Attending to Early Modern Women 2015

1. **Workshop: Time to Talk about Women in Salons and Learned Circles**

2. **Summary:** In the past decade, much scholarly attention has focused on early modern women’s participation in a wide variety of types of salons, learned circles, academies, and correspondence networks. In this workshop we will examine such women’s activities in Italy, France, England, and the Low Countries. Our goal is to gain a broader sense of the time frame, geographical diversity, and issues of inclusion/exclusion regarding the development of women’s participation in such circles.

3. **Organizers:**
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5. **Description:**
   During the past decade, there has been increased scholarly attention to early modern women’s participation in cultural production through groups—salons, literary circles, scientific and philosophical circles and academies, religious circles, correspondence networks, and patronage networks. It has become evident by now that such groups provided women key points of entry into public discourses of many kinds. We are particularly interested in exploring the early modern time-frame of this phenomenon, as well as its origins, geographical spread, diversity, and, in some cases, its contested nature. Were these circles, salons, and academies a “discursive dead end for women,” as has been argued, or did they allow for women to contribute to significant philosophical, scientific, religious, and literary issues of the day?

   Also, for too long in academia, we have focused specifically on seventeenth-century France as the time and place for women’s participation in salon society. While this era and place must be considered among the most important and influential regarding development of and refinement to such institutions, it is time to acknowledge the broad spread of practices that preceded these salons. In this workshop we would like to explore the “longue durée” of early modern circles in which women participated.
We would like participants to discuss the following regarding women in Italy, France, England, and the Low Countries (additionally, participants familiar with learned women and their circles in Scandinavia, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and other countries are very welcome to add their insights to the discussion):

1. Salons, circles, academies, and networks in which women took part that allowed women to participate in cultural production of some kind—literary, scientific, philosophical, religious, and/or political.

2. How women were or were not empowered by their participation in such society. What were the sociopolitical conditions/strictures in such groups?

3. How does participation in such groups cross borders, if applicable? What do lines of communication look like? What is produced by such groups and how does it travel—in space and time?

We would like for participants to bring to our session a short list of answers and questions regarding these topics. We will work in small groups and as one large group as we facilitate discussion.

6. **Readings**:

   -- Excerpt, *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters* (2009), Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen


7. **Additional suggested readings**:

   -- pp. 27-31, Chapter 1 of *Cartesian Women* by Erica Harth (1992), on the hostility to women’s academies in France in the first half of the seventeenth century.


England and France, emblem makers and poets in Scotland and the Netherlands, authors of treatises and dialogues on the education of women in Utrecht and Poitiers—who were able to reach across the barriers of language, class, and gender to form communities of an unusual kind.

Introduction

Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen

What I am imagining is a criticism concerned with the local, regional, national and transnational dimensions of women’s participation in literary cultures. Requiring extensive new archival research and competence in several languages, it will have to emerge from the kinds of collaborative efforts that have in recent decades so dramatically reshaped our understandings of British and European women’s cultural production in the early modern period.

Kate Cheguzoy

In her article “The Cultural Geographies of Early Modern Women’s Writing: Journeys across Spaces and Times,” Kate Cheguzoy calls for greater attention to an international and comparative approach to early modern women’s writing. The critic, she suggests, must become a traveler attuned to the interweaving of race, gender, status, religion, and especially “the full complexities of the locations the writing comes from, and how and why that locatedness matters.” Feminist theorists and anthropologists have already for some time reminded us that, as Sara Blair notes, “theory travels, knowledges are situated, subjects localized, communities and public spheres diasporic and globalized.” Literary critics must these days undertake journeys across spaces and times, mindful of the cultural geographies of the changing early modern world. Fresh ways of reading early modern women’s writing entail new maps that consider such issues as the interconnections between sites of women’s literary activity, women’s belonging and displacement in relation to colonial and imperial history, their bilingualism and multilingualism in crossing linguistic and national cultural and literary borders, their sense of identity mediated by local, regional, national, and transnational affiliations and conflicts, and the interrelations of English and Continental women’s writings.

This book contributes to the growing scholarship on early modern women writers and cross-national cultural and literary communities. While building on

2 Ibid., 887.
4 See, for instance, Rebecca D’Monté and Nicole Pohl, eds., _Female Communities: 1600–1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities_ (New York: St. Martin’s Press in association with the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University
previous collections of essays on women and communities of letters, it differs from these in focusing on multiple literatures from several countries. It examines texts written and events occurring in Italy, France, the Low Countries, England, and Scotland. As it journeys across these geographically diverse locales, it features women writers from different social classes engaging with the intellectual, political, and religious dimensions of changing multilingual and transnational cultures.

The original, abbreviated versions of several of the essays originated in sessions sponsored by the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and held at the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference in Atlanta (2005) and the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo (2007). Diana Robin, the sessions’ commentator at the Atlanta conference, highlighted the past decade’s increasing critical emphasis on communities of early modern literary women and men rather than the lone female prodigy, alienated from family, friends, and state. Her observation and the papers delivered at the sessions are the starting points for this volume. In it, we draw attention to notions of crossing several kinds of borders—geographic, linguistic, political, religious, and generic. We also illustrate connections between communities—familial, political, and religious networks, literary circles and coteries, and affective relationships. Identifying such crossings and connections, the essays examine, for instance, the writings of the Dutch Nassau family siblings, aunts, uncles, and mothers corresponding in French over vast distances across Europe; the French and Belgian mentors of the French Morel and English Seymour girls whose writings they patronized for political reasons and transported during their travels from England to France and vice versa; the cloistered Italian nun Arcangela Tarabotti’s connections with the Venetian circle of wives and daughters of the French ambassadors and her mediation in the economics of her convent’s lace-making; the transnational community of women writers from Italy, Portugal, and France imagined by the gentry writer Catherine des Roches as a way to support her own writing; and the translation by of London, 2000); Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds., Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000); Jane Donawerth and Adele Steffe, eds., Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2000); Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Janet F. van der Meulen, and Pim van Oostrum, eds., Foreign Women’s Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf (Hilversum: Utgiverij Verloren, 2004); Tijljez Akkerman and Sief Stuurman, eds., Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: from the Middle Ages to the Present (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Julie D. Campbell, Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Diana Robin, Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); a number of essays on women and literary communities, salons, and coteries in Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, eds., Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007).

Dutch poet Anna Roemers Visscher of Georgette de Montenay’s emblems and her transposition of these emblems into Dutch political life.6

All these writers belonged to communities of letters which supported them in defying restrictions and enabled them to step outside traditional female roles. The term “community” has three broad uses as Rebecca D’Monte and Nicole Pohl have summarized. First, it refers to the concepts of a nation, commonwealth, country, district, borough, or city—“in short, [to] a body of people organized into a sovereign socio-political unit which is spatially specific.” Early modern women were as aware of their male peers of the process of state-formation and the constant demarcation of lands and drawing up of boundaries. Their self-understanding was shaped in relation to the political by virtue of writing about issues tangential to their countries, regions, and cities of origin. We especially see the shaping forces of national identities at work in the communities of the Seymour and Morel sisters and the Nassau family. In these cases, issues of national identity were central to the writers in question. The Seymours and Morels were invested with importance as representatives of England and France, respectively, and the Nassaus were intent on maintaining a united family identity, even as their dynastic legacy required them to take on other national identities through marriage. Second, a community can be described as “virtual” when it is conceived as a group who share professional, political, social, or literary pursuits that are not spatially limited.7 The correspondence of the Nassau family across Europe and that between Anna Maria van Schurman and the members of her famille d’alliance illustrate the ways in which communications traveled transnationally to reach kindred spirits and shape virtual communities. Similarly, the catalogs of illustrious contemporary women, such as the one in Catherine des Roches’s protofeminist dialogues, can be considered virtual communities of women addressing one another.8 Third, communities refer to bodies of individuals that share a specific social or ideological commonality such as convents and monasteries, academies, literary

5 Similarly, these essays address Anne Lock’s risk-taking interventions in the world of Reform theology during the Tudor reign; Dorothy, Lady Pakington’s authorship of prayers for the Church of England during the seventeenth century, thus participating in a way for women to have a voice within the established church; Anna Maria van Schurman’s active participation in an international famille d’alliance; Jeanne de Marret’s promotion of female-authored texts in her 1546 edition of Peronne du Guillet’s poetry; Esther Inglis’s multivalent abilities as miniaturist, calligrapher, and Christian humanist concerned both with politics and social advancement; and Giulia Gonzaga’s risky epistolary support of the persecuted Italian Reform movement.

6 D’Monte and Pohl, Female Communities, 3.

7 Ibid., 4.

8 Robin notes that Lodovico Domenichi created a “radically different kind of anthology” in which women “address one another across differences of city, rank, profession, age, and occupation, as though they were attending an academy meeting or a salon,” Publishing Women, 62.
Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters

coteries and court circles, inter-generational families, separatist households, and religious sects. These communities are intentional in that they form “an aggregate of persons engaging in common activities, sharing common interests, and having a feeling of sociopsychological unity.”

Broadly considered, all the communities of letters discussed in this volume reflect the third definition in that they consist of individuals sharing in a collective dedication to learning, literature, and writing. Specific groups, such as the Morel and Seymour families, partake of multiple facets of this third category in that they represent family, court, and literary circles. The Mésdames des Roches epitomized the learned, inter-generational family and hosted an important humanist literary circle. Giulia Gonzaga and Arcangela Tarabotti especially took part in convent communities, and numerous figures discussed here participated in Protestant or Reformist circles. An array of communities, then, many of them intersecting, served as the creative matrices for the women considered in this study.

These communities of letters were all facilitated in some way by the mobility of early modern Europeans. Not only did they exchange letters, as in the examples of the “virtual communities,” they themselves traveled between cities, courts, and countries. The figure of the peripatetic male humanist is a familiar one: Desiderius Erasmus’s journeys over the Continent and to England, Joachim du Bellay’s travels to Rome, Montaigne’s travels though France and Germany to Italy, and Philip Sidney’s prototypical grand tour come quickly to mind, as do the travels of scores of other male scholars, ambassadors, and religious dissenters during this period. It is important to recall, however, that women also traveled. Colette Winn traces in “Des femmes en mouvement…” numerous journeys undertaken by high-ranking women of France, noting that these women traveled frequently to meet up with their highly mobile spouses, escape the plague, or go on pilgrimages. They also traveled on state business as well as for reasons of health and pleasure. In Publishing Women, Robin repeatedly refers to the mobility of both high-ranking women and courtiers, including the Colonna-d’Avalos women, Caterina Cibo, and Tullia d’Aragona. In Women Latin Poets, Jane Stevenson writes about the travels of early modern women Latinists in Europe and England, and she also illustrates the ways in which traveling male humanists helped to create networks of communication for such women and other like-minded men. Taken together, the works of Winn, Robin, and Stevenson illustrate a view of well-educated early modern women who were profoundly in touch with international political, religious, literary, and philosophical movements. Scholarship that aspires to investigate the conditions of and connections between the groups in which such women moved must take into consideration such sophisticated worldview.

This volume thus allies itself with what Peter Herman calls “the new inclusivity” in early modern studies, one that is interdisciplinary in nature and encompasses theoretical, geographical, and topical diversity. Hermann notes that “just as the borders between theoretical approaches and disciplines have started to erode, so have the borders between the study of national literatures.” Herman’s assessment, made in 1999, now seems prescient and clearly foregrounds Chedgzoj’s call for the “new maps of early modern women’s writing” needed to “help the field grow in terms of both content and methodology.” A similar sense of inclusivity is at work in this volume, one that no longer seems “new” but increasingly de rigueur in early modern studies.

Like Chedgzoj, we are aware that national borders were porous and shifting and that women’s lives and communications, as well as their domestic, literary, artistic, and religious interests, were intimately associated with the cross-national religio-political and humanistic events and influences of their times. Within their communities of letters, the women considered in this volume participated in the Reform and Counter-Reform movements, politics, commerce, travel, and the production of literature in both manuscript and print publication. Moreover, the scholars who write about these women represent a range of scholarly disciplines, including literature, history, modern and classical languages, and women’s studies. Several of these scholars are crossing geographical, disciplinary, and linguistic borders in their current research projects: for instance, Martine van Elk, who teaches English literature, is doing a comparative study of English and Dutch writers of the seventeenth-century; Camilla Russell, an historian of religious cultures, gender, and information exchange in Renaissance Italy, is researching Jesuit overseas missionary enterprises; and Carol Pal, a scholar of early modern intellectual history, writes on the technologies of transmission in learned networks such as the transnational Republic of Letters. When we consider the ways in which women of the early modern period crossed linguistic, national, and cultural borders, it becomes clear that scholars must do the same in that they must be willing to work

eighteenth-century women such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft, who traveled extensively.

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9 Ibid., 4.
11 There is at present a growing critical interest in the travel memoirs, diaries, and letters of women in the radical religious sects of the seventeenth century, as well as those of

13 Herman, Opening the Borders, 16.
14 Chedgzoj, “Cultural Geographies,” 884.
in interdisciplinary circumstances to give their readers a multidimensional sense of such women’s lives and accomplishments.

In her discussion of women and literacy in late medieval and early modern France and England, Margaret Ferguson notes that, regarding alphabetic literacy, “European women writers straddle in an exemplary way the ideological boundary between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of a social group.”

She also points out that literacy arms women with the ability to “create authorial personae that both register and challenge their societies’ ways of distinguishing between proper feminine and proper masculine behavior, especially in the sphere of language.”

As the studies in this volume show, women “straddled” or crossed numerous ideological boundaries between social groups, with literacy playing a large role in their ability to do so. What the authors in this volume are reading in each case is the residual evidence of the roles that literacy played in the lives of the women in question. For the majority of the women discussed, literacy included competence in modern and classical languages, which allowed them access to the society of the humanists and to that of co-religionists. All of the women considered here were inserting their voices into key arenas of thought, commerce, and politics and were indeed challenging gender paradigms.

In light of such an unprecedented amount of cultural contributions by women, the question arises: what historical shifts occurred to make it possible? The answers to this question are diverse, but their historical elements existed synchronistically and interacted in ways that buttressed notions of the rightness of women’s participation in cultural production. Naturally, as the resurgence of the querelle des femmes and counter-reformation pronouncements on women’s place and status illustrated, there was not universal support of women’s voices, but, especially after 1540 in Italy and France, and somewhat later in England, one may find in abundance the emergence of the very sorts of women’s contributions discussed by the authors in this volume.

A fundamental cultural shift to consider is that regarding humanist education for girls. This shift was reflected in elevated status for families for whom the notion of being a “learned family” was significant as well as in the ways in which male writers began taking nationalistic pride in the accomplishments of their countrywomen’s work. In regard to giving girls humanist education that included instruction in Latin, Stevenson notes that during the early modern period, the cultural cachet of learned daughters was great for both aristocratic families and those of somewhat lower station. For the former, such a daughter could “write letters, compose verses, or deliver public speeches expressing the family’s stance on political developments,” thus acting as a “useful adjunct to more official forms of diplomatic activity;”

Moreover, Stevenson continues, such an educated nobelwoman could thus demonstrate “fitness for rule.” As for educated young women of lower circumstances, she notes that “some daughters of educationalists may have contributed to their families’ reputations, as walking illustrations of their fathers’ pedagogic talents.”

Stevenson’s observations hold true for several subjects of these essays, including Giulia Gonzaga, the Morel and Seymour sisters, and the Nassau women. Highly educated mothers as well took seriously their own self-proposed mission to inculcate in their daughters pride of place among the learned members of their family, community, and country, as was the case in France with Madeleine des Roches and Catherine des Roches or in England with Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, a mother/mentor figure whose influence extended to at least 10 of her female descendants—daughters, nieces, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law.

Accompanying the rise in humanist education for women was the emergence of salon and academic society across the Continent and in England. Robin points out that “the woman-led salon was the primary vehicle by which elite women first entered the commercial print world of sixteenth-century Italy,” and Campbell adds that French salons and, “to a limited extent, the court academies of France,” along with English coteries also provided early modern women entrance into learned society. In Italy, important examples included Costanza d’Avalos, Vittoria Colonna, Maria d’Aragona, Giovanna d’Aragona, and Giulia Gonzaga, who led salons connected by their network of family and friends and their interests in poetry, philosophy, and reform thought. In France, Antoinette de Loni, Mme de Morel, paved the way for slightly younger Parisian salon hostesses such as Claude-Catherine de Clermont, duchesse de Retz, and Madeleine de L’Aubespine, Mme de Villeroy, as did that in Lyon of Marie de Pierrevite, Mme de Gondi, the mother-in-law of Retz. Among the upper gentility and nobility of the robe,
Madeleine and Catherine des Roches have long been recognized for their salon in Poitiers. Circulating among these French salons were the poets of the Brigade and the Pléiade. In England, the household of Mildred Cooke Cecil became renowned as a center of learning, and in the next generation, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, and her kinswoman Lucy Harington, Countess of Bedford, served as patrons and coterie leaders for many of their contemporaneous male poets. In the Netherlands, Anna Roemers Visscher and especially her sister Maria Tusscher were active participants of a coterie that met from 1609 to 1647 at the poet Pieter C. Hoof’s manor house at Muiden. This list of women who led key literary circles in Italy, France, England, and the Netherlands serves only to indicate the importance and acceptance of this trend for learned women; it does not account for the numbers of women who took part in literary society during this period.

Some indication of the extent of women’s participation in literary society may be gleaned from anthologies of women’s poetry and miscellanies, records of publication, and dictionaries of literary biography. In Italy, beginning with the 1538 publication of Vittoria Colonna’s Rime, women’s lyric poetry was published over two decades with regularity, climaxing in 1559 from the Venetian press of Gabriel Giolito with Ludovico Domenichi’s Rime diverse d’alcune nobilissime e virtuose donne, the first anthology of women’s lyric poetry ever published. As Deanna Shemek reports, this collection was a “conceptual breakthrough” that “proposed women’s poetry as a literary and bibliographical category, a gender turned genre.”23 It allowed for the first time women’s literature to become a “recognizable thing for purposes cultural, commercial, and pedagogical” made possible in great part by a “culture of collecting” in early modern European society.24 Print technology was essential to the dissemination of Italian women’s works. The presses of Gabriel Giolito and his associates often put out print-runs of 1,000 copies each, a statistic especially interesting in light of the fact that at “the end of the sixteenth century the number of women who had published their work in Italy topped two hundred.”25

In France, the bio-bibliographer François Grudé de La Croix du Maine mentions in his influential Bibliothèque Française (1584) no less than 45 literary women among whom 14 had published books while another four had pieces included in miscellanies, leaving 27 who had not published their writings, although some like Madeleine de l’Aubespine would after 1584.26 As Margaret Ezell has argued, many literary women preferred the venue of manuscript circulation since it allowed them a readership outside the home, control over their work, and “a reputation as poet, scholar, or controversialist without a word having been published.”27 However, as La Croix du Maine makes clear, it was expedient for the glory of France that many more women publish their works. His glowing entry on the Dames des Roches, for instance, stresses that their publications constituted so many public proofs of their learning.28 La Croix du Maine’s interest in furthering the editorial project of getting women into print is evidenced as well in his stated, but never fulfilled, intention of publishing a separate volume containing information on the lives and Latin and French compositions of “the erudite and learned women of France.”29 His intent was eventually carried out by numerous male and female bio-bibliographers in the next two centuries such as Louis Jacob, Hilarion de Coste, Jean de La Forge, Jacquette Guillaume, Marguerite Buffet, and Louise de Kerlal who attempted to keep pace with the ever increasing number of active literary women.

Because print publication for literary works was not as overtly sought in England as it was in Italy and France throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholars have erroneously suggested that English women were more restricted in their literary activities. Regarding literary output in the seventeenth century, Ezell notes that Donne, Jonson, and “court satirists” at this time “took little or no care to publish their works,” and, observing that the same trend held true for more provincial writers, she adds, “Refusals to commit one’s works to print, therefore, cannot be seen as a peculiarly female trait, but a manifestation of a much more general, and much older attitude about writing, printing, and readership.”30 Ezell points out, however, that various forms of manuscript exchanges were widely used by English women writers, including manuscript books, items individually circulated in loose sheets, which were also often preserved in commonplace books, manuscript miscellanies, and correspondence. In The Patriarch’s Wife, she documents numerous examples of these types of texts, which include poems, meditations, devotions, translations, and plays, and adds that many of the editions of women’s writings “that were published posthumously had previously been circulated in manuscript.”31 Moreover, she points out that when one does turn from manuscripts to printed texts by Englishwomen, one learns that even though women published only a small fraction of all titles during the 1600s, some nearly 300 of

28 La Croix du Maine, Bibliothèque, 41.
29 Ibid., 284, “les doctes et savantes femmes de France.”
30 Ezell, Patriarch’s Wife, 64–5. Moreover, in her Social Authorship and the Advent of Print (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), she points out that as late as 1724, there were only 28 printing houses in the provinces and 75 in London, most of which operated only a single printing press (86).
these “have been identified as the authors of pamphlets, books, and broadsides.” Early modern Englishwomen, then, also left their marks on cultural production in their society. Tellingly, Ezell notes that “women who did publish chose to do so most frequently on controversial subjects or in defense of a beleaguered faith.” The issues of “beleaguered” faith provided an impetus for women across the Continent and in England to take up their pens.

Women’s participation in learned society was inevitably about more than literary interests. The preeminent concerns of the times encroached. War and religion were unavoidable topics. Regarding intellectual communities in five cities in Italy, Robin notes that the “literary salons of Italian city women were never more than a few miles from bloody scenes of war and carnage.” Members of the Parisian salon of Claude-Catherine de Clermont, duchesse de Retz, were also preoccupied with the wars of religion because mentions of the subject arise in poetry and correspondence related to the salon. The writings of the Mesdames des Roches reflect as well their anxiety, fears, and outrage at the violence and destruction brought by the civil wars. The religio-political issues entwined in these wars inspired erudite women to engage in some of the most sensitive debates of their times, risking charges of heresy and harm to themselves and their families. Religio-political provocations, then, were key catalysts for some learned women’s contributions to cultural production, as may be seen in many of the essays in this volume, including those concerned with Gonzaga, Anne Vaughan Lock, and Dorothy, Lady Packington.

A complex combination, then, of shifts in practices of educating daughters, the resulting or accompanying changes in cultural capital associated with educated women, the rise of social institutions such as salons and academies with their focus on literary developments, and the catalysts of religio-political issues contextualize the rise of cultural production for early modern women. The essays in this volume reflect a variety of combinations of these developments, from the early stages of the phenomena in the 1540s to their lingering influences in the seventeenth century. The resonances and affinities between the essays lend themselves to the groupings that are arranged in the three parts described below, which focus on women’s epistolary activity, the proliferation of women’s involvement in textual communities and production, and the broad scope of transnational communities.

33 Ibid., 89.
34 Robin, Publishing Women, xvii.
35 See commentary from Estienne Pasquier and a poem from the Retz album (Campbell, Literary Circles, 73, 78).
INTRODUCTION

In the first place, a large number of people, machines, and materials must converge and act together for it to come into existence at all. How exactly they do so will inevitably affect its finished character in a number of ways. In that sense a book is the material embodiment of, if not a consensus, then at least a collective consent. . . . So a printed book can be seen as a nexus conjoining a wide range of worlds of work. Adrian Johns, The Nature of the Book

This book explores the very public emergence of women writers as a group for the first time in Italy, during the years 1530–70. Focusing always on the collective process of publication rather than on the figure of the isolated poet, this study will examine intellectual communities in five cities where women and men were active as writers: Naples, Venice, Rome, Siena, and Florence. I will probe the circumstances of the midcentury literary renaissance of urban Italian women, asking why women enjoyed unprecedented visibility as writers, thinkers, and literary patrons at the height of the Inquisition and at a time when civil unrest and foreign invasions plagued the peninsula. The literary salons of Italian city women were never more than a few miles from bloody scenes of war and carnage. Siena, where elite women and men had gathered in the evening for poetry readings and serious debate for decades, was sacked and burned in 1555; and in the battle of Cerese, not far from Maria d’Aragona’s brilliant salon in Milan, twelve thousand men lost their lives.

Since the publication of Elizabeth Eisenstein’s The Printing Press as an Agent of Change in 1979, a fertile field of inquiry has opened up, inaugurating studies in the history of the book and suggesting other avenues for the further investigation of print culture. But the obvious question still needs raising: To what extent did women participate in the European print revolution? Joan DeJean’s study of the novel in seventeenth-century France, Tender Geographies,
has shown that women writers were among the first producers of the modern print behemoth—the novel. And Susan Broomhall, in her recent study, *Women and the Book Trade in Sixteenth-Century France*, has made clear that women took part in every phase of the early printing industry, though only a fraction of the total number of books printed in France were written by women. In my study of women's impact on early print culture in Italy, I will focus on literary authorship, a category dominated by elite men and from which all but elite women were excluded, with some notable exceptions. Nonetheless, during this period a significant number of women—writers and patrons—principally from the elite classes did make a dent in the Italian book market, though their numbers were small relative to their male compatriots. As Carlo Dionisotti has observed, between the years 1540 and 1560, for the first time in Italian literary history and "never before or since," women writers were numerous enough to be considered a significant group. When in 1538, a book of Vittoria Colonna's *Rime* was published in Parma, the first publication of its kind by a woman under her own name, "it was," Dionisotti wrote, "as though a glowing ember had fallen on tinder." At the end of the sixteenth century the number of women who had published their work in Italy topped two hundred. By midcentury many of their poems were appearing in the new poetry anthologies produced by the Giolito press and several other publishing houses affiliated with Giolito in Venice, the uncontested center of the print industry in sixteenth-century Italy. The rise of women writers in the publishing world—from their early token appearances in the Venetian anthologies in the later 1540s, to the solo editions of such writers as Vittoria Colonna, Laura Terracina, and Tullia d'Aragona—peaked in 1559 with the publication of the first anthology of women poets ever produced in Europe, a volume showcasing the works of fifty-three women writers.

The moral strictures placed on the public appearance of women's names, which caused many writers in early modern France and England to publish their works anonymously, simply do not apply in the commercial print world of sixteenth-century Italy. Editors such as Lodovico Domenichi and the critic Girolamo Ruscelli, who assisted women writers in preparing their manuscripts for the presses, also publicized the patronage of the elite women who financially supported the books the press produced. They thanked their women patrons with florid prefaces to their books and even published lists of their names that circulated as a kind of intellectual social register. Ruscelli, for example, published a twenty-two-page list naming 250 women from thirty-five Italian cities in an appendix to his book, *Lettura sopra un sonetto . . . alla divina signora Marchesa del Vasto* (Lecture on a sonnet . . . for the divine signora).

Domenichi publicized the names of 195 elite women patrons and writers by having the characters in his *La nobiltà delle donne* (1549) cite them and their cities by name in the course of their dialogue on the virtues of women. In this study, I will follow the lives and works of several loosely connected groups of elite women and men in Italy who not only produced a new vernacular literature but who worked, as well, to disseminate ideas for the reform of the established Church. Departing from earlier studies, I will show that many of the leading writers in Italy between the 1530s and 1560s, whether female or male, were active on two fronts: in the religious reform movement inaugurated by Giulia Gonzaga and Juan de Valdés in Naples and in the literary renewal fostered by the urban academies and high-volume Venetian publishing businesses such as the Giolito press, where publications by women spiked at midcentury.

Up to now scholars of early modern Italy have maintained the separation between women's literary history, the history of the book, and Counter-Reformation studies, the three fields most germane to my study—a separation that has perpetuated the marginalization of women as important actors in European history. Crossing the borders between these fields, my study will attempt to produce a cultural history of the period that considers the significant roles that Italian women played in tandem with men in the literary, political, religious, and social life of the peninsula. Following the lead of Ann Rosalind Jones's theory of "negotiation," my work insists that women's works be read alongside those of their male contemporaries and that they be considered in terms of their appropriation—and in some cases rejection—of the literary and linguistic codes of both their male age-peers and their predecessors. I will argue, moreover, that the woman-led salons was the primary vehicle by which elite women first entered the commercial print world of sixteenth-century Italy. Chapter 1 pictures the birth of one such salon on the island of Ischia, off the coast of Naples. It tells the story of the literary circle that Costanza d'Avalos first established on the island and later moved to Naples with the younger women in her family—Vittoria Colonna, Maria d'Aragona, her sister Giovanna d'Aragona, and eventually, Giulia Gonzaga Colonna. These were women who led their lives independently of oversight by a husband or male relative. Their salon proved a potent matrix, generating from itself five subsequent salons, each directed by one of the founding d'Avalos-Colonna women who shaped the institution and were themselves molded by it. Under the leadership of Giulia Gonzaga and the Spanish theologian Juan de Valdés, these salons, which began as gatherings for poets, later functioned as cells for the dissemination of ideas for religious reform that the
Church would soon criminalize as heretical. The poet Vittoria Colonna and her circle played an essential role in the formation of Cardinal Reginald Pole’s cenacle at Viterbo; similarly, Maria d’Aragona d’Avalos’s court in Milan and her salon at Pavia were centers where both the new Italian poetry and reform thought were cultivated.

The story of the early women-led salons in my opening chapter and their intense commitment, at first, to post-Petrarchan poetry and, later, to Valde- sian theology provides a die for the description of the literary coteries in northern Italy, whose activities and publications I will consider in the chapters that follow. The salon differed from the royal court in sixteenth-century Italy in its insulation from the apparatuses of state or city-state. Without official authorization and lacking a bureaucracy, its meetings were informal and sporadic in nature; it functioned primarily as a social and cultural assembly rather than as an appendage of the state. Nonetheless this informal sixteenth- century institution was deeply embroiled in the politics of church and city. The leaders of the Ischia salon were, in Elizabeth C. Goldsmith’s formulation, itinerant women, women economically independent enough to change their residences at will, often moving from city to city in the course of their lives.12 Presiding over the circles she created wherever she was, Vittoria Colonna lived variously in Ischia, Rome, Naples, Ferrara, Lucca, Orvieto, and Viterbo using a network of convent safe houses as bases for her operations, while Maria d’Aragona moved house from Ischia to Naples, Milan, and Pavia, before finally returning to Ischia.

Unlike the salons in seventeenth-century France, the Naples-Ischia salons did not decline but grew in importance with the rise of the printing industry in sixteenth-century Italy, where reciprocity and dynamism characterized the interaction among salon, academy, and press.13 In the Italian salons and academies, the works of both new and seasoned authors were performed, while this kind of prepublishing cultivated an audience for the works and often led to publication.

The forging of intellectual partnerships of the sort Joan DeJean describes in her study of what she calls “salon writings” in seventeenth-century France, in which women writers from the highest ranks of society allied themselves with lower-ranking men who had literary expertise, dominates my study thematically.14 While DeJean’s female-male literary partnerships represent the obverse of Jones’s scene of negotiation, where women writers perceived as socially inferior must win the approval of higher-ranking males, in both paradigms, when women enter the alien world of print culture, their authorship involves—in Jonesian terms—an appropriation of received (male) literary and linguistic codes.15 In both cases, women advance their careers as authors via their collaborations with literary men. In sixteenth-century Italy, partnerships between women and men of unequal rank, such as DeJean describes, characterize sociality and discourse both in the religious reform movement and the poetry salons. My subsequent chapters foreground the bonding of elite women writers with men working at the presses as editors, translators, correctors, printers, and consultants. These so-called male poligraf, known as such because of the broad array of artisanal and scholarly functions they performed at the presses, helped aristocratic women to place their work with reputable firms, while collaboration with a woman from an elite family brought gravitas to an editor’s portfolio and prestige to his press. In other cases, elite women acted as literary patrons, providing subventions to a publisher or his editor, in return for which she might be lavishly thanked in the work’s preface; her name might also be published in a list of distinguished donors to the press, as I noted above in the cases of Ruscelli and Domenichi’s patron rosters.16

The poetry anthology, a new genre in sixteenth-century Italian print culture, was closely related to the salon, as I will demonstrate, and the publication of a group of writers constituted a virtual salon, in effect. Investigating the roots of one such anthology, chapter 3 locates its impetus in the suppression of Maria d’Aragona’s salon and the banning of the literary academies in Naples in 1547. The city’s poets were forced to seek a voice elsewhere. Through d’Aragona’s connections at the Venetian presses, writers previously unknown outside the Naples salons were able to win peninsula-wide celebrity by virtue of their publication in the commercially successful Giulio poetry series and through the press’s promotion of them as a new group from the south—they were sold under the title Rime di diversi illustri signori Napoletani, e d’altri nobilissimi ingegni. Similarly, when women writers and their patrons saw their chances for publication dwindle at the height of the Inquisition—with its blacklisting of poetry judged “lascivious” and its targeting of Venice for increased vigilance—they looked to an editor with connections outside the center of the industry. This chapter describes the first anthology composed almost entirely of women’s works ever published, the Rime diverse d’alcune nobilissime, et virtuosissime donne, which Giulio’s senior editor Domenichi placed with a small printer in Lucca in 1559.7 As in the case of the print afterlife of the Naples salon, the 1559 anthology amounted to the publishing of a salon for women.

Fully thirty-five of the sonnets in Domenichi’s 1559 anthology represent exchanges between women, some in the heated amatory language of Petrarch
and Ovid. These erotically edged lyrics might not in themselves suggest the beginnings of a same-sex love lyric tradition in late Renaissance Italy such as Harriette Andreidis has found in early modern England, though at least one mid-sixteenth-century critic, Agnolo Firenzuolo, publicly compared a Sienese gentlewoman, whose poems were addressed to another woman in Domenichini’s anthology, to Sappho and the sort of woman who, as he put it, “by nature spurns marriage and flees from intimate conversation with us men.”

When the 1559 women’s anthology came out, the Roman Holy Office was tightening its grip on the publishing industry in Venice, and even poetry was suspect. This explains its publication at a press outside the mainstream. Yet this was also a time, as Ruscelli’s and Domenichini’s lists show, when every city had its coteries of literary women; and the number of women who participated in intellectual salons, wrote poetry for publication, and acted as patrons of the presses was a matter of civic pride. As icons of local culture, these mid-sixteenth-century anthologies projected images of an egalitarian city of letters: courtesans and the daughters and sons of guildsmen shared space in its pages with aristocrats at the top of the social scale. But these were utopias of an editor’s imagining, not documents reflecting real-time sodality.

Other elite women writers and patrons fought the geopolitics of the Church as well as its theology. In chapter 3, I present an account of the first in a series of clashes between the Colonna-d’Aragona women and the pope: the Salt War of 1541. When Pope Paul III (Alessandro Farnese) launched a war against the Colonnas, Vittoria Colonna withdrew from her intense involvement in the spiritual movement initiated by Valdès to act as her brother Ascanio Colonna’s secretary of state. Colonna’s little studied letters to her brother during the Salt War—partnered with the war dispatches of the pope’s field commissary, who happened to be Colonna’s friend and fellow poet, Giovanni Guidiccioni—portray the changing landscape of a war whose outcome would have an impact on the Colonna-d’Aragona women’s future role in the politics of the peninsula. Colonna’s letters illuminate her skill at forging alliances and representing her clan both at the ambassadorial level and within her extended family, where solidarity was at issue. This chapter also considers two other little known literary interventions the Colonna women authored during the Salt War, the first a highly embellished Ciceronian oration that Giovanna d’Aragona Colonna sent the pope, begging him to ease the misery of her family; in the second, Vittoria Colonna addresses a pair of sonnets to the pope, starkly depicting the sorrow and the waste of war and calling on the pontiff to shepherd his flock to peace. Crucial resemblances and repetitions of images and ideas, found in both the Colonna women’s writings and their friend Guidiccioni’s letters to the pope during the war, document the Colonna-d’Aragona women’s talent for maintaining longtime friendships across political fault lines.

In a sequel to the story of the Salt War, I present the second installment of the Colonna women’s battles with a sitting pope, this time Paul IV (Gian Pietro Carafa, pope 1555–59). When, for the second time in less than fifteen years, a pope’s army marched on the Colonna towns in the Castelli Romani, the d’Aragona-Colonna women and their allies fought back. In chapter 4, I argue that the published writings of the Venetian poets show how closely allied such elite women from the south as Giovanna d’Aragona Colonna and Maria d’Aragona d’Avalos had become to the literary academies, salons, and presses of Florence and Venice and how much the papal court had withdrawn from the vibrant literary culture of the Italian cities in its pursuit of heresy. As soon as Carafa was elected pope, he renewed his attacks on the Venetian publishing industry. The Roman Holy Office banned the complete works of 550 authors, among whom were a number of poets who were the mainstays of the Giolito poetry anthologies and the clients of the d’Aragona-Colonna women. In 1557, the pope ordered the imprisonment of Vittoria Colonna’s longtime friend Cardinal Giovanni Morone for heresy. It was in this climate that leading publishers in Venice and Florence brought out two major works celebrating Vittoria Colonna’s sister-in-law Giovanna d’Aragona Colonna, each of these volumes presenting itself as a temple in her honor. Coming out in rapid-fire succession, Girolamo Ruscelli’s Il tempio alla divina signora Giovanna d’Aragona, a massive polyglot anthology featuring 277 poets writing in four languages (1555), and Giuseppe Betussi’s dialogue, Le imagini del tempio della signora Giovanna Aragona (1556), constituted a public drawing of a line in the sand between the presses and the Church. Ruscelli’s Tempio, like the earlier Giolito anthologies represented a utopian, classless republic of letters, where rank and gender had nothing to do with a poet’s placement in the text. But Betussi’s Imagini del tempio, more in keeping with the temper of the times, published a roster of elite female-male literary couples. Here every elite woman in Betussi’s list of imagini is paired with a man well known for his work at, or in collaboration with, the Venetian presses. Betussi had, in fact, published the very phenomenon that characterized the dramatic entry of women, and in significant numbers, into the urban literary world of the fifties: the alliances between women from the highest social caste with men connected with the presses. The mélange of mid-sixteenth-century diaries, documentary-style dialogues, travelogues, and poems I cite in chapter 5 make it clear that the literary scene in the provincial city of Siena was very different from that of
metropolitan Naples, Milan, and Venice. Siena shared a number of cultural institutions in common with those cities at mid-century: women-led salons; an active religious reform movement associated with the teachings of Valdés and Bernardino Ochino; a literary academy of peninsula-wide fame; and last but most important, an avant-garde circle that promoted the kind of amatory rhetoric that the Inquisition would criminalize under Paul IV. But Siena and its bourgeois elite coteries remained separate from the high salon culture of the d’Aragona-Colonna women. Though Charles V’s daughter Margaret of Austria visited Siena twice in the company of her father, the granddaughters of the king of Naples and their friends did not travel to Siena, nor did they forge connections by letter with the elite women of the small republic, though they could have done so through the intervention of such well-connected men within the Venetian publishing world as Ruscelli, Betussi, and Domenichi, who maintained friendships with the intellectual women of both worlds.

Opening proleptically, this chapter chronicles, in the eyes of two contemporary witnesses, the city’s fall to Spanish and Florentine troops in 1555. They depict Siena’s last days as a free republic and describe the Sienese poet Laudomia Forteguerri’s leadership of a legion of a thousand women who, with picks and shovels, attempt to erect new fortifications while the armies of Cosimo I and Charles V are at the city’s gates. I then turn, in that chapter, to the world of the Sienese salons where, a decade and a half earlier, women and men displayed their literary talents at poetry games, dialogue writing, and serious debates about the Christian faith and the viability of Valdese reform doctrine. The friendship between two leaders of the Sienese veglie (evening assembles), Laudomia Forteguerri and Alessandro Piccolomini, a literary alliance of the sort typical of the era, resulted in the first work of criticism on the poetry of a woman author ever published, the Lettura del S. Alessandro Piccolomini Infiammato fatta nell’academia degli Infiammati (1542). The prominence of literary women in the dual sphere of poetry and theology in Siena, a city already under suspicion in the early forties for its ostensible cultivation of heresy and heretics, is evident in Marcantonio Piccolomini’s staging of a dialogue between an advocate of Valdese reform and an orthodox Catholic as a debate between two elite women.

My closing chapter returns to the story of Caterina Cibo, an adherent of Ochino and Valdés introduced in chapter 1, who fled to Florence when the pope expelled her from her home in Camerino. I trace here the shift in Florence, under the rule of Cosimo I de’ Medici, from its reputation by 1548–49 as a magnet for heterodox passions to a city where heresy could no longer be tolerated. In the late forties and early fifties, the fervor of intellectuals for religious reform was still entwined in Florence with the zealous pursuit of a new Italian literary canon, in the form of radical dialogues and the revision of the Petrarchan poetic tradition. Cibo, whom a Dominican friar had publicly denounced as a “heretic and a teacher of heretics,” is eulogized by Cosimo’s protégé Laura Battiferra in 1560, in an ensemble of four poems, as a leader of women’s circles in Florence and as the poet’s much admired friend and mentor.

At the core of this chapter, three dialogic works represent intellectual partnerships between a woman and a man, relegating to their female speakers an authority not seen in earlier sixteenth-century dialogues. Two of these exchanges—Ochino’s Dialogi sette, in which Caterina Cibo is cast as one of the principal interlocutors, and Marcantonio Flaminio’s consolatory letters addressed to Cibo—belong to the literature of the Valdese reform movement, though both works fall within the tradition of the Neoplatonic dialogo d’amore in their focus on the dialogic prospect of two souls united in their quest for the highest good and the soul’s upward journey to God. A third dialogic work in this group, the courtesan Tullia d’Aragona’s Dialogo della infinità di amore, a work more Aristotelian than Platonic, is the most daring and dynamic of the three pieces. While d’Aragona’s Dialogo resembles Ochino’s Dialogi sette in its line of inquiry—its questioning of the nature and meaning of love, desire, happiness, and the location of ultimate satisfaction—d’Aragona’s dialogue differs from Ochino’s in her striking omission of the organizing trope of the Neoplatonic love dialogue: d’Aragona’s interlocutors reach no moment of truth; they ascend no ladder to the pinnacle of spiritual love where the earthly contemplation of beauty leads finally to the apprehension of the source of all goodness in the cosmos.

D’Aragona’s Infinità di amore differs most from other sixteenth-century dialogues not only in its female authorial voice but in the sensational nature of the literary partnership it publishes as well. In earlier dialogues, courtesans had been portrayed as interlocutors—d’Aragona herself was the model for Sperone Speroni’s character “Tullia” in his Dialogo d’amore. But d’Aragona’s Infinità di amore represents the intellectual alliance of a courtesan who presents herself openly as a sexually experienced woman with a professor whose alleged violation of the sodomy laws had made him the subject of public scandal. Cosimo I’s sponsorship of d’Aragona’s dialogue and its publication twice within a five-year period, in 1547 and 1552, testifies to the tolerance that prevailed at the Medici court at midcentury.

A major shift marks Cosimo’s cultural politics after the siege and occupation of Siena, the departure of Ochino to Geneva, Flaminio’s and Cibo’s deaths, and finally Cosimo’s wife Eleonora’s own death in 1562. The end of the
possibility of a politics of religious reform in Florence in the early sixties after
the closing of the Council of Trent and the execution of Cosimo's longtime
client Pietro Carnegiacchi signaled the demise of the Valdesian movement in
Florence and the rest of Italy as well. Laura Battifora's first book of collected
poems, despite its memorial for Caterina Cibo, represents the end of an era.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Note on the Texts}
\end{center}

The idiosyncratic orthography of the early printed Italian editions cited in
this book has been retained. The punctuation of the text has been edited in
conformance with modern practice. Diacritics missing in the original edi-
tions have only been added where clarification of the sense made them neces-
sary. All the translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Many of the early printed texts I selected for inclusion in this book—letters,
poems, dialogues, and other documents—are little known, even to specialists
in the field; and many of these have not been reprinted since the Renaissance.
Of the primary sources I cite, I continue to find the Giolito poetry anthologies
and their extensive prefatory apparatuses the most useful of all materials in
their revelations about the women, men, and books at the center of my study.
In hopes that the reader will find the anthologies as instructive as I have, I've
included two appendixes, the first an alphabetical index of the authors, editors,
publishers, and dedicatees of each of the anthologies; the second presents a
physical description of each of the fifteen anthologies in the Giolito ensemble.\textsuperscript{27}
A third appendix provides a chronology of the key events that structure the
book's narrative. A final appendix contains biographical and bibliographical
data for all the major and many minor figures mentioned in the book; these
I included to document, and to emphasize, the extent of women's newfound
desire for publication and publicity in sixteenth-century Italy.
Scientific discourse—especially with regard to natural philosophy—became an increasingly important element of the *querelle des femmes*, or debate over women, during the course of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Italy. The presence of women in the area of early modern scientific discourse was not limited, however, to the printed pages of *querelle* discussions. By the 1580s, women were participating in scientific debate in deliberate, formal and public ways: publishing works on natural philosophy, joining scientific academies, and entering into correspondence with major scientific figures. If, at the turn of the sixteenth century, Caterina Sforza practiced science as a kind of private art, refining and collecting her alchemical experiments in a volume never meant for publication, two women active toward the end of the sixteenth century instead sought to establish themselves as learned contributors to public scientific discourse. The examples of Camilla Erculiani (d. post-1584), an apothecary from Padua, and Margherita Sarrocchi (1560–1617), a writer and salonnière in Rome, raise important questions about the nature of scientific communities in early modern Europe and the fluidity with which knowledge circulated across boundaries of both gender and geography. Erculiani had ties to an international scientific community in Padua and circulated her unorthodox views...
on the Biblical flood, astrology, and meteorology in Poland, where her only extant work was published in 1584. The erudite Sarrocchi, best known for her epic poem Scanderbeide (published posthumously in 1623), forged relationships with members of scientific academies such as the Lincei in Rome, hosted an intellectual ridotto in her home, and corresponded with Galileo Galilei about his discovery of Jupiter’s satellites and about her own literary work. Although many of Sarrocchi’s scientific writings have been lost, her contemporaries unanimously point to her unparalleled excellence in the arena of natural philosophy.

While Sarrocchi, like many of her female contemporaries, encountered some hostility in reaction to her activities in the literary and scientific spheres, and Erculiani was subject to an Inquisition trial for her unorthodox views, there is evidence of increasing support for women’s scientific education and activities in this period despite the repressive climate created by the Counter-Reformation. The subject of women’s education in the sciences is addressed not only in works specifically devoted to the querelle des femmes but also in more strictly scientific texts. Many sixteenth-century treatises on natural philosophy are dedicated to women, and some contain prefatory and paratextual material linking women to scientific knowledge and praising them for excellence in this area. Alessandro Piccolomini (1508–1579), who promoted making Latin works available to a wide audience through translation, addressed the 1552 edition of his Della sfera del mondo (The sphere of the world) to Laudomia Forteguerra. In his dedicatory letter he decries women’s lack of access to Latin and thus to scientific studies: “being that, in my opinion, the only reason your ladyship was not able to learn certain things is that you were not taught Latin, the result of our unfortunate customs these days, which, since scientific works are not written in Italian, prohibit women from learning the language in which they are written, and keep many women from studying the most important and rare works.” Similarly, in the dedicatory letter to his Instrumento della filosofia (Instrument of philosophy, 1551), Piccolomini insists that the book is meant to benefit female readers as well as male, and to “be of aid to many whom I know to be of excellent intellect, and suited to philosophy; but [who do not] know any language but their native Italian.” Girolamo Borro’s dialogue on the movements of the tides, Del flusso e riflusso del mare (On the tides of the ocean, 1561) bears a dedication to Elisabetta della Rovere, marchesana of Massa; while commentaries on Aristotle’s Meteorology by Nicolò Vito di Gozze (Nikola Vitov Gučetić, 1549–1610) and Michiele Monaldi (1550–1590),
both Ragusan nobles and academicians, were likewise dedicated to women.\(^5\) Vito di Gozze’s *Discorsi sopra le metheore d’Aristotele* (Discourses on Aristotle’s meteorology, 1584) is of particular interest in this respect, for not only is it dedicated to Fiore Zuzori, or Flora Zuzzeri (Cvijeta Zuzorić, 1552–1648), a Ragusan woman celebrated for her intellect in her native country and in Italy; but the dedicatory letter written by the author’s wife, Maria Gondola (Mara Gundulić), incorporates common threads of *querelle des femmes* argumentation into a defense of women’s capacities in the sciences.\(^6\) A Neoplatonic justification of women’s superior intelligence that also incorporates typical etymological argument (the significance of the word “donna”) and humoral theory (women’s humoral composition is more perfect than that of men), Gondola’s letter praises Zuzori’s beauty and learning and castigates the “fierce blows of the envious” (*fieri colpi de gl’invidiosi*) that led to her friend’s departure from Ragusa. It should not surprise anyone, Gondola insists, that she should now seek a woman’s protection for her husband’s work, because—she argues—women are as capable in the sciences (not to mention in battle) as men:

[I am] sending my husband’s work to you, so that you may act as an un-wavering shield against those who, out of innate malignity, are ready to gnaw and tear at the most beautiful and precious things, since you are most virtuous among the beautiful, and most beautiful among the virtuous; although many may marvel at my motive for publishing these *Discourses* under the protection of, or to be defended by, the female sex, perhaps believing that, since we are not by nature suited to arms, we must likewise lack the capacity for knowledge [*scienze*], or for the understanding of things.\(^7\)

With a lengthy catalog, Gondola continues to single out women’s accomplishments in the sciences: Arethea, daughter of Aristippus, “held forth publicly on natural philosophy”; Pythagoras learned about natural philosophy from his sister Theoclea, and his daughter garnered more attention in her domestic salon than Pythagoras did when speaking in the public academies.\(^8\) Gondola’s foreword—a rare protofeminist work by an early modern Croatian writer—elicited controversy and was removed from subsequent editions of her husband’s work.\(^9\) Both Fiore Zuzori and Maria Gondola appear as interlocutors in two other works by di Gozze, *Dialogo della bellezza* (Dialogue on beauty, 1581) and *Dialogo dell’Amore* (Dialogue on love, 1581). The first of these Platonic dialogues, dedicated to Fiore’s sister, Nika, puts forth a similarly positive opinion
regarding women’s intellect, describing women as more innately capable than men in any discipline at all.\textsuperscript{10}

The linking together of scientific subject matter with the traditional arguments and topoi of the \textit{querelle des femmes} signaled a new dimension in the evolution of ideas about women’s learning. Women’s engagement with science had begun to acquire a public facet, not just in dedicatory letters and prefaces to scientific works composed by men, but in the scientific publications and activities of women themselves, as in the cases of Erculiani and Sarrocchi. Whether engaging in hands-on scientific practice themselves, or exchanging opinions with others on matters of natural philosophy, astronomy, or medicine through intellectual networks in Italy and abroad, women continued to add their voices to the early modern exploration of the world.

Camilla Erculiani’s \textit{Lettere di philosophia naturale} (1584)

Camilla Erculiani’s \textit{Letters on Natural Philosophy}, a treatise packaged in epistolary form, was published in Kraków, Poland, in 1584, the same year as Gondola’s polemic in the \textit{Discourses on Aristotle’s Meteorology}. Erculiani’s \textit{Letters on Natural Philosophy} employs many of the same rhetorical strategies and even some of the same language in making science a new weapon to be wielded in the \textit{querelle des femmes}. Given that Erculiani cites Aristotle’s \textit{Meteorology} in her \textit{Letters}—and that di Gozze, like Erculiani, treats the universal flood in his \textit{Discourses}—it is possible that Erculiani may even have known the Gondola/di Gozze text.\textsuperscript{11} A slim collection of four letters touching on various problems of natural philosophy—the causes of the universal deluge, the composition of rainbows, the influence of the stars and planets on human temperament and action—Erculiani’s \textit{Letters} overtly entwine contemporary scientific debate with the early modern debate over women. In Erculiani’s prefatory material, as well as the letters themselves, women’s facility for scientific reasoning takes center stage as proof of their equality to men. Dedicated to a powerful female patron, Anna Jagiellon of Poland (1523–1596), and framed as an epistolary exchange with Giorgio Garnero (Georges Garnier, 1550–1614), a Burgundian medical writer, Erculiani’s work, with its explicit advocacy of women’s participation in scientific culture, also raises questions about the nature of scientific debate and scientific communities in early modern Europe.\textsuperscript{12} Where did Erculiani, a self-described \textit{speciala}, acquire her knowledge? How did she come to correspond with Garnier, and why did she dedicate a work of natural philosophy to the Polish queen?
Margherita Sarrocchi, the *Scanderbeide*, and Galileo

Orthodox in her views on matters both literary and religious, Margherita Sarrocchi (1560–1617) had no occasion to incur the suspicion of the Church as Erculiani did (indeed, her support of Galileo, whom she met in Rome, noticeably diminished once the scientist’s theories came under increased scrutiny by the Roman Inquisition).

Sarrocchi, however, had a much higher profile and greater public presence than Erculiani, moving in both scientific and literary circles. As a woman renowned for her learning in literature and the sciences, she confronted other kinds of obstacles, including the hostility of some of her contemporaries (Giambattista Marino, once an admirer, notoriously dismissed Sarrocchi as a “magpie” in his poem *Adone* [1623], and others routinely criticized her ambition and drive as unseemly in a woman, or accused her of unchastity).

On occasion, Sarrocchi, like Erculiani, likened her role as a woman in the world of learning to a battle of sorts with male detractors. Yet—also like Erculiani—Sarrocchi had many supporters, and she participated in scientific culture in public, visible ways that shed important light on the power wielded by early modern women in such circles. Indeed, Sarrocchi’s scientific as well as literary interests led her to engage with some of the most important intellectual figures of her day. Although Sarrocchi’s extant works do not focus explicitly on natural philosophy, as Erculiani’s *Letters* do, it is likely she wrote works of a scientific nature that are lost to us today, including a treatise on Euclidean theorems.

Even her most famous work, the epic poem *Scanderbeide*, harbors glimpses of Sarrocchi’s scientific inclinations, particularly in its portrayal, in an early version, of the enchantress Calidora, depicted as a woman learned in natural philosophy (in a reflection of the Counter-Reformation climate in which the work was composed, a prefatory note to the reader clarifies that this “maga turca” is intended only as an entertaining imitation of other poets, and has no other meaning).

The dedicatory letter to the 1606 edition of the *Scanderbeide* (addressed to Costanza Colonna Sforza, marchioness of Caravaggio, and attributed to an unidentified academician), clearly states that knowledge of the sciences is critical to crafting an epic poem: “To compose an epic, one must be learned in every science and every art: this has been demonstrated by the authors of good poems, men of profound erudition. Such erudition is not lacking in Signora Sarrocchi, with respect to every science.”
The letter further states that the remaining cantos of the poem, not included in the present edition, contain additional scientific material dealing with cosmology, astrology, and natural philosophy in general: “as for science, [they] deal with the heavens, astrological knowledge, [and] a study of very curious natural things, all appropriately and poetically explained.”

(In fact, the narrative thread concerning Calidora, in which such themes figure most prominently, was excised from the 1623 version as a result of Sarrocchi’s efforts to streamline the poem around the bellic narrative). Some of Sarrocchi’s occasional poetry ventures into the arena of natural philosophy, using astrology as a structuring theme or as a source of metaphor; and her presence as the dedicatee of scientific works penned by others (or as a contributor of paratextual material to such works), along with a constant refrain of admiration for her learning among her contemporaries, make Sarrocchi an important figure for thinking about the influence of women in scientific culture by the early seventeenth century.

Notes

1. As Virginia Cox notes, the “urge . . . to go beyond humanistic and literary pursuits and embrace ‘the sciences’ more generally seems to have been something of a trend of the period” (The Prodigious Muse: Women’s Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011], 238). This marks a contrast from earlier decades in which access to education in natural philosophy for women was particularly contested: as Laura Giammetti notes, the obstacles faced by women wishing to study this subject formed the basis for various early modern comedies (Lei/la Riss: Imagining Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009], 62–67).


3. “esendo che sola cagione che V. Signoria non habbia possuto alcune cose sa-pere, stimo io che sia l’eserice sta ascosa la lingua latina, colpo della mal usanza dei nostri tempi, la qual dapoi che le science non sono nella lingua nostra, ne vieta an-co la che le Donne non apprendin quella lingua in cui le si trovano e così ne impi-disce che molte Donne non venghin ne gli studi de le lettere eccellentissime e rare” (Alessandro Piccolomini, Della Sfera del mondo [Venice: al segno del pozzo, 1552], aii–aiii). On Landovina Forteguerra, see Diana Robin, Publishing Women: Salons, The Presses, and the Counter- Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 124–139.

4. “giubbe a molti ch’io conosco d’intelletto buonissimo, e atto a filosofare; i quali non sapendo altra lingua che la italiana lor materna” (Piccolomini, Instrumento della filosofia [Venice: Giorgio de’ Cavalli, 1565], A1r). Piccolomini further notes that women are not generally taught Latin, “Since it is not the custom in Italy to teach them any language other than that which they learn from their nurses” (Non essendo costume in Italia di far loro apprendere altra lingue, che quella che che le nutrício imparano [ibid., A4v]). On Piccolomini and women’s learning, see also Carinci, “Una ‘speziata’ padovana,” 210–211; on Piccolomini more generally, see Florindo Cerreta, Alessandro Piccolomini: Letterato e filosofo Senese del cinquecento (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Illuminati, 1960).

5. Appendix to Borro’s work is a second dialogue in which a male character addresses six female interlocutors on the subject of the perfection of women (see Craig Martin, “Meteorology for Courtiers and Ladies: Vernacular Aristotelianism in Renaissance Italy,” Philosophical Readings 4, no. 2 [2012]: 12). On Nicolò Vito di Gozze and Michèle Mould, see Simeone Glueckh, Dizionario biografico degli uomini illustri della Dalmazia (Vienna-Zara, 1836); on Ragusa in this period, see Francesco Maria Appendini, Notizie istorico-critiche sulle antichità storia e letteratura dei Ragusani (Ragusa: Antonio Martecchini, 1803); and Susan Mosher Stuard, A State of Deference: Ragusan Dubrovnik in the Medieval Centuries (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). Niccolò Vito di Gozze studied in Padua and wrote Neoplatonic dialogues as well as scientific treatises.

6. See Cox, The Prodigious Muse, 238 and Carinci, “Una ‘speziata’ padovana,” 212. The work is mentioned briefly in Stuard, A State of Deference, 100. Gundula’s letter is included in a volume forthcoming in the “Other Voice in Early Modern Europe” series: see Renaissance Women’s Writing between the Two Adriatic Shores. I am grateful to the editors for sharing some preliminary pages of this edition with me. Born in Ragusa but raised in Italy and married to a Florentine nobleman, Bartolomeo Pescioni, in 1577, Fiore Zuzori (Cvijeta Zuzoric) was widely praised by Ragusans and Italian poets, including Tasso, for her beauty and intellect (see Torquato Tasso, Il molte, ed. Bruno Basile [Torino, Einaudi 1994], 431). Josip Torbarina, Tassovi somet i madrij uci u Crijevu Zuzoric Dubrovniku, Hrvatsko kolo no. 21 (Zagreb, 1940). After returning to Ragusa, Zuzori and her husband settled in Ancona. On Zuzori, see Claudia Boccolini, Flora Zuzori in Ancona (Ancona: Consiglio Regionale delle Marche, 2007), which, while speculative, contains transcriptions of some archival documents. On Maria Gundula, see Zdenka Janekovic Roder, “Marija Gundula Gozze, Le querelle des femmes u renaisanuom Dubrovniku; in Žene u Hrvatskoj: Ženska i kulturna povijest, ed. Andrea Feldman (Zagreb: Ženska Infotreka, 2004), 105–123. I thank Velimir Jurdjevic for his assistance in translating this article.
8. “esse pubblicamente la filosofia naturale,” “Pittagora hebbe non solo la sorella Theoekle, dalla qual esso imparò tanto filosofia, ma ancor’ hebbe una figliuola . . . che in Athenè più dilettesiavano sentì essa parlare nella sua casa, che sentire Pittagora legger in Academia” (ibid., unnumbered but 4c-5c).

9. See Rönter, “Marta Gundola Gozze,” 106, 119. Francesca Maria Gabrielli posits that the letter was altered not because of its pro-woman content, but as a result of its attack on Ruggasian society (see Renaissance Women’s Writing). On Mara Gundulic see also Danja Fulispeci, “Women in Croatian Literary Culture, 16th to 18th centuries,” in A History of Central European Women’s Writing, ed. Celea Hawkinsworth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 33–40.

10. “troveremo le donne essere più atti; che gli huomini, a imparare ogni scienza.” (Nicolò Vito di Gozze, Dialogo della bellezza e Di, Dipoli o Lippot. Dialogo d’Amore: Dialogo a Ljubici, ed. and trans. Ljerka Schiffler [Zagreb: Marica Hrvatska, 2008], 53–54. Gundolc echoes this comment in her letter to Zucor: “women are quicker to learn . . . have sharper minds, and are more suited to learning then men” (sono le donne più facili all’imparare . . . hanno intelletto più acuto, e più disposto alle disci-pline, che non hanno gli huomini, Vito di Gozze, Di, Dipoli, not numbered but 7c-v).

11. See Erculiani, Letters, d1-e; “Come dice Aristotele nel 4 della Metaeora.” Di Gozze elaborates that while Aristoteles considered the universal flood a natural phenomenon, “we Catholics believe Noah’s flood was supernatural” (noi cattolici crediamo che quel diluvio mitico fu soprannaturale, Di, Dipoli, 5e. Di Gozze spent time in Padua as a student; it is possible there could even have been a personal connection if the two had occasion to cross paths. Four extant copies of Camilla’s Lecture have been identified, located at the Biblioteca Alessandrina (Rome); the Biblioteca Civica (Padua); the Houghton Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts); and the Biblioteca PAN (Kórnik, Poland). The author is identified in the title as Camilla Herculanina. The spelling of her name varies in sources; for consistency, I have chosen to use “Erculiani.”

12. Garnier, called Garnero in Erculiani’s text, was the author of a treatise on plague, Liber de peste, quae grasseus est Venetiis del 1576. On Garnero, see Curtin, “Una spezzata” padovana,” 209 and n35.

Galilei first came to the attention of the Inquisition in 1611, and traveled to Rome to defend his Copernican views there; in 1616, he was called to Rome again by Pope Paul V and Cardinal Bellarmine and instructed not to teach the Copernican theory. The bibliography on Galilei is vast; see, inter alia: Galilei Galilei, Le Opere di Galileo Galilei, ed. Antonio Favaro (Florence: Barbera, 1890–1909); Mario Biagioli, Galileo’s Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); Michele Camerota, Galileo Galilei e la cultura scientifica nell’età della Controriforma (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2004); Maurice A. Finocchiaro, Retrying Galileo, 1613–1616 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Thomas S. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957); Pietro Redondi, Galileo eretico (Tortino: Einaudi, 1983); William Shea and Mariano Attigas, Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Woolman, Galilei, Watcher of the Skies (New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press 2010).

In a letter to Achillini, Marino would later brush off Sarrocchi’s own criticism of him, writing, “it doesn’t sadden me to have felt myself shot through with the sharp points of those quills of those Scanderbeidians” (non mi attrista l’avermi sentito trafigger con acute punture delle penne sacherbide) (Marino, 165, stanzas 38–39). Sarrocchi’s distaste for Marino’s baroque style fueled her decision to abandon the Accademia degli Umorati for the new Academia of the Ordinati. For the verse exchanged by Marino and Sarrocchi in praise of one another, see Nadia Verz-del, “Contributi alla biografia di Margherita Sarrocchi” Rendiconti dell’Accademia di Architettura, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli 61 (1989–1990) 165–206. Stigliani, too, though a fierce adversary of Marino, mocked Sarrocchi’s Scanderbeide in verse (see Verz, “Contributi alla biografia,” 197–198).

Sarrocchi is also said to have composed commentaries on Della Casa and Petrarch, a translation from the Greek of Musaeus’s Hero and Leander, and a treatise on predestination (see Verz, “Contributi alla biografia,” 167–168). Although her translation is lost, a highly complimentary letter to Sarrocchi from the editor and publisher Aldo Manuzio in Venice provides a glimpse of this work: “Therefore, I await your Musaeus, so that I too may participate in this wonderful work” (Storo dunque aspettando il tuo Musaeo, per dover essere anch’io partecipe di sì fatto bene). Three letters from Manuzio to Sarrocchi are published in Aldo Manuzio, Lettere volgari (Rome: Santi e Comp., 1592).

9. “una maga turca pur favolosa . . . post[a] solo per dilettere ad imitatione d’altri poeti, & non per significato” (Margherita Sarrocchi, Lettere del 1576, 10r). Her sonnet celebrating Felice Orsini, published in Muzio Manfredi, Lettere, huomini dotti di nobilia ed eccellentissime virtù della Scanderbeide, poemas heroic, [Rome: Lepido Faci, 1606], “Benigni lettori,” not numbered. For Calidora, see ibid., III, stanzas 37–38. This early version had only eleven cantos, as opposed to the twenty-three of the 1623 edition.

10. “Et quanto bisogni all’Epico essere intendente d’ogni scienza, & d’ogni arte; l’hanno dimostrato gli Autori de buoni Poesmi, huomini tutti di profonda dot-trina. Questa non manca in ciascuna scienza alla Signora Sarrocchi” (ibid., 2v). The letter, signed “L’Amatoatore Academico Raffontato,” is surely intended to add academic (masculine) credibility to Sarrocchi’s endeavor.

11. “in materia di sciente, si tratta de Cieli, dell’intelligenza di astrologia, duno stadio de cose naturali molto curioso poste, & esplicate tutte opportunamente et po-eiticamente” (ibid., unnumbered but 3c).