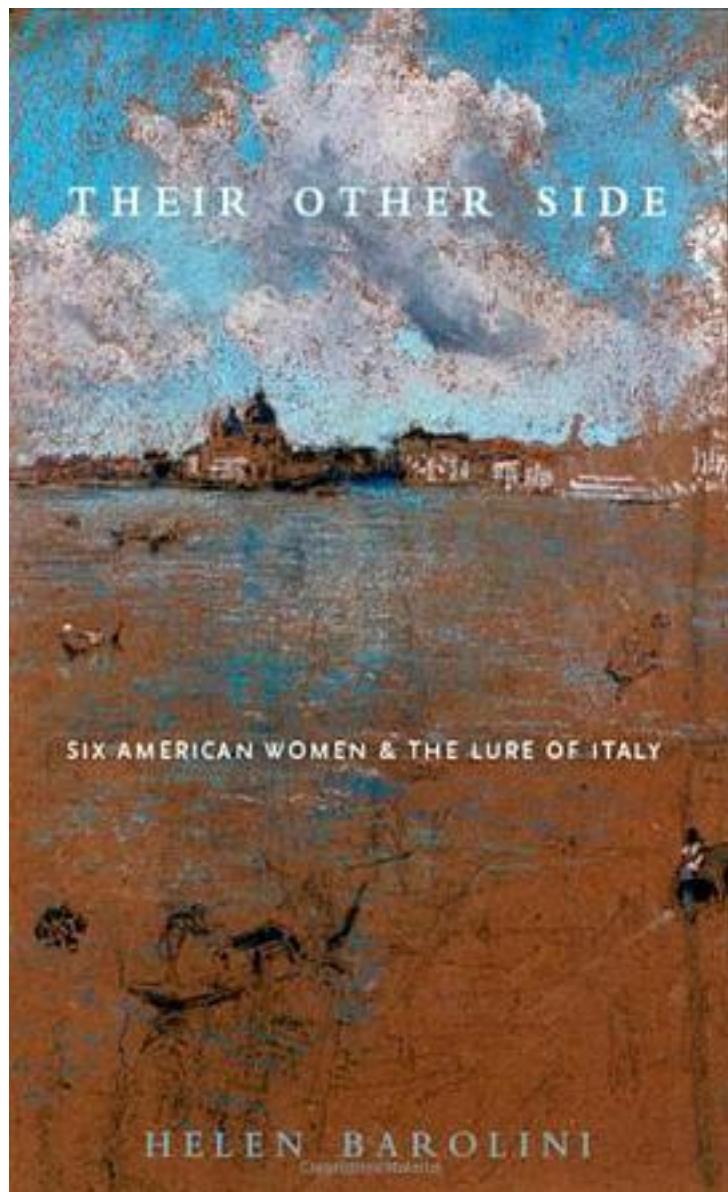


# Their Other Side



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"Our lives are Swiss," Emily Dickinson wrote in 1859, "So still - so cool." But over the Alps, "Italy stands the other side." For Dickinson, as for many other writers and artists, Italy has been the land of light, a seductive source of invention, enchantment, and freedom. So it was for Helen Barolini, who, as a student in Rome after World War II, wrote her first poetry and gave birth to her own creative life, reinvigorating her mother tongue. In this book, Barolini celebrates the lives of other women whose imaginations succumbed to the lure of Italy. Here, Barolini profiles six gifted women transformed by Italy's mythic appeal. Unlike Barolini herself, they were not daughters of the great Italian diaspora. Rather, they were drawn to an idea of "Italy" and its gifts - in whose welcome a new self could be created. Or discovered. Emily Dickinson traveled to Italy only in the imaginative genius of her verse. Margaret Fuller struggled alongside her Italian lover in the political revolutions that gave birth to the Italian Republic, while the novelist and short-story writer, Constance Fennimore Woolson found her home in Venice and Florence. Here, too, is the flamboyant artist Mabel Dodge Luhan, entertaining at her villa near Florence; and Marguerite Chapin of Connecticut, who married an Italian prince and in Rome founded the premier literary review of the mid-century, *Botteghe Oscure*. Finally, here is Iris Cutting Origo, the Anglo-American heiress who, with her Italian nobleman husband, built a Tuscan estate, where she wrote acclaimed biographies - and created a refuge from Mussolini's fascism. Linking these lives, Barolini shows, is the transforming catalyst of change in a new land. "Their Other Side" is a wise, warm, and deeply felt literary journey that brilliantly captures the enduring effects of Italy as a place, a culture, and an experience.

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