

Contents

List of plates	viii
Acknowledgements	x
Frequently cited sources	xi
Introduction	1
Part I Ideals	
1 Woman's nature and characteristics	12
The case against women	12
Theological arguments	16
Biological arguments	18
Biology to social psychology: woman's temperament and characteristics	21
From description to prescription: notions of womanly virtues	25
2 The discourse of beauty and love	26
The nature and value of woman's beauty	29
Beauty and classical echoes	30
Beauty and vernacular poetry	32
Questioning and reversing poetic ideals of beauty	35
The diffusion of poetic ideals of beauty	37
Ideal love	38
3 The Virgin Mary	42
Women approaching Mary as woman and exemplar	43
Public cults	48
Private devotions	52
4 Female saints	56
Cults, prayers, stories	57
Female saints and female devotion	62
Renaissance saints and holy women	66
5 Famous and exemplary women	73
Goddesses	76
Old Testament heroines	76
Famous women among the ancients	79
Anti-heroines and their vices	85
Famous women and Renaissance women	87

Part II Life cycles

6 Girls	94
The birth of a daughter	95
Upbringing	97
Appearance and dress	100
Education	101
Social behaviour and pastimes	106
Poor girls	109
7 Betrothals and weddings	115
Choosing a husband/Choosing a wife	116
The betrothal	121
Dowries, gifts and commemorative art	127
The wedding and wedding festivities	129
8 Marriage and married life	137
The justification for marriage	137
Conduct and behaviour in marriage: the marriage treatise	142
Conduct and behaviour in marriage: two churchmen's views	144
Outward appearance	145
Domestic spaces and furnishings	150
Running a household	152
The life of married women	157
Preparing for death	160
Unhappy marriages	162
9 Conception, childbirth and the upbringing of children	167
Conception	168
Pregnancy	171
Childbirth	175
Festivities after the birth of a child	178
Death in childbirth	178
Bringing up children	183
10 Widows	187
Exemplary widows; widowhood in general	187
Alternative widowhoods	189
The aftermath of bereavement	190
Coping alone: financial and practical matters	194
Bringing up children	197
Remarriage	198
Influential widows	201
Widows dispose of their estates	202
Piety and charitable activities	205

Part III Roles

11 Nuns and women in religion	210
Entering a convent: procedures, motivations, personnel	211
The monastic way of life: ideals and practices	215
Problems and abuses	220
The physical environment of nuns; their use of artefacts	222
Nuns' social contacts and cultural roles	227
The Third Orders and other non-enclosed religious groupings	230
12 The court lady	234
The court lady as an ideal	234
The court lady	236
The <i>donna di corte</i> or lady-in-waiting	239
The roles of a ruler's wife	242
Luxury at court	248
Relaxation and pastimes	250
Mistresses and concubines	256
13 Women and work for gain	258
Women in the marketplace	258
Textile workers	259
Servants and slaves	264
Wet-nurses	268
Hospital staff	270
14 Prostitutes and courtesans	273
Prostitutes in city spaces	274
Different methods and behaviour	277
The successful courtesan	279
Courtesans speak	286
Negative views of courtesans	289
Attempts at reform	292
15 Writers, artists, musicians and performers	296
Backgrounds, settings, training, mentors	296
Positive critical reactions	306
Negative reactions: issues of decorum	312
Self-presentation and justification	314
 The plates	 319
 Index	 361

List of plates

- 1 Palma Vecchio, *La Bella*, c. 1525–8. Thyssen collection, Madrid. 320
Copyright © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.
- 2 Andrea del Sarto, *Portrait of a Lady with a Petrarchino*, c. 1528. 322
Florence, Uffizi.
Photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.
- 3 Antoniazio Romano, *Annunciation with Cardinal Torquemada and Poor Girls*, 1500. Rome, S. Maria sopra Minerva. 324
Photo: Archivio Fotografico, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Romano.
- 4 Vittore Carpaccio, St Ursula debating with her father, detail from *The Arrival of the Ambassadors*, c. 1496–8. Venice, Accademia. 326
Photo: Osvaldo Böhm.
- 5 Anon., *Colomba da Rieti fed by an angel*, frontispiece to Leandro Alberti, *La Vita della Beata Colomba da Rieto* (Bologna, 1521). 328
Reproduced from British Library, shelfmark c.127.g.2.
- 6 Domenico Beccafumi, *Tanaquil*, c. 1519–25. London, National Gallery. 330
Photo: National Gallery, London.
- 7 Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, *Tomb of Medea Colleoni* (with detail), after 1475. Bergamo, Colleoni Chapel. 332
Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- 8 Attributed to Ambrogio de' Predis, *Portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza*, probably 1493. Washington, National Gallery of Art. 334
Photo: © 2004 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
- 9 Marco del Buono Giamberti and Apollonio di Giovanni, *The Story of Esther*, c. 1460–70. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. 336
Photo: © All rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 10 Paolo Caliari (Veronese), *Happy Union*, c. 1570–80. London, National Gallery. 338
Photo: National Gallery, London.
- 11 Domenico Ghirlandaio, detail, *The Miracle of the Roman Notary's Son*, 1482–85. Florence, S. Trinita, Sassetti Chapel. 340
Photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

- 12 Woodcut with scene of childbirth, from Girolamo Mercurio,
La commare o riccogliatrice (Venice, 1601). 342
Reproduced from British Library, 1621 reprint, shelfmark 1377.d.15.
- 13 Lavinia Fontana, *Portrait of a Widow with a Girl*, late 1590s. Bologna,
Pinacoteca Nazionale. 344
Photo: Archivio Fotografico, Soprintendenza P.S.A.D. Bologna.
- 14 Nuns' choir, S. Maurizio (Monastero Maggiore), Milan, architecture
c. 1503 onwards, paintings 1522–24 and 1556–58. 346
Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of
London.
- 15 Lorenzo Costa, *Virgin and Child with the Bentivoglio Family*, 1488.
Bologna, S. Giacomo Maggiore. 348
Photo: Archivio Fotografico, Soprintendenza P.S.A.D. Bologna.
- 16 Bonifazio de' Pitati (Bonifazio Veronese), *The Finding of Moses*,
c. 1535–45. Milan, Brera. 350
Photo: MRR.
- 17 Vincenzo Campi, *The Kitchen*, c. 1580. Milan, Brera. 352
Photo: Soprintendenza per il patrimonio storico, artistico e
demoetnoantropologico di Milano.
- 18 Benedetto Caliari, *Virgin and Child with Mary Magdalene and the Inmates
of the Soccorso, Venice*, 1597. Venice, Accademia. 354
Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Veneziano.
- 19 Jacopo and ?Domenico Tintoretto, *Danae*, c. 1580–90. Lyon, Musée
des Beaux-Arts. 356
Photo: MRR.
- 20 Two frontispiece portraits from *Rime* of Vittoria Colonna
(Venice, 1540) and *Rime* of Laura Terracina (Venice, 1548). 358
Reproduced from British Library, shelfmarks 11426.aa.18 and
241.e.12 respectively.