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The 'female Rushdie' Fallen prose of a fallen woman

Monday 12 August 12.30 – 1.30pm

Hanifa Deen Award-winning author

The Theatre Room 202, Sir Roland Wilson Building, McCoy Circuit, ANU



This public lecture will explore the domestic and international responses to dissident Bangladeshi writer-in-exile, Taslima Nasreen. Following a newspaper interview the author gave in neighbouring India, violent demonstrations broke out in 1994 and she was accused of blasphemy. This led to an international campaign by human rights organisations such as: Amnesty International, International PEN and Reporters San Frontiers to 'Save Taslima'. Labelled 'the female Salman Rushdie', which eventually proved her undoing, Nasreen escaped to the West where she became an overnight celebrity, a much-lauded feminist and free speech icon adopted by European freedom of expression organisations and USA feminists. Her Western supporters never asked why Bangladeshi feminists, secularists and human rights activists never 'adopted' her. Nasreen's brand of feminism and Indian backing alienated her from what should have been her domestic support base.

Eventually Nasreen toppled from her literary pedestal in the West, a victim of everyone's expectations, political manoeuvring and her own sense of entitlement. Nasreen writes in Bengali, her mother tongue, and wants to live permanently in West Bengal, India. This presents difficulties for the government as her presence leads to violent demonstrations by Muslim extremists. She is also famous for her acrimonious fallings out with her male mentors in Bangladesh, Western Europe and now in India. Hirsi Ali, another critic of Islam, has in some respects relegated Nasreen to the sidelines.

Hanifa Deen is an award-winning author who writes narrative non-fiction and lives in Melbourne. Her books include: *Caravanserai: A Journey Among Australian Muslims*, for which she won a NSW Premier's Literary Award; *Broken Bangles*, short listed for a WA Premier's Award, *The Jihad Seminar* (UWA Press) short listed for the Australian Human Rights Commission, Literature Non-Fiction Award; *Ali Abdul vs. The King*, (UWA Publishers, 2011). Her latest book *On the Trail of Taslima* was released in April 2013.

Presented by

The ANU Gender Institute

RSVP

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This lecture is free and open to the public

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