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Italy's Book Industry Today and Its Literary Canon: A Gender Perspective

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Italy's Book Industry Today and Its Literary Canon: A Gender Perspective

Dr Alberica Bazzoni

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Charles and Joan Alberto Italian Studies Institute Visiting Fellow

Italian national identity is closely linked to its literary tradition: before existing as a country, Italy was unified by its language and literature.

Since the late 19th century, women have increasingly gained access to the public sphere and cultural life of the country, deeply changing its literary landscape.

What is the position of women writers in the literary system today?

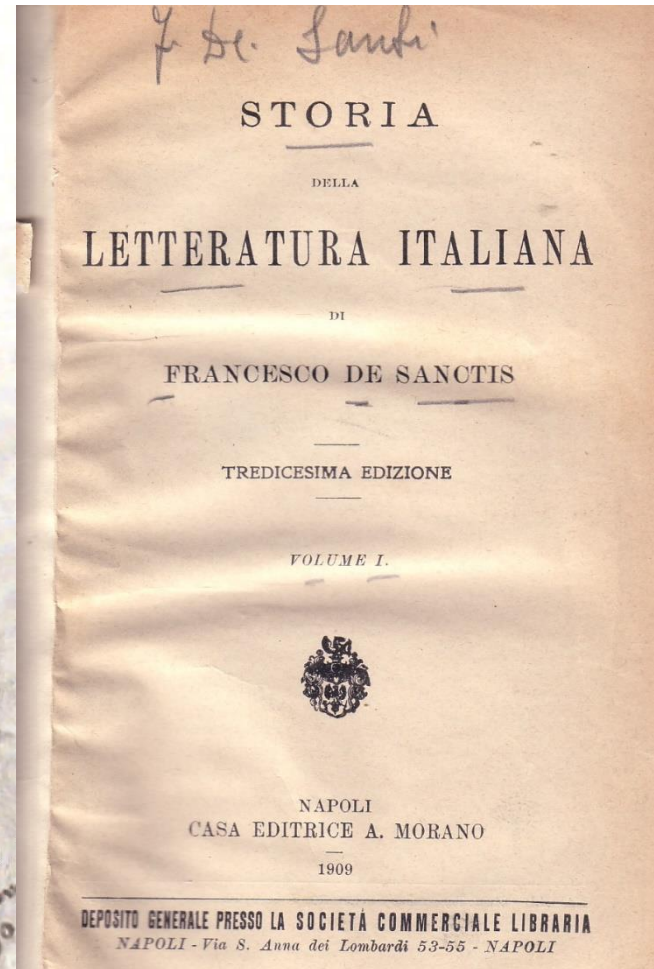
How is the canon itself produced and reproduced?

The “Three Crowns”: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio



Francesco De Sanctis

History of Italian Literature (1871)



Women's Rights Timeline



- **1946:** right to vote
- **1974:** divorce
- **1975:** women were granted legal equality with men in the organization of the family
- **1978:** right to abortion
- **1981:** abrogation of 'delitto d'onore' (honour killing) and 'matrimonio riparatore' (marriage after rape)
- **1996:** rape becomes a crime against a person, while before it was a crime against morality

The most important phenomenon among the changes occurred in the literary scene during the second half of the 20th century is the presence of women. [...] In the last quarter of the century the number of women writers equalled that of men. It had never happened before. The numeric data (but, to put it simply, it is quantity of quality) describes an epochal change.

Massimiliano Capati, 2002

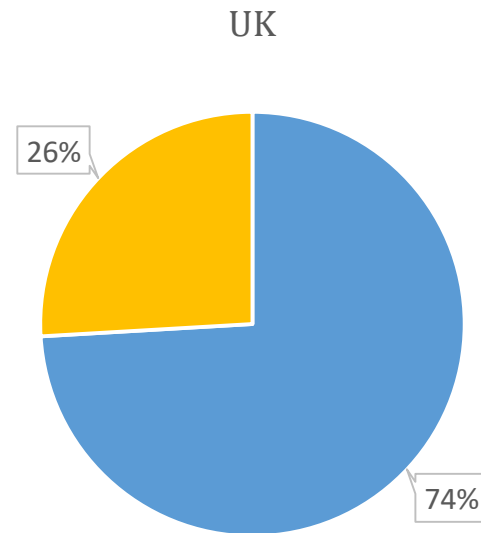
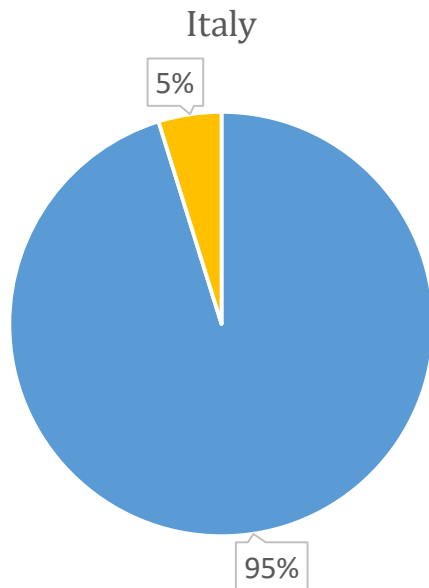
One of the most striking developments in twentieth-century Italian literature has been the emergence of women writers to take the very centre stage of the literary scene, and to do so in such a substantial numbers that (paradoxically) the literary market at the end of the century was all but gender-blind.

Robert Gordon, 2005

For the first time, women writers are attracting as much public and critical attention as their male colleagues, and are finally resisting being ghettoized, sidelined, respected but ignored, read but then forgotten.

Sharon Wood, 1994

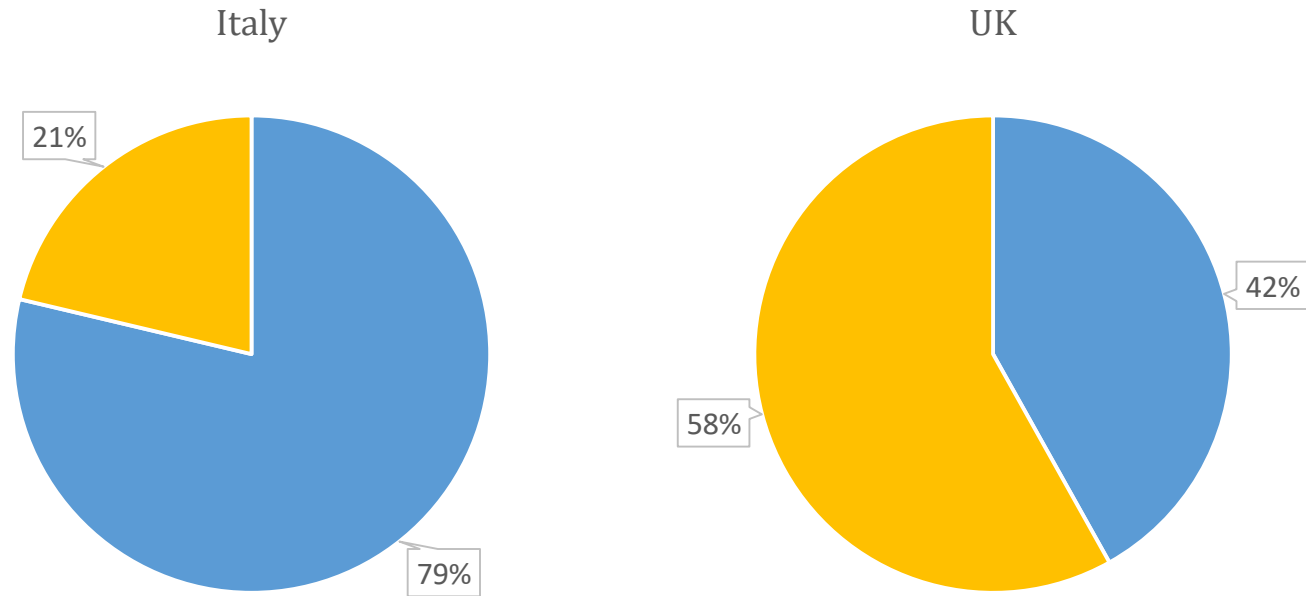
20th-21st Century Men and Women Writers in University Courses



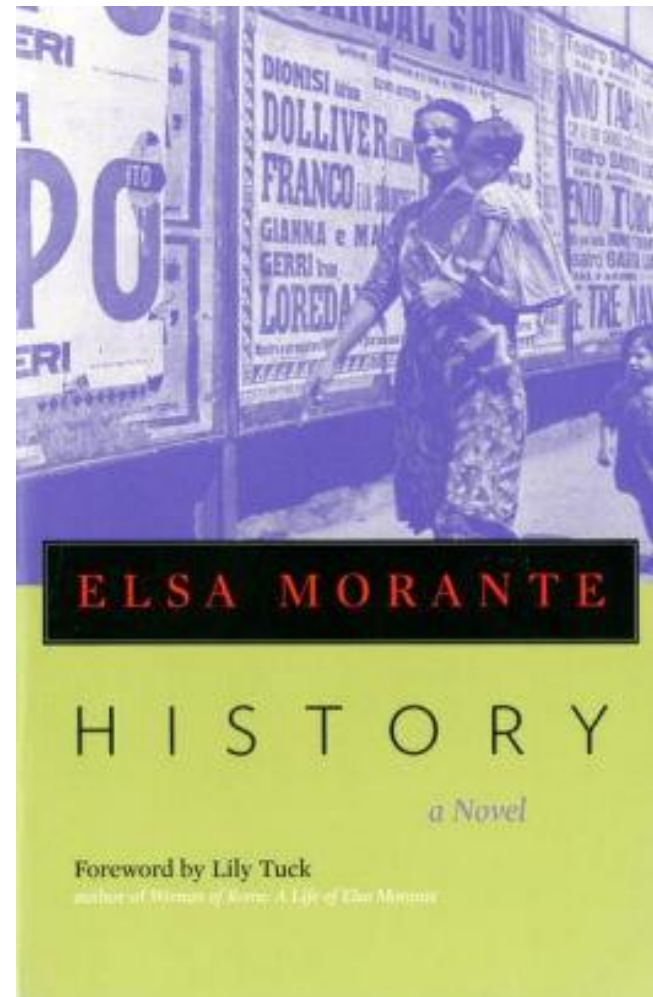
■ Men writers taught

■ Women writers taught

20th-21st Century Men and Women Writers in University Courses



- Number of courses that do not include any women
- Number of courses that include at least 1 woman





Grazia Deledda, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927

Literary Prizes

Strega: active since 1947. Tot. prizes awarded: 72

Men: 61 (85%); Women: 11 (15%)

2009-2018: Tot. prizes: 10. M: 9; W: 1.

Viareggio: active since 1929. Tot. prizes: 251.

Men: 216 (86%); Women: 35 (14%)

2009-2018: Tot. prizes: 31. M: 27; W: 4.

Campiello: active since dal 1963. Tot. premi: 57.

Men: 43 (76%); Women: 14 (24%)

2009-2018: Tot. prizes: 10. M: 5; W: 5

> **Difference from other prizes: popular jury.**



Helena Janeczka, winner of the 2018 Strega Prize

HELENA JANECZEK

**LA RAGAZZA
CON LA LEICA**

Romanzo



"A biography, a feminist
parable, a declaration of love
for photography, and a tableau
of the 1930s: *The Girl with
the Leica* is all of this at once."

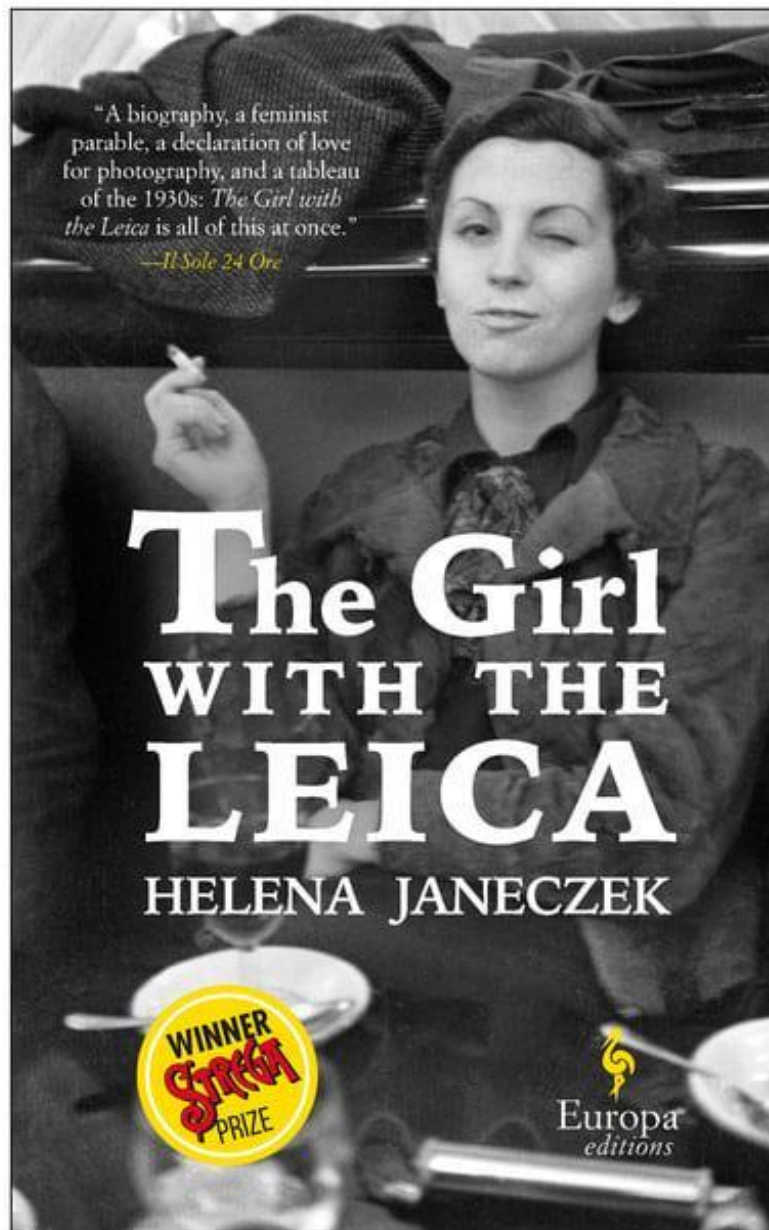
—*Il Sole 24 Ore*

**The Girl
WITH THE
LEICA**

HELENA JANECZEK

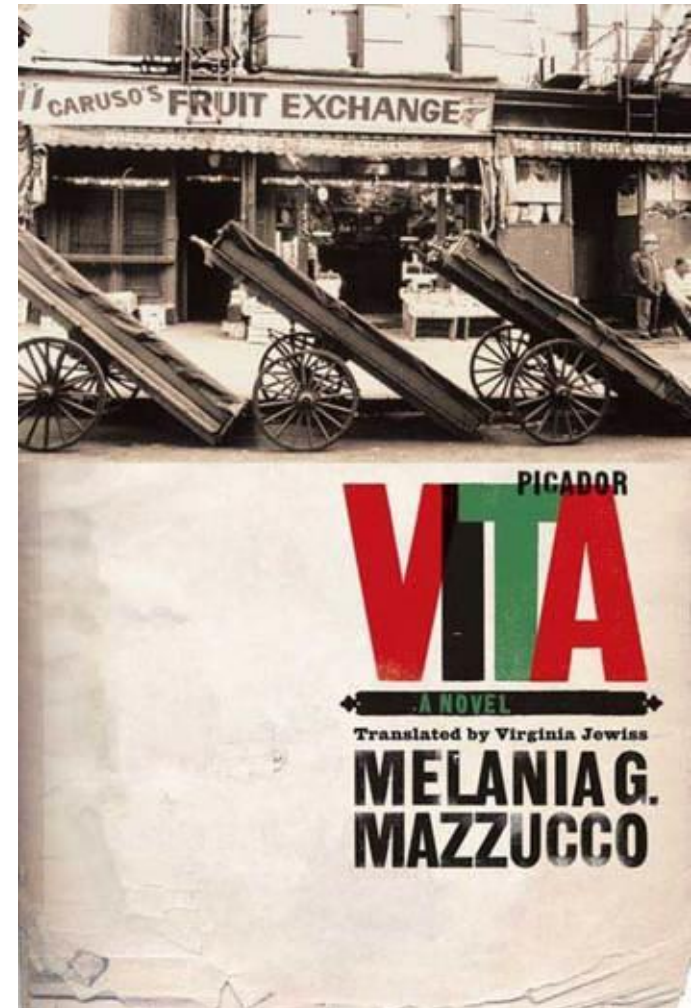



**Europa
editions**





Melania Mazzucco
winner of the 2003 Strega Prize



The Book Industry

Readers:

From 2017 AIE Report: The female population on average reads more (48,8% women vs. 35% men)

Composition of the Workforce in the Book Industry:

Managerial Roles: 77,7% men; 22,3% women.

Italian Publishing Association (AIE) Executive Board: 14 men, 1 woman

The Book Industry

Writers:

Novels published in 2017: Men 61,7 %; 38,3% women.

9% increase in the number of women since 2005.

Market:

- Top 10 books sold in Italy in 2016: 6 are written by women, 4 by men.
- Fiction: top 40 books: 22 by women, 18 by men.
- Italian fiction: top 20 books: 7 by women, 13 by men
- Foreign fiction: top 20 books, 15 by women, 5 by men.

> **Gap between market and recognition of value**

> **Gap between reception of Italian and foreign women writers**

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LESS
THAN
HALF
THE
PICTURE**

WITHOUT THE VISION OF WOMEN ARTISTS AND ARTISTS OF COLOR.

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GUERRILLA GIRLS CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD



Festivals and Independent Publishing

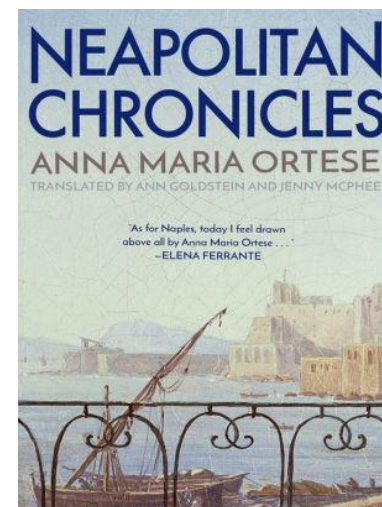
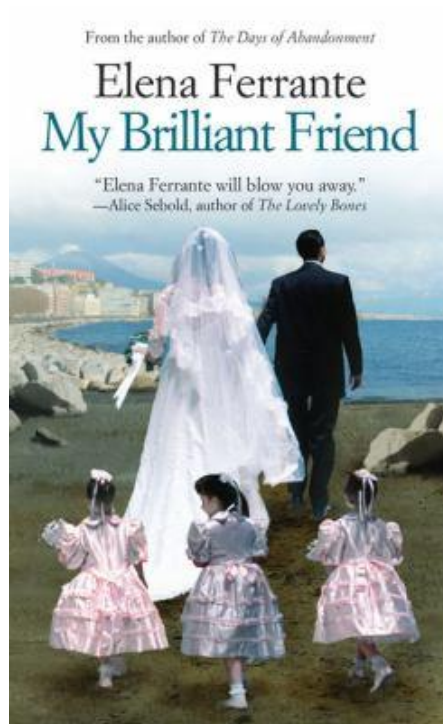
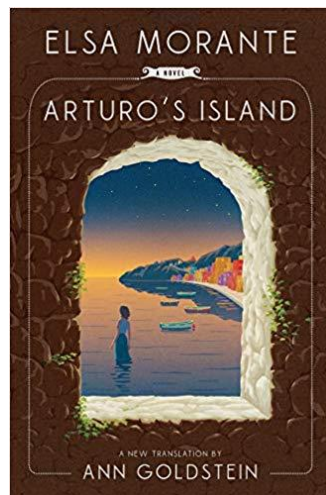


'Feminism'
Festival of Women's Publishing,
Rome, March 2019

'InQuiete'
Women Writers Festival
Rome, October 2019



Women's Fiction Festival, Matera.
(Active since 2005)





www.norwegian.com



Grazia Deledda
Italian author



Thank you!

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