

DEPARTMENT OF ITALIAN, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

ITALIAN 647

ITALIAN WOMEN WRITERS IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

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The course aims at providing graduate students in Italian with a broad knowledge of some of the foremost issues concerning women's writing in relation to the Italian context. For a long time such questions have been conveniently forgotten or evaded (i.e. repressed and erased) in literary and critical debates, and most of these women writers are still excluded from the canon. Only in recent years the relevance and specificity of this production have come to the fore, in both the American and the Italian intellectual arenas, thus provoking an insightful and thorough critical inquiry. The result of this body of research has been the reappraisal and an enriched understanding of pivotal works, whose novelty and peculiarity had been ignored because of the imposition of inadequate criteria of evaluation, in an attempt at realigning or silencing these autonomous and disturbing voices.

The course will address questions about the specificity of women's writing, about women's writing and difference, and about women's writing as difference. As writing by women is often marked by the writers' specific experiences as women -- with a penchant toward autobiographical models --, we will also tackle the cultural and social conflicts these works denounce and discuss. Our primary concern will be to explore a historically specific sense of difference by examining the ways in which these forms of nineteenth and twentieth century women's writing thematize, analyze, and articulate difference. The progression of these issues along chronological lines will allow a look at different forms of *écriture féminine* and reveal an increasing awareness of the status of women as writers.

Grading is based on:

active participation in class discussions (20%);
analysis of two critical essays and oral presentation of the research paper (20%);
research paper (60%).

Syllabus

Week 1

Introduzione al corso. La condizione delle scrittrici alla fine dell'800

Week 2

La condizione delle scrittrici alla fine dell'800; Matilde Serao, "La virtù di Checchina."

Critical reading: L. Re, "Passion and Sexual Difference."

Week 3

Matilde Serao, "O Giovannino, o la morte," *Il ventre di Napoli* (selections).

D. Tench, "Gutting the Belly of Naples."

Week 4

Marchesa Colombi, *Un matrimonio in provincia*

Critical reading: J. Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade"

Week 5

Neera, *Teresa*

Critical reading: V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (scelta);

E. Martínez Garrido, "Neera's *Teresa*";

K. Mitchell, "Neera's Refiguring of Hysteria."

Week 6

Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna*

Critical readings: U. Fanning, "Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*";

B. Spackman, "Puntini, puntini, puntini: Motherliness as Masquerade."

Week 7

Grazia Deledda, *Cosima*

Critical reading: R. Pickering-Iazzi, "The Politics of Gender and Genre."

Week 8

Anna Banti, *Artemisia*

Critical reading: A.M. Capodivacca, "L'Artemisia Gentileschi di Anna Banti."

Week 9

Elsa Morante, *L'isola di Arturo*

Critical reading: C. Della Coletta, *Plotting the Past* (selections).

Week 10

Elsa Morante, *La Storia* (selections)

Critical reading: L. Re, "Utopian Longing and the Constraints of Racial and Sexual Difference."

Week 11

Elsa Morante, *La Storia* (scelta)

Critical reading: D. Renga, "Revisiting and Resisting Fascism."

Week 12

Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli e Silenzio a Milano* (scelta)

Critical reading: M. Farnetti, *Anna Maria Ortese* (selections).

Week 13

Dacia Maraini, *La lunga vita di Marianna Ucría*

Critical readings: A. Cavarero, *Nonostante Platone: figure femminili nella filosofia antica* (selections);

Cannon, J. "Rewriting the Female Destiny."

Additional essays will be assigned during the seminar.