

Antonia Ambrose

Monteverdi Reflection

This past summer, I was incredibly blessed to be the student in residence at Hotel Monteverdi in Castiglioncello del Trinoro for six weeks. The incredible generosity of the Cioffi family, paralleled only by the abundance of natural beauty within the *borgo*, or village, gave me a summer full of study, contemplation, and solitary reflection that will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Through the Monteverdi Prize, I was able to extend my study-abroad experience of an immersive semester in the student life of Bologna, Italy, with a completely different and equally revelatory experience of the hills of the Val d'Orcia. Monteverdi's welcoming staff shared their life with me around the family meal table each day, teaching me--as we laughed in Italian--the Tuscan culture: How to talk about wine. How to cook perfect eggplant or make *fiori di sambuco* (elderflower syrup, best in a spritz with lemon juice and Prosecco). How to pepper my Italian with Tuscan idioms. How to build intergenerational and intercultural friendship in a supportive work environment.

My 'work time' consisted of long hours under the apricot trees or by the lavender-surrounded pool, alone with my thesis texts. In preparation for my thesis on Italian feminist thought of the 17th century, I delved into the poetry and philosophy of author Lucrezia Marinella, then changed my topic to specifically evaluate the philosophical writings of Marinella alongside her Venetian contemporaries Arcangela Tarabotti and Moderata Fonte. Using the generous funds allotted by the Monteverdi Prize, I had spent a wonderful formative week in Venice before arriving at Monteverdi, reading the original editions of these works at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana and encountering the unique Venetian culture that gave rise to these thinkers. My stay at Monteverdi allowed me to take the time to encounter these works in the original Italian, to discover a more fruitful topic, and to meditate on the experience of thesis research and writing--and on the beginning of the end of PLS and my undergraduate education. Monteverdi pushed me to come into my own as a scholar, to manage my personal time and rise to the challenge of being treated as a peer by more experienced guests and thinkers. As part of my scholarship, I was invited to Monteverdi's conference in May on the Italian Culture of Beauty. Near the end of my stay, I participated in a panel discussion on women and art throughout history with Michael Cioffi, founder of Monteverdi, and acclaimed Italian sculptor Giovanna Lysy. I was honored to present my research on women's creative genius as represented in my chosen thesis authors, and reflect beyond my thesis on this continually rich and relevant history.

At the beginning of my stay at Monteverdi, while waiting for my books to arrive, I read and reflected on a seminal text in feminist thought, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Her thesis, representative of perhaps all feminist writing about the intellectual world, is simply "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." While I was writing literary analysis rather than fiction, my wonderful meditative summer was made possible by the Cioffi family's generous gift of money and a room of my own -- more specifically, a gorgeously restored loft apartment with the best sunset views in Italy. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to grow into scholarly independence and to make my own small contribution to the intellectual heritage of women throughout history.