History Initiates publishes outstanding undergraduate essays produced in the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University. In this edition, Swatilekha Ahmed explores aspects of the Italian Futurist movement in the early 20th Century and the ways in which political thought became entwined with aesthetic representation as members of the Futurist movement sought to carve out a new role for intellectuals and art in Italian political life. Chloe Haywood-Anderson steps us back to examine love in Italian Renaissance marriages, teasing out the implications of a phrase from Francesco Barbaro’s treatise on marriage, On Wifely Duties. Barbaro claimed that the three attributes of a good wife were “love for her husband, modesty of life and a diligent and complete care in domestic matters”. In a fascinating essay, Haywood-Anderson contrasts this claim with the practical utility and political imperatives surrounding marriage for elite families at the time. William Spence offers another engaging piece based on Renaissance sources, examining an innovative turn in Renaissance cartography – the Vatican’s Gallery of Maps, which recorded “all the territories which Pope Gregory claimed to have both a temporal and divine jurisdiction over”. Spence offers a forensic interpretation of the maps within the political context of central Europe at the time.

Lani Stewart and Campbell Duffy both tackle traumatic histories of sexual violence in World War II. Stewart reminds readers that Allied violence perpetrated against German women has been often overlooked in discussions of the war, and is largely absent from the moral frameworks constructed around the conflict. Her essay addresses this gap. Duffy then asks the difficult question of why German women suffered in silence after the war, using rape victims of the Red Army as a case study. As many as two million women were raped by the Red Army in a systematic program of terror. Duffy argues that “deliberate actions were taken, often state-sponsored, by the Soviets and the West to suppress the rape-narrative.”

Not all of the above histories make easy reading, but they are clearly important contributions to our understandings of the past. We’re proud of the work produced by our students and hope you find the essays in this volume as engaging as we have.