



# **Gender Meets Genre: Woman As Subject in the Fictional Universe of Matilde Serao (Publications of the Ucd Foundation for Italian Studies)**

*Ursula Fanning*

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This book provides a detailed analysis of the fiction of a Neapolitan novelist and journalist whose work spanned the turn of the last century and, widely translated, was in her own lifetime the object of both critical and popular acclaim. Serao is placed firmly in her socio-political context, against the background of post-unification Naples and the prelude to Fascism. Dr. Fanning identifies a particular tension for Serao which involves both her view of herself as a woman writer and the representation of women in her fiction, with some surprising results. Through a consideration of the roles allocated to Serao's female characters, the novelist is seen to explore genre from a specifically gendered perspective, and the nature of the impact of gender on genre is uncovered. Feminist and psychoanalytical theories are drawn on where relevant in support of the thesis that, despite her carefully constructed conservative public persona, in her fiction, through a complex web of gender-genre connections, Serao poses undeniably political challenges to specific social institutions. This analysis of a novelist who writes simultaneously within and outside accepted literary frameworks will be of interest to those concerned with the nineteenth and twentieth-century novel, women's writing and women's history.

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