

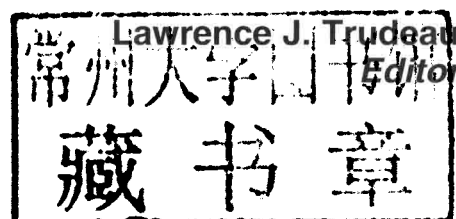
Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 303

Volume 303

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short-Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations



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**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,
Vol. 303**

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Volumes 1 through 87 of TCLC featured authors who died between 1900 and 1959; beginning with Volume 88, the series expanded to include authors who died between 1900 and 1999. Beginning with Volume 26, every fourth volume of TCLC was devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers. With TCLC 285, the series returned to a standard author approach, with some entries devoted to a single important work of world literature and others devoted to literary topics.

TCLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), *Shakespearean Criticism* (SC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC).

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author's name (if applicable).
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a

free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. As a further aid to the reader, a list of **Principal English Translations** is provided for authors who did not publish in English; the list focuses primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, plays are dated by first performance, not first publication, and the location of the first performance is given, if known. Lists of **Representative Works** discussed in the entry appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** describing each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors who have appeared in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) style or University of Chicago Press style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Anna Banti

1895-1985

(Born Lucia Lopresti; full name Lucia Lopresti Longhi)
Italian novelist, short-story writer, and art historian.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prolific writers in postwar Italian literature, Banti is best known as a writer of historical fiction. She won renown with her first major novel, *Artemisia* (1947), a fictionalized biography of the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi that also incorporates elements from Banti's own life story. The work sounds many of the themes that occupied Banti throughout her career: the indeterminacy of historical knowledge, the role of women in a male-dominated society, and the creation of art as an act of individuality. Banti explored these themes in both historical and contemporary settings in works such as *Le donne muoiono* (1951; may be translated as *The Women Are Dying*), *La camicia bruciata* (1973; may be translated as *The Burned Nightgown*), and *Un grido lacerante* (1981; published as *A Piercing Cry*). By the time of her death in 1985, Banti was celebrated as one of Italy's greatest writers of the twentieth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Banti was born Lucia Lopresti in Florence, Italy, on 27 June 1895 to a family of Calabrian and Piedmontese origin. A gifted child, she began to write stories at the age of five. She studied art history at the University of Rome, and in 1919, her essay "Marco Boschini scrittore d'arte del secolo XVII" (may be translated as "Marco Boschini, Writer on Art of the Seventeenth Century") was lauded by one of Italy's leading intellectuals, Benedetto Croce. After working briefly as a curator in Abruzzo, in 1924, she married her former professor, the Italian art historian Roberto Longhi, and though she found success as an art historian, scholars have suggested that she ended her promising career so as not to compete with her husband. She continued to write about art under her maiden and married names until 1934, when she published her first short story, "Cortile" (may be translated as "Courtyard"), under the pseudonym she used publicly thereafter, Anna Banti.

During the following decade, Banti found success writing both short- and long-form fiction. In 1937, she published her first novel, *Itinerario di Paolina* (may be translated as *Paolina's Itinerary*), followed by *Il coraggio delle donne* (1940; may be translated as *The Courage of Women*), a collection of five lengthy short stories. The novel *Sette lune* (1941; may be translated as *Seven Moons*) was fol-

lowed by another collection of stories, *Le monache cantano* (1942; may be translated as *The Nuns Are Singing*). Banti continued to write during World War II (1939-45), even as the fighting encroached on Florence. By 1944, she had nearly completed the manuscript for *Artemisia*, but it was lost when her home was destroyed during fighting between the city's German occupiers and Allied forces. By 1947, she had rewritten the novel.

In 1949, Banti's husband was appointed to a position at the University of Florence, and later that year, the couple founded the literary and art history journal *Paragone*. Banti was chief editor for literary issues; Longhi oversaw the figurative-arts content. During the 1950s, *Paragone* became the primary venue for Banti's fiction. In addition to fiction, she published film criticism and translations of English and French novels by Virginia Woolf, Colette, and others. Around 1950, Banti wrote the short story "Lavinia fuggita" (may be translated as "Lavinia Has Fled"), perhaps her second most important work. The story was published in *The Women Are Dying*, which won the prestigious Viareggio Prize in 1952. She won the 1955 Premio Marzotto with *Allarme sul lago* (1954; may be translated as *Alarm on the Lake*), a novel presented in the form of three interlocking stories. Banti continued to publish works at a rapid rate through the 1950s and 1960s. Among these works of note is *Noi credevamo* (1967; may be translated as *We Believed*), a historical novel about the unification of Italy in the nineteenth century. The novel *The Burned Nightgown*, the winner of the D'Annunzio Prize, has been frequently cited by critics as her most successful historical novel, as it does not include autobiographical elements like *Artemisia* and other earlier works.

Banti continued to write prolifically late in her career. Notable works from this period include the 1974 short story "Tela e cenere" (may be translated as "Canvas and Ashes"), the story collection *Da un paese vicino* (1975; may be translated as *From a Neighboring Country*), and the critical study *Giovanni da San Giovanni, pittore della contraddizione* (1977; may be translated as *Giovanni from San Giovanni, a Painter of Contradiction*). In 1981, Banti published her last major work of fiction, the autobiographical novel *A Piercing Cry*. She died in Ronchi di Massa, Italy, on 25 September 1985, at the age of 90.

MAJOR WORKS

Banti's best-known and most critically scrutinized novel is *Artemisia*. In her rewritten version, Banti eschewed the

purely historical perspective of the original in favor of a more self-conscious narrative that interweaves the story of her own wartime struggles and sufferings with that of the persecution faced by Artemisia Gentileschi. The daughter of Orazio Gentileschi, a famous painter from Pisa, Gentileschi became one of the great painters of the Italian Baroque and the first woman to be admitted to the Accademia del Disegno in Florence. Banti's novel depicts Gentileschi's apprenticeship under her father, her struggle to paint, her rape at the age of fourteen, and the ensuing trial. Like many historical novels, *Artemisia* draws upon and depicts the known facts of Gentileschi's biography as a framework for a fictional narrative that includes speculative psychological development of the major character, but Banti also uses the novel to explore her own life in light of Gentileschi's. The novel begins with a description of Banti herself, dressed only in her nightgown, sitting on a gravel path in the Boboli Gardens of Florence, distraught and stunned by the loss not only of her manuscript but also of the city of Florence itself, burned by the retreating Germans in August 1944. While in this state, Banti is visited by the ethereal presence of Gentileschi, who narrates, and authorizes Banti to narrate, her story. A novel about female empowerment, suffering, and artistic triumph, *Artemisia* does not fit easily into such conventional genres as the historical novel or the *künstlerroman* ("art novel"); rather, it is a tale of historical identification and a blending of autobiography and biography and of history and fiction.

We Believed is another historical novel noted for its autobiographical elements, but the protagonist in this case is male: a patriotic Calabrian who shares the author's surname, Domenico Lopresti. Set in the mid-nineteenth century, the novel tells of Lopresti's victories and defeats during the struggle for Italian unification, a period known as the Risorgimento (1815-71). The novel is written as a fictional autobiography, Lopresti's first-person memoir. Although it chronicles the struggles of a patriotic hero, *We Believed* is not a mere celebration of the ideals behind unification. Rather, as Norma Bouchard (2005; see Further Reading) observed, the novel "subverts visions of Italy's unification as progress from division to unity, from local to national identities and, by so doing, relocates the assumptions of nationalist narratives within an imaginary, utopian realm of fiction."

In addition to her popular and critical success as a novelist, Banti published many short stories, the most often discussed being "Lavinia Has Fled." Much like *Artemisia*, the story depicts a young artist, an orphaned musician who resides in a Venetian charity hospital famous for its all-girl orchestra and choir associated with the Italian Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi. The director of the choir, Lavinia has a talent that leads her beyond mere performance to an interest in composition, and, in a transgressive act of empowerment, she secretly replaces one of Vivaldi's oratorios with her own. In the wake of the scandal that erupts following the performance of her work, Lavinia is forced to resign her position and leave. Olga Ragusa (1992) charac-

terized Lavinia's act as the inevitable outcome of her "hunger for complete, consummated, self-expression." As in *Artemisia*, "Lavinia Has Fled" draws attention to Banti's most fundamental theme, the struggle and transgression inherent in the creation of art.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Banti's fascination with and depiction of female artists has attracted the critical attention of feminist theorists, many of whom view the protagonist of Banti's *Artemisia* as a prototypical feminist figure. In her 1994 essay, JoAnn Cannon argued that Gentileschi's art, as well as her struggle to create it, calls traditional gender roles into question. Cannon declared that, in its portrayal of Gentileschi as one "torn between the conflicting roles of woman and artist," the novel "convincingly sets forth both the dilemma of the woman artist and the dilemma of the writer of a woman's life." Anna Maria Torriglia (1996) proposed that Banti "roots her relationship" to Gentileschi "in their shared gender, thus turning gender into a bond of solidarity." For Paola Giuli (2000), the narrator's discovery of a forgotten painting and simultaneous acknowledgment of the work as the self-portrait of *Artemisia*'s protagonist—a controversial attribution at the time of Banti's writing—symbolizes the "feminist historian's revisionist mission: to seek out and reevaluate forgotten or undervalued women artists, in spite of the literary establishment's dismissive attitude of such artists and disapproval of such endeavors."

Another vein of inquiry in studies of Banti concerns the confluence of historical biography and autobiography in much of her fiction. Miriam Fuchs (2004) argued that Banti's personal experience of loss forced her to reconsider her own story in relation to that of Gentileschi, and it was this reconsideration that compelled the author to incorporate her autobiography into the historical novel. Chiara De Santi (2011) traced parallels in the lives of Gentileschi and Banti, focusing in particular on similarities between Banti's relationship with her art-critic husband and the artist's relationship with her father.

Many scholars have considered Banti's relationships to the authors who influenced her career. Lucia Boldrini (2009) contended that Banti's literary connection to Woolf extended beyond that of translator to a shared interest in feminist concerns and the role of the woman writer. In her analysis of Banti's historical fiction, Paola Carù (1999; see Further Reading) focused on Banti's views regarding the theories of the nineteenth-century Italian novelist and historian Alessandro Manzoni, particularly as expressed in his critical work *On the Historical Novel* (1850). According to Carù, Banti rejected Manzoni's emphasis on the primacy of historical fact, producing instead stories notable for "intertwining 'official' facts with probable hypotheses."

Gregory Luther

PRINCIPAL WORKS

"Marco Boschini scrittore d'arte del secolo XVII" [may be translated as "Marco Boschini, Writer on Art of the Seventeenth Century"]. *Arte* 22 (1919): 13-33. (History)

"Cortile" [may be translated as "Courtyard"]. *Occidente* Oct.-Dec. 1934: 82-7. (Short story)

Itinerario di Paolina [may be translated as *Paolina's Itinerary*]. Rome: Augustea, 1937. (Novel)

**Il coraggio delle donne* [may be translated as *The Courage of Women*]. Florence: Le Monnier, 1940. (Short stories)

"Verità su Beatrice" [published as "The Truth about Beatrice"]. *Oggi* 25 Oct. 1941: 6. (Essay)

"Piaceri di Laura" [published as "Laura's Pleasures"]. *Oggi* 27 Dec. 1941: 14. (Essay)

Sette lune [may be translated as *Seven Moons*]. Milan: Bompiani, 1941. (Novel)

Europa milleseicentosei [may be translated as *Europe 1606*]. By Bernardo Bizoni. Ed. Anna Banti. Milan: Rizzoli, 1942. (Travel essays)

Le monache cantano [may be translated as *The Nuns Are Singing*]. Rome: Tuminelli, 1942. (Short stories)

Artemisia. Florence: Sansoni, 1947. (Novel)

La fiera delle vanità. Trans. Banti from *Vanity Fair*, by William Makepeace Thackeray. Milan: Longanesi, 1948. (Novel)

La camera di Jacobbe. Trans. Banti from *Jacob's Room*, by Virginia Woolf. Milan: Mondadori, 1950. Pub. as *La camera di Jacob*. Milan: Mondadori, 1980. (Novel)

†*Le donne muoiono* [may be translated as *The Women Are Dying*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1951. (Short stories)

Il bastardo [may be translated as *The Bastard*]. Florence: Sansoni, 1953. Pub. as *La casa piccola* [may be translated as *The Little House*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1961. (Novel)

Fra Angelico. Milan: Garzanti, 1953. (Criticism)

Lorenzo Lotto. Florence: Sansoni, 1953. Pub. as *Rivelazione di Lorenzo Lotto* [may be translated as *Lorenzo Lotto's Revelation*]. Florence: Sansoni, 1981. (Criticism)

Allarme sul lago [may be translated as *Alarm on the Lake*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1954. (Novel)

L'amico dei pittori [may be translated as *The Friend of the Painters*]. Trans. Banti from *L'ami des peintres*, by

Francis Carco. Milan: Martello, 1955. (Correspondence and reminiscences)

Diego Velasquez. Milan: Garzanti, 1955. (Criticism)

Claude Monet. Milan: Garzanti, 1956. (Criticism)

"*La monaca di Sciangai*" e altri racconti [may be translated as "*Shanghai's Nun*" and *Other Stories*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1957. (Short stories)

L'arte italiana [may be translated as *The Italian Art*]. Trans. Banti from *L'art italien*, by André Chastel. 2 vols. Florence: Sansoni, 1957-58. (Criticism)

Corte Savella [may be translated as *Savella Court*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1960. (Play)

Opinioni [may be translated as *Opinions*]. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1961. (Criticism)

Le mosche d'oro [may be translated as *The Golden Flies*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1962. (Novel)

Campi elisi [may be translated as *Elysian Fields*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1963. (Short stories)

Matilde Serao. Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1965. (Criticism)

Noi credevamo [may be translated as *We Believed*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1967. (Novel)

Il grande amico [may be translated as *The Great Friend*]. Trans. Banti from *Le grand Meaulnes*, by Henri Alain-Fournier. Milan: Mondadori, 1971. Pub. as *Il gran Meaulnes*. Milan: Mondadori, 1977. (Novel)

Je vous écris d'un pays lointain [may be translated as *I Write You from a Far Country*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1971. (Short stories)

La camicia bruciata [may be translated as *The Burned Nightgown*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1973. (Novel)

Tela e cenere [may be translated as *Canvas and Ashes*]. Pistoia: Pacinotti, 1974. (Short story)

Da un paese vicino [may be translated as *From a Neighboring Country*]. Milan: Mondadori, 1975. (Short stories)

Giovanni da San Giovanni, pittore della contraddizione [may be translated as *Giovanni from San Giovanni, a Painter of Contradiction*]. Florence: Sansoni, 1977. (Criticism)

La vagabonda [may be translated as *The Female Vagabond*]. Trans. Banti from *La vagabonde*, by Colette. Milan: Mondadori, 1977. (Novel)

Caterina. Trans. Banti from *Northanger Abbey*, by Jane Austen. Florence: Giunti-Marzocco, 1978. (Novel)

Un grido lacerante [published as *A Piercing Cry*]. Milan: Rizzoli, 1981. (Novel)

Quando anche le donne si misero a dipingere [may be translated as *When the Women Also Started to Paint*]. Milan: Tartaruga, 1982. (Criticism)

La signorina e altri racconti [published as *The Signorina and Other Stories*]. Ed. Carol Lazzaro-Weis. New York: MLA, 2001. (Short stories)

Romanzi e racconti [may be translated as *Novels and Short Stories*]. Ed. Fausta Garavini. Milan: Mondadori, 2013. (Novels and short stories)

Principal English Translations

Artemisia. Trans. Shirley D'Ardia Caracciolo. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988. Print.

"The Courage of Women." *New Italian Women: A Collection of Short Stories*. Ed. Martha King. New York: Italica, 1989. 1-22. Print. Trans. of "Il coraggio delle donne."

"From *Artemisia*." Trans. Joan Borrelli. *Longman Anthology of World Literature by Women, 1875-1975*. Ed. Marian Arkin and Barbara Shollar. London: Longman, 1989. 340-43. Print. Partial trans. of *Artemisia*.

A Piercing Cry. Trans. Daria Valentini and S. Mark Lewis. New York: Lang, 1996. Print. Trans. of *Un grido lacerante*.

"Laura's Pleasures." Trans. Paola Carù. *Forum Italicum* 32.1 (1998): 215-18. Print. Trans. of "Piaceri di Laura."

"The Truth about Beatrice." Trans. Carù. *Forum Italicum* 32.1 (1998): 210-14. Print. Trans. of "Verità su Beatrice."

The Signorina and Other Stories. Trans. Martha King and Carol Lazzaro-Weis. New York: MLA, 2001. Print. Trans. of *La signorina e altri racconti*.

*Includes the story "Il coraggio delle donne" [published as "The Courage of Women"].

†Includes the story "Lavinia fuggita" [may be translated as "Lavinia Has Fled"].

which *Artemisia Gentileschi* appears to be telling her life story to the narrator.]

Artemisia is not a biography but rather a novel based on the life of the seventeenth century painter, Artemisia Gentileschi. The author unfolds the story in a very ingenious manner. She makes it appear that Artemisia is telling her about her life. From time to time she halts the story to inject her own comments.

As a child Artemisia lived in Rome. At an early age her father and a fellow-artist Agostino taught her to paint. This same Agostino seduced her, which was the beginning of a disillusioned and adventurous life. To safeguard the family honor her father arranged her marriage with Antonio Stiatessi, a peddler. After the ceremony she went with her father to Florence where they both painted. A year later he accepted an offer to paint at the Court of England, so Artemisia had to return to Rome to live with her husband and his family. All went well until she tried to change Antonio's mode of living. He began to sulk and finally left her, not knowing that she was bearing his child. From Rome she went to Naples, where her daughter Porziella was born, reared and married.

Artemisia painted to earn a living and all her patrons and models are delightfully described by the author. After her daughter's marriage she joined her father in England and there also painted at Court.

Thomas Peterson (essay date 1987-88)

SOURCE: Peterson, Thomas. "The 'Feminine' Writing of Anna Banti: *Un grido lacerante*." *Nemla Italian Studies* 11-12 (1987-88): 87-96. Print.

[In the following essay, Peterson traces the evolution of Banti's prose, from the early, ornate works influenced by the prosa d'arte ("art-prose") movement of the 1920s and 1930s to the more classical writing of her late autobiographical novel, *A Piercing Cry*. He then compares *A Piercing Cry* to two other novels by Italian women, Sibilla Aleramo's autobiographical *A Woman at Bay* (1907) and Nobel laureate Grazia Deledda's *Ashes* (1904).]

Does a study of women authors necessarily implicate a feminist discourse? The answer seems to be yes insofar as readers have been conditioned to assume a prevalent male identity—or authority—behind the Text, or in society: a Cartesian subject, detached from commitments, moral actions, or community. Yet beyond this conditioning, one might answer *no*, seeing in gender an insufficient index for that "feminine" writing centered on the pathos and intuition of conversing selves rather than on abstractions or declarations of truth. Anna Banti employs conventional narrative structures to expand the effective presence of a feminine voice in fiction. Yet, as Veronica Franco and Gaspara Stampa had done with the sonnet in the 16th century, she

CRITICISM

Angelina Grimaldi Cioffari (review date 1949)

SOURCE: Cioffari, Angelina Grimaldi. Rev. of *Artemisia*, by Anna Banti. *Books Abroad* 23.3 (1949): 306. Print.

[In the following review, Cioffari offers a brief synopsis of the plot of *Artemisia* and an admiring discussion of Banti's "ingenious" narrative technique in the novel, through

subverts the literary institution from within, investing details with a tactility of emotion not found in her male counterparts.

Among Banti's predecessors is Sibilla Aleramo, whose documentation of a struggle against archaic values and sexual hypocrisy in a village culture is a painful verification of her chosen "sybilline" identity, and Grazia Deledda, whose blend of realism and symbolism, and deceptively simple craft, leaves the reader to infer what lies behind a "naïve" though agitated view of primitive culture.¹ Neither expounds on the psychological differences of women, but demonstrates them through "sensitivity," and within a cohesive model of dramatic fiction, an anomaly in an era of literary and psychological fragmentation. Unlike Gianna Manzini, her use of a stylized and decentered *prosa d'arte* is conditioned by a perception of such prose as ephemeral unless accompanied by the unifying factor of a meditation on the situation of women. Brilliance of style is combined with "dialogue," presupposing the presence of a community of speakers, now and through history. As in her earlier "historical" novels she assumes the responsibility for such a presupposition, while preserving the peculiarity of a private existence in which the typical and commonplace are repositories of wisdom, their value somehow dependent on the atypical or "eccentric."

In her late work Banti increases both the internal dialogue and the aversion to monologicistic, hieratic prose, reflecting a departure from the modernist-experimentalist tradition, and, as Pasolini has said, a move toward the "classical," away from the "mannered." In *Un grido lacerante* [*A Piercing Scream*], in particular, her "feminine voice" is as far from the *prosa d'arte* of her beginnings as from any explicitly "feminist" ideology. Dialogical relationships in general depend on fluid and dialectical exchanges, and commitments. Like "feminine" writing, they ostensibly oppose any male-derived *logos* which divides spirit and knowledge, affect and intelligence. In this last novel, set like the masterworks of *verismo*, contemporaneously to their writing, internal dialogue constitutes the primary narrative means, within the autobiographical confession, to merge with the intellectual life of the culture. Diverse "codes" and social mores are employed to create a foreshortened portrait of a marriage and a career, with ethical emphasis. These provide resistance to the sanctioned "History" or dominant ideology which censors the personal voice, and restore coinage to the term "Sensitivity," fallen in disrepute among the fragmented texts of the twentieth century. Banti returns, like her predecessors, to an organic, realistic, means of picturing society through direct personal apprehension of experience. Her writing seeks to penetrate what is typical in society without yielding to clichés—whether of ideology or technique—avoiding the modernist-existentialist error of enclosing the subject within psychological boundaries, seeking rather to arrive at a classical representation of characters in whom pity and political acuity coexist. Her stories too draw together author

and reader in relation to a shared experience and comprehension of a cultural and linguistic heritage. Such dialogue, as proposed by Bakhtin, is not conditioned by the strictures of objective science or literary precept, but by the "respiration" of the speakers, the ineradicable continuum of their common pathos, the primacy of context over text.

If Spitzer was to note that the chorality of Verga was no longer appropriate in the era of the monologue of Hemingway, one might interpolate a middle style epitomized by dialogue, as a witness to and document of living material culture.² Such dialogue is a sustained and effective exchange between two (or more) voices, which may exist within a protagonist as options contemplated or discussed, or be figurally extended into the *dramatis personae*.³ The dual dialogue may fail due to the peremptory or parasitical intervention of a third party, who disturbs the ethical balance of the "dialogic imagination." If positively introduced, the third may stabilize the rapport.

In the *amorous dialogue* the third may be love itself, or its negation by the Electral or Oedipal parent, or rival, or their surrogate (siblings or authority figures, or simply work "principles," rules, statutes of order or consistency). The ideal (Platonic) configuration of dialogue is dual; but the "third," as proposed by Fourier, allows for "passionate equilibrium," and may be a parasite which unleashes the inherent violence of the dialogue (to which it assigns the name of passion, and opposes in the name of career, moralism, God, common sense, etc.). The *sensus communis* is frequently a component of the "chorus" which, like the parasite, thrives on the destabilization of the dual dialogue. But unlike the chorus (a capsule of society) the unwholesome parasite acts to block reconciliation, tainting the remnants of familiarity with the insensate formulas of the conformist, the embodied cliché, the false counsel, the interloper, etc. In contrast to this the dialogical represents biological success, evolutionary progress, political felicity, love.

Each of the novels discussed here involves a threat to dialogue, though none resorts overtly to its most typical pattern, the adulterous triangle. Sibilla Aleramo's autobiographical *Una donna* (1906), documents the consequences of male sexual violence and culturally learned infidelity, reflecting realities of both culture and conscience. Aleramo's "woman" (like the characters, unnamed) is raped at fifteen in the southern Italian town where her family has moved from the north. The rapist marries her to save her from "disgrace." He tells her of her father's infidelity with a woman in the village, destroying her respect for the one man who was her beacon and love, even as she is drawn into marriage with one who will perpetrate the same injustice. She is then scandalized by a harmless contact with an admirer in the village. The initial trauma catalyzes a series of inner transformations revealed through her inner dialogue, directed sentimentally to her son, who is born despite the wishes of the father, himself a social parasite typical of the culture of hypocrisy in which agnostic