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Icons of Trauma and the Global Novel: Visual Portrayals of Violence in Elsa Morante, Svetlana Alexievich and Elena Ferrante's Works

While there has been a paradigm shift in the global visibility of gendered violence heralded by the #MeToo movement from 2017, a palpable increase in violence against women and deep – seated gender inequalities are a worrying global trend that has been further exposed by the current pandemic. With gendered violence forming an intrinsic part of the imaginary of the contemporary global novel, Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels provide a powerful gateway into the unacknowledged stories of the traumatized female subject and the global hegemonic norms that shape them. Ferrante's works narrate the lives of women as vulnerable to structural violence and systematic erasure in a patriarchal system whilst building on a lineage of female – authored narratives that centre on the 'dissymetries of power that impact on women's lives' (Boehmer), as previously explored in the works of Elsa Morante (de Rogatis and Wehling – Giorgi, [Allegoria 83](#)).

My contribution will explore Morante and Ferrante's fictionalisation of the unacknowledged, silenced stories of the female subject through the lens of trauma studies, with a specific focus on the visual, imagistic dimension. Given the difficulty of translating traumatic experience into linguistic memory, both authors' works show how traumatic events are often 'registered in a specific, imagistic way that stands outside normal memory creation' (Luckhurst). In fact, I will show how the texts' photographic or oneiric pictures synecdochally mirror the complex temporality of trauma. Read through the poetics of trauma, the textual pictures provide a powerful semiotic code to negotiate the horrors that leak through the façade of the texts' realist mode. The visual focus of their novels not only offers a productive interpretive key to reread Balagov's masterful filmic adaptation of Alexievich's *The Unwomanly Face of War* (Beanpole, 2019) and its privileging of a female – focalised narrative, but it also provides a particularly productive lens through which to reconsider these powerful tales of resistance against global structures of violence.