



# Ca' Foscari University of Venice

**PROJECT ACRONYM AND TITLE:** HYSTHEAS - The hysterical body between medical science and theatre (19th-20th century)

**FUNDING PROGRAMME:** HORIZON EUROPE

**CALL:** HORIZON-MSCA-2022-PF-01 (MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2022)

**KEYWORDS:** *Hysteria; Female body exposure; Spectacularity of the pathological body; Italian Grand Guignol; Actresses' bodies; Hysterical pose and iconography; Gesture and body writing; 19th and 20th centuries*

**HOST DEPARTMENT:** Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage

**SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE:** Pier Mario Vescovo

**FELLOW:** Silvia De Min

Project total costs	Overall funding assigned to UNIVE
€ 172.750,08	€ 172.750,08

## ABSTRACT:

When and why does the exposure of the body become, in itself, spectacularised? HYSTHEAS investigates this question by looking at a specific case study: the body affected by hysteria – the most spectacular of neuroses – and its exposure in two contexts, medicine and theatre, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. How do literary and artistic imaginaries influence the scientific study of hysteria? How do hysterical symptoms, identified in a medical context, influence theatrical productions? The project will examine a selection of Italian case studies. Specifically, I will consult the archive of the female asylum of San Clemente (Venice), focusing on the period from the 1870s to the 1930s. The archival sources will be compared with the theatrical writings on the body and gesture that arose in the same years. The starting point will be the little-studied repertoire of the Italian Grand Guignol, complemented with other scenes that attracted audiences through the spectacularity of the pathological body. The staged, posed body is what connects the exhibition of female bodies suffering from hysteria in the medical sphere with the same exhibition in the theatrical sphere. The pose in itself will be considered a form that straddles fiction and reality, art and life. The iconographic apparatus (photos of medical records, but also images for treatises and drawings for newspaper articles) and writings on the body from the two fields (medicine and theatre) will constitute the materials to be compared. The project addresses areas of study – history of mental illness and theatre – that have rarely been compared in Italian studies. Above all, the project's impact and reflection on the performing arts is of primary importance. The contemporary performance scene is increasingly opening up to accommodate dramatic compositions written by/for “non-standardised bodies”. HYSTHEAS will shed new light on the body's exposure in order to overcome the “disease–spectacularisation” nexus.

Planned Start date	Planned End date
01/09/2024	31/08/2026

## PARTNERSHIP

1. Ca' Foscari University of Venice	Italy	Beneficiary
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