

**LAURA BENEDETTI**, Laura and Gaetano De Sole Professor of Contemporary Italian Culture at Georgetown University, has spent her life in the university reading across seven centuries of Italian writers, culture and history, and focusing on the representation of women, intertextuality in the Renaissance, the fictional treatment of historical figures, and narrative strategies and structure.

In April 2017, Professor Benedetti joined us in the Department of Italian at Rutgers University to give a presentation on her first novel, *Un Paese di Carta*, which tells the story of three generations of Italian-American women from Abruzzo to Maryland. The youngest of the women must return to L'Aquila, Italy, where she discovers a town struggling to recover from the 2009 earthquake, as well as the real reasons that prompted her grandmother's departure over half a century earlier.

During this enlightening evening, Laura read and discussed some of her favorite passages, she revealed the reasons for their creation, the complexity of the book's title and how every event has brought her a new understanding of it, how the novel emerged from an idea initially conceived as an academic essay, and much more.

We were delighted and grateful that she agreed to follow up that event with an exclusive interview (conducted via email) for this edition of *La Fusta*.

**RENATTA FORDYCE** has written creatively and professionally for over twenty years. Her work has appeared in newspapers in South America and online journals. Her body of work falls into the genre of literary fiction and includes poetry, short stories, and articles.

Renatta composed this poem for a course at Rutgers University, called "Colorlines and Borderlands" (Latino and Caribbean Studies 202). The course examined the power of "colorlines" in producing divisions among peoples and individuals, and explored the possibilities to cross borders of separation and create new forms of human connection in the 21st century.

**BRITTA GIGLIOTTI** is a senior in New York University's Global Liberal Studies program with minors in History and Italian. As a part of her major requirements she spent the entirety of her junior year in Florence, which only reaffirmed her love of Italian culture and solidified her interest in food studies. She is very interested in the ways that food can be made to seem insignificant, yet at the same time play such a vital role in each of our daily lives.

She submitted her essay, "A Forgotten Fear: Unpacking the 'Dark Evil' of Milk in *Keeping House: A Novel in Recipes* by Clara Sereni," for this edition of *La Fusta*. This essay locates a perplexing quote in Sereni's novel and works through unpacking its meaning: "For a dinner together she asks me to contribute a dessert without milk. Once viewed as the supreme antidote, milk has been transformed into a dark evil, one of the many unexploded mines that threatens the unborn child." Sereni leaves this quote unexplained, perplexing readers of a different generation. Why is milk only now a "dark evil?" How does it threaten "the unborn child?" What exactly happened—and when—to earn that fear? The answer lies in the tumultuous aftermath of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster which has since faded from contemporary memory.