

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## A History of Women's Writing in Italy

*A History of Women's Writing in Italy* offers a comprehensive historical account of writing by women in Italy. Covering writing from the Middle Ages to the present day, it moves away from narrow definitions of literature, and brings to the reader's attention other forms of expression such as letter writing, religious and devotional writing, scholarly and philosophical essays, travel writing and journalism. Contributors point to the considerable practical, social and ideological difficulties faced by women in writing and presenting their work to a wider reading public, but also highlight the resourcefulness and determination of women through the centuries in making their voices heard. Extensive guides to further reading and a detailed guide to more than two hundred writers form an integral part of the volume. The international team of contributors have produced a striking work of new scholarship and research, which will be invaluable for students and scholars alike.

LETIZIA PANIZZA is currently Research Fellow in Italian at Royal Holloway College, University of London. She is a contributor to *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (1996). She has published widely on Italian humanism and intellectual history of the fifteenth century, and in Women's Studies she has published a critical edition of Arcangela Tarabotti's *Che le donne siano della specie degli uomini* (*Women are no less rational than men*) (1994). She is also the translator and editor of Tarabotti's *Paternal Tyranny* (2001), and the editor of *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society* (2000).

SHARON WOOD is Professor of Italian at Leicester University. She has specialised in the study of modern and contemporary narrative, with particular reference to women's writing. She is the author of *Woman as Object: Language and Gender In the Work of Alberto Moravia* (1990) and *Italian Women's Writing 1860–1994* (1995). In 1993 she published a critical anthology of short stories called *Italian Women Writers*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# A History of Women's Writing in Italy

---

*Edited by*

**LETIZIA PANIZZA**

*Royal Holloway College, University of London*

*and*

**SHARON WOOD**

*University of Strathclyde*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy  
 Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521570886](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521570886)

© Cambridge University Press 2000

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

The Cambridge history of women's writing in Italy / edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 521 57088 3 (hardback) ISBN 0 521 57813 2 (paperback)

1. Italian literature – Women authors – History and criticism. 2. Women and literature – Italy – History. 3. Women – Italy – Intellectual life. I. Panizza, Letizia. II. Wood, Sharon

PQ4055.W6C36 2000

850.9'9287–dc21

00-037914

ISBN 978-0-521-57088-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-57813-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy  
 Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## Contents

*Notes on contributors* vii  
*Acknowledgements* xi  
*List of abbreviations* xiii  
*Note on the text* xv

Introduction 1  
 LETIZIA PANIZZA and SHARON WOOD

### Part I **The Renaissance, Counter-Reformation and seventeenth century**

- 1 Letter writing, 1350–1650 13  
 MARIA LUISA DOGLIO (translated by Jennifer Lorch)
- 2 The fifteenth century 25
  - (i) *Humanism* LETIZIA PANIZZA 25
  - (ii) *Vernacular poetry and mystery plays* JUDITH BRYCE 31
- 3 Lyric poetry, 1500–1650 37  
 GIOVANNA RABITTI (translated by Abigail Brundin)
- 4 Fiction, 1560–1650 52  
 VIRGINIA COX
- 5 Polemical prose writing, 1500–1650 65  
 LETIZIA PANIZZA
- 6 Religious and devotional writing, 1400–1600 79  
 GABRIELLA ZARRI (translated by Susan Haskins)

### Part II **The Enlightenment and Restoration**

- 7 Eighteenth-century literature 95  
 LUISA RICALDONE (translated by Peter Brand)

vi *List of contents*

- 8 Travel writing, 1750–1860 107  
 RICCIARDA RICORDA (translated by Sharon Wood)
- 9 Journalism, 1750–1850 120  
 VERINA R. JONES
- 10 Literary critics and scholars, 1700–1850 135  
 ADRIANA CHEMELLO (translated by Peter Brand)

Part III **The Risorgimento and modern Italy, 1850–2000**

- 11 Journalists and essayists, 1850–1915 151  
 SILVANA PATRIARCA
- 12 The novel, 1870–1920 164  
 LUCIENNE KROHA
- 13 The popular novel, 1850–1920 177  
 ANNA LAURA LEPSCHY
- 14 Futurism and Fascism, 1914–1945 190  
 LUCIA RE
- 15 The novel, 1945–1965 205  
 ANN HALLAMORE CAESAR
- 16 The novel, 1965–2000 218  
 ADALGISA GIORGIO
- 17 Poetry, 1870–2000 238  
 CATHERINE O'BRIEN
- 18 Theatre and cinema, 1945–2000 254  
 ÁINE O'HEALY
- 19 Aesthetics and critical theory 267  
 SHARON WOOD

*Bibliographical guide to women writers and their work*

(co-ordinated by Penny Morris) 282

*Bibliography* 338

*Reference works and anthologies* 338

*Primary texts* 339

*Studies* 340

*Index* 351

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy  
Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

### *Notes on contributors*

#### JUDITH BRYCE

Professor of Italian at the University of Bristol. Author of *Cosimo Bartoli (1503–1572): The Career of a Florentine Polymath* (Geneva, 1983). Articles on Italian writers from Ariosto and Verga to Calvino and Maraini, and principally on Renaissance Florence. Currently working on women's literacy and women's writing in later fifteenth-century Florence.

#### ANN HALLAMORE CAESAR

Professor of Italian at the University of Warwick. Co-editor with M. Caesar of *The Quality of Light: Modern Italian Short Stories* (London, 1993). Author of *Characters and Authors in Luigi Pirandello* (Oxford, 1998), and articles on women's writing. Currently working on the evolution of the novel and its relationship to conduct literature in nineteenth-century Italy.

#### ADRIANA CHEMELLO

Teaches at the Institute of Italian Philology and Letters, University of Padua. Critical edition of Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne* (Mirano–Venice, 1988). Joint editor with Marina Zancan of *Nel cerchio della luna* (Venice, 1983); and with A. Arslan and G. Pizzamiglio of *Le stanze ritrovate. Antologia di scrittrici venete* (Mirano–Venice, 1991). Editor of *Alla lettera: Teorie e pratiche epistolari dai Greci al Novecento* (Milan, 1998).

#### VIRGINIA COX

Lecturer in Italian at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Christ's College. Author of *The Renaissance Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge, 1992), and of articles on women's writings in the Renaissance. Translator and editor of Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women* (Chicago, 1997).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)viii *Notes on contributors*

## MARIA LUISA DOGLIO

Professor of Italian, University of Turin. Critical editions of Galeazzo Flavio Capra, *Della eccellenza e dignità delle donne* (Rome, 1988); Torquato Tasso, *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (Palermo, 1997) and Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Virgilio Malvezzi and Lorenzo Magalotti. Author of *Lettera e Donna. Scrittura epistolare al femminile tra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Rome, 1993), and *Il segretario e il principe* (Rome, 1993).

## ADALGISA GIORGIO

Senior Lecturer in Italian in the Department of European Studies and Modern Languages, University of Bath. Articles on Annie Vivanti, Elsa Morante, Natalia Ginzburg, Fabrizia Ramondino, Edith Bruck, and Italian feminist theory. Joint editor with Anna Cento Bull of *Culture and Society in Southern Italy: Past and Present* (Supplement to *The Italianist*, 1994); and currently editing a volume on the mother–daughter relationship in Western European narrative by women.

## VERINA R. JONES

Senior Lecturer in Italian, University of Reading, where she set up the Centre for Italian Women's Studies in 1996. Author of *Le 'Dark Ladies' manzoniane* (Rome, 1998). Joint editor with C. Honess of *Le donne delle minoranze. Le ebreo e le protestanti d'Italia* (Turin, 1999); and with A. L. Lepschy of *With a Pen in her Hand. Women and Writing in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Leeds: Society for Italian Studies, forthcoming).

## LUCIENNE KROHA

Associate Professor of Italian Studies, McGill University, Montreal. Studies on nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors such as Giorgio Bassani, Maria Messina, G. A. Borgese and Luigi Pirandello. Author of *The woman writer in late nineteenth-century Italy. Gender and the formation of literary identity* (Lewiston, Queenstown, 1990).

## ANNA LAURA LEPSCHY

Professor of Italian, University College, University of London. Joint author with G. Lepschy of *The Italian Language Today* (London, 1977; new edition, 1991), and of *L'amanuense analfabeta e altri saggi* (Florence, 1999). Author of *Tintoretto Observed. A Documentary Survey of Critical Reactions from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Ravenna, 1983; Italian version Venice, 1998); *Narrativa e teatro fra due secoli: Verga, Invernizzo, Svevo, Pirandello* (Florence, 1994). Joint editor with V. Jones, *With a Pen in Her Hand* (see Jones).



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PENNY MORRIS

Lecturer in Italian at the University of Glasgow. Author of *Giovanna Zangrandi: Una vita in romanzo* (Verona, 2000, forthcoming). Currently working on a study of Alba de Céspedes.

## CATHERINE O'BRIEN

Professor of Italian, National University of Ireland, Galway. Articles on Cesarotti and Ossianic poetry and on modern Italian poetry. Joint editor with Alessandro Gentili of an anthology on modern Italian poetry, *The Green Flame* (Dublin, 1987). Editor of *Italian Women Poets of the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 1996).

## ÁINE O'HEALY

Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. Articles and book chapters on Italian cinema, cultural studies and Irish cinema. She is currently co-editing a collection of essays on cinematic constructions of the Balkans.

## SILVANA PATRIARCA

Teaches in the Department of History, Columbia University, New York. Author of *Numbers and Nationhood. Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge, 1996), and of several studies on the social and cultural history of modern Italy. Author of *Remaking Italians: the Question of Character from the Risorgimento to the Second Republic* (forthcoming).

## GIOVANNA RABITTI

Teaches in the Dipartimento di Italianistica, University of Florence. Critical editions of *Lettere e rime di Chiara Matraini* (Bologna, 1989), and of *Giacomo Zane, Rime* (Padua, 1997). Author of several articles on Italian Renaissance lyric poets including Laura Battiferri Ammannati, Vittoria Colonna and Chiara Matraini. Contributing editor (G. Leopardi) to *Antologia della poesia italiana* (Turin, 1999).

## LUCIA RE

Teaches in the Department of Italian Studies, University of California Los Angeles. Author of *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism: Fables of Estrangement* (Stanford, 1990) and *Women and the Avant-Garde: Experimentalism, Gender and Politics in Modern Italian Culture* (forthcoming). Translator with Paul Vangelisti of Amelia Rosselli's *War Variations* (1964), forthcoming in a bilingual translation.

LUISA RICARDONE

Teaches modern Italian literature at the University of Turin. Editor of eighteenth-century texts concerned with women, and author of *La scrittura nascosta. Donne di lettere e loro immagini tra Arcadia e Restaurazione* (Paris–Fiesole, 1996). Joint editor with Adriana Chemello of *Erudite e letterate tra Sette e Ottocento* (Padua, 1999).

RICCIARDA RICORDA

Teaches modern Italian literature in the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy at the University of Venice. Author of *La 'Nuova Antologia' 1866–1915. Letteratura e ideologia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Padua, 1980); *Dalle parti di Ariele. Angelo Conti nella cultura di fine secolo* (Rome, 1993); *Pagine vissute. Studi di letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Naples, 1995); and articles on eighteenth-century women travellers in Italy.

GABRIELLA ZARRI

Professor of History at the University of Florence. Editor of *Donna disciplina creanza cristiano tra xv e xvii secolo. Studi e testi a stampa* (Rome, 1996); with L. Scaraffia, *Donna e fede. Santità e vita religiosa in Italia* (Rome–Bari, 1994), translated as *Women and Faith. Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge MA, 1999); and *Per lettera. La scrittura epistolare femminile secoli xv–xvii* (Rome, 1999).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

### *Acknowledgements*

As the editor who has seen this book through from its inception up to publication, the pleasant task falls on me to thank everybody else, beginning with Katherina Brett of Cambridge University Press, with whom I first discussed a book on the history of women's writing in Italy that would form part of a series, and continuing with Linda Bree, who has guided the project from submission to production.

A book of this size and complexity is of its very nature a team effort; and has benefited from the collaboration of colleagues. I am grateful to Verina Jones, who agreed to be joint editor during the early stages of planning the book, contacting possible contributors, and preparing initial proposals for Cambridge University Press. Sharon Wood has shared the editorial burdens for the greater part of the journey, always managing to make the most demanding tasks appear light and easy. We have shared all policy decisions, and final planning lists of contributors and chapters; read and discussed all the submissions, including our own, from first versions through all revisions, and all the translations. Penny Morris has performed the invaluable task of co-ordinating the bibliographical guide to women writers and their work, from setting up the database and continually adding to and amending it over a long period. All of us who sent in material for our chapters owe her a great debt.

The contributors, without whom there would be no book, represent a truly representative band of Italianists from Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, the United States and Canada. We appreciate their patience in considering revisions, even when this meant repeated trimming of text and notes to meet the strict word-length of chapters, and in the completion of the bibliographical guide. We hope that when they see their own chapters set

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy  
Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

xii *Acknowledgements*

into the larger framework of the complete volume, they will be as pleased and impressed as we are by the final result.

We have also been fortunate in finding translators who believe that translations should read as if they were written in English, and have been willing to take the time to achieve that result. Our deepest thanks go to Peter Brand, Abigail Brundin, Susan Haskins and Jennifer Lorch for their labours of love. (Sharon Wood also translated a chapter.) The Department of Modern Languages at Strathclyde, and the Department of Italian, Royal Holloway, have both made generous contributions towards the translations; the Department of Italian at the University of Cambridge assisted Abigail Brundin. Ann Caesar suggested the cover illustration of *Woman Reading* by Faruffini.

Letizia Panizza

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

- Aricò S. Aricò, *Contemporary Women Writers in Italy: A Modern Renaissance*. Amherst, 1990.
- Asor Rosa A. Asor Rosa, *Letteratura italiana del novecento*. Rome, 1992.
- Blelloch P. Blelloch, *Quel mondo dei guanti e delle stoffe... Profili di scrittrici italiane del '900*. Verona, 1987.
- Bondanella P. Bondanella and J. Conaway Bondanella, eds., *Dictionary of Italian Literature* (revised). Westport, 1996.
- CHIT P. Brand and L. Pertile (eds.), *Cambridge History of Italian Literature*. Cambridge, 1996, revised 1999.
- Costa-Zalesow N. Costa-Zalesow, *Scrittrici italiane dal XIII al XX secolo. Testi e critica*. Ravenna, 1982.
- (Cos-Zal)
- Cutrufelli M. R. Cutrufelli, *Scritture, scrittrici*. Milan, 1987.
- DBI *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. Rome, 1960–
- DS *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, ed. M. Viller, Paris, 1937.
- De Giovanni N. De Giovanni, *Artemide sulla soglia. Donne e letteratura in Italia*. Teramo, 1994.
- Della Fazia Amoia A. Della Fazia Amoia, *Women on the Italian Literary Scene*. New York, 1992.
- GLdS *Il grande libro dei santi, dizionario enciclopedico*, 3 vols., Cinisello Balsamo, 1998.
- Lazzaro-Weiss C. Lazzaro-Weiss, *From Margins to Mainstream: Feminism and Fictional Modes in Italian Women's Writing*. Philadelphia, 1993.
- Morandini G. Morandini, *La voce che è in lei. Antologia della narrativa femminile italiana tra '800 e '900*. Milan, 1980.
- Nozzoli A. Nozzoli, *Tabù e coscienza. La condizione femminile nella letteratura italiana del novecento*. Florence, 1978.

xiv *List of abbreviations*

Petrignani	S. Petrignani, <i>Una donna, un secolo</i> . Rome, 1986.
Rasy	E. Rasy, <i>Ritratti di signora</i> . Milan, 1995.
Russell	R. Russell, <i>Italian Women Writers</i> . Westport, 1994.
Stanze	A. Arslan, A. Chemello, G. Pizzamiglio, <i>Le stanze ritrovate. Antologia di scrittrici venete</i> . Mirano–Venice, 1991.
Testaferri	A. Testaferri, <i>Donna. Women in Italian Culture</i> . Toronto, 1989.
Wilson	K. Wilson (ed.), <i>Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation</i> . Athens, GA, 1987.
Wilson	K. Wilson (ed.), <i>An Encyclopedia of Continental Women Writers</i> . 2 vols., New York, 1991.
Wood	S. Wood, <i>Italian Women's Writing, 1860–1994</i> . London, 1995.
GSLI	<i>Giornale storico della letteratura italiana</i>
IT	<i>Italian Studies</i>
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
RBLI	<i>Rassegna bibliografica della letteratura italiana</i>
RCLI	<i>Rassegna critica della letteratura italiana</i>
RQ	<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>
RS	<i>Renaissance Studies</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

### *Note on the text*

This book is meant for the interested general reader, as well as for the university student coming to the subject for the first time, and the more advanced student and researcher, able to read texts and studies in Italian. It also presupposes a minimal acquaintance with Italian culture, although it does not take for granted any knowledge of the Italian language.

Prose quotations are rendered in English, while poetry quotations are given in the original Italian followed by a prose English translation. The titles of books and poems referred to within the body of the chapters have also been translated. If there is a published translation, the title is given in italics within parentheses: *Il merito delle donne* (*The Worth of Women*); if there is not, a translation of the title within single quotation marks is provided: *I misteri di Napoli* ('The mysteries of Naples').

The bibliographical guide to women writers and their work is a special feature of this book, and writers in the guide are indicated in the chapters by an asterisk (\*) before a name. The guide contains basic biographical facts, a list of the author's main works (with dates of first editions, and translations into English), some major studies, and a list of (a) reference works with entries about the author in question and (b) anthologies. Do not, therefore, expect to find a 'life and works' for an asterisked author in the body of the chapter itself or in the notes.

The bibliographical guide has allowed us to keep notes in chapters to a minimum. Where sufficient, shortened titles will be found in the notes. Complete bibliographical entries for all studies mentioned, and main works of authors discussed in chapters, but not asterisked and therefore not found in the bio-bibliographies, will be found in the general bibliography, comprising reference works, primary texts and studies.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57088-6 - A History of Women's Writing in Italy

Edited by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

If you wish to know more about Italian literature, we recommend *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, edited by Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (Cambridge University Press, 1996, revised and in paperback, 1999). If you would like to pursue historical and cultural contexts, we recommend the various paperback volumes of the Longman History of Italy, General Editor, Denys Hay.