WOMEN IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART

GENDER REPRESENTATION IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

Man may be the expression of the perfect proportions of the universe, as Leonardo's famous image of the Vitruvian man implies, but to the average tourist visiting the Uffizi or the Louvre it is images of women which embody the ideals of beauty and harmony of the Italian Renaissance. Women are the subject matter of paintings, so well known that they are in fact part of the visual baggage even of people who have never entered a museum or an art gallery. Who is not familiar with the grace and ethereal beauty of Botticelli's *Primavera* and of his naked Venus? Who cannot recognise the smile of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*? Who has not seen in reproduction the maternal sweetness of a Raphael Madonna, or the opulent Venetian sensuality of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*? From the public's point of view, the terms 'Renaissance' and 'Woman' seem to be synonymous.

The familiarity of the images and the painters' mastery of technique may lead the viewer to believe that these paintings are like mirrors which reflect the reality of the past. It is easy to be 'tricked' into believing that, when we look at a painting produced during this period, we are looking at 'the real world'. Leon Battista Alberti, humanist, writer, painter and architect, wrote in the mid-1430s in his treatise *On Painting* that 'the painter is concerned solely with representing what can be seen'.[1] Alberti expresses the notion that knowledge is derived from sensory perception, and that painting is based on the observation of objects made visible by light. Masaccio was described as 'imitator of nature' (*imitatore di natura*), while Leonardo urged painters to explore 'the causes of nature's phenomena regulated by nature's laws'.[2] From the beginning of the fifteenth century to the first decades of the sixteenth, artists studied the appearance of the natural world, inspired also by stories about two famous painters of antiquity, Zeuxis and Parrhasios, and about their prodigious skills in the imitation of nature. According to Pliny the Elder, Zeuxis had painted some grapes which looked so 'real', that birds tried to peck at them. Parrhasios then asked Zeuxis to look at his painting, which was veiled by a curtain: when Zeuxis tried to move the curtain aside, he realised that it was in fact painted.[3]

'Nature', however, had to be filtered through the ideal: concepts of beauty, harmony and divine proportions were seen as the manifestation of the perfection of an idea and of the infinite goodness of God. The painters of Greece and Rome had knowledge of these 'secrets' which Renaissance artists were trying to rediscover. The search for the ideal is evident throughout this period, and

is manifested in the study for the proportions to be used in the representation of the human body, in the design of buildings, in the plans for ideal cities. Idealisation and selection of what is best in nature were necessary for the painter in order to eliminate the imperfections of reality. Alberti advised the painter: 'always take from nature that which you wish to paint, and always choose the most beautiful'. He used an example from antiquity as a warning: the painter should not follow Demetrius '... an antique painter, [who] failed to obtain the ultimate praise because he was much more careful to make things similar to the natural than to the lovely'.[4] Both Cicero and Pliny the Elder told another story about Zeuxis, which became famous during the Renaissance, and which Alberti reported in his treatise:

> In order to make a painting which the citizens placed in the temple of Lucina near Croton, Zeuxis, the most excellent and most skilled painter of all, did not rely rashly on his own skills as every painter does today. He thought that he would not be able to find so much beauty as he was looking for in a single body, since it was not given to a single one by nature. He chose, therefore, the five most beautiful young girls from the youth of that land in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in a woman. He was a wise painter.[5]

About eighty years later, in 1514, Raphael would make references to the same story in a letter to Baldassarre Castiglione. Discussing his fresco representing the nymph *Galatea*, which he had painted for Agostino Chigi in his *villa suburbana* in Rome, Raphael wrote:

> As for the Galatea, I should consider myself a great master if only half of the many compliments your Lordship wrote to me are deserved. However, I recognize in your words the love you bear me, and would say that in order to paint one beautiful woman I'd have to see several beautiful women, always on the condition that I had your Lordship at my side in making the choice. But since there is a shortage both of good judges and of beautiful women, I make use of a certain idea which comes into my mind. Whether it carries any excellence of art I do not know, but I work hard to achieve it.[6]

Perfection, then, could be achieved through the 'idea' present in the artist's mind, even if there were no beautiful women available, nor anybody able to judge their beauty!

The images of women discussed in this book are not direct representations of 'reality', nor of 'what the painter saw'. They are the embodiment of a set of ideals and values, both aesthetic and social, shared by the artists and by the patrons who commissioned the paintings. The culture in which they were made was very different from ours: we need to learn their language in order to understand what they are saying.

Painted furniture

The first images of women in this book appear in the domestic environment of the fifteenth-century house. In this period furniture was decorated with painted stories, usually representing subject matter derived from Greek, Roman or fourteenth-century literature, or from the Old Testament. In these narratives women often figure as heroines and protagonists. In our museums we now see these panels in conditions which are totally different from their original context. The series of panels made to decorate and insulate the walls of Renaissance rooms have been separated, and the painted beds and chests dismembered, so that these panels are now shown as easel paintings. Until recently, these works have attracted the attention of scholars but not of the general public, probably because many of them are not linked to the prestigious names of well-known artists. Yet they are extremely important objects, both for the history of art, and for our understanding of fifteenth-century culture. These panels can tell us much about the material conditions in which a section of fifteenth-century society lived – from the moderately wealthy shopkeepers to the families of the cultural and political elite of cities like Florence and Siena. They also reveal a taste for elaborate decoration and for the growing use of luxury objects in the home. Quite early in the fifteenth century a number of stock subjects was developed, from which painters and patrons could draw. These stories can help us to understand the aspirations of that society, ideals and attitudes towards the place of the family, and the roles which men and women were supposed to fulfil within marriage. They show how men and women were presented with ideal models of behaviour which conformed to specific rules. Feminine ideals, however, did not exist in isolation. They were the counterpart of male ideals in a society which demanded strict codes of behaviour from both men and women.

These narratives, like all visual story-telling, required complex manipulation of pictorial language and artistic skill. They tell, after all, of dramatic events which convey emotion and meaning through figures. Leon Battista Alberti explained in his book *On Painting* that the *istoria*, or narrative, is the 'greatest work of the painter'. This is because the artist has to be able to convey so much through the human figure, expressing through it the emotion required by the story, and using it consistently within its role in the narrative. The individual figures have to be meaningfully grouped together, reacting with gesture to one another. Meaning and emotion are also conveyed by the setting of the story. A wide range of such artistic problems was explored during the century, and can be studied through an examination of furniture panels, from the

anatomy of the human body to the representation of three-dimensional space through the use of perspective, from the development of secular narratives to the study of the antique. These paintings, therefore, are not just examples of a 'minor' form of art. As Giorgio Vasari wrote in the middle of the sixteenth century, even well-known artists used to produce in their workshops painted furniture decorated with *istorie*: Botticelli was one of them. Through the function and context of these objects, through the subject matter, and through the way in which the stories are told, the modern viewer can find a way towards an understanding of the position of women in a culture so distant from ours.

Portraiture

After looking at the ideal roles of women as heroines in fifteenth-century secular narrative paintings, we then examine another version of the ideal woman, this time through portraits which represent 'real' women – women who actually existed, and about whom we may have some historical information. These images of women, however, still appear to the viewer through the screen of the ideals of the society in which they were produced: ideals of beauty, of behaviour, of display. In them we still see not an individual, but a cypher, and we have to be aware of the conventions which guided these modes of representation followed throughout the fifteenth century by, among others, Pisanello, Filippo Lippi, Piero della Francesca and Ghirlandaio.

We have already seen how, during the fifteenth century, painters developed skills which helped to convey a sense of emotion and of inner life, so that the viewer could experience an apparent communication with the image. This interaction with the spectator was at the core of artistic problems related to the perception and representation of reality – of the physical appearance of the natural world – which were explored in Italy, and expecially in Florence. During the second half of the fifteenth century, all these problems became linked to the function of the portrait, as shown by the works produced by Leonardo da Vinci during the last decades of the century and at the beginning of the next. The profile portrait, which in the representation of women had continued for decades more or less unaltered, was abandoned in favour of poses which allowed for eye-contact between sitter and viewer.

The size of portraits, the ways in which they were displayed, and the reasons for commissioning them, changed and diversified during the sixteenth century, as Italian society shifted towards one in which the more formal and etiquette-conscious behaviour of the courts dominated. From the small-scale female profile busts of the fifteenth century, to the imposing portraiture of the sixteenth produced by painters such as Raphael, Titian and Bronzino, display of wealth through detailed representation of jewellery and clothes was always

a crucial sign of status. A display of finery was not an empty gesture of vanity, but a significant means through which women made their position visible to the eyes of society.

Beauty, and especially the beauty of women, was a subject of great interest in the milieu of the educated elite, and it became fashionable not only to read and write poems about beautiful women, but also to commission and collect paintings representing imaginary beauties. The erotic charge of these images, which play with the representational conventions of portraiture, leads us to explore questions related to the perception and to the function of these paintings of beautiful women.

The nude

The representation of the nude figure, male and female, was central to all Renaissance art, and ample visual and written evidence testifies to this concern. Any study of images of the female nude opens up a number of problems, which yet again centre on questions of intention and function, representation and perception. 'The nude', however, was not only a supreme test for artists: there is much contemporary evidence showing that these images of the naked body were openly recognised to arouse sexual feelings, in women as well as in men. The thoughts and feelings we find expressed in conventional descriptive set-pieces, in more casual and spontaneous observations about the paintings, as well as in the treatises and pronouncements of churchmen on the dangers inherent in the representation of the naked human body, are interestingly complex. To understand them we must forget the dichotomy which exists in the English language between 'naked' and 'nude', so brilliantly explained by Kenneth Clark in his book *The Nude*. Clark distinguishes between a body 'deprived of clothes', therefore 'naked' and tinged by 'the embarassment which most of us feel in that condition', and a term, 'nude', which has 'no uncomfortable overtone', which indicates 'a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body re-formed' by art. The use of these two terms tells us much more about Anglo-Saxon attitudes to art and to the body than about Italian Renaissance viewpoints. This distinction does not exist in the Italian language, and both 'nude' and 'naked' are translated, today as during the Renaissance, by the same term, *nudo*. By forgetting about the differences between the two English terms, it will be easier to understand how the representations of male and female naked figures painted in Italy during this period could embody a complex range of impulses and thoughts, at times contradictory, such as lust, platonic ideals of goodness and perfection, memories of the antique past, erotic pleasure, and delight in the sensuous appreciation of the surfaces and colours of the paintings. These pictures were perceived as 'art', but they did not occupy

a rarefied sphere of the mind, separated from the life of emotions and of physical responses. These images are erotic, but they had a very different position, in the culture of the sixteenth century, from the modern throwaway images of seduction, such as advertisements and soft-porn photographs, to which John Berger compared them in his *Ways of Seeing* of 1972. According to Berger, common conventions of representation which encourage voyeurism link these images produced in different centuries by different cultures.[7] In spite of what Berger wrote, in this case the medium *is* the message, and there is no better reply to his argument than Ludovico Dolce's letter to Alessandro Contarini published in 1559, which describes, through rhetorical conventions, one of Titian's famous female nudes. Dolce claims that at the core of the 'seriousness of intent' of the representation of the nude lies the authority of antique art, and the viewer's awareness of the skill of the artists in manipulating form and surface qualities. Dolce stresses that all the knowledge and all the artistic skills the painter possesses are used, and this is a constant aspect of Renaissance art, to produce images which can move the viewer. In the case of representations of the nude, they will often knowingly move the viewers to lust.

Religious images

A discussion of the representation of women in Renaissance painting cannot ignore the importance that religion had in the lives of people from all strata of society. Religion was so tightly enmeshed with all aspects of life, that it is often impossible to separate it from the secular. Images of the Virgin Mary and of female saints can help us to gain an insight into the way in which women, and men too, experienced religion. Yet again we find that emotion is a key element in the relationship between the faithful and the saints, a relationship mediated through the use of images which were used in order to help to concentrate the mind on devotion and prayers. In a perceptive essay on the role of images of the Virgin Mary, Julia Kristeva examines the way in which the presence of the feminine operates in a culture at the level of psychological needs. Kristeva asks 'what is it about the representation of the Maternal in general, and about the Christian or virginal representation in particular, that enables it not only to calm the social anxiety and supply what the male lacks, but also to satisfy a woman, in such a way that the community of the sexes is established beyond, and in spite of, their flagrant incompatibility and permanent state of war?'[8] Kristeva's analysis of the needs fulfilled by the Virgin Mary and her representations could be extended, under certain aspects, to the role which the protection and consoling powers provided by female saints had in the interior lives of both men and women. For women, female saints offered examples of womanly virtues and religious dedication which were difficult to equal. At

the same time, the Church opened up to women important possibilities of self-realisation which were absent in other areas of social life.

Methodology: 'representation', 'reality' and interpretation

The post-modern debate on history and historical interpretation has made us familiar with the notion that the past is not an immutable foreign country, waiting for the historian to discover all its sources, and to decipher all its meanings in an objective search towards an unchanging truth. We have become aware that each historian brings to his/her search a baggage of choices, of differences in perception and experience, which belong to gender, age, nationality, class, race and religion. In the same way, as Roland Barthes has pointed out, each viewer re-formulates anew the meaning of a text (or a work of art). In our perception of the work of art we can, and we should, distinguish the difference between our modern position and the historical significance of the image.

To be able to make sense of the art of the past, we first need to be aware of the ways in which artists interpreted their vision of the world, defined as 'schemata' by E. H. Gombrich, and used as a means of representing the world, available at a particular time within a particular culture. We also have to take account of what Gombrich called the 'beholder's share' – the part played in the perception and understanding of images by the contemporary (in this case, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century) viewer, and by the modern viewer. Renaissance artists and their public shared a common world view, a way of relating to knowledge. They also shared a number of assumptions about images and image-making. They had absorbed those social and artistic conventions which guided visual representation in their culture, so that the meaning (or meanings) of a work could be transmitted and elaborated. Michael Baxandall defines 'the skills one happens to possess, the categories, the model patterns and the habits of inference and analogy' as the 'cognitive style' of a period. Images, he writes, are decoded and made meaningful by 'the period eye'. The modern viewer has to become familiar with the 'cognitive styles' of the past, and has to become aware of 'the period eye' of the Renaissance viewer.[9]

If the organisation and interpretation of sources are, for the historian, beset with problems, for the art historian the task is made even more complex by the relationship between the work of art and the society in which it was created. How do society and representations relate to each other? The theory that art 'reflects' society has long since lost all credibility, and to use works of art as straightforward and unproblematic illustrations of the attitudes and

customs of a culture is to misrepresent a more complex history.[10] Francis Haskell warns that visual art 'does have a language of its own which can be understood only by those who seek to fathom its varying purposes, conventions, styles and techniques', and advocates a collaboration of the historian and art historian, both being aware of the differences and peculiarities of their disciplines.[11] Michael Podro, following Wittgenstein's conception of language, suggests that 'art may be seen both to emerge out of the context of our other activities, and to be irreducible to them and to transform them'.[12]

'The viewer', whether contemporary to the images presented in this book, or modern, is an abstraction. In reality, there is no typical viewer. There is, however, a type of contemporary viewer who, through different kinds of writing, has left evidence of his way of seeing. By necessity, the historian is forced to listen to his voice and to interpret it above all others. This viewer is the educated, often wealthy man – the patron, his agent, the *letterato* (man of letters) – and, at times, the artist himself. We have little evidence of women as viewers, apart from some very matter-of-fact observations which we find in their letters, mostly about the buying and commissioning of paintings.

As we cannot listen to the voice of women talking about paintings, we can study the way in which they have been represented. Why, however, should we isolate these 'representations of women'? Are there any advantages in treating women as a separate category, as a subject matter to be examined apart from others? Looking only at pictures representing women may help us to highlight specific aspects of the historical and social context in which these pictures were made. It can lead us to reflect on the role played by gender in the making and in the perception of images. It may encourage the historian to look for evidence which speaks with the voices of men *and* of women, and to be sensitive to any differences between them. When concentrating on portraits representing only women, for example, it becomes impossible to discuss portraiture without taking into account questions which touch on the notion of female beauty and on those modes of behaviour pertaining specifically to women. In other words, we will be led to examine the ideals which these images of women presented to male and female viewers. We will become aware that 'representation' is inevitably gender-specific, and that an 'ungendered history' distorts our perception of the past by assuming that the past has a single viewpoint and a single voice. At times, however, problems arise when theory is applied ruthlessly and insensitively to historical evidence. In some cases, standards and anachronistic preoccupations which belong to our own culture are imposed on the culture and society of the past. Using a particular theoretical viewpoint simply as a means to highlight the fact that in the patriarchal society of Renaissance Italy women did not possess the same juridical rights as men, or berating with

indignation the notions that different standards were applied to judge the capabilities and virtues of women, does not help us to understand the culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is ahistorical to apply modern concepts of individualism and achievement to this period, and to conclude that women's lives, within the structure of the family, remained by necessity unfulfilled. Concepts of equality and of 'equal opportunities', needless to say, are not really relevant or helpful for a study of Renaissance history.[13]

Women and art during the Renaissance

Representations of women: historiography

During the last two decades, probably in response to the work carried out by historians of sexuality in France and in Britain, the representation of women as subject matter in nineteenth-century art has attracted the attention of a large number of art historians, resulting in exhibitions and books directed also to the general public. By contrast, the effort of Renaissance art historians has, on the whole, been confined to articles published in scholarly journals and to collections of essays destined for the specialist reader. No curator, for example, has been tempted to organise a thematic exhibition centred on the representation of the Renaissance woman using an approach similar to the 1989 exhibition 'Degas – Images of Women' at the Tate Gallery, Liverpool and at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow.[14]

Since the early 1970s, an attempt has been made by a number of art historians to challenge the *status quo* of art historical scholarship, and to consider the possibility of changing the perspective from which to reassess the representation of women in Renaissance art. The spotlight of the 'new art history' has focused on the iconography of biblical and mythological female characters. Using psychoanalytical theory, semiotics, and the concepts of the male and female gaze, art historians have reinterpreted the function and meanings of narratives, such as the stories of Judith and Holofernes, of Samson and Delilah, Susannah and the Elders, Esther and Ahasuerus, Orpheus and Euridice, of Jupiter's seduction of Danae. The Old Testament heroine Judith, for example, has been seen as a construction of the patriarchal system, even if she appears in art as an invincible castrating virago.[15] Delilah has also been interpreted as the embodiment of man's fear of feminine power.[16] The significance of religious iconography has been explored in the context of customs and modes of behaviour pertaining to women's lives – such as the motif of the *Virgo lactans* in Tuscan painting, or the creation of hagiographic typologies in the representation of female saints.[17]

The most interesting and successful work on women as subject matter in

Italian Renaissance painting has been produced by those scholars who have firmly anchored their thorough analysis to the discourse of Renaissance treatises and debates about women. The discussions on beauty, from the writings of Petrarch to the treatises by writers such as Firenzuola in the sixteenth century, for example, are the context for the work carried out by Mary Rogers and by Elizabeth Cropper on women's portraits and on paintings representing beautiful women with no specific identity. Sharon Fermor looks at the importance given, in contemporary writing, to the concept of 'grace'. Using dance manuals as additional source material, she relates the graceful movements advocated by writers as being appropriate to women of a certain status to the poses of the female figures in the works by Botticelli and Ghirlandaio.[18]

Portraits of women have been analysed by Patricia Simons not as demonstrations of the 'Renaissance glorification of the individual', but with the awareness that 'women's claims to civic recognition, familial regard, entrepreneurial success, and intellectual worth, although not impossible, were more limited than they were for men'. Simons takes issue with Burckhardt's 'patriarchal, bourgeois, nineteenth-century vision' which she sees as still colouring the history of the Renaissance, and advocates a historical approach guided by the 'apparatus of critical theory available in a post-modern or, rather, post-structuralist age'.[19]

Representations of women through the medium of print – woodcut, etching or engraving – predicate a different relationship between object and viewer. These printed images have recently been the subject of studies by scholars, such as Sara F. Matthews Grieco. Prints could be bought directly from printers' shops, or from stationers' shops, from booksellers, and – in the case of the very cheap prints at the lower end of the market – from itinerant sellers. Prints of different quality and price were produced, so that they could be purchased by different kinds of clients. More expensive prints designed by famous masters would satisfy a sophisticated and wealthy public, while cheap ones would be bought by those members of society who could never afford a painting. These images could be produced in relatively large numbers, and were easy to transport, these factors ensuring their wide distribution. All of these are reasons why the study of prints representing women is a particularly interesting area. In some cases they are a product of 'popular culture' which may allow us an insight into a different level of discourse. The subjects represented were secular as well as religious, from mythological subject matter to erotica and pornography; and from allegorical representations to images of saints and of the Virgin Mary. Patricularly interesting are the broadsheets outlining the desired behaviour expected from women, which allow us to see, as Matthews Grieco has perceptively pointed out, the gulf between reality and ideals.[20]

The role of women as patrons has only recently begun to attract the attention of scholars, and much work is still needed in this area to obtain a satisfactory picture of this important aspect of women's history. The limitations which circumscribed women's patronage during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have been examined by Catherine King. Women, excluded from the political and economic life of the society in which they lived, usually commissioned religious works not only for private use, but also for public functions and locations, such as altarpieces and furnishings for funerary chapels. These commissions, King writes, 'were properly pious and usually intended to benefit their family or community – and therefore fittingly "feminine" '. She identifies three groups of women who, because of their relative financial independence, could dispose of their money through art patronage and could enter into contractual agreements with artists. These were widows of merchants, bankers and minor rulers, daughters of wealthy families who lived in monasteries as nuns, and wives of powerful rulers.[21] Among this last group is the Marchioness of Mantua, Isabella d'Este, wife of Francesco Gonzaga. Without any doubt, she must be considered the most important woman patron in fifteenth-century Italy, for the range and scope of her commissions and for the amount of information we have about her taste and her dealings with artists.[22] New research has highlighted the role of women as patrons of architecture: Carolyn Valone has found evidence of fifty female patrons of buildings in Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century.[23]

Women artists in the Renaissance: sixteenth-century viewpoints

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a woman artist was a rare phenomenon indeed. Any discussion of the paintings or of the sculptures produced by a woman could not be separated from the sense of wonder at the special talent she possessed, which singled her out from the rest of women. Two literary works which would have been known to educated men, Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* and Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, guided writers about the expression of conventional terms of praise towards those few women who practised as artists. Pliny listed six famous women painters from Greece and Rome. Boccaccio, in his gallery of illustrious examples of female virtue and admirable behaviour written in the last decades of the fourteenth century, used Pliny as his source, and mentioned three female artists from antiquity: Thamyris, Irene and Marcia.

In the second edition of his monumental work, the *Lives of the Artists*, which was published in Florence in 1568, the painter, architect and historian, Giorgio Vasari, introduced some biographical material about a small number of women artists. Like Boccaccio, he praises them as a marvel of nature, and,

remarking that women have succeeded in all the areas where talents and skill are required (*in tutte quelle virtù ed in tutti quelli esercizi)*, he reminds the reader that women in antiquity excelled in war, in poetry, in philosophy. Vasari then lists his female contemporaries who 'have acquired the highest fame' as writers and poets, and quotes the poet Ludovico Ariosto, agreeing with him that women have reached excellence in all the arts they have cared to practise.[24]

Vasari's words have been dismissed as a patronising rhetorical device which precludes any serious discussion of these artists and of their work. It is true, however, that for a woman to succeed as a painter or an engraver, or rarest of all, a sculptor, the circumstances in which she trained and then practised as an artist had to be exceptional indeed. The expressions of surprise from sixteenth-century writers like Vasari must have been in part the result of a sense of wonder sincerely experienced. Not only were women's intellectual capacities believed to be inferior to men's, and therefore little suited to overcome the difficulties of painting, but also the possibility of obtaining an adequate training without being able to follow the usual apprenticeship in a workshop presented considerable problems.[25] Most of these women had learned their craft from their fathers. In the *Life of Paolo Uccello*, Vasari mentions that the painter had a daughter, Antonia, a Carmelite nun, 'who could draw'. She died in 1491, and is identified as 'painter' (*pittoressa*) in the Death Register in Florence.[26] In Mantua, Vasari had seen the engravings of Diana Scultore, the daughter of an engraver and sculptor called Giovambattista, and wrote that her works were 'very beautiful, and I marvelled at them'. In Ravenna, in the house of a painter called Luca Longhi, Vasari had met his young daughter Barbara, who 'draws very well, and she has begun to colour some things with good grace and manner'. Barbara Longhi was praised by Maurizio Manfredi in a lecture given in Bologna in 1575: 'You should know that in Ravenna lives today a girl of eighteen years of age, daughter of the Excellent painter Messer Luca Longhi. She is so wonderful in this art that her own father begins to be astonished by her, especially in her portraits as she barely glances at a person that she can portray better than anybody else with the sitter posing in front.'[27]

Together with his praise expressed within the conventional sixteenth-century notion of woman, Vasari also makes perceptive and precise remarks which show his keen and discriminating observation, and which make his accounts of the works of these women, however brief, very interesting reading. These remarks give us an insight into the difficulties and problems women artists had to face in their training and in their career. Describing the work of another nun, suor Plautilla Nelli, who was the abbess of the monastery of St Catherine of Siena in Florence and who was still alive at the time, Vasari notes that she did not have much experience in painting men. He felt that her heads of women

were more skilfully carried out, because, he says, she has had occasion to see and study many more women than men. He judges that her copies from the works by other artists were more successful than her own original compositions because of her lack of sufficient training. He adds that her works show that she could have done wonderful things, 'as men are able to do', if she had been able to study and dedicate more time to drawing. In spite of these drawbacks, she must have been quite successful: Vasari notes that her paintings could be found in monasteries, in churches, and in innumerable private houses. Among suor Plautilla's works, Vasari mentions a 'much praised' *Adoration of the Magi* and a *Last Supper*, which were in her own monastery. A large altarpiece with the Virgin and Child accompanied by St Thomas, St Augustine, Mary Magdalene, St Catherine of Siena, St Agnes, St Catherine of Alexandria and St Lucy, could be seen in the monastery of S. Lucia in Pistoia. In the cathedral of Florence, Santa Maria del Fiore, there was another of her works, a predella illustrating episodes from the life of one of the patron saints of Florence, St Zenobi. Among her private commissions were two Annunciations, which were in possession of two Florentine ladies.[28]

Some women, Vasari writes, have not hesitated to grapple with 'the roughness of marble and the harshness of iron' with their soft white hands. In his famous book of drawings, he had collected some examples by the only contemporary woman sculptor, Properzia de' Rossi from Bologna, who also worked as an engraver. He even dedicates a separate *Life* to her, accompanied by a portrait. As is often the case in his *Lives* of male artists, Vasari embellishes his information with anecdotes, curious details about her life and personality in order to create an interesting narrative. Properzia de' Rossi was considered by the citizens of Bologna as a '*grandissimo miracolo della natura*'. Vasari writes that she was very beautiful – an important physical trait for a sixteenth-century artist, male or female. She could play and sing better than any other woman in Bologna, and she was envied by both men and women because of her knowledge and skill. For the sculpted decoration of the portals of the cathedral of Bologna, S. Petronio, Properzia de' Rossi made a marble relief illustrating the story of Joseph, escaping from the seductive embrace of the wife of Potiphar. Vasari adds that in this story she 'gave vent . . . to her passion' for a young man who, apparently, was not interested in her. Vasari adds that she was paid very little for her relief because of the machinations of an envious painter, Amico Aspertini.[29]

While the works of these women artists are only briefly mentioned, Vasari gives a more detailed account of the achievements of Sofonisba Anguissola (?1535–1625).[30] Germaine Greer takes Vasari to task for not treating the work of the Anguissola sisters seriously, and for not 'assessing their contribution to

art'.[31] In fact, he certainly does take them seriously, as can be seen from the attention he pays to the paintings and to the Anguissola sisters' careers, even if, as he writes, he had seen only a few works by them. His descriptions of Sofonisba's paintings contributed to their fame throughout Italy and to the successful career of the artist. Sofonisba Anguissola was the most accomplished and well known amongst a group of sisters – Elena, Lucia, Minerva, Europa and Anna Maria – all painters, who belonged to a noble family in Cremona. Sofonisba's sister Lucia, who died one year before Vasari visited the Anguissola household in 1566, was also an accomplished portrait painter, as was another sister, Europa, in spite of her young age: at the time she probably was not yet twenty. Even the fifth sister, Anna Maria, who was still a child, showed great promise. Vasari writes that the house of Amilcare Anguissola 'seemed to me the house of painting, or in fact, of all talents'.

With the constant help and encouragement from her father, Sofonisba trained with the Cremonese painter Bernardino Campi. Her career was remarkable: she was well known in Italy and abroad, and she received advice and encouragement from Michelangelo. By the time Vasari visited Cremona, where he went with the specific intention to see her paintings, Sofonisba had already left her native city. In 1559 she had been called to the Spanish court in Madrid as a lady-in-waiting to the young wife of Philip II, Isabella de Valois. There she painted a number of portraits of the Queen and of other members of the court. Vasari was enthusiastic about Sofonisba's paintings, which he described in a letter to his friend, the *letterato* Vincenzo Borghini, as 'wonderful'. In his *Lives*, Vasari mentions two group portraits by Sofonisba which he saw in her father's house. The first represents three of the Anguissola sisters sitting around a table, covered by an oriental carpet; two are playing chess, while the third one, together with an old woman of their household, looks on (Poznan, Museum Narodowe). In the other portrait, Sofonisba's father is shown sitting between her sister Minerva ('of rare accomplishments as a painter and as a writer') and her brother Asdrubale, against the background of a distant fantastic landscape moulded on Northern European examples (Nivaa, Nivaagaards Malerisamling). In the house of the archdeacon of Piacenza Vasari saw the archdeacon's portrait and Sofonisba's own self-portrait, and he comments that 'both figures only lack speech'. Vasari praises the portraits with the terms he uses in relation to the works of great artists, saying that the figures 'seem to breathe, and look alive'.

Even Pope Pius IV wanted one of Sofonisba's works, a portrait of the Queen of Spain, which the artist sent with a letter, duly transcribed by Vasari together with the Pope's reply.[32] Vasari had in his own collection one of her drawings, representing a little girl laughing at a crying boy who has been

bitten by a crayfish, which originally had been sent to Duke Cosimo de Medici by Michelangelo's friend, Tommaso Cavalieri, together with a drawing by Michelangelo. Sofonisba's drawing, wrote Cavalieri to the Duke, 'is not simply beautiful, but also exhibits considerable invention'. This is a great praise indeed, as '*inventione*' according to sixteenth-century theory was a distinctive intellectual quality related to the content of a work of art. Averardo Serristori, the Florentine ambassador to the papal court, agreed with this praise when he wrote in a letter to Duke Cosimo de Medici that Sofonisba's drawing was 'something quite rare'.[33] Various contemporary writers also concurred in this assessment of Sofonisba's work: in his *Ragionamento Quinto* of 1564, an imaginary dialogue between the Greek sculptor Phidias and Leonardo da Vinci, Giovan Paolo Lomazzo writes that all princes in Europe were astonished by Sofonisba's portraits. Alessandro Lamo comments, in his 1584 treatise *Discorso Intorno alla Scoltura e Pittura*, that Sofonisba is remarkable for her talent in painting as she is for the nobility of her spirit. The Anguissola sisters, he continues, are beautiful in mind and in body, and are adorned by ladylike qualities.[34]

Women artists in the Renaissance: recent historiography

In 1976, Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, with their catalogue for the exhibition *Women Artists 1500–1950*, brought to the attention of the public a large number of works by women artists. In a series of introductory essays, the catalogue provided much important information on the social and literary context of contemporary writing about women artists, and on the conditions in which these women lived, trained and worked. Short but comprehensive biographies for each of the artists selected for the exhibition complete the work.[35]

In *The Obstacle Race. The Fortunes of Women Painters and their Work* (1979), Germaine Greer set out to raise a number of questions about the contribution of women to the visual arts, including those concerning the conditions in which these women lived and worked, and the 'disappearance' of their works through the centuries. Useful as this book was in bringing together so much material, its polemical position painted a one-sided picture for the reader, who was invited to see the lives of these artists as beset by a series of obstacles (training, family, love, and so on) which targeted women as their principal victims. These are stories of unfulfilled aspirations, broken hopes, untold miseries which are peculiar to women because, Greer wrote, to women belongs that 'carefully cultured self-destructiveness'. The tales of these thwarted lives take precedence in Greer's book over analysis of the actual works.

While much work has been done in the last twenty years to rediscover and assess the works by nineteenth-century women artists, and to present afresh information about their lives and careers, the considerable problems surrounding

research on sixteenth-century women artists have held back our knowledge of their achievements. These problems have not been helped by polemical and partisan positions taken by some writers, often intent upon demonstrating above everything else that women artists were not treated seriously by their contemporaries, and that their works have been, through the centuries, deliberately ignored. Other writers seem to be reluctant to abandon a romantic view of the artist driven by self-expression, in their desire to use biographical information which may highlight, in the works by women artists, a sense of 'otherness', a 'difference', an essentially 'feminine' way of painting.

What is really needed, instead, is some fundamental research. In many cases, when studying the careers of women artists, basic problems of attribution and of identification of the paintings, supported also by more archival research, need to be solved in order to have a better understanding of their work, or to establish a *corpus* of work for those artists who are, for the moment, mere names. A large group of paintings by Sofonisba Anguissola and her sisters, first shown in her native Cremona in 1994, and then the following year at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, has brought this artist to the attention of the general public and to renewed scrutiny from scholars. It has also helped to answer some questions about the style and attribution of a number of portraits executed at the Spanish Court, and to assess Sofonisba Anguissola's place in the development of genre painting in Northern Italy in the late sixteenth century. The exhibition has also revealed the high quality of Lucia Anguissola's work.[36]

During 1994, the Museo Civico Archeologico in Bologna housed an exhibition dedicated to the most famous among the women painters from Bologna, Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614). Trained by her father, the painter Prospero Fontana, Lavinia produced works for private and public commissions: portraits, altarpieces, images of famous women, such as Cleopatra and Judith, and a painting representing a naked Minerva, executed in 1613 for Cardinal Scipione Borghese. The exhibition placed Lavinia Fontana within the context of late sixteenth-century painting in Bologna, and also explored the crucial factor of the particularly strong interest in women artists in that city. It also looked at the relationship between father and daughter by comparing paintings of similar subjects by Prospero Fontana and by Lavinia.[37]

Notes

1 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. J. R. Spencer, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1st ed. 1956, repr. 1966, p. 43.

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2 Michael Baxandall explains the concept of 'imitation of nature' through a discussion of Cristoforo Landino's and of Leonardo's texts in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1st ed. 1972, 2nd ed. 1988, pp. 119–21.

3 For the Zeuxis and Parrhasios stories and their meaning, see E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Phaidon Press, London, first published 1960, 5th ed. 1977, pp. 172 ff.

4 Alberti, *On Painting*, pp. 94 and 92.

5 Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 93.

6 Raphael's letter is cited by E. H. Gombrich in 'Ideal and Type in Italian Renaissance Painting', *Gombrich on the Renaissance. Vol. 4: New Light on Old Masters*, Phaidon Press, London, first published 1986, 2nd ed. 1993, pp. 89–124, esp. pp. 89–90. It is also analysed at length in P. Barocchi, *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento*, vol. 2, Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, Milan and Naples, 1973, pp. 1529–31, and in E. Camesasca (ed.), *Raffaello. Gli Scritti. Lettere, Firme, Sonetti, Saggi Tecnici e Teorici*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1994, pp. 154–67.

7 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude. A Study of Ideal Art*, first published John Murray, London, 1956, repr. by Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, 1960; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972. For a discussion of Clark's and Berger's definitions of the terms 'naked' and 'nude' and an assessment of the ideologies which structure their positions, see L. Nead, *The Female Nude. Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, pp. 12 ff. Discussing what she sees as one of the fundamental problems in the representation of the nude – the relationship between the power of the painter/medium and the passivity of the female/surface, Nead looks at the ways in which the actual act of painting has been seen as sexualised: 'the female nude within patriarchy thus signifies that the woman/surface has come under the government of the male style' (p. 57). She adds that 'the sexualised metaphorization of the female nude within art criticism has systematically reinforced patriarchy' (p. 59). While the critic envisaged by Nead indefatigably and relentlessly pursues 'politically vigilant forms of interpretation' (p. 59), it is to be hoped that the historian, sensitive and respectful towards the different cultures of the past, will be able to understand and interpret attitudes without condemning them.

8 Julia Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', in S. Rubin Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body in Western Culture. Contemporary Perspectives*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1986, pp. 99–118, esp. p. 101.

9 The concepts of schemata of representation and of the 'beholder's share' are explored by E. H. Gombrich in his *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Phaidon Press, London, 1977, first published 1960. M. Baxandall discusses the visual and cognitive skills of the Renaissance viewer ('the period eye') in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, first published 1972, 2nd ed. 1988.

10 On the relationships between society and culture, see R. Chartier, 'Intellectual History and the History of "Mentalités". A Dual Re-evaluation', in his *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, Polity/Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, pp. 19–52.

11 F. Haskell, *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993. The book deals with 'how, when and why historians have tried to recapture the past, or at least a sense of the past, by adopting the infinitely seductive course of looking at the image that the past has left of itself'. On the disciplines of history and art history, Haskell wisely cautions : 'Fruitful cooperation between the historian and the art historian can be based only on a full recognition of the necessary differences between their approaches, not, as it is often implied, on the pretence that these approaches are basically the same' (pp. 9–10). On this problem, see especially the Introduction and Chapter 8, 'The Arts as an Index of Society'. On the problems concerning the use of visual artifacts as historical sources, see also the review by M. Bury, *History*, 79, 258, February 1994, pp. 89–90.

12 M. Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1982, p. 216. Chapter 10, 'The Tradition Reviewed', is particularly relevant to the question of interpretation.

13 In their introduction to *Feminism and Art History. Questioning the Litany*, Harper & Row, New York, 1982, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard write: 'Feminism has raised other, more fundamental questions for art history as a humanistic discipline, questions that are now affecting its functioning at all levels and that may ultimately lead to its redefinition. In its broadest terms, we would define the impact of feminism on art history as an adjustment of historical perspective' (p. 1). By the same authors, see the Introduction to *The Expanding Discourse. Feminism and Art History*, Harper Collins, New York, 1992, pp. 1–25. See also L. Nead, 'Feminism, Art History and Cultural Politics', in A. L. Rees and F. Borzello (eds), *The New Art History*, Camden Press, London, 1986, pp. 120–4. Griselda Pollock ('Feminist Interventions in the Histories of Art: An Introduction', in *Vision and Differences: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988) summarises the development of feminist art history and charts its evolution through the instruments of Marxism, semiotics, Foucault's 'discourse analysis' and psychoanalytical theory. These have provided, respectively, a way of considering art as a 'social practice', an instrument for the analysis of texts, a means to examine art history itself as a 'discursive formation', and an insight into the construction of sexuality. Pollock writes that the importance of feminist art history lies in its fundamental critique of the discipline: 'Art history itself is to be understood as a series of representational practices which actively produce definitions of sexual difference and contribute to the present configuration of sexual politics and power relations. Art history is not just indifferent to women; it is a masculinist discourse, party to the social construction of sexual differences' (p. 11). Pollock feels that the feminist art historian should be engaged in a 'feminist rewriting of the history of art in terms which firmly locate gender relations as a determining factor in cultural production and in signification' (p. 12). She ends her analysis with the assertion that feminist art history (or 'a feminist intervention in the histories of art') is an aspect of the women's movement. Pollock writes that 'this is no "new art history" aiming to make improvements, bring it up to date, season the old with current intellectual fashions or theory soup. The feminist problematic in this particular field of the social is shaped by the terrain – visual representations and their practices – on which we struggle' (p. 17). For an assessment of Pollock's conceptual framework, see E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods. A Critical Anthology*, Phaidon, London, 1995, pp. 296–9.

14 One of the early examples of 'feminist art history' which explored the representation of women as subject matter was Linda Nochlin's essay 'Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art', in T. B. Hess and L. Nochlin (eds), *Woman as Sex Object, Studies in Erotic Art, 1730–1970*, Newsweek, New York, 1972. For further bibliography, see W. Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1990.

15 E. Ciletti, 'Patriarchal Ideology in the Renaissance Iconography of Judith', in M. Migiel and J. Schiesari (eds), *Refiguring Women. Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1991, pp. 35–70. M. Jacobus gives a psychoanalytical reading of Judith in her 'Judith, Holofernes and the Phallic Woman', in *Reading Woman*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 110–36.

16 M. Millner Kahr, 'Delilah', *The Art Bulletin*, 54, September 1972, pp. 282–99, repr. in Broude and Garrard, *Feminism and Art History*, pp. 119–45. This is an analysis of a number of representations of the Samson and Delilah story from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.

17 M. R. Miles, 'The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Nudity, Gender and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture', in Rubin Sulemain, *The Female Body in Western Culture*, pp. 193–208, repr. in Broude and Garrard, *The Expanding Discourse*, pp. 27–37. Miles writes that the exposed breast of the Virgin would have been associated, in the mind of the contemporary viewer, with actual women nursing their babies.

18 M. Rogers, 'Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy', *Word and Image*, 2, 4, October–December 1986, pp. 291–305; 'The Decorum of Women's Beauty: Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the Representation of Women in 16th Century Painting', *Renaissance*

JOAN KELLY

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I dedicate this book to
and to each of them

TWO

Did Women Have a Renaissance?

One of the tasks of women's history is to call into question accepted schemes of periodization. To take the emancipation of women as a vantage point is to discover that events that further the historical development of men, liberating them from natural, social, or ideological constraints, have quite different, even opposite, effects upon women. The Renaissance is a good case in point. Italy was well in advance of the rest of Europe from roughly 1350 to 1530 because of its early consolidation of genuine states, the mercantile and manufacturing economy that supported them, and its working out of postfeudal and even postguild social relations. These developments reorganized Italian society along modern lines and opened the possibilities for the social and cultural expression for which the age is known. Yet precisely these developments affected women adversely, so much so that there was no renaissance for women—at least, not during the Renaissance. The state, early

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I first worked out these ideas in 1972–1973 in a course at Sarah Lawrence College entitled "Women: Myth and Reality" and am very much indebted to students in that course and my colleagues Eva Kollisch, Gerda Lerner, and Sherry Ortner. I thank Eve Fleisher, Martin Fleisher, Renate Bridenthal, and Claudia Koonz for their valuable criticism of an earlier version of this paper.

capitalism, and the social relations formed by them impinged on the lives of Renaissance women in different ways according to their different positions in society. But the startling fact is that women as a group, especially among the classes that dominated Italian urban life, experienced a contraction of social and personal options that men of their classes either did not, as was the case with the bourgeoisie, or did not experience as markedly, as was the case with the nobility.

Before demonstrating this point, which contradicts the widely held notion of the equality of Renaissance women with men,[1] we need to consider how to establish, let alone measure, loss or gain with respect to the liberty of women. I found the following criteria most useful for gauging the relative contraction (or expansion) of the powers of Renaissance women and for determining the quality of their historical experience: 1) the regulation of *female sexuality* as compared with male sexuality; 2) women's *economic* and *political roles*, i.e., the kind of work they performed as compared with men, and their access to property, political power, and the education or training necessary for work, property, and power; 3) the *cultural roles* of women in shaping the outlook of their society, and access to the education and/or institutions necessary for this; 4) *ideology* about women, in particular the sex-role system displayed or advocated in the symbolic products of the society, its art, literature, and philosophy. Two points should be made about this ideological index. One is its rich inferential value. The literature, art, and philosophy of a society, which give us direct knowledge of the attitudes of the dominant sector of that society toward women, also yield indirect knowledge about our other criteria: namely, the sexual, economic, political, and cultural activities of women. Insofar as images of women relate to what really goes on, we can infer from them something about that social reality. But, second, the relations between the ideology of sex roles and the reality we want to get at are complex and difficult to establish. Such views may be prescriptive rather than descriptive; they may describe a situation that no longer prevails; or they may use the relation of the sexes symbolically and not refer primarily to women and sex roles at all. Hence, to assess the historical significance of changes in sex-role conception, we must bring such changes

into connection with all we know about general developments in the society at large.

This essay examines changes in sex-role conception, particularly with respect to sexuality, for what they tell us about Renaissance society and women's place in it. At first glance, Renaissance thought presents a problem in this regard because it cannot be simply categorized. Ideas about the relation of the sexes range from a relatively complementary sense of sex roles in literature dealing with courtly manners, love, and education, to patriarchal conceptions in writings on marriage and the family, to a fairly equal presentation of sex roles in early Utopian social theory. Such diversity need not baffle the attempt to reconstruct a history of sex-role conceptions, however, and to relate its course to the actual situation of women. Toward this end, one needs to sort out this material in terms of the social groups to which it responds: to courtly society in the first case, the nobility of the petty despotic states of Italy; to the patrician bourgeoisie in the second, particularly of republics such as Florence. In the third case, the relatively equal position accorded women in Utopian thought (and in those lower-class movements of the radical Reformation analogous to it) results from a larger critique of early modern society and all the relations of domination that flow from private ownership and control of property. Once distinguished, each of these groups of sources tells the same story. Each discloses in its own way certain new constraints suffered by Renaissance women as the family and political life were restructured in the great transition from medieval feudal society to the early modern state. The sources that represent the interests of the nobility and the bourgeoisie point to this fact by a telling, double index. Almost all such works—with certain notable exceptions, such as Boccaccio and Ariosto—establish chastity as the female norm and restructure the relation of the sexes to one of female dependency and male domination.

The bourgeois writings on education, domestic life, and society constitute the extreme in this denial of women's independence. Suffice it to say that they sharply distinguish an inferior domestic realm of women from the superior public realm of men, achieving a veritable "renaissance" of the outlook and practices of classical Athens, with its domestic imprisonment of

citizen wives.[2] The courtly Renaissance literature we will consider was more gracious. But even here, by analyzing a few of the representative works of this genre, we find a new repression of the noblewoman's affective experience, in contrast to the latitude afforded her by medieval literature, and some of the social and cultural reasons for it. Dante and Castiglione, who continued a literary tradition that began with the courtly love literature of eleventh- and twelfth-century Provence, transformed medieval conceptions of love and nobility. In the love ideal they formed, we can discern the inferior position the Renaissance noblewoman held in the relation of the sexes by comparison with her male counterpart and with her medieval predecessor as well.

Love and the Medieval Lady

Medieval courtly love, closely bound to the dominant values of feudalism and the church, allowed in a special way for the expression of sexual love by women. Of course, only aristocratic women gained their sexual and affective rights thereby. If a knight wanted a peasant girl, the twelfth-century theorist of *The Art of Courtly Love*, Andreas Capellanus, encouraged him "not [to] hesitate to take what you seek and to embrace her by force."[3] Toward the lady, however, "a true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved"; for if courtly love were to define itself as a noble phenomenon, it had to attribute an essential freedom to the relation between lovers. Hence, it metaphorically extended the social relation of vassalage to the love relationship, a "conceit" that Maurice Valency rightly called "the shaping principle of the whole design" of courtly love.[4]

Of the two dominant sets of dependent social relations formed by feudalism—*les liens de dépendence*, as Marc Bloch called them—vassalage, the military relation of knight to lord, distinguished itself (in its early days) by being freely entered into. At a time when everyone was somebody's "man," the right to freely enter a relation of service characterized aristocratic bonds, whereas hereditability marked the servile work relation of serf to lord. Thus, in medieval romances, a parley typically followed a declaration of love until love freely proffered was freely returned. A kiss (like the kiss of homage) sealed the pledge, rings were exchanged, and the knight entered the love service of his lady.

Representing love along the lines of vassalage had several liberating implications for aristocratic women. Most fundamental, ideas of homage and mutuality entered the notion of heterosexual relations along with the idea of freedom. As symbolized on shields and other illustrations that place the knight in the ritual attitude of commendation, kneeling before his lady with his hands folded between hers, homage signified male service, not domination or subordination of the lady, and it signified fidelity, constancy in that service. "A lady must honor her lover as a friend, not as a master," wrote Marie de Ventadour, a female troubadour or *trobairitz*.[5] At the same time, homage entailed a reciprocity of rights and obligations, a service on the lady's part as well. In one of Marie de France's romances, a knight is about to be judged by the barons of King Arthur's court when his lady rides to the castle to give him "succor" and pleads successfully for him, as any overlord might.[6] Mutuality, or complementarity, marks the relation the lady entered into with her *ami* (the favored name for "lover" and, significantly, a synonym for "vassal").

This relation between knight and lady was very much at variance with the patriarchal family relations obtaining in that same level of society. Aware of its incompatibility with prevailing family and marital relations, the celebrants of courtly love kept love detached from marriage. "We dare not oppose the opinion of the Countess of Champagne who rules that love can exert no power between husband and wife," Andreas wrote (p. 175). But in opting for a free and reciprocal heterosexual relation outside marriage, the poets and theorists of courtly love ignored the almost universal demand of patriarchal society for female chastity, in the sense of the woman's strict bondage to the marital bed. The reasons why they did so, and even the fact that they did so, have long been disputed, but the ideas and values that justify this kind of adulterous love are plain. Marriage, as a relation arranged by others, carried the taint of social necessity for the aristocracy. And if the feudality denigrated marriage by disdaining obligatory service, the church did so by regarding it not as a "religious" state, but an inferior one that responded to natural necessity. Moreover, Christianity positively fostered the ideal of courtly love at a deep level of feeling. The courtly relation between lovers took vassalage as its structural model, but its passion was nourished by Christianity's exaltation of love.

Christianity had accomplished its elevation of love by purging it of sexuality, and in this respect, by recombining the two, courtly love clearly departed from Christian teaching. The toleration of adultery it fostered thereby was in itself not so grievous. The feudality disregarded any number of church rulings that affected their interests, such as prohibitions of tournaments and repudiation of spouses (divorce) and remarriage. Moreover, adultery hardly needed the sanction of courtly love, which, if anything, acted rather as a restraining force by binding sexuality (except in marriage) to love. Lancelot, in Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth-century romance, lies in bed with a lovely woman because of a promise he has made, but "not once does he look at her, nor show her any courtesy. Why not? Because his heart does not go out to her. . . . The knight has only one heart, and this one is no longer really his, but has been entrusted to someone else, so that he cannot bestow it elsewhere."[7] Actually, Lancelot's chastity represented more of a threat to Christian doctrine than the fact that his passion (for Guinevere) was adulterous, because his attitudes justified sexual love. Sexuality could only be "mere sexuality" for the medieval church, to be consecrated and directed toward procreation by Christian marriage. Love, on the other hand, defined as passion for the good, perfects the individual; hence love, according to Thomas Aquinas, properly directs itself toward God.[8] Like the churchman, Lancelot spurned mere sexuality—but for the sake of sexual love. He defied Christian *teaching* by reattaching love to sex; and experiencing his love as a devout vocation, as a passion, he found himself in utter accord with Christian *feeling*. His love, as Chrétien's story makes clear, is sacramental as well as sexual:

> . . . then he comes to the bed of the Queen, whom he adores and before whom he kneels, holding her more dear than the relic of any saint. And the Queen extends her arms to him and, embracing him, presses him tightly against her bosom, drawing him into the bed beside her and showing him every possible satisfaction. . . . Now Lancelot possesses all he wants. . . . It cost him such pain to leave her that he suffered a real martyr's agony. . . . When he leaves the room, he bows and acts precisely as if he were before a shrine. (p. 329)

It is difficult to assess Christianity's role in this acceptance of

feeling and this attentiveness to inner states that characterize medieval lyric and romance, although the weeping and wringing of hands, the inner troubles and turmoil of the love genre, were to disappear with the restoration of classical attitudes of restraint in the Renaissance. What certainly bound courtly love to Christianity, however, aside from its positive attitude toward feeling, was the cultivation of decidedly "romantic" states of feeling. In Christian Europe, *passion* acquired a positive, spiritual meaning that classical ethics and classical erotic feeling alike denied it. Religious love and courtly love were both suffered as a destiny, were both submitted to and not denied. Converted by a passion that henceforth directed and dominated them and for which all manner of suffering could be borne, the courtly lovers, like the religious, sought a higher emotional state than ordinary life provided. They sought ecstasy; and this required of them a heroic discipline, an ascetic fortitude, and single-mindedness. Love and its ordeals alike removed them from the daily, the customary, the routine, setting them apart as an elite superior to the conventions of marriage and society.

Religious feeling and feudal values thus both fed into a conception of passionate love that, because of its mutuality, required that women, too, partake of that passion, of that adulterous sexual love. The lady of medieval romance also suffered. She suffered "more pain for love than ever a woman suffered" in another of Marie de France's romances. As the jealously guarded wife of an old man, ravished by the beauty of her knight when she first saw him, she could not rest for love of him, and *"franc et noble"* (i.e., free) as she was, she granted him her kiss and her love upon the declaration of his—"and many other caresses which lovers know well" during the time she hid him in her castle.[9] So common is this sexual mutuality to the literature of courtly love that one cannot take seriously the view of it as a form of Madonna worship in which a remote and virginal lady spurns consummation. That stage came later, as courtly love underwent its late medieval and Renaissance transformation. But for the twelfth century, typical concerns of Provençal *iocs-partitz*, those poetic "questions" on love posed at court (and reflecting the social reality of mock courts of love played out as a diversion) were: "Must a lady do for her lover as much as he for her?"; or, "A husband learns that his wife has a lover. The wife

and the lover perceive it—which of the three is in the greatest strait?"[10] In the same vein, Andreas Capellanus perceived differences between so-called "pure" and "mixed" love as accidental, not substantial. Both came from the same feeling of the heart and one could readily turn into the other, as circumstances dictated. Adultery, after all, required certain precautions; but that did not alter the essentially erotic nature even of "pure" love, which went "as far as the kiss and the embrace and the modest contact with the nude lover, omitting the final solace" (p. 122).

The sexual nature of courtly love, considered together with its voluntary character and the nonpatriarchal structure of its relations, makes us question what it signifies for the actual condition of feudal women. For clearly it represents an ideological liberation of their sexual and affective powers that must have some social reference. This is not to raise the fruitless question of whether such love relationships actually existed or if they were mere literary conventions. The real issue regarding ideology is, rather, what kind of society could posit *as a social ideal* a love relation outside of marriage, one that women freely entered and that, despite its reciprocity, made women the gift givers while men did the service. What were the social conditions that fostered these particular conventions rather than the more common ones of female chastity and/or dependence?

No one doubts that courtly love spread widely as a convention. All ranks and both sexes of the aristocracy wrote troubadour poetry and courtly romances and heard them sung and recited in courtly gatherings throughout most of medieval Europe. But this could happen only if such ideas supported the male-dominated social order rather than subverted it. The love motif could, and with Gottfried of Strasbourg's *Tristan* (c. 1210) did, stand as an ideal radically opposed to the institutions of the church and emerging feudal kingship. But in its beginnings, and generally, courtly love no more threatened Christian feeling or feudalism than did chivalry, which brought a certain "sacramental" moral value and restraint to the profession of warfare. While courtly love celebrated sexuality, it enriched and deepened it by means of the Christian notion of passion. While the knight often betrayed his lord to serve his lord's lady, he transferred to that relationship the feudal ideal of freely committed, mutual service. And while passionate love led to adultery, by that very fact

it reinforced, as its necessary premise, the practice of political marriage. The literature of courtly love suppressed rather than exaggerated tensions between it and other social values, and the reason for this lies deeper than literature. It lies at the institutional level, where there was real agreement, or at least no contradiction, between the sexual and affective needs of women and the interests of the aristocratic family, which the feudality and church alike regarded as fundamental to the social order.

The factors to consider here are property and power on the one hand, and illegitimacy on the other. Feudalism, as a system of private jurisdictions, bound power to landed property; and it permitted both inheritance and administration of feudal property by women.[11] Inheritance by women often suited the needs of the great landholding families, as their unremitting efforts to secure such rights for their female members attest. The authority of feudal women owes little to any gallantry on the part of feudal society. But the fact that women could hold both ordinary fiefs and vast collections of counties—and exercise in their own right the seigniorial powers that went with them—certainly fostered a gallant attitude. Eleanor of Aquitaine's adultery as wife of the king of France could have had dire consequences in another place at another time, say in the England of Henry VIII. In her case, she moved on to a new marriage with the future Henry II of England or, to be more exact, a new alliance connecting his Plantagenet interests with her vast domains centering on Provence. Women also exercised power during the absence of warrior husbands. The lady presided over the court at such times, administered the estates, took charge of the vassal services due the lord. She *was* the lord—albeit in his name rather than her own—unless widowed and without male children. In the religious realm, abbesses exercised analogous temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction over great territories, and always in their own right, in virtue of their office.

This social reality accounts for the retention of matronymics in medieval society, that is, a common use of the maternal name, which reflects the position of women as landowners and managers of great estates, particularly during the crusading period.[12] It also accounts for the husband's toleration of his wife's diversions, if discreetly pursued. His primary aim to get and maintain a fief required her support, perhaps even her inheritance. As

Emily James Putnam put it, "It would, perhaps, be paradoxical to say that a baron would prefer to be sure that his tenure was secure than that his son was legitimate, but it is certain that the relative value of the two things had shifted."[13] Courtly literature, indeed, reveals a marked lack of concern about illegitimacy. Although the ladies of the romances are almost all married, they seldom appear with children, let alone appear to have their lives and loves complicated by them. Much as the tenet that love thrives only in adultery reflected and reinforced the stability of arranged marriage, so the political role of women, and the indivisibility of the fief, probably underlies this indifference to illegitimacy. Especially as forms of inheritance favoring the eldest son took hold in the course of the twelfth century to preserve the great houses, the claims of younger sons and daughters posed no threat to family estates. Moreover, the expansive, exploitative aristocratic families of the eleventh and twelfth centuries could well afford illegitimate members. For the feudality, they were no drain as kin but rather a source of strength in marital alliances and as warriors.

For all these reasons, feudal Christian society could promote the ideal of courtly love. We could probably maintain of any ideology that tolerates sexual parity that: 1) it can threaten no major institution of the patriarchal society from which it emerges; and 2) men, the rulers within the ruling order, must benefit by it. Courtly love surely fit these requirements. That such an ideology did actually develop, however, is due to another feature of medieval society, namely, the cultural activity of feudal women. For responsive as courtly love might seem to men of the feudality whose erotic needs it objectified and refined, as well as objectifying their consciousness of the social self (as noble), it did this and more for women. It gave women lovers, peers rather than masters; and it gave them a justifying ideology for adultery which, as the more customary double standard indicates, men in patriarchal society seldom require. Hence, we should expect what we indeed find: women actively shaping these ideas and values that corresponded so well to their particular interests.

In the first place, women participated in creating the literature of courtly love, a major literature of their era. This role they had not been able to assume in the culture of classical Greece or

Rome. The notable exception of Sappho only proves the point: it took women to give poetic voice and status to female sexual love, and only medieval Europe accepted that voice as integral to its cultural expression. The twenty or more known Provençal trobairitz, of whom the Countess Beatrice of Die is the most renowned, celebrated as fully and freely as any man the love of the troubadour tradition:

> Handsome friend, charming and kind,
> when shall I have you in my power?
> If only I could lie beside you for an hour
> and embrace you lovingly—
> know this, that I'd give almost anything
> to see you in my husband's place,
> but only under the condition
> that you swear to do my bidding.[14]

Marie de France voiced similar erotic sentiments in her *lais*. Her short tales of romance, often adulterous and always sexual, have caused her to be ranked by Friedrich Heer as one of the "three poets of genius" (along with Chrétien de Troyes and Gautier d'Arras) who created the *roman courtois* of the twelfth century.[15] These two genres, the romance and the lyric, to which women made such significant contributions, make up the corpus of courtly love literature.

In addition to direct literary expression, women promoted the ideas of courtly love by way of patronage and the diversions of their courts. They supported and/or participated in the recitation and singing of poems and romances, and they played out those mock suits, usually presided over by "queens," that settled questions of love. This holds for lesser aristocratic women as well as the great. But great noblewomen, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Marie of Champagne, Eleanor's daughter by her first marriage to Louis VII of France, could make their courts major cultural and social centers and play thereby a dominant role in forming the outlook and mores of their class. Eleanor, herself granddaughter of William of Aquitaine, known as the first troubadour, supported the poets and sentiments of Provence at her court in Anjou. When she became Henry II's queen, she

brought the literature and manners of courtly love to England. When living apart from Henry at her court in Poitiers, she and her daughter, Marie, taught the arts of courtesy to a number of young women and men who later dispersed to various parts of France, England, Sicily, and Spain, where they constituted the ruling nobility. Some of the most notable authors of the literature of courtly love belonged to these circles. Bernard of Ventadour, one of the outstanding troubadours, sang his poems to none other than the lady Eleanor. Marie de France had connections with the English court of Eleanor and Henry II. Eleanor's daughter, Marie of Champagne, was patron both of Andreas Capellanus, her chaplain, and Chrétien de Troyes, and she may well be responsible for much of the adulterous, frankly sexual behavior the ladies enjoy in the famous works of both. Chrétien claimed he owed to his "lady of Champagne" both "the material and treatment" of Lancelot, which differs considerably in precisely this regard from his earlier and later romances. And Andreas's *De remedio*, the baffling final section of his work that repudiates sexual love and women, may represent not merely a rhetorical tribute to Ovid but a reaction to the pressure of Marie's patronage.[16]

At their courts as in their literature, it would seem that feudal women consciously exerted pressure in shaping the courtly love ideal and making it prevail. But they could do so only because they had actual power to exert. The women who assumed cultural roles as artists and patrons of courtly love had already been assigned political roles that assured them some measure of independence and power. They could and did exercise authority, not merely over the subject laboring population of their lands, but over their own and/or their husbands' vassals. Courtly love, which flourished outside the institution of patriarchal marriage, owed its possibility as well as its model to the dominant political institution of feudal Europe that permitted actual vassal homage to be paid to women.

The Renaissance Lady: Politics and Culture

The kind of economic and political power that supported the cultural activity of feudal noblewomen in the eleventh and

twelfth centuries had no counterpart in Renaissance Italy. By the fourteen century, the political units of Italy were mostly sovereign states that regardless of legal claims, recognized no overlords and supported no feudatories. Their nobility held property but no seigniorial power, estates but not jurisdiction. Indeed, in northern and central Italy, a nobility in the European sense hardly existed at all. Down to the coronation of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor in 1530, there was no Italian king to safeguard the interests of (and thereby limit and control) a "legitimate" nobility that maintained by inheritance traditional prerogatives. Hence, where the urban bourgeoisie did not overthrow the claims of nobility, a despot did, usually in the name of nobility but always for himself. These *signorie*, unlike the bourgeois republics, continued to maintain a landed, military "class" with noble pretensions, but its members increasingly became merely the warriors and ornaments of a court. Hence, the Renaissance aristocrat, who enjoyed neither the independent political powers of feudal jurisdiction nor legally guaranteed status in the ruling estate, either served a despot or became one.

In this sociopolitical context, the exercise of political power by women was far more rare than under feudalism or even under the traditional kind of monarchical state that developed out of feudalism. The two Giovannas of Naples, both queens in their own right, exemplify this latter type of rule. The first, who began her reign in 1343 over Naples and Provence, became in 1356 queen of Sicily as well. Her grandfather, King Robert of Naples—of the same house of Anjou and Provence that hearkens back to Eleanor and to Henry Plantagenet—could and did designate Giovanna as his heir. Similarly, in 1414, Giovanna II became queen of Naples upon the death of her brother. In Naples, in short, women of the ruling house could assume power, not because of their abilities alone, but because the principle of legitimacy continued in force along with the feudal tradition of inheritance by women.

In northern Italy, by contrast, Caterina Sforza ruled her petty principality in typical Renaissance fashion, supported only by the Machiavellian principles of *fortuna* and *virtù* (historical situation and will). Her career, like that of her family, follows the Renaissance pattern of personal and political illegitimacy. Born in

1462, she was an illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, heir to the Duchy of Milan. The ducal power of the Sforzas was very recent, dating only from 1450, when Francesco Sforza, illegitimate son of a condottiere and a great condottiere himself, assumed control of the duchy. When his son and heir, Caterina's father, was assassinated after ten years of tyrannous rule, another son, Lodovico, took control of the duchy, first as regent for his nephew (Caterina's half brother), then as outright usurper. Lodovico promoted Caterina's interests for the sake of his own. He married her off at fifteen to a nephew of Pope Sixtus IV, thereby strengthening the alliance between the Sforzas and the Riario family, who now controlled the papacy. The pope carved a state out of papal domains for Caterina's husband, making him Count of Forlì as well as the Lord of Imola, which Caterina brought to the marriage. But the pope died in 1484, her husband died by assassination four years later—and Caterina made the choice to defy the peculiar obstacles posed by Renaissance Italy to a woman's assumption of power.

Once before, with her husband seriously ill at Imola, she had ridden hard to Forlì to quell an incipient coup a day before giving birth. Now at twenty-six, after the assassination of her husband, she and a loyal castellan held the citadel at Forlì against her enemies until Lodovico sent her aid from Milan. Caterina won; she faced down her opponents, who held her six children hostage, then took command as regent for her young son. But her title to rule as regent was inconsequential. Caterina ruled because she mustered superior force and exercised it personally, and to the end she had to exert repeatedly the skill, forcefulness, and ruthless ambition that brought her to power. However, even her martial spirit did not suffice. In the despotisms of Renaissance Italy, where assassinations, coups, and invasions were the order of the day, power stayed closely bound to military force. In 1500, deprived of Milan's support by her uncle Lodovico's deposition, Caterina succumbed to the overwhelming forces of Cesare Borgia and was divested of power after a heroic defense of Forlì.

Because of this political situation, at once statist and unstable, the daughters of the Este, Gonzaga, and Montefeltro families

represent women of their class much more than Caterina Sforza did. Their access to power was indirect and provisional, and was expected to be so. In his handbook for the nobility, Baldassare Castiglione's description of the lady of the court makes this difference in sex roles quite clear. On the one hand, the Renaissance lady appears as the equivalent of the courtier. She has the same virtues of mind as he and her education is symmetrical with his. She learns everything—well, almost everything—he does: "knowledge of letters, of music, of painting, and . . . how to dance and how to be festive."[17] Culture is an accomplishment for noblewoman and man alike, used to charm others as much as to develop the self. But for the woman, charm had become the primary occupation and aim. Whereas the courtier's chief task is defined as the profession of arms, "in a Lady who lives at court a certain pleasing affability is becoming above all else, whereby she will be able to entertain graciously every kind of man" (p. 207).

One notable consequence of the Renaissance lady's need to charm is that Castiglione called upon her to give up certain "unbecoming" physical activities such as riding and handling weapons. Granted, he concerned himself with the court lady, as he says, not a queen who may be called upon to rule. But his aestheticizing of the lady's role, his conception of her femaleness as centered in charm, meant that activities such as riding and skill in weaponry would seem unbecoming to women of the ruling families, too. Elisabetta Gonzaga, the idealized duchess of Castiglione's *Courtier*, came close in real life to his normative portrayal of her type. Riding and skill in weaponry had, in fact, no significance for her. The heir to her Duchy of Urbino was decided upon during the lifetime of her husband, and it was this adoptive heir—not the widow of thirty-seven with no children to compete for her care and attention—who assumed power in 1508. Removed from any direct exercise of power, Elisabetta also disregarded the pursuits and pleasures associated with it. Her letters express none of the sense of freedom and daring Caterina Sforza and Beatrice d'Este experienced in riding and the hunt.[18] Altogether, she lacks spirit. Her correspondence shows her to be as docile in adulthood as her early teachers trained her to be. She

met adversity, marital and political, with fortitude but never opposed it. She placated father, brother, and husband, and even in Castiglione's depiction of her court, she complied with rather than shaped its conventions.

The differences between Elisabetta Gonzaga and Caterina Sforza are great, yet both personalities were responding to the Renaissance situation of emerging statehood and social mobility. Elisabetta, neither personally illegitimate nor springing from a freebooting condottiere family, was schooled, as Castiglione would have it, away from the martial attitudes and skills requisite for despotic rule. She would not be a prince, she would marry one. Hence, her education, like that of most of the daughters of the ruling families, directed her toward the cultural and social functions of the court. The lady who married a Renaissance prince became a patron. She commissioned works of art and gave gifts for literary works dedicated to her; she drew to her artists and literati. But the court they came to ornament was her husband's, and the culture they represented magnified his princely being, especially when his origins could not. Thus, the Renaissance lady may play an aesthetically significant role in Castiglione's idealized Court of Urbino of 1508, but even he clearly removed her from that equal, to say nothing of superior, position in social discourse that medieval courtly literature had granted her. To the fifteen or so male members of the court whose names he carefully listed, Castiglione admitted only four women to the evening conversations that were the second major occupation at court (the profession of arms, from which he completely excluded women, being the first). Of the four, he distinguished only two women as participants. The Duchess Elisabetta and her companion, Emilia Pia, at least speak, whereas the other two only do a dance. Yet they speak in order to moderate and "direct" discussion by proposing questions and games. They do not themselves contribute to the discussions, and at one point Castiglione relieves them even of their negligible role:

> When signor Gasparo had spoken thus, signora Emilia made a sign to madam Costanza Fregosa, as she sat next in order, that she should speak; and she was making ready to do so, when suddenly the Duchess said: "Since signora Emilia does not choose to go to the trouble of devising a game, it would be quite right for the other ladies to share in this ease, and thus be exempt from such a burden this evening, especially since there are so many men here that we risk no lack of games." (pp. 19–20)

The men, in short, do all the talking; and the ensuing dialogue on manners and love, as we might expect, is not only developed by men but directed toward their interests.

The contradiction between the professed parity of noblewomen and men in *The Courtier* and the merely decorative role Castiglione unwittingly assigned the lady proclaims an important educational and cultural change as well as a political one. Not only did a male ruler preside over the courts of Renaissance Italy, but the court no longer served as arbiter of the cultural functions it did retain. Although restricted to a cultural and social role, she lost dominance in that role as secular education came to require special skills which were claimed as the prerogative of a class of professional teachers. The sons of the Renaissance nobility still pursued their military and diplomatic training in the service of some great lord, but as youths, they transferred their nonmilitary training from the lady to the humanistic tutor or boarding school. In a sense, humanism represented an advance for women as well as for the culture at large. It brought Latin literacy and classical learning to daughters as well as sons of the nobility. But this very development, usually taken as an index of the equality of Renaissance (noble) women with men,[19] spelled a further decline in the lady's influence over courtly society. It placed her as well as her brothers under male cultural authority. The girl of the medieval aristocracy, although unschooled, was brought up at the court of some great lady. Now her brothers' tutors shaped her outlook, male educators who, as humanists, suppressed romance and chivalry to further classical culture, with all its patriarchal and misogynous bias.

The humanistic education of the Renaissance noblewoman helps explain why she cannot compare with her medieval predecessors in shaping a culture responsive to her own interests. In accordance with the new cultural values, the patronage of the Este, Sforza, Gonzaga, and Montefeltro women extended far beyond the literature and art of love and manners, but the works they commissioned, bought, or had dedicated to them do not

show any consistent correspondence to their concerns as women. They did not even give noticeable support to women's education, with the single important exception of Battista da Montefeltro, to whom one of the few treatises advocating a humanistic education for women was dedicated. Adopting the universalistic outlook of their humanist teachers, the noblewomen of Renaissance Italy seem to have lost all consciousness of their particular interests as women, while male authors such as Castiglione, who articulated the mores of the Renaissance aristocracy, wrote their works for men. Cultural and political dependency thus combined in Italy to reverse the roles of women and men in developing the new noble code. Medieval courtesy, as set forth in the earliest etiquette books, romances, and rules of love, shaped the man primarily to please the lady. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, rules for women, and strongly patriarchal ones at that, entered French and Italian etiquette books, but not until the Renaissance reformulation of courtly manners and love is it evident how the ways of the lady came to be determined by men in the context of the early modern state. The relation of the sexes here assumed its modern form, and nowhere is this made more visible than in the love relation.

The Renaissance of Chastity

As soon as the literature and values of courtly love made their way into Italy, they were modified in the direction of asexuality. Dante typifies this initial reception of courtly love. His *Vita Nuova*, written in the "sweet new style" (*dolce stil nuovo*) of late-thirteenth-century Tuscany, still celebrates love and the noble heart: *"Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa."* Love still appears as homage and the lady as someone else's wife. But the lover of Dante's poems is curiously arrested. He frustrates his own desire by rejecting even the aim of union with his beloved. "What is the point of your love for your lady since you are unable to endure her presence?" a lady asks of Dante. "Tell us, for surely the aim of such love must be unique [*novissimo*]!"[20] And novel it is, for Dante confesses that the joy he once took in his beloved's greeting he shall henceforth seek in himself, "in words which praise my lady." Even this understates the case, since Dante's

words neither conjure up Beatrice nor seek to melt her. She remains shadowy and remote, for the focus of his poetry has shifted entirely to the subjective pole of love. It is the inner life, *his* inner life, that Dante objectifies. His love poems present a spiritual contest, which he will soon ontologize in the *Divine Comedy*, among competing states of the lover poet's soul.

This dream-world quality expresses in its way a general change that came over the literature of love as its social foundations crumbled. In the north, as the *Romance of the Rose* reminds us, the tradition began to run dry in the late-thirteenth-century period of feudal disintegration—or transformation by the bourgeois economy of the towns and the emergence of the state. And in Provence, after the Albigensian Crusade and the subjection of the Midi to church and crown, Guiraut Riquier significantly called himself the last troubadour. Complaining that "no craft is less esteemed at court than the beautiful mastery of song," he renounced sexual for celestial love and claimed to enter the service of the Virgin Mary.[21] The reception and reworking of the troubadour tradition in Florence of the late 1200s consequently appears somewhat archaic. A conservative, aristocratic nostalgia clings to Dante's love poetry as it does to his political ideas. But if the new social life of the bourgeois commune found little positive representation in his poetry, Florence did drain from his poems the social content of feudal experience. The lover as knight or trobairitz thus gave way to a poet scholar. The experience of a wandering, questing life gave way to scholastic interests, to distinguishing and classifying states of feeling. And the courtly celebration of romance, modeled upon vassalage and enjoyed in secret meetings, became a private circulation of poems analyzing the spiritual effects of unrequited love.

The actual disappearance of the social world of the court and its presiding lady underlies the disappearance of sex and the physical evaporation of the woman in these poems. The ladies of the romances and troubadour poetry may be stereotypically blond, candid, and fair, but their authors meant them to be taken as physically and socially "real." In the love poetry of Dante, and of Petrarch and Vittoria Colonna, who continue his tradition, the beloved may just as well be dead—and, indeed, all three authors made them so. They have no meaningful, objec-

tive existence, and not merely because their affective experience lacks a voice. This would hold for troubadour poetry too, since the lyric, unlike the romance, articulates only the feelings of the lover. The unreality of the Renaissance beloved has rather to do with the *quality* of the Renaissance lover's feelings. As former social relations that sustained mutuality and interaction among lovers vanished, the lover fell back on a narcissistic experience. The Dantesque beloved merely inspires feelings that have no outer, physical aim; or, they have a transcendent aim that the beloved merely mediates. In either case, love casts off sexuality. Indeed, the role of the beloved as mediator is asexual in a double sense, as the *Divine Comedy* shows. Not only does the beloved néver respond sexually to the lover, but the feelings she arouses in him turn into a spiritual love that makes of their entire relationship a mere symbol or allegory.

Interest even in this shadowy kind of romance dropped off markedly as the work of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio led into the fifteenth-century renaissance of Graeco-Roman art and letters. The Florentine humanists in particular appropriated only the classical side of their predecessors' thought, the side that served public concerns. They rejected the dominance of love in human life, along with the inwardness and seclusion of the religious, the scholar, and the lovesick poet. Dante, for example, figured primarily as a citizen to his biographer, Lionardo Bruni, who, as humanist chancellor of Florence, made him out as a modern Socrates, at once a political figure, a family man, and a rhetor: an exemplar for the new polis.[22] Only in relation to the institution of the family did Florentine civic humanism take up questions of love and sexuality. In this context, they developed the bourgeois sex-role system, placing man in the public sphere and the patrician woman in the home, requiring social virtues from him and chastity and motherhood from her. In bourgeois Florence, the humanists would have nothing to do with the old aristocratic tradition of relative social and sexual parity. In the petty Italian despotisms, however, and even in Florence under the princely Lorenzo de' Medici late in the fifteenth century, the traditions and culture of the nobility remained meaningful.[23] Castiglione's *Courtier*, and the corpus of Renaissance works it heads, took up the themes of love and courtesy for this

courtly society, adapting them to contemporary social and cultural needs. Yet in this milieu, too, within the very tradition of courtly literature, new constraints upon female sexuality emerged. Castiglione, the single most important spokesman of Renaissance love and manners, retained in his love theory Dante's two basic features: the detachment of love from sexuality and the allegorization of the love theme. Moreover, he introduced into the aristocratic conception of sex roles some of the patriarchal notions of women's confinement to the family that bourgeois humanists had been restoring.

Overtly, as we saw, Castiglione and his class supported a complementary conception of sex roles, in part because a nobility that did no work at all gave little thought to a sexual division of labor. He could thus take up the late medieval *querelle des femmes* set off by the *Romance of the Rose* and debate the question of women's dignity much to their favor. Castiglione places Aristotle's (and Aquinas's) notion of woman as a defective man in the mouth of an aggrieved misogynist, Gasparo; he criticizes Plato's low regard for women, even though he did permit them to govern in *The Republic*; he rejects Ovid's theory of love as not "gentle" enough. Most significantly, he opposes Gasparo's bourgeois notion of women's exclusively domestic role. Yet for all this, Castiglione established in *The Courtier* a fateful bond between love and marriage. One index of a heightened patriarchal outlook among the Renaissance nobility is that love in the usual emotional and sexual sense must lead to marriage and be confined to it—for women, that is.

The issue gets couched, like all others in the book, in the form of a debate. There are pros and cons; but the prevailing view is unmistakable. If the ideal court lady loves, she should love someone whom she can marry. If married, and the mishap befalls her "that her husband's hate or another's love should bring her to love, I would have her give her lover a spiritual love only; nor must she ever give him any sure sign of her love, either by word or gesture or by other means that can make him certain of it" (p. 263). *The Courtier* thus takes a strange, transitional position on the relations among love, sex, and marriage, which bourgeois Europe would later fuse into one familial whole. Responding to a situation of general female dependency among

the nobility, and to the restoration of patriarchal family values, at once classical and bourgeois, Castiglione, like Renaissance love theorists in general, connected love and marriage. But facing the same realities of political marriage and clerical celibacy that beset the medieval aristocracy, he still focused upon the love that takes place outside it. On this point, too, however, he broke with the courtly love tradition. He proposed on the one hand a Neo-Platonic notion of spiritual love, and on the other, the double standard.[24]

Castiglione's image of the lover is interesting in this regard. Did he think his suppression of female sexual love would be more justifiable if he had a churchman, Pietro Bembo (elevated to cardinal in 1539), enunciate the new theory and had him discourse upon the love of an aging courtier rather than that of a young knight? In any case, adopting the Platonic definition of love as desire to enjoy beauty, Bembo located this lover in a metaphysical and physical hierarchy between sense ("below") and intellect ("above"). As reason mediates between the physical and the spiritual, so man, aroused by the visible beauty of his beloved, may direct his desire beyond her to the true, intelligible source of her beauty. He may, however, also turn toward sense. Young men fall into this error, and we should expect it of them, Bembo explains in the Neo-Platonic language of the Florentine philosopher Marsilio Ficino. "For finding itself deep in an earthly prison, and deprived of spiritual contemplation in exercising its office of governing the body, the soul of itself cannot clearly perceive the truth; wherefore, in order to have knowledge, it is obliged to turn to the senses . . . and so it believes them . . . and lets itself be guided by them, especially when they have so much vigor that they almost force it" (pp. 338–339). A misdirection of the soul leads to sexual union (though obviously not with the court lady). The preferred kind of union, achieved by way of ascent, uses love of the lady as a step toward love of universal beauty. The lover here ascends from awareness of his own human spirit, which responds to beauty, to awareness of that universal intellect that comprehends universal beauty. Then, "transformed into an angel," his soul finds supreme happiness in divine love. Love may hereby soar to an ontologically noble end, and the beauty of the woman who inspires such ascent may acquire metaphysical status and dignity. But Love, Beauty, Woman, aestheticized as Botticelli's Venus and given cosmic import, were in effect denatured, robbed of body, sex, and passion by this elevation. The simple kiss of love-service became a rarefied kiss of the soul: "A man delights in joining his mouth to that of his beloved in a kiss, not in order to bring himself to any unseemly desire, but because he feels that that bond is the opening of mutual access to their souls" (pp. 349–350). And instead of initiating love, the kiss now terminated physical contact, at least for the churchman and/or aging courtier who sought an ennobling experience—and for the woman obliged to play her role as lady.

Responsive as he still was to medieval views of love, Castiglione at least debated the issue of the double standard. His spokesmen point out that men make the rules permitting themselves and not women sexual freedom, and that concern for legitimacy does not justify this inequality. Since these same men claim to be more virtuous than women, they could more easily restrain themselves. In that case, "there would be neither more nor less certainty about offspring, for even if women were unchaste, they could in no way bear children of themselves . . . provided men were continent and did not take part in the unchastity of women" (pp. 240–241). But for all this, the book supplies an excess of hortatory tales about female chastity, and in the section of the dialogue granting young men indulgence in sensual love, no one speaks for young women, who ought to be doubly "prone," as youths and as women, according to the views of the time.

This is theory, of course. But one thinks of the examples: Eleanor of Aquitaine changing bedmates in the midst of a crusade; Elisabetta Gonzaga, so constrained by the conventions of her own court that she would not take a lover even though her husband was impotent. She, needless to say, figures as Castiglione's prime exemplar: "Our Duchess who has lived with her husband for fifteen years like a widow" (p. 253). Bembo, on the other hand, in the years before he became cardinal, lived with and had three children by Donna Morosina. But however they actually lived, in the new ideology a spiritualized noble love *supplemented* the experience of men while it *defined* extra-

marital experience for the lady. For women, chastity had become the convention of the Renaissance courts, signaling the twofold fact that the dominant institutions of sixteenth-century Italian society would not support the adulterous sexuality of courtly love, and that women, suffering a relative loss of power within these institutions, could not at first make them responsive to their needs. Legitimacy is a significant factor here. Even courtly love had paid some deference to it (and to the desire of women to avoid conception) by restraining intercourse while promoting romantic and sexual play. But now, with cultural and political power held almost entirely by men, the norm of female chastity came to express the concerns of Renaissance noblemen as they moved into a new situation as a hereditary, dependent class.

This changed situation of the aristocracy accounts both for Castiglione's widespread appeal and for his telling transformation of the love relation. Because *The Courtier* created a mannered way of life that could give to a dependent nobility a sense of self-sufficiency, of inner power and control, which they had lost in a real economic and political sense, the book's popularity spread from Italy through Europe at large in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although set in the Urbino court of 1508, it was actually begun some ten years after that and published in 1528—after the sack of Rome, and at a time when the princely states of Italy and Europe were coming to resemble each other more closely than they had in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The monarchs of Europe, consolidating and centralizing their states, were at once protecting the privileges of their nobility and suppressing feudal power.[25] Likewise in Italy, as the entire country fell under the hegemony of Charles V, the nobility began to be stabilized. Throughout sixteenth-century Italy, new laws began to limit and regulate membership in a hereditary aristocratic class, prompting a new concern with legitimacy and purity of the blood. Castiglione's demand for female chastity in part responds to this particular concern. His theory of love as a whole responds to the general situation of the Renaissance nobility. In the discourse on love for which he made Bembo the spokesman, he brought to the love relation the same psychic attitudes with which he confronted the political situation. Indeed, he used the love relation as a symbol to convey his sense of political relations.

The changed times to which Castiglione refers in his introduction he experienced as a condition of servitude. The dominant problem of the sixteenth-century Italian nobility, like that of the English nobility under the Tudors, had become one of obedience. As one of Castiglione's courtiers expressed it, God had better grant them "good masters, for, once we have them, we have to endure them as they are" (p. 116). It is this transformation of aristocratic service to statism, which gave rise to Castiglione's leading idea of nobility as courtiers, that shaped his theory of love as well. Bembo's aging courtier, passionless in his rational love, sums up the theme of the entire book: how to maintain by detachment the sense of self now threatened by the loss of independent power. The soul in its earthly prison, the courtier in his social one, renounce the power of self-determination that has in fact been denied them. They renounce *wanting* such power; "If the flame is extinguished, the danger is also extinguished" (p. 347). In love, as in service, the courtier preserves independence by avoiding desire for real love, real power. He does not touch or allow himself to be touched by either. "To enjoy beauty without suffering, the Courtier, aided by reason, must turn his desire entirely away from the body and to beauty alone, [to] contemplate it in its simple and pure self" (p. 351). He may gaze at the object of his love-service, he may listen, but there he reaches the limits of the actual physical relation and transforms her beauty, or the prince's power, into a pure idea. "Spared the bitterness and calamities" of thwarted passion thereby, he loves and serves an image only. The courtier gives obeisance, but only to a reality of his own making: "for he will always carry his precious treasure with him, shut up in his heart, and will also, by the force of his own imagination, make her beauty [or the prince's power] much more beautiful than in reality it is" (p. 352).

Thus, the courtier can serve and not serve, love and not love. He can even attain the relief of surrender by making use of this inner love-service "as a step" to mount to a more sublime sense of service. Contemplation of the Idea the courtier has discovered within his own soul excites a purified desire to love, to serve, to unite with intellectual beauty (or power). Just as love guided his soul from the particular beauty of his beloved to the universal concept, love of that intelligible beauty (or power) glimpsed within transports the soul from the self, the particular intellect,

to the universal intellect. Aflame with an utterly spiritual love (or a spiritualized sense of service), the soul then "understands all things intelligible, and without any veil or cloud views the wide sea of pure divine beauty, and receives it into itself, enjoying that supreme happiness of which the senses are incapable" (p. 354). What does this semimystical discourse teach but that by "true" service, the courtier may break out of his citadel of independence, his inner aloofness, to rise and surrender to the pure idea of Power? What does his service become but a freely chosen Obedience, which he can construe as the supreme virtue? In both its sublimated acceptance or resignation and its inner detachment from the actual, Bembo's discourse on love exemplifies the relation between subject and state, obedience and power, that runs through the entire book. Indeed, Castiglione regarded the monarch's power exactly as he had Bembo present the lady's beauty, as symbolic of God: "As in the heavens the sun and the moon and the other stars exhibit to the world a certain likeness of God, so on earth a much liker image of God is seen in . . . princes." Clearly, if "men have been put by God under princes" (p. 307), if they have been placed under princes as under His image, what end can be higher than service in virtue, than the purified experience of Service?

The likeness of the lady to the prince in this theory, her elevation to the pedestal of Neo-Platonic love, both masks and expresses the new dependency of the Renaissance noblewoman. In a structured hierarchy of superior and inferior, she seems to be served by the courtier. But this love theory really made her serve—and stand as a symbol of how the relation of domination may be reversed, so that the prince could be made to serve the interests of the courtier. The Renaissance lady is not desired, not loved for herself. Rendered passive and chaste, she merely mediates the courtier's safe transcendence of an otherwise demeaning necessity. On the plane of symbolism, Castiglione thus had the courtier dominate both her and the prince; and on the plane of reality, he indirectly acknowledged the courtier's actual domination of the lady by having him adopt "woman's ways" in his relations to the prince. Castiglione had to defend against effeminacy in the courtier, both the charge of it (p. 92) and the actuality of faces "soft and feminine as many attempt to have who not only curl their hair and pluck their eyebrows, but preen

themselves . . . and appear so tender and languid . . . and utter their words so limply" (p. 36). Yet the close-fitting costume of the Renaissance nobleman displayed the courtier exactly as Castiglione would have him, "well built and shapely of limb" (p. 36). His clothes set off his grace, as did his nonchalant ease, the new manner of those "who seem in words, laughter, in posture not to care" (p. 44). To be attractive, accomplished, and seem not to care; to charm and do so coolly—how concerned with impression, how masked the true self. And how manipulative: petitioning his lord, the courtier knows to be "discreet in choosing the occasion, and will ask things that are proper and reasonable; and he will so frame his request, omitting those parts that he knows can cause displeasure, and will skillfully make easy the difficult points so that his lord will always grant it" (p. 111). In short, how like a woman—or a dependent, for that is the root of the simile.

The accommodation of the sixteenth- and seventeenth century courtier to the ways and dress of women in no way bespeaks a greater parity between them. It reflects, rather, that general restructuring of social relations that entailed for the Renaissance noblewoman a greater dependency upon men as feudal independence and reciprocity yielded to the state. In this new situation, the entire nobility suffered a loss. Hence, the courtier's posture of dependency, his concern with the pleasing impression, his resolve "to perceive what his prince likes, and . . . to bend himself to this" (pp. 110–111). But as the state overrode aristocratic power, the lady suffered a double loss. Deprived of the possibility of independent power that the combined interests of kinship and feudalism guaranteed some women in the Middle Ages, and that the states of early modern Europe would preserve in part, the Italian noblewoman in particular entered a relation of almost universal dependence upon her family and her husband. And she experienced this dependency at the same time as she lost her commanding position with respect to the secular culture of her society.

Hence, the love theory of the Italian courts developed in ways as indifferent to the interests of women as the courtier, in his self-sufficiency, was indifferent as a lover. It accepted, as medieval courtly love did not, the double standard. It bound the lady to chastity, to the merely procreative sex of political marriage,

just as her weighty and costly costume came to conceal and constrain her body while it displayed her husband's noble rank. Indeed, the person of the woman became so inconsequential to this love relation that one doubted whether she could love at all. The question that emerges at the end of *The Courtier* as to "whether or not women are as capable of divine love as men" (p. 350) belongs to a love theory structured by mediation rather than mutuality. Woman's beauty inspired love but the lover, the agent, was man. And the question stands unresolved at the end of *The Courtier*—because at heart the spokesmen for Renaissance love were not really concerned about women or love at all.

Where courtly love had used the social relation of vassalage to work out a genuine concern with sexual love, Castiglione's thought moved in exactly the opposite direction. He allegorized love as fully as Dante did, using the relation of the sexes to symbolize the new political order. In this, his love theory reflects the social realities of the Renaissance. The denial of the right and power of women to love, the transformation of women into passive "others" who serve, fits the self-image of the courtier, the one Castiglione sought to remedy. The symbolic relation of the sexes thus mirrors the new social relations of the state, much as courtly love displayed the feudal relations of reciprocal personal dependence. But Renaissance love reflects, as well, the actual condition of dependency suffered by noblewomen as the state arose. If the courtier who charms the prince bears the same relation to him as the lady bears to the courtier, it is because Castiglione understood the relation of the sexes in the same terms that he used to describe the political relation: i.e., as a relation between servant and lord. The nobleman suffered this relation in the public domain only. The lady, denied access to a freely chosen, mutually satisfying love relation, suffered it in the personal domain as well. Moreover, Castiglione's theory, unlike the courtly love it superseded, subordinated love itself to the public concerns of the Renaissance nobleman. He set forth the relation of the sexes as one of dependency and domination, but he did so in order to express and deal with the political relation and its problems. The personal values of love, which the entire feudality once prized, were henceforth increasingly left to the lady. The courtier formed his primary bond with the modern prince.

In sum, a new division between personal and public life made itself felt as the state came to organize Renaissance society, and with that division the modern relation of the sexes made its appearance,[26] even among the Renaissance nobility. Noblewomen, too, were increasingly removed from public concerns—economic, political, and cultural—and although they did not disappear into a private realm of family and domestic concerns as fully as their sisters in the patrician bourgeoisie, their loss of public power made itself felt in new constraints placed upon their personal as well as their social lives. Renaissance ideas on love and manners, more classical than medieval, and almost exclusively a male product, expressed this new subordination of women to the interests of husbands and male-dominated kin groups and served to justify the removal of women from an "unladylike" position of power and erotic independence. All the advances of Renaissance Italy, its protocapitalist economy, its states, and its humanistic culture, worked to mold the noblewoman into an aesthetic object: decorous, chaste, and doubly dependent—on her husband as well as the prince.

Notes

1. The traditional view of the equality of Renaissance women with men goes back to Jacob Burckhardt's classic, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). It has found its way into most general histories of women, such as Mary Beard's *Women as Force in History* (1946), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), and Emily James Putnam's *The Lady* (1910), although the latter is a sensitive and sophisticated treatment. It also dominates most histories of Renaissance women, the best of which is E. Rodocanachi, *La femme italienne avant, pendant et après la Renaissance*, Hachette, Paris, 1922. A notable exception is Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1956, who discovered there was no such parity.

2. The major Renaissance statement of the bourgeois domestication of women was made by Leon Battista Alberti in Book 3 of *Della Famiglia* (c. 1435), which is a free adaptation of the Athenian situation described by Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus*.

3. Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John J. Parry, Columbia University Press, New York, 1941, pp. 150–151.

4. Maurice Valency, *In Praise of Love: An Introduction to the Love-Poetry of the Renaissance*, Macmillan, New York, 1961, p. 146.

5. *"E il dompna deu a son drut far honor/Cum ad amic, mas non cum a seignor."* Ibid., p. 64.

6. Lanval (Sir Launfal), *Les lais de Marie de France*, ed. Paul Tuffrau, L'Edition d'Art H. Piazza, Paris, n.d., p. 41. English ed., *Lays of Marie de France*, J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton, London and New York, 1911.

7. Excellent trans. and ed. by W. W. Comfort, *Arthurian Romances*, Dent and Dutton Everyman's Library, London and New York, 1970, p. 286.

8. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1–2, q. 28, art. 5.

9. Lanval, *Les lais*, p. 10.

10. Thomas Frederick Crane, *Italian Social Customs of the Sixteenth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1920, pp. 10–11.

11. As Marc Bloch pointed out, the great French principalities that no longer required personal military service on the part of their holders were among the first to be passed on to women when male heirs were wanting. *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1964, p. 201.

12. David Herlihy, "Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701–1200," *Traditio*, 18 (1962), 89–120. Also, "Women in Medieval Society," *The Smith History Lecture*, University of St. Thomas, Texas, 1971. For a fine new work on abbesses, see Joan Morris, *The Lady Was a Bishop*, Collier and Macmillan, New York and London, 1973. Marie de France may have been an abbess of Shaftesbury.

13. Emily James Putnam, *The Lady*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1970, p. 118. See also the chapter on the abbess in the same book.

14. From *The Women Troubadours*, trans. and ed. by Meg Bogin, Paddington Press, New York/London, 1976.

15. Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe 1100–1350*, Mentor Books, New York, 1963, pp. 167, 178–179.

16. This was Amy Kelly's surmise in "Eleanor of Aquitaine and Her Courts of Love," *Speculum*, 12 (January 1937), 3–19.

17. From *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldesar Castiglione, a new translation by Charles S. Singleton (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 20. Copyright © 1959 by Charles S. Singleton and Edgar de N. Mayhew. This and other quotations throughout the chapter are reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Co., Inc.

18. Selections from the correspondence of Renaissance noblewomen can be found in the biographies listed in the bibliography.

19. An interesting exception is W. Ong's "Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite," *Studies in Philology*, 56 (1959), 103–124; also Margaret Leah King's "The Religious Retreat of Isotta Nogarola (1418–1466)," *Signs*, Summer 1978.

20. Dante Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova*, trans. Barbara Reynolds, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England and Baltimore, 1971, poem 18.

21. Frederick Goldin, trans., *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères*, Doubleday, New York, 1973, p. 325.

22. David Thompson and Alan F. Nagel, eds. and trans., *The Three Crowns of Florence: Humanist Assessments of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972.

23. For Renaissance humanistic and courtly literature, Vittorio Rossi, *Il quattrocento*, F. Vallardi, Milan, 1933; Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1956. On erotic life, interesting remarks by David Herlihy, "Some Psychological and Social Roots of Violence in the Tuscan Cities," *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200–1500*, ed. Lauro Martines, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, pp. 129–154.

24. For historical context, Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 195–216; N. J. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretive History of Kiss Symbolism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969; Morton Hunt, *The Natural History of Love*, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1967.

25. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean World*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973; A. Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società Veneta*, Laterza, Bari, 1964; Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965.

26. The status of women as related to the distinction of public and private spheres of activity in various societies is a key idea in most of the anthropological studies in *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1974.

Suggestions for Further Reading

On Renaissance women: Stanley Chojnacki, "Patrician Women in Early Renaissance Venice," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 21 (1974), 1976–203; Susan Groag Bell, "Christine de Pizan," *Feminist Studies*, 3 (Spring/Summer 1976), 173–184; Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Notes on Women in the Renaissance," *Conceptual Frameworks in Women's History* (Sarah Lawrence Publications, Bronxville, N.Y., 1976); Margaret Leah King, "The Religious Retreat of Isotta Nogarola," *Signs*, Summer 1978; Kathleen Casey, "Reconstructing the Experience of Medieval Woman," *Liberating Women's History*, ed. Berenice Carroll (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1976), 224–249. With the exception of Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1956), and Ernst Breisach, *Caterina Sforza: A Renaissance Virago* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967), all other serious studies stem from the first wave of the feminist movement. They form a necessary basis, although they concern themselves almost exclusively with "exceptional" women and are not sensitive to socioeconomic factors. Among them, Marian Andrews (pseud. Christopher Hare), *The Most Illustrious Ladies of the Italian Renaissance* (Scribner's, New York, 1904); Julia Cartwright (Mrs. Ady), *Isabella d'Este*, 2 vols. (Dutton, New York, 1903) and *Beatrice d'Este* (1899); Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Lucrezia Borgia* (Blom, 1968 reprint of 1903 ed.); E. Rodocanachi, *La femme italienne avant, pendant et après la Renaissance* (Hachette, Paris, 1922); T. A. Trollope, *A Decade of Italian Women*, 2 vols. (Chapman & Hall, London, 1859).

The most significant studies in demographic and social history bearing upon Renaissance women are those of David Herlihy, among whose several articles are "Mapping Households in Medieval Italy," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 58 (April 1972), 1–24; "Viellir à Florence au Quattrocento," *Annales*, 24 (November–December 1969), 1338–1352; "The Tuscan Town in the Quattrocento," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 1 (1970),

81–110; also, a forthcoming book on the Tuscan family. Two demographic studies on infanticide and foundlings in Florence by Richard C. Trexler are in *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 1, nos. 1 and 2 (1973); Gene Brucker has excellent selections from wills, marriage contracts, government minutes, legal judgments, etc., in *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study* (Harper, New York, 1971).

Histories of family life and childrearing among the courtly aristocracy of early modern France supplement very nicely Castiglione's portrayal of the courtier and court lady. Among them, Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (Knopf, New York, 1965), and David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (Harper, New York, 1972). Although he does not deal with Renaissance Italy, Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965) is indispensable reading for information about aristocratic social life.

Primary sources on medieval and Renaissance love used in the text in English translation are: Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love* (trans. John J. Parry, Columbia University Press, New York, 1941); *Lays of Marie de France* (J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton, London and New York, 1911); Chrétien de Troyes's Lancelot from *Arthurian Romances* (trans. and ed. W. W. Comfort, Dent and Dutton Everyman's Library, London and New York, 1970); Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (trans. Charles S. Singleton, Doubleday, New York, 1959); Dante Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova* (trans. Barbara Reynolds, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England and Baltimore, 1971). See, too, F. X. Newman, *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (The State University of New York Press, Albany, 1967), for contemporary opinion and a good bibliography. The soundest and most sensitive study is still Maurice Valency's *In Praise of Love* (Macmillan, New York, 1961). Two fine articles on the literature of love, sex, and marriage in early modern Europe are by William Haller, "Hail Wedded Love," *A Journal of English Literary History*, 13 (June 1946), 79–97, and Paul Siegel, "The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love," *Studies in Philology*, 42 (1945), 164–182.