



Aretino's Dialogues (Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library)

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Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) was one of the most important figures in Italian Renaissance literature, and certainly the most controversial. Condemned by some as a pornographer, his infamy was due largely to his use of explicit sexuality and the vulgar tongue of ordinary speech in much of his work.

Dialogues centres around a conversation between two rather frank, experienced, and sharp-tongued women on the topic of women's occupations. We learn that at the time there were only three: wife, whore, or nun. Their discussion is a rollicking account of the advantages, perils, and pleasures each profession offers.

Not only was *Dialogues* the first erotic book in the Christian world to be written in the common vernacular, it was but one of the few to describe the obscenity of commercial love, and is thus a cornerstone of both Italian literature and Counter-Renaissance vigour. Raymond Rosenthal's English translation first appeared in 1971, and this edition contains his original preface as well as a new introduction by Margaret Rosenthal. Also included, as a preface, is a review of the translation by Alberto Moravia from the *New York Times Book Review*.

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