

ABSTRACTS

I. Mysticism

Gabriella Bruna Zarri, *Un «signoril modo» per giungere alla perfezione. La lettera della beata Elena Duglioli dall'Olio ad Anna di Monferrato (1521).*

The purpose of this essay is to deepen our understanding of the spirituality of Blessed Elena Duglioli Dall'Olio as it emerges from the letter sent to Anna d'Alençon, Marchioness of Monferrato. After briefly presenting the protagonists of this exchange of correspondence which took place in 1517, the character and content of the writing, published in 1521 after Duglioli's death, are examined in depth. The text is proposed as an itinerary of perfection whose goal is contemplation. Unlike the previous itineraries of perfection, marked by a path that proceeds gradually in order to progressively abstract from the earthly world to raise the mind in God, Elena indicates a daily path of prayer. In this process, mental prayer and Mass play a central role. We could say that Duglioli's small treatise stems from a religious practice she herself pursues, which starts from the assumption of some elements of mystical theology combined with an ascetic-liturgical spirituality that has something in common with the *Devotio Moderna*, the spirituality movement born in the Netherlands in the fifteenth century. Achieving union with God, mystically represented as the bridegroom of the soul, is the goal of the «noble way» of reaching perfection, but the path traced by the charismatic Bolognese is original and new.

Alessia Liroso, *Scrittura, mistica e conoscenza in Battistina Vernazza. Dai Dubbi giovanili ai Colloqui della maturità.*

Sister Battista Vernazza has been defined as the most knowledgeable mystical writer of the Italian sixteenth century. Daughter of the founder of the Oratory of Divine Love and goddaughter of the mystic Caterina Fieschi, she spent almost her entire life within a cloister and was held up by the Church of the Counter-Reformation as a model of the perfectly disciplined nun. Nonetheless, her desire to deepen knowledge of the sacred texts and, above all, her willingness to write and comment on them were impressive. But, could a woman of that time interpret and explain Scripture, an activity granted only to clergy and male theologians? By reading and comparing two of the nun's numerous writings

– her youthful *Dubbi* and her later *Colloqui* – this paper aims to explore how Battistina managed to avoid the sin of pride, and to create a successful relationship between her extensive knowledge and the mystical experience she was protagonist of, especially in the second part of her life.

Stefano Fortin, *L'incarnazione del Verbo. Corporalità e gesto nelle 'didascalie' delle performance estatiche di Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.*

Partially departing from the already rich critical bibliography of rhetorical-stylistic and biographical-doctrinal approaches, this paper investigates the performative dimension of the ecstasies of the Florentine mystic Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (1566-1607), as it emerges from the sisters' reports, which frequently mention – in descriptive 'didascalies' – gestures, movements and expressions used by the saint during the ecstatic rapture. The purpose, through the study of the *Trigesimo Sesto Colloquio*, is to complete the rhetorical analysis of Magdalenian ecstasies through an examination of the phenomena related to the *actio*.

Magda Kučerková, *La poetica della preghiera contemplativa nell'opera delle mistiche italiane santa Caterina da Genova e santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.*

This essay aims to study the language of mystical experience in the context of contemplative prayer. Within the Christian spiritual tradition, this is understood as *the infused loving knowledge of God* (St John of the Cross) and is studied in the Italian language writings collecting female experience of a mystical character, particularly in the work of Catherine of Genoa (1446-1510) and Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (1566-1607). Infused contemplation is perceived as a gift from God, far from any human effort, the result of which is in any case infused love that is fully and profoundly realized in the woman's spiritual interior and, consequently, in her daily life. The phenomenon we explore here is mainly the imagery that emerges and its specific qualities, which can be defined as inner images. In spite of the supernatural character of the revelations witnessed by the Italian mystics and the activity of the 'superconscious', the experience of *amor unitivus* is also a conscious activity by virtue of which the mystics are able to perceive and describe these images. The methodological approach to the selected texts is theoretical-literary interpretation, which will allow us to better understand what the women were experiencing, how they represented it and the topicality of their experience.

Olimpia Pelosi, «*La mia volontà sia non mia*». *Mimesi critica, magistero spirituale e fonti vetero e neotestamentarie negli scritti di Isabella Cristina Berinzaga, Maria Domitilla Galluzzi e Chiara Isabella Fornari.*

The essay focuses on the writings of three mystic women who lived in North-Central Italy between the late Renaissance and the early Enlightenment. The Milanese laywoman

Berinzaga is the only one among them who didn't write her experiences in her own hand, but let her confessor be her scribe. Their collaborative endeavor gave birth to: *Per via di annichilazione*, written between 1585 and 1601. The manuscript was confiscated by the Inquisition and was published only in 1994. The two works (*Vita da lei narrata*, and *La Passione*) by Galluzzi, a Capuchin nun in Pavia, were both written in her own hand in 1624, upon command of her spiritual directors. They were both condemned by the Holy Office and were first published only in 2003 and 2007. As for Chiara Isabella Fornari, a Poor Clare nun and abbess in the convent of Todi (Umbria), I have examined several excerpts taken from her *Trattato mistico* (1759) and from her *Relazioni mistiche* (1760). The inquiry shows a main theme shared by the women, that is the Christocentric nature of their mystical experiences, primarily based on their contemplation on the suffering of Christ on the Cross. The mystics empathically identify with Christ and his sorrows and replicate on their bodies his bleeding wounds (*stigmata*). Through their enacting of such a full *imitatio Christi* and through their abundant use of scriptural quotations, the women validated their spiritual authority and became beloved 'objects' of worship as *sante vive* (living saints), an attitude regarded with suspicion of heresy, in their era, by the Church of Rome.

Alessandro Vetuli, «Voce di ali». *Figure e funzioni degli angeli nelle Rivelazioni di Giovanna Maria della Croce.*

In the *Revelations* of Giovanna Maria della Croce (1603-1673), the angel is an omnipresent figure which designates a hermeneutical model on several levels of analysis. Through this model the author's spiritual doctrine can be fully grasped. The present article sets out to study this model first by attempting to trace back the main references of Giovanna's devotion towards angels. Then it shows two essential symbolic functions of the angel: the spiritual one and the linguistic one. In the first case the angel becomes a symbol of a new vision of the world, it shows an internal process by which the soul returns to its divine essence. The organic images, especially the metamorphosis of the wings, suggest the transition from Ego to Everything, from solitude to union. In the second symbolic function the angel means and symbolizes a particular type of utterance. The author hints to the supernatural voice to enable the human language to overcome its expressive limits. On the other hand, this supernatural voice implies the possibility of an all-encompassing language that restores communion between all created things giving them new meaning. This insistence on reconciliation's dynamics shows how the angel is one icon of Incarnation's mysticism which is oriented towards the christification of men and reality, and which is less interested in language problems.

Chiara Coletti, *Tra slancio mistico e zelo riformatore. Le reti della scrittura mistica francescana femminile in Umbria tra XVIII e XIX secolo.*

Many recent studies show how, in spite of the widespread rationalist climate, there were numerous ambivalences and manifestations of 'religious enthusiasm' that ran

throughout eighteenth-century Europe. The Umbrian territory remained a 'laboratory' rich in charismatic experiences: the nuns examined here, some such as Veronica Giuliani (1660 - 1739) and Chiara Isabella Fornari (1697 - 1744) well-known, others less familiar such as Maria Chiara Totti (1695 - 1778) and Maria Lanceata Morelli (1704 - 1762), despite the individuality of their personal experiences, present striking similarities in language, spiritual journey and concrete action towards rigorous institutional reform.

II. Devotion

Marzia Giuliani, *Devozioni borromaiche. Agata Sfondrati e le angeliche di San Paolo Converso a Milano*.

The essay considers the Angelic Sister Agata Sfondrati, Prioress of the Convent of San Paolo Converso in Milan, spiritual daughter of Carlo Borromeo, and keeper of his memory and legacy. Manuscript and print sources shed light upon her life of devotion both within and beyond the boundaries of the cloister which the holy archbishop had imposed. The nun transcribed the sermons given by Borromeo at the convent and was in contact with the publishers Pietro Martire Locarni and Giovanni Battista Bidelli, both of which gained her some prominence in Milan in the early seventeenth century.

Serena Laiena, *Le pratiche devozionali delle attrici in età moderna: tra ambiguità e autopromozione*.

The writings by preachers and moralists in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy reveal the existence of an apparently irreparable rift between the Church and professional theatre. Actresses in particular are pointed at as an anti-model and placed outside the social map of female perfection in post-Tridentine Italy because, as opposed to other early modern women, they perform in public and enjoy the freedom to work, earn, and travel. However, the relationship between commedia dell'Arte actresses and the Catholic religion is not reducible to oppositional dynamics. This study investigates the attempts of commedia dell'Arte actresses to bridge the gap that separated them from the ideal models of women in the eyes of their contemporaries. Taking into consideration a variety of published and unpublished documents, this essay analyses the multifaceted relationship between commedia dell'Arte actresses and religion and reconstructs some of their devotional practices. Furthermore, it highlights the historical value of the instrumentalisation of these practices by actresses, thus considering the influence of devotion on the process of transformation of the public image of female performers. This investigation reveals the existence of a model of Christian actress that does not discard its antithesis – the 'anti-Christian' actress – but incorporates it through a process of re-semanticisation which results in a rewriting of the boundaries of women's virtue in early modern Italy.

Isabel Harvey, *The Risks of Charity. The Double Foundation of the Seminario/Colleggio della Immacolata Concettione di Maria Vergine of Venice, between Inquisition and Holiness.*

In 1669, the wealthy Venetian aristocrat Francesco Vendramin removed the pious woman Cecilia Ferrazzi from the governance of one of his charitable works, the *Seminario della Immacolata Concettione di Maria Vergine*, as a result of her condemnation by the Inquisition for pretense of holiness. The *Seminario* welcomed girls and young women who were abandoned or were at risk of falling into prostitution. After the condemnation of Cecilia Ferrazzi, a female community of Capuchins received the mission of administrating the *Seminario*. After which, we lose the traces of the institution. During the same years, elsewhere in northern Italy, the tertiary Franciscan sister Lucia Ferrari founded a series of female monasteries and pious institutions for women: Guastalla, Treviso, Mantua, Como, Parma, and... Venice. According to a hagiography dedicated to her, in 1668 she would have founded and written the Rule – of Capuchin obedience – for an institution devoted to the education of young girls in Venice, sponsored by the noble Francesco Vendramin. The institution was named the *Colleggio dell'Immacolata Concettione*. The similarities between the institutions of Cecilia Ferrazzi and Lucia Ferrari are striking: same charitable activities, same sponsors, similar names, and concurrent dates. Was this the same institution? This paper revisits the biographical narratives of these two founders who acted on the margins of the Church and proposes to explore the social roles of non-cloistered religious women as well as their relationships with the authorities. The case of the *Seminario/Colleggio* gives matter to rethink the use of inquisitorial and hagiographic documentation, the role of non-cloistered religious women, but also the gender relations behind charity.

Francesca Guiducci, *Di cera e d'inchiostro. Lucia Tartaglini scrittrice e artista devota nell'Italia centrale fra Sei e Settecento.*

«In dotazione di spirito profetico e di conoscenza interna di cuori», this is how Giovanni Girolamo Sernini Cucciatti in *Catalogo degli uomini illustri cortonesi* defines Lucia Tartaglini, who lived between 1629 and 1713. Writer of devout texts such as *Lumi ricevuti per anime* and *Il Calvario* and other dialogues between soul and God, Lucia Tartaglini was born in Cortona where she was brought up in the local Cistercian monastery. Following a serious financial crisis, she moved to Perugia, where she founded the women's conservatory of the Torre degli Sciri. In addition to welfare and religious practices, the Franciscan tertiary characterized her work through the creation of a wax-plastic workshop where she made busts of Christ and crucifixes. She is celebrated as a new *living saint*, and is also documented in Assisi, Città della Pieve and other centers of the Umbrian-Tuscan suburbs. Lucia gathered around her a fervent cenacle of women of different social backgrounds and ages, including the countesses Caterina della Penna Oddi, Francesca Baldacchini and many young scions of the local oligarchy, creating a solidarity network between benefactors, and women who were exposed, unsafe, dangerous or had fallen into the hands of the Inquisition. Through the papers of the archives of Cortona, Perugia, and

of Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede of Rome, the study reconstructs the life and works of this still almost unknown female character.

III. Poetry

Matteo Leonardi, «*Darti un baso amoroso... d'un amor de smisuranza*». *La ricezione del misticismo iacoponico nelle rinascimentali* Devotissime compositioni rhythmiche.

The *Devotissime compositioni rhythmiche* are a *long seller* of sixteenth-century monastic female literature, by an anonymous author, which sit within the *laude* tradition that reached from Iacopone da Todi, through Bianco da Siena and Feo Belcari up to the early sixteenth century. Close analysis of this poetic inheritance allows us to appreciate the profound *ruminatio* on Iacopone's verse, particularly in the poems that amplify the nuptial allegory used in affective mysticism, as seen in laudes 86 and 89 (by Mancini's numbering). The signs of an intentional process of imitation of the collection are seen less than a free recombination of Iacopone-esque elements familiar to the memory of a long-time reader. The reinterpretation of Iacopone-style mysticism in a purely affective and practical key is of great interest. On the one hand the reinterpretation deprives the ecstatic confessions of the clear doctrinal background with which Iacopone carefully justifies them; on the other hand it gives the poetry a tender lightness and affectionate grace, making possible theologically daring outbursts demonstrating the courage of a stereotypically feminine love that overwhelms the reticence of the intellect.

Chiara Cassiani, *I sonetti sullo specchio di Vittoria Colonna*.

In Vittoria Colonna's *rime*, poetic aspiration coexists with spiritual tension, so much so that the transition from love to sacred compositions is blurred. The essay examines a nucleus of sonnets, present in the *Raccolta di rime per Michelangelo*, in which the Marchesa uses the metaphor of the mirror with different meanings, to reflect, in addition to a profound need for spiritual renewal, the will to establish a new relationship with the Scriptures. Through Neoplatonic Plotinian and Ficinian allusions, which blend with Christian themes and with echoes of Dante and Petrarch, the symbolism of the mirror, linked to the term *speculum* in the devotional tradition, as an example to be imitated, becomes a metaphor of the contemplative vision of God and allows the poetry to become a mystical experience.

Paola Ugolini, *Gaspara Stampa e Paola Antonia Negri: nuove proposte di lettura*.

This essay examines Gaspara Stampa's *Rime*, paying particular attention to the sacred verse in the collection, in order to shed light on Stampa's relation with the spirituality of the Angeliche and their «divine mother teacher» Paola Antonia Negri. Active in the

Venetian territories in the first half of the sixteenth century, the Angeliche fostered a spirituality based on the imitation of Christ and on a direct relationship with God. Echoes of the teachings of Paola Antonia Negri, who addressed a letter to Gaspara in which she invited the poet to repentance, can be found in Stampa's *canzoniere*, suggesting a systematic interaction between the two women.

Virginia Cox, «*L'umil prego ascolta*». *A Votive canzone to the Miraculous Madonna of Lucca (1588)*.

This essay examines a religious canzone by a little-known Cinquecento poet, singer, and dramatist, Leonora Bernardi Belatti (1559-1616), written shortly after a famous Marian miracle that occurred in her home city of Lucca on 30 March 1588. The canzone, which opens with a hymn of praise to the Virgin modelled in part on Petrarch's «*Vergine bella*», goes on to allude darkly to a prolonged period of suffering in the author's life, before appealing to Mary for aid. The essay explores the dramatic autobiographical context of the poem, written at a time when Bernardi had been exiled to Florence with her parents following an accusation that she had connived in the murder of her husband. A further context brought into play is that of Lucca's collective devotional response to the 1588 Marian miracle, and particularly the votive and oblativ aspects of that response. The essay suggests that Bernardi's canzone may be read as a dramatized votive prayer on the part of the author: a literary analogue to material votive offerings such as narrative *tavolette*, and a symbolic means for the exiled poet to reintegrate herself with her natal spiritual community. A further focus of the essay is the early reception history of Bernardi's canzone, with special reference to the response poems it elicited from Angelo Grillo and Ottavio Rinuccini. Grillo's, in particular, it is argued, played an active role in Bernardi's seemingly successful campaign of self-exoneration, as well as hailing the poem as a new paradigm of Marian verse.

Myriam Chiarla, *La Bibbia nella lirica sacra e spirituale delle autrici del Seicento*.

Following a previous line of study on the use of biblical sources in seventeenth-century religious poetry, this essay aims to investigate the ways in which the words of Scripture were used in verse collections published by women during the period. The analysis is developed by focusing on two exemplary cases: the spiritual poems of a lay author (*Rime spirituali, e morale della sig. Isabetta Coreglia di Lucca*, 1628) and the sacred poems of a woman who had taken vows (*Poesie sacre composte dalla molto rev. madre suor Francesca di Giesu Maria* [Francesca Farnese], 1657). Taking into consideration the lexical choices of the titles, with a reflection on the meanings assumed by the concepts of 'spiritual' and 'sacred' in the literature of the seventeenth century, the essay aims to identify similarities to and differences from other religious *canzonieri* of the time (first of all the *Pietosi affetti* by Angelo Grillo), trying to understand if it is possible to identify a specificity in the reuse of biblical sources in the poetic writings of women.

Eleonora Carinci, *La Tortore smarita di suor Pietra Margherita dal Sale (1620-1692). Poesia, preghiera e pentimento in un convento ravennate del Seicento.*

Sister Pietra Margherita dal Sale (1620-1692), born Virginia, was a nun at the Benedictine monastery of Sant'Andrea Maggiore in Ravenna and a member of the local nobility. She wrote a work entitled *Tortore smarita o Anima pentita che desidera trovare Giesù suo sposo* ('Lost Turtledove, or repentant soul desiring to find Jesus her Bridegroom'), in which she invites her own soul (and presumably the soul of the reader) to find Jesus Christ, who had abandoned her because of her sins. The manuscript text, probably autograph, consists of an alternation between short prose texts addressed to the soul, and biblical quotations in Latin, prayers of the soul to God and poetic compositions that echo the content of the prose sections and describe the path of repentance, reconciliation and redemption that the sinful and repentant soul follows. This contribution analyses the text taking into consideration the tradition of devotional literature, laudes, Pianti of the Madonna, texts for music and spiritual poetry to which the nuns had access. It also considers the tradition of meditation through dialogue with the soul, and that of literature addressed to nuns or aspiring nuns to abandon the path of sin for the safer and more fulfilling path of religion. The text is an interesting example of how a seventeenth-century nun takes the pen, drawing inspiration from her own readings, but also, probably, from her own experience and desire to find consolation or offer it to others, in order to overcome moments of wavering and bewilderment that could lead to serious consequences and to appreciate life as a bride of Christ.

Erminia Ardissino, *I Geroglifici morali di Maria Alberghetti. Una voce delle Dimesse tra simbolismo e missione educativa*

This essay considers the *Geroglifici morali (Moral Hieroglyphs)*, a section of the poetry collection *Giardino di poesie spirituali* published in the name of the Venetian Maria Alberghetti a decade after her death by the sisters of the 'dimesse' congregation. After a brief reconstruction of the biographical events around the composition and publishing of the collection, this particular section that was not included in the *Libro di cantici spirituali* – that is, the collection edited by the author herself – is studied. The *geroglifici* all come from autograph manuscripts and are designed for the education and spiritual formation of the nuns, so resemble a homily in style. They also use much symbolism to explore the moral life as was popular in sermons of the time, in line with the practice of 'conzettismo', also frequently used in the creation of emblems. They show how neatly Alberghetti's writings fitted the Baroque style of sacred writings, as well as the versatility of their author. The symbology obviously has evangelical and biblical roots, using symbols found in the parables of Christ, but is adapted to a form of spirituality fitted to the 'dimesse'. Particularly notable is the 'domestic' style seen in the highly musical, fluid verses, which suggests a specifically feminine sensibility.

IV. For Women

Maria Cardillo, *Via de tri di: un inedito trattato per clarisse osservanti.*

The essay aims to illustrate the unpublished treatise *Via de' tri di*, which is preserved in two manuscripts, datable between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, both kept at the Archivio Generale Arcivescovile di Bologna, Fondo Archivio della Beata Caterina, cart. No. 376. The author is the little-known friar Antonio da Pontremoli, a Franciscan Minor Observant of which very little is known and for whom it is impossible to reconstruct a biographical profile. The dedicatee of the treatise is Sister Innocenzia Annichini († 1493) from Ferrara, one of the first companions of St. Catherine of Bologna (1413-1463). The *Via de' tri di* is not a handbook on holiness, but a guide to reading and interpreting the Clarian Rule (Rule I). The tripartition into three days is broken down as so: the first day corresponds to the vow of obedience, the second to that of poverty and the third to that of chastity. To reach the path of holiness, adherence to the three vows must be total and the models of holiness proposed are, besides Christ, Francis and Clare. The aim of this treatise is to provide first of all to the dedicatee, Sister Innocence, and, more generally, to all those who have taken vows, a cloistered lifestyle inspired by the Rule. The collection of good practices proposed by friar Antonio da Pontremoli therefore is of undoubted documentary value for the study of the written productions of the Clarian Observance of Northern Italy at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Paolo Pucci, *La vedova orante: la preghiera femminile nel contesto patriarcale.*

In fifteenth and sixteenth century treatises on widows' conduct, specific teachings deal with prayer. This study highlights the modalities in, and the objectives for which the authors of such texts (like *Libro della vita viduale* (1490) by Girolamo Savonarola, *Dialogo della istituzione delle donne, secondo li tre stati che cadono nella vita umana* (1545) by Ludovico Dolce and *Instituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane* (1575) by Agostino Valier) recommend the religious practice, within the context of instruction on the topic destined to all the faithful. In the early modern era, numerous texts on prayer were written, *Zardino de oration fructuoso* (1454), *Ejercicios espirituales* (1548) by Ignatius of Loyola and *Libro de la oración y meditación* (1557) by the Spanish Dominican Luis de Granada among others. The pedagogy on praying addressed to widows meant to further confine them within the domestic sphere, in order to circumscribe their autonomy that originated from the loss of marital guidance and supervision. At the same time, like nuns, widows were taught to contribute to the Christian community's well-being through intercession and charitable work (as they had been instructed to do already in the early Christian era, according to 1 Tim. 5, 3-16), under the careful stewardship of the local clergy. Through these inter-related resources, the challenge by widowhood to the traditional female ideal of chastity, submission to male authority, and devotion to family or God was constructively coped with to safeguard the patriarchal status quo, which the widow seemed to question.

Danilo Zardin, *La Cetra delle divine lodi del p. Gregorio Ferrari (1639)*.

The subject of the study is a devotional miscellany published in Milan in 1639 as the work of a «devout religious», but which can be attributed with certainty to the authorship of the Jesuit Gregorio Ferrari (1580-1659), a figure at the center of the religious ferment of the city's community, whose commitment to the spiritual direction of nuns and lay penitents in search of perfection was already known. Based on the continuous alternation between poetic inserts and an apparatus of exegetical-edifying commentary in prose, the corpus of material offered by the *Cetra delle divine lodi* was intended to meet the support needs of a heterogeneous public, and found a particularly warm reception among female devotees, as is shown by significant documentation on the text's fortunes.

THE AUTHORS

ERMINIA ARDISSINO (Ph.D., Yale University; Ph.D., University Cattolica di Milano) is Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Torino, and has also taught in several universities in the USA. Her research covers Italian literature from Dante to the Baroque age, with special attention to the relationship between the history of ideas and religious experience. She has published several books on Dante (*Tempo storico e tempo liturgico nella "Commedia" di Dante*, 2009; *L'umana 'Commedia' di Dante*, 2016), Tasso (*'L'aspra tragedia'. Poesia e sacro in Torquato Tasso*, 1996; *Tasso, Plotino, Ficino. In margine a un postillato*, 2003), Galileo (*Galileo. La scrittura dell'esperienza. Saggio sulle lettere*, 2010), Baroque Italian literature (*Il Barocco e il sacro. La predicazione del teatino Paolo Aresi tra letteratura, immagini e scienza*, 2001; *Il Seicento*, 2005), and critical editions of early modern texts; and authored articles in the leading journals in philology and literary studies. Currently she is exploring reading and writing by women in early modern Italy, and has published *Donne interpreti della Bibbia nell'Italia della prima età moderna. Riscritture e comunità ermeneutiche* (2020) and several essays.

MARIA CARDILLO, after graduation at the University of Catania, she continued her studies at the Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari at University of Rome La Sapienza, obtaining a diploma as a librarian. She received then a diploma in librarianship at the Vatican School, a diploma as an archivist at the Vatican Apostolic Archives, a Ph.D. in bibliography at La Sapienza, and attended the School of Medieval Franciscan Studies. Her research interests focus on the history of language and medieval studies.

ELEONORA CARINCI is currently Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oslo with her project *Rethinking Mary in Early Modern Italy: Men's and Women's perspectives on the Virgin Mary (1450-1650)*. In 2023-2024 she will be Maria Zambrano Fellow at the Universidad de Sevilla for a project on sixteenth and seventeenth century women's autobiographical writing. Her research focuses mainly on early modern Italian literature and culture, with a particular interest in the religious and philosophical writings by women. Her publications include numerous articles in journals and chapters in collected volumes, focusing on various women authors. She also published the *Lettere di philosophia naturale* by Camilla Erculiani (2016), and edited its English translation in the series "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe" with a preface by Paula Findlen (2021). Her monograph on Sister Felice Rasponi is forthcoming with Classiques Garnier.

CHIARA CASSIANI is Associate Professor of Italian Literature at the Department of Humanist Studies at the University of Calabria. Her main research interest is the literature of the sixteenth century, with a particular focus on the relationship between words and images. She has written monographs and essays on the poetics of myth and metamorphosis (*Metamorfosi e conoscenza. I dialoghi e le commedie di Giovan Battista Gelli*, 2006), on literature in Rome moving from Latin to vernacular (*La battaglia delle parole e delle cose. Dal Bellum grammaticale di Guarna a Erasmo, Rabelais e Swift*, 2013), and articles on the genres of dialogue, comedy and chivalric poetry. Her most recent research has been on Francesco Berni and burlesque poetry, the intertextuality of the *Furioso*, Moderata Fonte and female writing. She edited the volume *Ariosto e gli antichi. Riscritture dei classici nell'Orlando furioso* (2022).

MYRIAM CHIARLA is currently teaching as “professore a contratto” at the University of Genoa. Her research interests mainly focus on Italian poetry of the 20th century and the literature of the seventeenth century, with particular attention to the spiritual poetry of the post-Tridentine era. She edited the 2013 edition of *Pietosi affetti* by Angelo Grillo, wrote the entry on Stefano A. Schiappalaria for the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, and has published essays on religious literature, the burlesque poetry of the seventeenth century, Ansaldo Cebà, Gasparo Murtola, and Giorgio Caproni.

CHIARA COLETTI is Associate Professor of Modern History at the University of Perugia. Her research interests focus on the history of religious institutions and sensibilities between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and culture and society in the Napoleonic era. Among her most recent publications are the volumes *Iconismi, lettere ardenti e Bambini di cera. Chiara Isabella Fornari, «anima viatrice» nelle inquietudini religiose del Settecento* (2020) and *I depositi di mendicizia negli Stati romani e la dominazione napoleonica. Lavoro forzato e inclusione sociale* (2018).

VIRGINIA COX is Senior Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Honorary Professor of Early Modern Italian Literature and Culture at the University of Cambridge. Her principal research interests are early modern Italian literature, with a special focus on the genres of literary dialogue and lyric poetry and on the tradition of women's writing, and the history of rhetoric, with a focus on the transmission of classical rhetoric between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Her books include *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts* (1992), *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy*, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (respectively 2008, 2011, and 2013), and *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance* (2015). She is currently working on a monograph provisionally entitled *The Social Worlds of Italian Renaissance Lyric* and a new overview of Italian Renaissance culture for Cambridge University Press.

STEFANO FORTIN's interests primarily concern critical and philological analysis of early 19th-century Italian, with particular attention to Foscolo and the classical-Romantic debate. He has worked on a critical edition of unpublished writings by Giovita Scalvini,

on the 19th-century reception of the life and works of Torquato Tasso, mystical writing (Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi) and theatrical literature (the rewriting of Manzoni's *Adelchi* by Carmelo Beni).

MARZIA GIULIANI studies the Duchy of Milan in the Spanish Age, particularly the intersection of society, religion, culture, and art history, paying particular attention to the era of Carlo Borromeo. In addition to numerous journal articles, she has published the monograph *Il vescovo filosofo. Federico Borromeo e i sacri ragionamenti* (2007), and she has edited *Le Antichità di Milano. Una descrizione della città alla fine del Cinquecento* (2011). Her latest monograph is *La Repubblica dei Segretari. Potere e Comunicazione nell'Italia d'Antico regime* (2022).

FRANCESCA GUIDUCCI is working with the University of Perugia as “cultore della materia” in Modern History. She is curator of the permanent exhibition *Lucia della Torre e le altre: vite di donne a Perugia in età moderna* (Torre degli Sciri, Perugia) and of the project *Donne al Centro. Ieri e oggi* (Centro Unità di Gestione, University of Perugia). She teaches at the Home Academy of Santa Maria degli Angeli-Assisi (<https://homeacademy.it/>). She has published the volume «*Madri sorelle et figlie in Christo carissime*». *Vite di donne a Perugia in età moderna* (2019), and several articles on women religious and mystical experience in early modern age.

ISABEL HARVEY is FNRS research fellow for a project on the environmental history of the Catholic missions at UCLouvain in Belgium, and associate professor of early modern Italian history at the Department of History of the Université du Québec à Montréal, in Canada. She has been Postdoctoral Fellow at Ca' Foscari University in Venice, and at Humboldt University in Berlin. She is a co-director of the research project *Sorores. Religieuses non cloîtrées en Europe (XII-XVIII)*, promoted by the École française de Rome and the Casa de Velazquez, and principal investigator of the project *L'Église catholique devant les défis environnementaux : missions, mobilité et climat et Italie du Sud, France et Amérique du Nord durant la période moderne* funded by an Insight Project Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). She has published numerous articles in academic journals and several book chapters in French, English and Italian. An Italian version of her Ph.D. dissertation (*(Re)construire une identité monastique à travers le corps: normalisations, traductions et utilisations des discours et pratiques corporelles entre les murs des cloîtres féminins dans l'Italie de la Réforme Catholique*) will be published shortly by UNICOPLI.

MAGDA KUČERKOVÁ is Associate Professor at the Department of Romance and German Studies at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. She published *Magický realizmus Isabel Allendeovej* (2011); *Poetika nevyjadriteľného* (2016), in collaboration with Miroslava Režná and in collaboration with Ján Knapík, *Cesta do Compostely. Legendy, historia, skúsenosti* (2018). She edited two themed issues of *World Literature Studies (Literatúra a náboženská skúsenosť)*, 2014, with Róbert Gáfrík, and *Jazyk transcendentnej skúsenosti v literárno-fenomenologickej interpretácii*, 2020, with

Martin Vašek). She directed two academic projects funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic: *The Transformations in Representing the Spiritual Journey in Western Literatures (from the Middle Ages to Present)* (2014-2016) and *The Poetics of Mystical Experience and the Literary Forms of Mystagogy* (2019-2021), publishing the proceedings of two conferences *Duchovná cesta a jej podoby v literatúre* (2015), and in collaboration with Antonio Barnés *The Figurativeness of the Language of Mystical Experience. Particularities and Interpretations* (2021).

SERENA LAIENA is Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at University College Dublin. She currently investigates the agency of professional actresses in early modern Italian society through an analysis of unpublished archival material. She has obtained her PhD at the University of Cambridge. Her doctoral research project looks at the careers of the performers Giovan Battista Andreini and Virginia Ramponi within the social and historical context of early seventeenth-century Italy. On this subject, she has written her first monograph: *The Theatre Couple in Early Modern Italy. Self-fashioning and Mutual Marketing*, which will be published by University of Delaware Press in 2023. She has published essays and articles on Commedia dell'Arte and early modern actresses. Her interests include the social history of theatre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, women's agency and women workers in early modern Europe, and the social function of theatre today.

MATTEO LEONARDI, after teaching at the Universities of Bern and Aosta, he is now “professore a contratto” of Italian literature at the University of Torino and Research Fellow at the University di Trento. His research has focused primarily on medieval literature: from *laude* to the Franciscan tradition, from mystical literature to Dante Alighieri and Boccaccio. Among his monographs are the first complete edition of and commentary on the *Laude* of Iacopone da Todi (2010), the *Bibliografia iacoponica* (2010), il *Libro delle Tre Scritture* di Bonvesin da la Riva (2014) e la *Storia della lauda. Secoli XIII-XVI* (2021). He has published several articles on Dante and his source literature, including in leading Italian and foreign literature and philology journals. He is editing, with Alessandro Vettori, a volume on Iacopone da Todi (2023). His study of modern literature focuses on the *novella* between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with special attention to Verga and Pirandello.

ALESSIA LIROSI is Associate Professor of Modern History at the Niccolò Cusano University in Rome. She also collaborates with the Luiss Business School and with Sapienza University of Roma. Together with Liviana Gazzetta she directs the series *Donne, Fedi, Culture* for the Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura. Among her publications are: *Una confraternita femminile a Roma. La Compagnia di Sant'Anna nella chiesa di S. Pantaleo tra XVII e XVIII secolo* (2019); *Libere di sapere. Il diritto delle donne all'istruzione dal Cinquecento al mondo contemporaneo* (2015, winner of the Premio Soroptimist 2015); and *I monasteri femminili a Roma tra XVI e XVII secolo*, (2012, winner of the Premio Desiderio Pirovano 2013 of the Istituto Luigi Sturzo). She has edited several volumes, including *Donne e Inquisizione* with Marina Caffiero (2020) and *Religioni e parità di genere* with Alessandro Saggiorno (2022).

OLIMPIA PELOSI is Associate Professor of Italian Studies at the State University of New York at Albany. Among her major research interests are Renaissance literature, theatrical literature and Baroque satire, female-authored mystical literature between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, gender studies, and comparative literature. In these areas she has produced monographs, collections of essays and numerous articles; among her publications is the volume *Satira barocca e teoriche sul genere dal Cinque all'Ottocento* (1991). She has also published a critical edition of the manuscript of the second edition of *La Fiera* by Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane (1568-1646), and the manuscript of the *Vita da lei narrata* (1624) by the mystic Maria Domitilla Galluzi d'Acqui. She has collaborated and continues to collaborate with various journals of Renaissance and modern literature.

PAOLO PUCCI is Associate Professor of Italian Language and Culture at the University of Vermont; he has also taught Italian language courses at Princeton University. His research focuses on sexual, ethnic and religious otherness in fifteenth-century culture. He has published on the figures of the prostitute and courtesan as objects of libelous writings and as letter writers, as well as the protagonists of novellas. His interest in minorities led him to investigate and publish on the relations between Christians and Muslims in the novella from Boccaccio to Giovan Battista Giraldu Cinzio, as well as on the decisiveness of homosexual attraction on personal identity. His monograph on the widow in the early modern age, and on manipulations of this model, will soon be out in print.

PAOLA UGOLINI is Associate Professor of Italian in the departments of Romance Languages and Literatures and Global Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University at Buffalo (SUNY). She works on women's writing in the early modern age, court culture, and on critiques to courts and courtiers in early modern Italy. She has published essays on Gaspara Stampa, Matteo Bandello, Pietro Aretino, Ludovico Ariosto, and Agostino Mascardi. She is author of *The Court and Its Critics. Anti-Court Sentiments in Early Modern Italy* (2020). Together with Molly M. Martin, she edited the English edition of Veronica Gambara's *Rime* for the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (2014), and with Marco Faini the *Companion to Pietro Aretino* (2021).

ELISABETTA SELMI is Full Professor of Italian Literature and Dramatic Literature of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods at the University of Padua. Her research focuses mainly on Renaissance, Baroque and Arcadian literature. She has published various essays, editions and monographs on the theatre of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries (on Ruzante, Guarini, Tasso, Imperiali, the *pastorale* and the melodrama, the sacred drama, Apostolo Zeno, Scipione Maffei, the theater of the *Conciliatore*). She is interested in the epic between the fifteenth and seventeenth century, rhetoric, religious literature, and the study of the relationship between literature and image. Recently she has published essays on Tasso's dialogues, courtly literature, philosophical thought (with a particular focus on the late sixteenth-century Neoplatonism), ethics and literature. She has published on female writing in the Lombardy and the Veneto and on female mysticism. Her interests also include the reception of Erasmus's writings in the Italian humanist Renaissance tradition.

ALESSANDRO VETULI obtained the double degree Ph.D. in Contemporary Humanism at the LUMSA University of Rome and the Ph.D. in Philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Paris. He has studied the language of women's mysticism and his research focuses on mystical texts of the early modern age, with a particular attention on the history and dynamics of the spiritual imagination. He has written articles dedicated to forms of expressiveness in Bernardo di Sant'Onofrio, Giovanna Maria della Croce, and Maria Maddalena Martinengo. He has published *Il linguaggio simbolico di Maria Maddalena Martinengo* (2019). For SISMELE he is currently editing, together with Sister Barbara Veronica Salomon, the critical edition of the ninth book of *Revelazioni* by Giovanna Maria della Croce.

DANILO ZARDIN, former Professor at the University of Genoa, is currently a Professor in Modern History at the Università Cattolica (both in Milan and Piacenza). Presently, he is Chair of the Dipartimento di Storia dell'economia, della società e di scienze del territorio «Mario Romani», and of the Centro di ricerca per l'educazione attraverso l'arte e la mediazione del patrimonio culturale sul territorio e nei musei (CREA). He is a member of the Consiglio direttivo of the Classe di Studi Borromaici dell'Accademia Ambrosiana, and of the governing committee of the Fondazione Maccarrone for «Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia». He also coordinates the academic committee of the digital journal «Lineatempo. Itinerari di storia, letteratura, filosofia e arte». His research interests include the social structures of *ancien régime* in Europe and the characteristics of its cultural universe, with a particular focus on the system behind its religious tradition and institutional support thereof. One particular area of his research is the world of Milan and Lombardy in the early modern period, from its sixteenth-century development to the reforms of the eighteenth century.

GABRIELLA BRUNA ZARRI is a retired Professor of Modern History at the University of Firenze, after having taught at the Universities of Bologna and Udine. She is a member of several Italian and foreign academic associations. She directs the international journal «Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà» and the series *Scritture nel chiostro* for the Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura. Her research areas include ecclesiastical institutions and religious life between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, with particular reference to male and female religious orders and the study of the female condition and holiness. Among her publications are, in addition to numerous essays and edited volumes, the following volumes: *Le sante vive. Cultura e religiosità femminile nella prima età moderna* (1990); *Recinti. Donne, clausura e matrimonio nella prima età moderna* (2000); *La religione di Lucrezia Borgia. Le lettere inedite del confessore* (2006); *Libri di spirito. L'editoria religiosa in volgare nei secoli XV-XVII* (2009); *Uomini e donne nella direzione spirituale (sec. XIII-XVI)* (2016); *La chiesa dei principi e delle città tra medioevo e prima età moderna* (2021); *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e vita religiosa a Bologna tra medioevo ed età moderna* (2021).