



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI PADOVA

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### **WOMENWRITERS - The Self-Fashioning of Women Writers in Early Modern Italy (1490-1610)**

Today issues vital to women are on the public agenda: equal pay, childcare, domestic abuse, breast cancer research and curricular revision with an eye to the inclusion of women. These recent achievements have their origins in things women (and some male supporters) said - or rather wrote - for the first time 600 years ago. Women writers began to emerge as a collective, non-occasional, literary phenomenon in the long 16th century (1490-1610). While the development was to an extent pan-European, its centre of gravity was undoubtedly Italy. The activity of women writers has been well documented by historians and scholars of literature. However, unlike their male counterparts, interest in the self-fashioning and presentation of women writers in portraits has been only sporadically touched upon.

The project WOMENWRITERS will pursue 3 objectives: a) to assemble the intellectual biographies of 18 women writers included in 17 anthologies of poetry published in Venice (1545-1590), by detecting the strategies of self-fashioning in their published works; b) to collect and classify female portraits from the 16th century, in different media, on the basis of their association with the names of women writers, according to internal (inscriptions, attributes) or external (later traditions) evidence; c) to make a final assessment of the formal and visual strategies of self-fashioning adopted by women writers active in the long 16th century, and to provide the first quantification and classification of their portraits.

The general goal of WOMENWRITERS is to improve our current understanding of the role of women in the cultural and artistic life of the early modern period. The project will challenge preconceptions on Renaissance misogyny, while at the same time addressing current anxieties on attitudes around gender. Furthermore, by focusing on women writers, it will raise awareness on the still highly relevant problem of female access to education.

**UNIPD Supervisor:** Alessandra Pattanaro

**MSCA Fellow:** Sarah Ferrari

**Department:** Department of Cultural Heritage: Archaeology and History of Art, Cinema and Music

**Coordinator:** Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy)

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