and the construction of fictional rape.

Representing violence and the Gothic New Woman in *Penny Dreadful*

Stephanie Green

Produced by Sam Mendes and John Logan, the television series *Penny Dreadful* takes famous supernatural characters from Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century popular fiction, using them to evoke the idea of a haunted past as a background for new stories of a world on the brink of unimaginable change. Not all the characters start out as supernatural beings. The key female characters are viscerally 'made' from their experiences, often at the hands of dominating or ruthless males. They wrestle with incursions on their autonomy and limits to their power, whether through enchantment or ideological or institutional oppression. The marks of violence are written on their bodies, but they seek to survive through mental determination, or by turning the tables of violence on the predators. The Gothic uncertainty of the story, however, renders their resistance inexact.

Schubart argues that the identity of the contemporary female screen super hero must be understood as complex and conflicted. Screen drama after feminism portrays women who seek power and express desire, without the necessary promise of resolution or success. This paper will address the ways in which *Penny Dreadful* reflects cultural complexities surrounding the idea of the 'Gothic New Women', figures of supernatural capacity who seek new possibilities for themselves and their worlds. I will argue that the Gothic New Women of *Penny Dreadful* attempt to assert a new subjectivity by changing

the expressive gestures of self-hood. While they are caught in the Gothic slippage of ideology and power, in cinematic terms, the recursive adaptability of their stories allows for new possibilities of gendered meaning to be sustained beyond the bounds of the series. *Penny Dreadful* has not only adapted historical stories, but has now gone on to spawn a new sequence of graphic narratives which brings ongoing possibilities for character transformation. For the character identities of the screen series, however, uncertainty and power bring both liberation and constraint.

Stephanie Green lectures in writing, literature and culture in the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University. Her research publications include "Desiring Dexter: The Pangs and Pleasures of Serial Killer Body Technique", in *Continuum* (26 2012) and she is co-editor of and contributing author to *Hospitality, Rape and Consent in Vampire Popular Culture* (Palgrave-Macmillan 2017).

PERFORMANCE AND FORUM

***Hurried Steps* by Dacia Maraini**

the English translation (2008) by Sharon Wood of *Passi affrettati*
performed by RedVentures with the Born on Monday choir

This is an amateur production organised with kind permission from the authors and facilitated by New Shoes Theatre.

Hurried steps tells a series of stories of women and girls from around the world who have experienced violence and persecution. The stories differ in their cultural contexts but have in common heartfelt, optimistic beginnings and a devastating progression. In writing this play, Dacia Maraini adapted, amalgamated and dramatised testimonies given to Amnesty International.

The performance, in a rehearsed-reading style, will be followed by a forum discussion to allow further exploration of the issues raised, with a panel of people experienced in working in women's support services.

"With hurried steps these women flee from pain and discrimination. But all too often these steps are halted, stopped, nailed down, made to turn back upon themselves... Inspired by real facts reported by Amnesty International, the text is a testimony, an accusation, a gesture of solidarity and acknowledgment of all those women who are still prisoners of forced marriage, of a violent family, of a pimp, of tradition or of age-old discriminations which are so difficult to overcome." Dacia Maraini

Please note: some people may find the content of this play disturbing. There will be a support person available for audience members to talk to if it raises issues for them.

RedVentures is a theatre action group based in Brisbane. All members are community artists who volunteer to work together on political theatre pieces. We choose to challenge ourselves with new works and hope to encourage discussion of the topics raised with our audiences.

The artworks on the PPT slides introducing sessions are by Lucienne Fontannaz, who generously offered them for this purpose.

This conference is supported by the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies (ACIS) and is part of the ACIS Visual and Performing Arts Research Group project. The project team members and conference organisers are:

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