Writing to Delight. Italian Short Stories by Nineteenth Century Women Writers, eds. Antonia Arslan and Gabriella Romani. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Pp. 210. ISBN 0-8020-3810-7. \$29.95

What a felicitous title the editors have assigned this volume, for beyond doubt it will be read with much delight. Delightful and also satisfying is the attention finally being paid to the late nineteenth century in Italy, not only through the volume under review but in several others that various publishers have offered recently. Overwhelmed by the great names of the first half of the century, and limited to an embarrassingly few literary stars in the second half, the nineteenth century in Italy has left the unwarranted impression of being a sparsely populated literary terrain. Such a statement applies notably for women writers whose cause remained even more hampered by the often cited refusals of at least two powerful stars, Tommaseo and Carducci, to address women writers seriously (although the former did promote Caterina Percoto and the latter became instrumental to the career of Annie Vivanti). Unfamiliarity with the Italian "tardo Ottocento" is especially true for non Italian readers who, accustomed to reading in translation, have not been made aware of the extraordinary wealth that the years between Italian Unification and the first World War have offered the world of literature, whether for study or sheer pleasure. This latest volume will surely correct such a perspective.

Writing to Delight contains a selection of twelve short stories by seven women writers: Matilde Serao, Neera, Marchesa Colombi, Caterina Percoto, Contessa Lara, Virginia Olper Monis and Bruno Sperani (Beatrice Speraz). Their contributions cover most of the latter half of the nineteenth century, from 1858 to 1894. At the end of the volume is a brief biography of each author with a list of her major writings.

Acknowledging the fact that many women authors of the period had to be omitted in this volume, editor Gabriella Romani also points out in her informative and detailed preface, that the women chosen all enjoyed various measures of success in their time and were known and respected in Italy. Of greater importance is the respect they enjoyed elsewhere in Europe. Wisely, both Romani and Antonia Arslan, who provides a post-face for the volume, allow the readers to discover for themselves the delight of the fictional pieces. Instead of literary criticism, Romani offers a historical framework for the stories, placing them within their social context.

As she rightly indicates, the stories did not just fill idle time for bourgeois ladies. These works also had a fundamental role in the society of the time, and in mirroring the social milieu of post-Risorgimento Italy, they also present to us today a valuable lesson in nineteenth-century Italian bourgeois social mores. But more: they reflect an era of unprecedented change and upheaval in a social environment highly dependent on tradition, one that historically did not cope well with new attitudes. We may think of Verga and his stories here; the short stories of this volume do not suffer in the comparison. In the world created by the women whose works are represented here, we see the deep psychological and spiritual turmoil of an Italy changing ineluctably and expanding quickly. We see the growth of the middle class and the often traumatic effects of industrialization. The

inevitable impact of increasing literacy, particularly female literacy, especially in the center and north of the peninsula, reveals itself through the stories (both from the perspective of the characters as from that of the intended reader); similarly the unstoppable focus on the new roles for women in post-Risorgimento Italy is reflected. It may be true that none of the authors here ever mentions fundamental feminist works by Luisa Anzoletti, or sculptress Adelaide Pandiani Maraini, nor the influence of foreign Italophiles such as Jessie Hillebrand, Alice Werner or Vernon Lee who worked assiduously to promote Italian literature in English translation; the names of the Cecchini sisters, (Caterina and Laudomia Zanoboni), of the Pasolinis (Angelica and her sister-in-law Maria), and countless others may be silenced even in this volume, but in the short stories their ideas insist on inserting themselves, willy nilly, into the fictional fabric of the narrative. Readers of the time came to expect and look forward to these and similar stories, *feuilleton* inspired, in the *Illustrazione italiana*, the *Fanfulla della Domenica*, the *Perseveranza* and other similar periodicals; they wanted to be delighted, they wanted to be informed, and in the manner of De Amicis' *Cuore*, they wanted to witness the building of a new Italy.

In reading the preface and post-face I was particularly struck by the sensitivity of Romani and Arslan to the cultural memory of this nineteenth-century world, far from us yet near. Gabriella Romani paraphrases Robert Hans Jauss to give a penetrating *raison d'être* for this book, should there still be readers dubious of the value of women's stories: these stories, she writes, "must be understood as the result of complex interrelations between different entities of the cultural world in which the writer operates (publisher, readership, academia, public opinion, etc.) rather than as an autonomous event merely expressing the individual authorial creativity" (p.5) This means that the translations, too, must demonstrate the same kind of sensitivity. Again, the volume provides a delightful surprise: the translations are thoughtfully executed, with brief notes to help us across the cultural divide. For example, the care and detail of searching out "milquetoast" to render as contemporary as possible a version of the Venetian "pepa freda" (Virginia Olper Moniz), and in other stories, the subtle indications of the interplay among *tu*, *Lei* and *Voi* as well as the thumbnail sketches of Italian products and customs long gone, enhance the value of this collection as a cultural memory album.

In this review, I have deliberately not commented upon the narrative techniques, plot or character development of the pieces. Read the stories. You will be most delighted.

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Collodi, Carlo. *Le Avventure di Pinocchio /The Adventures of Pinocchio the Puppet*. Testo inglese a fronte. Translation by Gloria Italiano. Caserta: Spring Edizioni, 2007. Pp. 255. ISBN 978-88-87764-63-2. €15

Those of us who teach Italian language and literature outside of Italy often sigh in despair over finding suitable texts for our students to enjoy as pleasure reading, or