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Suffragism and *italianità*: political and literary discourses of women's citizenship in Italy, 1900-1923

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A thesis submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

University of Dublin, Trinity College 2014

Declaration

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SUMMARY

The present research sets out to trace distinctive patterns of language use around the issue of women's suffrage in early-twentieth-century Liberal Italy. In particular, the question of how women's identities were constructed in suffrage-related discourse is addressed.

While building on existing work on the Italian suffrage movement, particularly the approach taken by Debora Migliucci, this work also seeks to make initial forays into two fields that have not yet received much scholarly attention: firstly, the intersections between Italian suffragism and its international counterparts; and, secondly, the relationship between suffragist discourse and emergent strains of feminist literary production in Italy. The methodology used, termed thematic discourse analysis, draws on models from both social psychology and critical linguistics. It has the dual aim of identifying recurrent thematic patterns in texts and specifying the linguistic strategies through which they are articulated.

In the main body of the thesis, three sets of texts are subjected to analysis. The first is drawn from a 1905 survey on the suffrage question. Due to the variety of views expressed in 139 responses, the survey proves a source through which to access a wide-ranging 'map' of positions prevalent at this early stage in the movement's coalescence. I analyse these in terms of two ideological 'axes': equality-difference and principle-pragmatism. Key observations include the following: I) the language used to convey discourses of equality and principle is considerably more stilted and limited than that used for discourses of difference and pragmatism; 2) individual narratives tend to be muted in survey responses; and 3) the 'special' case of Italy opens up a gulf between pro-suffrage principle and antisuffrage pragmatism for many respondents, including many women. Building on these findings, especially the last, I approach subsequent analyses with two particular questions in mind: firstly, how are individual and collective identities crafted within the category of 'Italian women'? Secondly, how are Italian suffragists and *italianità* more generally depicted in relation to the world stage?

The second text group considered comprises pro- and anti-suffrage documents which had the aim and effect of influencing the Italian suffrage debate at pivotal 'crisis moments'. These include a petition submitted to Parliament (1906); a report of the suffrage session from the first national women's congress held in Italy (1908); a pamphlet addressed to working-class women by socialist suffragist Anna Kuliscioff, following an electoral reform that included men only (1913); and a tract opposing suffragism, published by Gina Lombroso just as post-World War One Italy seemed on the brink of conceding the vote to women (1919). Through all these texts, I track the complex negotiations of collective identities among Italian women, noting that while multiple strategies are deployed to elide fissures in solidarity, the category of *donne italiane* never remains textually intact for long. On an

international plane, I observe the shifting relationship between discourses of *italianità* and of women's suffrage in the context of recently-unified Italy; in particular, I demonstrate the ambivalence and anxiety provoked in Italian suffragists by the militant tactics of the British suffragettes.

The third text set is literary: two autobiographical novels (by Anna Franchi and Sibilla Aleramo) and one somewhat genre-defying dialogue (by Donna Paola) are considered. While all three authors were active in the suffrage movement, the books engage explicitly with the question of the vote to varying degrees. My focus is less on what is stated about suffragism than on how the texts' discourses of identity – in a genre which tends to allow for individual subjectivity to be privileged, and ruptures in collective solidarity to be probed rather than elided – may shed light on the articulations of complex, conflicted communities noted in earlier sections. The analyses indicate that the construction of individual, embodied identities and the interrogation of interpersonal relationships are core preoccupations for these writers. Moreover, Franchi and Aleramo evince extreme ambivalence towards the possibility of solidarity among women, while Donna Paola dismisses it as an impossibility. All three authors also demonstrate considerable investment in a discourse of grazia that seems closely harnessed to one of italianità, while Donna Paola's text, in particular, offers insights into how foreign aspects of feminist language may have choked the development of feminist movements in Italy.

In the concluding section, I draw the analyses together to suggest three significant and interrelated patterns. Firstly, I suggest that suffragist ideology in Italy was articulated between two systems of discourse: one of equality/principle, which relied heavily and problematically on translation from English, and one of difference/pragmatism, which allowed for a more creative use of 'organic' Italian. Secondly, I contend that suffragist identity had to be inscribed within a profoundly complex matrix of existing identity discourses: exceptional individuality strained against the need for solidarity; the allencompassing figure of the donna italiana was fractured repeatedly along lines of class, region, and interventionism/pacifism; yet, placed in an international context, that multifarious donna represented a precarious and protean italianità, causing intense ambivalence in Italian attitudes to foreign manifestations of suffragism. Thirdly, I propose that the emergent tenor of Italian feminist literary writing is so distinct from that of the contemporaneous suffrage movement as to suggest discursive traditions running on parallel tracks. In sum, I argue that the convergence of these three patterns formed a severe challenge for Italian suffragist campaigners: they had to voice their cause in a language that was rapidly developing to suit arguments based on difference, examinations of rifts among women, and discourses of embodied and interpersonal identity, yet was less equipped to allow for expressions of egalitarian principle, overarching female solidarity, and collective political agency.

Except where otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Section overview

This introductory section comprises Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Here, I establish the central research question and set it in the context of relevant literature (Chapter 1); furnish a historical backdrop (Chapter 2); and account for the theoretical and methodological perspectives to be employed (Chapter 3).

The material offered in these initial chapters should guide the reader towards broad, cross-disciplinary conceptual frameworks within which to situate the texts studied in later sections and the analytical approaches adopted.

Chapter I The research question in context

In 1923, when the International Woman Suffrage Alliance [IWSA] held its congress in Italy for the first time, the role of honorary president was accorded to none other than Benito Mussolini, who had seized power less than a year previously. The episode put Italian suffragists in a confusing position. Most of the momentum that their movement had built up between the turn of the century and the outbreak of World War One had dissipated, and post-war parliamentary efforts to extend the franchise to (some) Italian women had come to nothing. Nevertheless, the eyes of suffragists throughout the world were now, suddenly and disconcertingly, on Italy.

Semi-privately, some international suffragist leaders were ambivalent at best about the Italian government in general and Mussolini in particular;² however, the official line taken towards the host country and its government was positive to a fault. In her address, IWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt drew on a rhetoric that romanticised both Italian history ('Rome old and hoary, with memories of by-gone greatness') and Italian innovation ('Rome young and modern'),³ and appealed to Mussolini with direct flattery as 'the most talked-of man in all the world today'.⁴ Mussolini, who had expressed delight at being invited to open the congress,⁵ availed of the occasion to pledge, albeit cautiously, the extension of at least the municipal vote to Italian women: 'lo penso cioè che la concessione del voto alle donne [...] non avrà conseguenze catastrofiche'.⁶

In response, the IWSA congress report was introduced with the hopeful remark that 'events at the Rome Congress [...] lead us to hope that the solid block of unenfranchised Latin countries may be

On Mussolini's role as honorary president, see IWSA, Report of Ninth Congress, Rome, Italy, May 12th- 19th 1923 (Dresden: B.G. Teubner, 1923), p. 25; p. 78.

Historian Daniela Rossini traces tensions among IWSA organisers in the lead-up to the 1923 congress. In particular, she notes that Carrie Chapman Catt, the president of the IWSA, had been in Italy for Mussolini's March on Rome and come away unimpressed; Catt made strenuous efforts to move the congress location to France, but was overruled. (Daniela Rossini, 'Dal sociale al politico: donne e suffragio a Roma tra il 1914 e il 1923' in Paolo Carusi (ed.), *La capitale della nazione. Roma e la sua provincia nella crisi del sistema liberale* (Rome: Viella, 2011), pp. 301-19 (pp. 309-10)).

³ IWSA, Report of Ninth Congress, p. 33.

⁴ IWSA, Report of Ninth Congress, p. 28: 'Your Excellency, Signor Mussolini, you are the most talked-of man in all the world today. To millions of men you are a great hero, and all the world knows that you are afraid of nothing – not even public opinion when it is wrong. Men tell us that you stand for order, for unity, for patriotism, for a better and a higher civilization in the world. These are our ideals too.'

⁵ Responding to Italian suffragist and Fascist supporter Regina Terruzzi, who had issued the invitation, Mussolini expressed his pleasure that 'tutte le signore straniere' [all the foreign ladies] would have an opportunity to witness Italy's resurrection through Fascism (cited in Rossini, 'Dal sociale al politico', p. 311).

⁶ [My belief, then, is that the concession of the vote to women [...] will not have catastrophic consequences.] Mussolini's speech to the IWSA delegates is cited in 'Il voto politico dopo quello amministrativo promesso alle donne dal governo fascista' in *L'Epoca*, 18 May 1923.

broken'.7 Two years later, in 1925, this prediction seemed justified: Mussolini passed a bill admitting certain categories of women to vote in local elections.8 The hopes of those women who had campaigned fruitlessly and unendingly for the vote in Liberal Italy seemed finally to be flowering under Fascism. However, before any women had exercised the newly-granted 'right', a further law was brought in which abolished local elections altogether? – an unlooked-for version of electoral equality between the sexes. Italy's suffrage movement, made redundant in the face of disintegrating democracy and organisationally muzzled by Fascist surveillance, coercion, and rigid gender norms, melted away. Only after the passage of another two decades, when Mussolini had been deposed and Italy defeated in World War Two, did Ivanoe Bonomi's temporary government extend both municipal and parliamentary suffrage to women, on I February 1945.10

With hindsight, the 1923 congress may spotlight some 'farcical' aspects of suffragist progress in Italy, II but it also serves as a focusing lens on the Italian suffrage movement's traditions and complex relationship with international suffragism. In particular, it is a reminder of the enormous discontinuity between Italy's period of strongest suffragist activism (1900-1914) and the eventual concession of the vote (1945). Various questions are prompted by these considerations. For instance, how did suffragism integrate, or not, into the national agenda of such a recently-unified country as Italy? In terms of priority, where did suffragism fit within the panoply of causes for which Italian women were campaigning in the early twentieth century? How did interactions between Italian suffragists and those from other countries slot into the broader international relationships being negotiated? Can the advent of Fascist power be seen as a final nail in the coffin of the suffrage movement, or had other factors already sealed that movement's fate? Counterfactually, might the suffragists have substantiated the possibility of victory, albeit a temporary victory, if they had deployed different campaigning strategies?

My interest in researching the suffrage movement in Italy was sparked by curiosity about questions such as these; however, my direct focus is on language and identity rather than on the sequence and

⁷ IWSA, Report of Ninth Congress, pp. 24-27 (p. 25). This foreword was penned by Helen Fraser (1881-1979), an English suffragist who had been a member of Emmeline Pankhurst's WSPU in the early days, but had broken with that organisation in 1908 due to disagreeing with its militant tactics. See Elizabeth Crawford, The women's suffrage movement: a reference guide, 1866-1928 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 230-32.

⁸ These categories included women of 25 or older who had received medals for patriotic valour, or were mothers or widows of soldiers who had died in action. Other restrictions also applied: women could not run for local office, and the franchise could only be exercised by those who explicitly requested it. See Mariapia Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne in Italia dal 1912 al fascismo' in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 16: 1 (1987), pp. 240-65 (p. 260).

⁹ This law, passed on 2 September 1926, decreed that local elections be replaced by a *regime podestarile* [mayor system]: mayors for local councils would now be appointed centrally, in Rome. See Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism ruled women*, 1922-1945 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 37-38.

¹⁰ See Anna Rossi-Doria, Diventare cittadine. Il voto alle donne in Italia (Florence: Giunti, 1996), pp. 20-23.

¹¹ Rossini, 'Dal sociale al politico', p. 311.

causality of historical events. Observing the difficulty with which discourses of feminism, femininity, and *italianità* were often held together in the early twentieth century, I have sought to understand how the issue of the vote worked within this already complex framework. It seemed likely that suffragism, with its overtly political aim, and (from 1905) connotations of foreign militancy, might have functioned as a 'grenade' of sorts when lobbed into an already problematic and rapidly-shifting mesh of identities. To explore this idea, my central question was this: how was language deployed in relation to the issue of women's suffrage in Italy between 1900 and 1923? In particular, how did the language(s) of Italian suffragism construct individual and collective female identities on national and/or international planes?

The question could be approached in multifarious ways. My strategy, for reasons that shall be elaborated in Chapter 3, is to analyse discourse¹² within a selection of texts belonging to diverse genres: surveys on the suffrage question, which offer a broad range of respondent positions; overtly suffragist (and anti-suffragist) documents emerging from and at pivotal moments of the campaign; and feminist literary texts by creative writers with at least temporary involvement in suffragism. Because these readings are detailed and the texts sampled are necessarily limited, the present introductory section must provide a comprehensive contextual background against which my subsequent analyses can be interpreted. In this first chapter, I review existing scholarship on Italian suffragism, with a view to elucidating the original aspects of my contribution. In Chapter 2, I offer a brief historical account of the movement's trajectory. In Chapter 3, I describe and defend my theoretical and methodological approach, noting its location at the intersection of several disciplines and citing particular scholars and studies from whom I have drawn inspiration; I then provide a detailed outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Existing scholarship: why this research direction?

I begin by reviewing when, where, by whom and in what contexts Italian suffragism has thus far been studied. I consider three fields: international suffrage studies (1.1.1), Italian suffrage studies (1.1.2), and studies of women's writing in Italy (1.1.3). Having identified lacunae in existing research, I specify how the pursuit of my research question may offer a fresh perspective to scholarship (1.1.4).

¹² As explained in Chapter 3, my methodology draws on approaches to discourse analysis developed both in psychology and in critical linguistics.

1.1.1 International suffrage studies: Italian absences

The broadest academic domain within which to consider any aspect of a suffrage movement is that of international and comparative suffrage studies.

This field, as Melanie Nolan and Caroline Daley point out when introducing their pioneering research collection,¹³ demands a reassessment of the time frames and narratives produced within the dominant, Anglo-American model of suffrage history: it requires that 'the "margins" [start] questioning the history of the "centre".¹⁴ 'Margin' terrains considered in Daley and Nolan's selection include suffrage movements in Australasia, Asia, and South America, as well as North America and Europe; within Europe, France and Germany, as well as 'central' Britain, are dealt with. However, there is no article which specifically considers the Italian case.¹⁵

The relative invisibility of Italy in *Suffrage and beyond* is typical of its general absence within international suffrage studies. For instance, the *International encyclopedia of women's suffrage* contains a brief entry on Italy and another on leading Italian suffragist Anna Maria Mozzoni, but allows for little detail;¹⁶ Leila Rupp's history of international women's organisations, including the International Woman Suffrage Alliance [IWSA], makes only passing (albeit tantalising) references to Italian suffragists and their interactions with international counterparts.¹⁷ While Francisco Ramirez et al. include Italy in their analysis of patterns of suffrage acquisition across 133 countries, they do not

¹³ Melanie Nolan and Caroline Daley, 'International feminist perspectives on suffrage: an introduction' in C. Daley and M. Nolan (eds.), *Suffrage and beyond: international feminist perspectives* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994), pp. 1-22.

¹⁴ Nolan and Daley, 'International feminist perspectives on suffrage', p. 1.

¹⁵ In this volume, however, Italy is briefly mentioned in an analysis of the suffrage question in France (Karen Offen, 'Women, citizenship and suffrage with a French twist, 1789- 1993', in Daley and Nolan (eds.), *Suffrage and beyond*, pp. 151-70 (see especially p. 151; p. 168, n. 34), and is also usefully referenced within the terms of an 'internationalist' history (Ellen Carol DuBois, 'Woman suffrage around the world: three phases of suffragist internationalism', in Daley and Nolan (eds.), *Suffrage and beyond*, pp. 252-74). DuBois elaborates on Italo-French parallels (since both countries eventually admitted women to the franchise in 1945), citing commonalities that may have combined to influence their delays in conceding suffrage: their lack of 'semi-autonomous socialist women's organisations', crucial to suffrage movements across a range of other countries (pp. 264-65); their Catholicism (p. 268); and their status as combatant countries in World War One (p. 269).

¹⁶ June Hannam et al. (eds.), *International encyclopedia of women's suffrage* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000), pp. 153-54; p. 196. Notably, the entry on Italy cites four references, but none deals specifically with suffragism. By way of comparison, the entry on France is not much longer, but cites three suffrage-specific sources (pp. 104-05).

¹⁷ Leila Rupp, Worlds of women: the making of an international women's movement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Examples of Rupp's allusions to Italian suffragists include the low opinion held by the Secretary of the International Council of Women [ICW] of the Italian delegates seeking to organise the 1914 congress in Rome (p. 170); at the same congress, the support of the Italian Comitato Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI] for a resolution that would give the host country veto power over the programme content – a move interpreted by Anna Howard Shaw as seeking to edge out the suffrage issue, and ultimately defeated (p. 136); and IWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt's frustration with Italian board member Margherita Ancona's overly 'nationalistic' attitude in 1922 (pp. 115-16).

discuss it individually.¹⁸ A more recently-published collection of international perspectives on gender and electoral reform, edited by Irma Sulkunen et al., does not include an entry on Italy, or any significant references to it.¹⁹

Exceptions to this rule of Italian non-appearance have emerged during the past five years. Most recently, a collection of suffrage studies from 21 European countries includes an article on Italy by Susanna Mancini; however, its chronological scope, which sweeps from early suffragist times until 2009, is considerably broader than that of most other contributions. Anne Cova's work on first-wave feminist organisations in three Southern European countries is an explicitly comparative study that includes Italy; once again, however, her research does not concentrate specifically on suffragism. Pertinently for my language-based approach, Daniela Rossini has considered aspects of the Italian movement as 'translation' from the American one, although again with a focus on feminism that includes, but is not limited to, suffragism. By examining documents relating to Italian participation in international feminist congresses — particularly those held in Italy — she interrogates points of affinity and divergence between Italian and 'American-led' feminisms. Her work is spurred by an awareness that

what is missing [in existing scholarship] is an analysis of what it meant for Italian feminists to be part of an international network [...] in order to identify both the areas of agreement and cooperation and the points of contrast between the national and the international leaders'. ²²

From within Italian scholarship, Gaetanina Sicari Ruffo's *II voto alle donne* (discussed in more detail in 1.1.2) includes a section on suffrage movements in 8 countries in addition to Italy, although the links between these are not probed in detail.²³

¹⁸ Francisco O. Ramirez, Yasemin Soysal and Suzanne Shanahan, 'The changing logic of political citizenship: cross-national acquisition of women's suffrage rights, 1890 to 1990' in *American Sociological Review*, 62: 5 (October 1997), pp. 735-45. Ramirez et al. does discuss those "modern" states [...] with a long history of male suffrage' which had waited until after World War Two to enfranchise their women, but chooses France as the example for analysis (p. 738).

¹⁹ Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi and Pirjo Markkola (eds.), Suffrage, gender and citizenship: international perspectives on parliamentary reforms (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009). This volume includes articles on suffragism in Australasia, Scandinavia, Russia and Eastern Europe, Britain and Ireland, and Palestine; it also includes articles that consider the relationship between gender and citizenship in a contemporary context in Canada, Iran, Poland, and Croatia.

²⁰ Susanna Mancini, 'From the struggle for suffrage to the construction of a fragile gender citizenship: Italy 1861-2009' in Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz and Ruth Rubio-Marín (eds.), *The struggle for female suffrage in Europe: voting to become citizens* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 373-88.

Anne Cova, 'International feminisms in historical comparative perspective: France, Italy and Portugal, 1880s – 1930s' in Women's History Review, 19:4 (September 2010), pp. 595-612.

²² Daniela Rossini, 'The Italian *translation* of American feminism: the CNDI and the international women's movement from *Belle Époque* to Fascism' in Marina Camboni et al. (eds.), *Translating America: importing, translating, misrepresenting, mythicizing, communicating America. Proceedings of the 20th AlSNA Conference, Torino, 24-26 September 2009, (Turin: OTTO, 2010), pp. 735-43 (p. 735, p. 736). See also Rossini, 'Dal sociale al politico' and 'Nazionalismo, internazionalismo e pacifismo femminile alla soglie della Grande Guerra: il CNDI e il congress dell'International Council of Women del 1914 a Roma' in <i>Giornale di storia contemporanea*, 2 (Dec 2009), pp. 57-89.

While international comparative studies of first-wave feminisms are slowly expanding to include Italy, then, a lacuna still exists around the particular case of Italian suffragism. This silence doubtless owes something to the linguistic hegemony that operated within the international suffrage movement, in which English, French and German (especially the first) were official languages. The dissemination of suffragist news in these languages privileged native speakers and excluded those who could understand none of them, thus perpetuating the status of those languages' respective communities as centres of the movement.²⁴ Moreover, this effect has filtered down to weight the map of international suffrage historiography in a similar fashion; the scholars to whom the richest sources are available are those who speak the dominant languages, and who produce their research in these same languages.²⁵ Recent works, notably Perry Willson's *Women in twentieth-century Italy*,²⁶ have written modern Italian women's history into the English language for the first time. However, there is as yet no substantial English-language study focusing exclusively on suffragism, or indeed first-wave feminism, in Italy,²⁷

²³ Gaetanina Sicari Ruffo, *Il voto alle donne. La lunga lotta per il suffragio femminile tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Rome: Mond&editori, 2009), pp. 108-30.

²⁴ Rupp, *Worlds of women*, p. 70. On the impact of linguistic hegemony on Italian women, see also Rossini, 'The Italian translation of American feminism', p. 741: she observes that a lack of knowledge of foreign languages is likely to have been a reason for the non-appearance of the president of Italy's national women's organisation, the Comitato Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI], at congresses outside Italy. Elsewhere, in her study of the International Council of Women (ICW) congress held in Rome in 1914, Rossini notes that the CNDI delegates were attacked on two language-related fronts: elements of the nationalist press critiqued them for not insisting on the use of Italian during the congress, while members of the ICW board privately censured them for insufficient familiarity with the official languages of the organisation (Rossini, 'Nazionalismo, internazionalismo e pacifismo femminile', pp. 62-63; p. 65).

²⁵ As Hannam et al. point out in introducing their world suffrage encyclopedia (there being no equivalents in any other language at present): 'The choice and length of entries have at times been affected by the extent to which material is available in English.' Hannam et al. (eds.), *International encyclopedia of women's suffrage*, p. xiv.

Perry Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Also relevant are Willson's detailed studies on female experience during Italian Fascism (The clockwork factory: women and work in Fascist Italy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Peasant women and politics in Fascist Italy: the Massaie rurali (London: Routledge, 2002)), as well as several of the essays in the volume edited by her, Gender, family and sexuality: the private sphere in Italy, 1860-1945 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Of these, see especially Perry Willson, 'Introduction: gender and the private sphere in Liberal and Fascist Italy', pp. 1-19; Mark Seymour, 'Till death do them part? The Church-State struggle over marriage and divorce. 1860-1914', pp. 37-50; and Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Women and the public/ private divide: the salotto, home and theatre in late nineteenth-century Italy', pp. 105-21. Mary Gibson's contribution to this volume, 'Labelling women deviant: heterosexual women, prostitutes and lesbians in early criminological discourse' (pp. 89-104), forms part of Gibson's extensive English-language work on prostitution in Liberal Italy, a theme which intersects frequently with that of Italian feminism – see especially Mary Gibson, Prostitution and the State in Italy, 1860-1915 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

²⁷ In contrast, the gravitational pull exerted by Anglophone suffrage narratives on Italian researchers is illustrated by an anthology published in Italy in 1990: Anna Rossi-Doria (ed.), La libertà delle donne. Voci della tradizione politica suffragista [Women's freedom. Voices from the suffragist political tradition], trans. Anna Nadotti and Anna Rossi-Doria (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990). Although there is no mention of nationality in the title, the 'voci' are in fact all Anglo-American; the volume comprises Italian translations of texts by British and American suffragists, suffragettes and anti-suffragists. The interpretation of the 'tradizione politica suffragista' as Anglophone seems to have been a default one, since the book's preface neither articulates reasons for this specificity nor relates the themes raised to the Italian movement (pp. 11-17). This is a

1.1.2 Italian feminist historiography: suffragism and other stories

If Italian suffragism has a tenuous presence in international suffrage studies and English-language scholarship, how has it been dealt with in the framework of Italian history?

Three volumes by Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, published in the 1960s and 1970s and widely deemed the foundation of Italian feminist historiography, consider the suffrage movement along with multiple other aspects of the first-wave women's movement in Italy. The first of these books encompasses the period between unification and the turn of the century, including Anna Maria Mozzoni's largely isolated struggles for suffrage and other reforms, and MP Salvatore Morelli's efforts to legislate for women voters in 1867 and 1877.²⁸ The timeframe of the second coincides with that of most fervent suffragist activism in Italy, and focuses especially on the problematic intersections and disjunctions between socialism and feminism.²⁹ The third examines the events surrounding and following the Fascist takeover from an angle that foregrounds their volatile relation to women's organisations.³⁰ While Pieroni Bortolotti offers a seminal and densely-researched account of suffrage-related developments, her broad perspective treats suffrage as one strand of a complex mesh of issues relating to women's emancipation, without isolating it for closer analysis. Michela De Giorgio's important volume on Italian women's history from unification to the 1980s weaves suffragism into an even more extensive sociological canvas.³¹

Studies with a more suffrage-specific lens have been produced by Mariapia Bigaran, Annarita Buttafuoco, and Fiorenza Taricone. Bigaran analyses parliamentary debates on the voting question in two articles which, between them, span the period between unification and the advent of Fascism.³² In tracing the fate of the question in parliament, she attends not only to outcomes, but also, sometimes, to language.³³ Buttafuoco focuses especially on suffragism in the essay 'Apolidi'³⁴ and in the fifth and

particularly striking instance of the persistence, in a modern Italian academic context, of the presumption that suffragism implied English-speakers as protagonists unless otherwise stated.

²⁸ Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, Alle origini del movimento femminile in Italia, 1848-1892 (Turin: Einaudi, 1963).

²⁹ Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile in Italia 1892-1922 (Milan: Mazzotta, 1974).

³⁰ Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, Femminismo e partiti politici in Italia, 1919-1926 (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1978).

³¹ Michela De Giorgio, Le italiane dall'unità a oggi: modelli culturali e comportamenti sociali (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1992). De Giorgio's book is organised into thematic sections, dealing with topics as diverse as beauty and marriage as well as emancipation; this latter forms the seventh chapter (pp. 455-530). Also relevant to my research is the chapter on women writers (pp. 377-454).

³² Mariapia Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari sul suffragio femminile: da Peruzzi a Giolitti' in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, I (1985), pp. 50-82; 'Il voto alle donne in Italia dal 1912 al fascismo' in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, I6: I (1987), pp. 240-65.

³³ For instance, she notes the frequent apposition of seemingly opposite lines of rhetoric, such as the danger posed by women and the need to protect them ('Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 64). Bigaran's approach could thus be termed at least partly discourse-focused.

sixth chapters of the volume *Cronache femminili*.³⁵ Although claiming only to portray the suffrage movement's 'main tendencies' through attention to particularly representative moments, ³⁶ Buttafuoco's work integrates close historical detail with perceptive analysis. ³⁷ Moreover, it balances its focus on the suffrage question with an awareness of the non-primacy of that question within the first-wave Italian women's movement itself. ³⁸ This is to be expected in light of Buttafuoco's other output, which provides crucial insights into the context in which Italian suffragism emerged, and especially illuminates the complex fusion of emancipationism and philanthropy in what became known as *maternità sociale* [social maternity]. ³⁹ Taricone's study of women's assocations in Liberal Italy includes an excellent and meticulously-researched section on suffragist organisations, although it devotes considerably more space to the non-suffragist CNDI. ⁴⁰ With Mimma De Leo, Taricone also edited a useful anthology of key texts from the Italian emancipationist, including suffrage, movement; ⁴¹ more recently, a suffrage-specific anthology has been compiled by Marina d'Amelia. ⁴²

³⁴ Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Apolidi. Suffragismo femminile e istituzioni politiche dall'Unità al fascismo' in Associazione degli ex parlamentari della repubblica, Le donne e la Costituzione. Atti del Convegno promosso dall'Associazione degli ex-parlamentari (Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1989), pp. 5-46.

³⁵ Annarita Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili. Temi e momenti della stampa emancipazionista in Italia dall'unità al fascismo* (Arezzo: Dipartimento di studi storico-sociali e filosofici, 1988). For Chapter 5 ('La stagione suffragista'), see pp. 177-249; for Chapter 6, 'Dopo la guerra: dal "femminismo puro" al "femminismo politico", see pp. 251-85.

³⁶ Buttafuoco, 'Apolidi', p. 6. A similar approach, concentrated on dissecting the dynamics of 'key moments' of the movement, is deployed in *Cronache femminili*.

³⁷ For instance, she observes the contrasting policies of various regional pro-suffrage committees on allowing members, before noting the novelty of male inclusion in the history of women's groups in unified Italy and identifying its significance in terms of the campaign image and 'the need for external alliances'. Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 192.

³⁸ 'If the vote represented an important goal for the Italian emancipationist movement, it is also true that the elements of the movement could by no means be boiled down to suffrage: even during the first decade of the twentieth century, [...] the vote was always considered – by all the movement's constituent parts – not as the aim, but as an instrument which was essential in order to achieve all the reforms demanded by women'. Buttafuoco, 'Apolidi', p. 18.

³⁹ See especially Annarita Buttafuoco, Le Mariuccine. Storia di un'istituzione laica: l'Asilo Mariuccia (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985); 'La filantropia come politica: esperienze dell'emancipazionismo italiano nel Novecento' in Lucia Ferrante et al. (eds.), Ragnatele di rapporti: patronage e reti di relazione nella storia delle donne (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1988), pp. 166-87; 'Motherhood as a political strategy: the role of the Italian women's movement in the creation of the Cassa Nazionale di Maternità' in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), Maternity and gender policies: women and the rise of the European welfare states, 1880s-1950s (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 178-95; Questione di cittadinanza. Donne e diritti sociali nell'Italia liberale (Siena: Protagon Editori Toscani, 1997). For an Englishlanguage account of Buttafuoco's work, see the special issue of the Journal of modern Italian studies, 7: 1 (2002); in particular, see Mary Gibson, 'Introduction', pp. 1-16, and Patrizia Gabrielli, 'Protagonists and politics in the Italian women's movement: a reflection on the work of Annarita Buttafuoco', pp. 74-87.

⁴⁰ Fiorenza Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile in Italia dall'unità al fascismo* (Milan: Edizione Unicopli, 1996). For the section on suffragism, see pp. 101-38; the section on the Unione Femminile Nazionale (UFN) is also relevant (pp. 139-73).

⁴¹ Mimma De Leo and Fiorenza Taricone (eds.), Le donne in Italia. Diritti civili e politici (Naples: Liguori, 1992).

⁴² Marina d'Amelia, Donne alle urne. La conquista del voto: documenti 1864-1946 (Rome: Biblink, 2006).

While the scholarship referenced above provided a rich basis for Italian suffrage studies, no booklength history of Italian suffragism emerged until Anna Rossi-Doria produced *Diventare cittadine*⁴³ (1996). Subsequent volumes include Giulia Galeotti's *Storia del voto alle donne in Italia* (2006),⁴⁴ Debora Migliucci's *Per il voto alle donne* (2006),⁴⁵ and Gaetanina Sicari Ruffo's *Il voto alle donne* (2009).⁴⁶ I will briefly consider the approaches taken in each of these works.

The structure of Rossi-Doria's *Diventare cittadine* reflects some of the challenges of periodising suffragism in Italian history. Of its four chapters, the first, second and fourth all deal with the events surrounding the eventual concession of suffrage to Italian women in 1945. Only the third chapter, 'A long road', is dedicated to the activism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁷ Rossi-Doria's approach is more narrative than analytical, but she does defend an overall argument that the failure of Italian suffragism was due in large part to the movement's character remaining 'more social than political'.⁴⁸ On a related note, she highlights the particular prominence in Italy of argumentative strategies emphasising women's difference – although she also observes that these existed in tension with the tradition of suffragist argument that relied on egalitarian principles.⁴⁹ As regards international context, Rossi-Doria devotes a considerable portion of her chapter to comparing the suffrage trajectories in Italy and France.⁵⁰

⁴³ Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*. Rossi-Doria was also the editor of the translated anthology of Anglo-American suffragist texts referenced on p. 7, n. 27 above (*La libertà delle donne*).

⁴⁴ Giulia Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne in Italia: alle radici del difficile rapporto tra donne e politica [History of votes for women in Italy: the roots of the difficult relationship between women and politics] (Roma: Biblink, 2006).

⁴⁵ Debora Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne. Dieci anni di battaglie suffragiste in Italia (1903-1913). (Milan: Mondadori, 2006).

⁴⁶ Sicari Ruffo, Il voto alle donne.

⁴⁷ In acknowledgement of the difficulty, yet desirability, of integrating these early- and mid-century sections as part of an overarching story, Rossi-Doria opens the third chapter by quoting from *Cose d'ieri dette alle donne d'oggi*, a book written in 1945 by Anna Franchi, herself a veteran of that early movement. The passage cited sees Franchi underline the debt owed by the women of 1945 to their forebears, 'ormai quasi tutte morte, [che] preparono quel substrato di forze morali che forse ha dato oggi l'impulso alle donne nuove' [now almost all dead, who prepared the ground layer of moral strength that is perhaps the impulse driving the new women of today]. (Cited in Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 75). That unemphasised 'forse' [perhaps] can be read as subtly attenuating both Franchi's and Rossi-Doria's accounts: while a link between pre-Fascist suffragism and post-Fascist enfranchisement is sought, it cannot be affirmed without acknowledgement of its empirical fragility.

⁴⁸ Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ 'The ambiguity and uncertainty between these two concepts of female citizenship caused, in large part, the political fragility of the Italian movement'. Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 85.

omen were eventually admitted to vote only after the Second World War (in 1946). While France did not have a Fascist government during the intervening years, Rossi-Doria draws attention to other commonalities between the status of the suffrage question in the two countries. (I have previously noted that some of Italy's cameos in the field of international suffrage studies occur in the context of such parallels – see p. 5, n. 15 above). In particular, Rossi-Doria notes that both feared Church influence on women voters, as the political foundation narratives of both placed considerable importance on the separation of Church and State. This led

Galeotti's *Storia del voto*⁵¹ is more evenly divided than Rossi-Doria's book: the first half deals with the period between unification and the advent of Fascism, while the second half treats of the 'biennio rosa'⁵² of 1945-46. In treating of the pre-Fascist suffrage movement, Galeotti analyses thematic and argumentative patterns, rather than presenting events in chronological sequence. She marks the ideological divide between the campaigns for women's municipal suffrage ('granted to some' by Mussolini in 1925, albeit none too usefully), and for their political suffrage ('denied to all').⁵³ Further, she notes the contrasting concerns raised by the prospect of the 'elettrice' [woman voter] and the often more terrifying one of the 'eletta' [elected woman].⁵⁴ Conscious that the Italian suffrage movement was far from being a 'monolithic bloc',⁵⁵ Galeotti, like Rossi-Doria, highlights the suffragist rhetoric emphasising women's 'female specificity', i.e. difference. While pointing out that this was a feature of many countries' suffrage movements, she holds that Italian women were especially focused on 'the idea of votes for women because they were potential mothers'.⁵⁶

Migliucci's *Per il voto*⁵⁷ features a more tightly defined periodisation than either Rossi-Doria's or Galeotti's: she sets out to describe the relationship of the suffrage movement and the Italian media 'from the preludes to its emerging trajectory [...] until its decline, following a historical arc of roughly a decade'.⁵⁸ Despite the apparent significance of post-World War One events, such as a suffrage bill passed by the Chamber in 1919 and Italy's hosting of the 1923 IWSA congress, Migliucci justifies the closure of her analytical arc in 1913 on the grounds that the suffrage campaign in Italy had grown

to women's suffrage being opposed not only by the right, but by members of the left who feared reactionary votes. Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 87.

⁵¹ Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne.

⁵² Galeotti's 'biennio rosa' [two pink years] is a pun on the historically better-known 'biennio rosso' [two red years], a name given to the period from 1919 to 1920 in reference to the high level of unrest among workers, an unrest seen as socialist/ communist in ideology and thus 'red'. This unrest was ultimately quenched by the rising, violent Fascist movement. (See for instance Martin Clark, *The failure of revolution in Italy, 1919-1920* (Reading: University of Reading, 1973)). By describing 1945-46 as a biennio rosa, Galeotti substitutes red with pink, a colour traditionally associated with women (and which has tended to be embraced as a symbol by Italian feminists of the second-wave and later, where it has often been rejected by feminists in English-speaking countries). The pun connotes the severe anticlimax felt by socialists when the biennio rosso culminated in a rightwing takeover. A section subtitle, which suggests why this connotation is deemed appropriate, reads, 'Tante elettrici e poche elette' [Many women voters and few women elected]; although Italian women were admitted to the franchise in 1945 and exercised it in 1946, this did not result in a significant level of female representation in parliament.

⁵³ Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne, p. 24; p. 35. This distinction is also emphasised by Rossi-Doria (*Diventare cittadine*, p. 76).

⁵⁴ Although Italy would eventually admit women to passive suffrage (i.e. the right to stand for election) in 1946, just one year after the concession of active suffrage, Galeotti opines that in the early part of the century, a majority of those supportive of municipal and/or parliamentary suffrage for women intended this to exclude the right to run for election: 'If it was possible to imagine women voters, albeit with difficulty, their presence in Parliament was still wholly unimaginable'. Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne, p. 85.

⁵⁷ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne.

⁵⁸ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 1.

untenably stale by then.⁵⁹ She considers organisational and legislative developments relevant to suffrage in conjunction with the coverage received in women-oriented publications that ranged from the overtly suffragist, through the more generically feminist, to the anti-feminist; the aim is to bring to life 'the choral interaction of the voices and viewpoints of women of the period'.⁶⁰ This *coralità* pervades Migliucci's account of the same events chronicled by Rossi-Doria and thematically analysed by Galeotti.⁶¹ Her key observation is of 'a divergence between the suffragist vanguard, represented by women of considerable intellectual status [...] and the resistance displayed by 'common' women'.⁶² However, she offers subtle analyses of schisms within that suffragist *avanguardia*, too: between older and younger generations, as well as between Catholic and anti-clerical, socialist and bourgeois, pacifist and interventionist groups.

Finally, the most recent of the books, Sicari Ruffo's, 63 observes that the suffrage question 'has often been dealt with in terms of independent elements and not always in its whole historical landscape', 64 and seeks to remedy this. The result is a fascinatingly broad-ranging account, which traces the development of ideas on women from Ancient Greece and Rome up to the late nineteenth century; describes the status of women's education in post-unification Italy; homes in on the developing relationship of women to civil and political citizenship between unification and the concession of the vote in 1945; briefly treats of government debates on suffrage in Liberal Italy; discusses a selection of relevant extracts from the Italian press during the same period; and, uniquely for the books under discussion, offers a section on 'international links' – however, this provides short accounts of the development of suffragism in 9 countries, rather than delving into the connections between them. 65 Overall, the text oscillates between a focus on Italy and a wider lens on the development of feminism and suffragism in the broad western world. While academic bridges between studies of the Italian

⁵⁹ Even though 1913 saw Italy's first specifically and exclusively suffragist national meeting take place, Migliucci contends that this event was characterised by discussion which 'seemed poor in content, as if worn out by ten year of battles and scarred by the resultant defeats'. Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 113. ⁶⁰ Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 2.

⁶¹ For instance, a description of the first national congress of Italian women in 1908 is counterpointed by analyses of responses to the congress in the journals *La donna* and *Il giornale della donna*, neither of which was explicitly feminist in outlook. (*La donna* was issued with the newspapers *La Stampa* (in Turin) and *La Tribuna* (in Rome); first launched in 1905, with an explicit declaration that 'non sarà un giornale femminista' [it will not be a feminist journal], it ran until 1968. *Il giornale delle donne* was issued on a fortnightly basis in Turin between 1872 and 1940; during the period under consideration, its editorial approach to feminist questions tended towards wary reserve. See Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 123-25). These journals reveal a strongly- and popularly-imagined demarcation between the 'sano movimento femminile' [healthy women's movement], which could be cautiously supported, and a less tolerable set of 'voli troppo alti e repentini' [flights that are too impulsive and range too high], within which suffragism was often positioned. (A. Vespucci, 'Conversazioni in famiglia' in *Il giornale delle donne*, XLI, 17 (5 September 1909), p. 408. Cited in Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 65-66).

⁶³ Sicari Ruffo, Il voto alle donne.

⁶⁴ Sicari Ruffo, *Il voto alle donne*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Sicari Ruffo, Il voto alle donne, Chapter 6 ('Rapporti trasnazionali'), pp. 108-30.

movement and the international one are undoubtedly needed (as discussed in 1.1.1), and while Sicari Ruffo's lively book makes a welcome gesture towards that need, the shifting scope of her analysis limits the clarity of her account. On the other hand, it succeeds in communicating the kind of impressionistic overview that was lacking in Italian suffrage studies until recently.

While recognizing the value of such overviews, my own study sets out to work on a narrower canvas, seeking to create a sharp focus on specific patternings of identity in language which I believe to have significant implications for the wider history of suffragism. Perhaps my 'underview' and the various types of overviews offered by Rossi-Doria, Galeotti, Migliucci, and Sicari Ruffo might be seen as complementary. Of these, however, Migliucci's approach, with its more or less discursive focus,66 has been particularly helpful in guiding the formation of my own methodology. Where she opts for an overarching analysis of the arguments around the suffrage question over a ten-year period – allowing for the incorporation of brief quotations from a vast range of documents - I envisaged a study in which a limited selection of texts would be subjected to more intensive analysis.⁶⁷ The complex fissures probed by Migliucci (both between Italian suffragists and other groups of women, and among the suffragists themselves) suggested that this kind of detailed textual analysis might yield further evidence of how Italian suffragist identity was constructed in this landscape of rifts. By probing linguistic articulations of that identity, I expected to find patterns whereby some of the tensions observed by Migliucci were manifested in discursive snags, emphases, and intricacies; however, I also thought it likely that I would identify strategies whereby suffragist campaigners fought to elide these differences and to forge a common noi [we].

One notable gap in histories of Italian suffragism (and first-wave feminism in Italy more generally) is the lack of studies integrating the insights of literary criticism with those of historical analysis. While research on Italian women's literary production during the era in question has proliferated in rather more abundance than has comparable historiographical research, these two strands have developed as largely separate entities. Despite some signals of rapprochement,68 there is certainly no Italian equivalent of the English-language studies that have used literary texts as a focusing lens on suffragism.⁶⁹ Since the latter have yielded illuminating results in an Anglophone context, I hoped to

history (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999). However, this volume deals primarily with historical novels written by women of the second-wave era and beyond.

⁶⁶ As well as looking at the 'organisational development' of the suffrage movement, Migliucci sets out to analyse 'the development of the debate both at institutional level [...] and, especially, at the level of public opinion'. Per il voto alle donne, p. 2.

⁶⁷ The advantages and limitations of my chosen method are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (pp. 41-57). 68 Notably, Maria Ornella Marotti and Gabriella Brooke (eds.), Gendering Italian fiction: feminist revisions of Italian

⁶⁹ See for instance Barbara Green, Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performance and the Sites of Suffrage, 1905-1938 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Kabi Hartman, "What made me a suffragette": the new woman and the new (?) conversion narrative' in Women's History Review 12: I (2003), pp. 35-50; Maroula Joannou,

make some initial steps towards bridging this disjunction in the Italian case. With that in mind, I now review some existing scholarship on Italian women's – and feminist – literature of the period.

1.1.3 Feminist voices in Italian literature: (a)political implications

Broad surveys of Italian women's writing, either focusing on or encompassing the early twentieth century, include those conducted by Anna Nozzoli,⁷⁰ Rinaldina Russell,⁷¹ and Sharon Wood.⁷² These scholars tend to agree upon a general pattern: they present those women writers who found their literary feet in the late nineteenth century, such as Matilde Serao, Neera, and La Marchesa Colombi,⁷³ as writing about women's lives without (overt) feminist consciousness, and attribute the primary break in this pattern to Sibilla Aleramo, whose autobiographical novel *Una donna* [A woman] was published in 1906. Also acknowledged, albeit in passing, is the fact that Aleramo had a precursor in Anna Franchi, whose *Avanti il divorzio!* [On with divorce!] broke similar thematic ground in 1902.⁷⁴

Readings of less obviously feminist authors, however, have sometimes revealed complex, highly-charged, and by no means wholly anti-feminist representations of gendered subjectivities. One foundational example of this approach comes from Lucienne Kroha, who observes how writers ranging from Neera to Aleramo have 'recourse to strategies which allow them simultaneously to display and to disguise a subversive stance vis-à-vis the literary tradition on the margins of which they find themselves'. Similarly, Lucia Re adapts the concept of 'anxiety of authorship' (originally developed in an Anglophone context by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar) to explore how writing is linked with gender in works by women as diverse as Serao and Aleramo; she gives especial emphasis to the peculiar national and nationalist context in which these post-Risorgimento women came to

^{&#}x27;Suffragette fiction and the fictions of suffrage' in M. Joannou and J. Purvis (eds.), *The women's suffrage movement:* new feminist perspectives (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 101-16; Sowon S. Park, 'Suffrage fiction: a political discourse in the marketplace' in *English Literature in Transition*, 1880-1920, 39:4 (1996), pp. 450-61.

Anna Nozzoli, Tabù e coscienza: la condizione femminile nella letteratura italiana del Novecento (Florence: La Nuova Editrice, 1978).

⁷¹ Rinaldina Russell (ed.), *Italian women writers: A bio-bibliographical sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994); *The feminist encyclopedia of Italian literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997).

⁷² Sharon Wood, *Italian women's writing, 1860-1994* (London: Athlone, 1995); see also Sharon Wood, 'Feminist writing in the twentieth century' in Peter E. Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 151-67.

⁷³ Matilde Serao lived from 1856-1927; Neera was the pen-name of Anna Radius Zuccari (1846-1918); La Marchesa Colombi was the pen-name of Maria Antonietta Torriani (1840-1920).

⁷⁴ See for instance Wood, *Italian women's writing*, p. 22; 'Feminist writing in the twentieth century', pp. 151-53.

⁷⁵ Lucienne Kroha, *The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy: gender and the formation of literary identity* (Edwin Mellen: Lewiston, 1992), p. 6.

⁷⁶ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The madwoman in the attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

writing.⁷⁷ Ursula Fanning explores the rich ambivalences of Serao's work: she notes that Serao simultaneously constructs ideally 'feminine' characters and sets them up for martyrhood, while the very act of writing locked the author outside the world of typical femininity in her own life.⁷⁸ In a related vein, Katharine Mitchell explores the 'domestic fiction' of Neera, Serao and Colombi as a lens on aspects of women's experience generally silenced or downplayed in official histories – marriage, work, education, and constraints relating to all of these – and argues that the authors in question employ an intense focus on the private sphere as a means of legitimating their entry, as writers, into the public one.⁷⁹

The polyvalent attitudes to feminist ideas in the works of writers like Serao and Neera is all the more interesting since the overt connections between these writers and the suffrage movement are decidedly antipathetic. Serao, writing in anticipation of Salvatore Morelli's first bill in favour of women's suffrage in 1877, was scathing: 'Grande agitazione in tutti i *boudoirs*, congiure nei salotti [...]; non si pensa più all'amore, alle acconciature, alla maldicenza; [...] le elezioni si fanno così raramente! [...] Dio! come si riderà in novembre alla Camera!'80 Neera, in 1904, condemned the rising wave of feminism, including suffragism, as 'troppo maschile per essere del femminismo sincero'.81 Responding to surveys in 1905 and 1911, she reiterated her absolute disinterest in votes for women.82

An interesting comparative study could be made of the discourses used by these and similar writers and the discourses found within the emergent suffrage movement. However, within my more limited scope, I wished to analyse literary texts by women who were (at least at the time of writing) prosuffrage. My hope was that this would allow for the exploration of tensions, contradictions and ambivalences that political suffragist documents sought to elide, but that could be pondered at articulate leisure within literary genres.

⁷⁷ Lucia Re, 'Passion and sexual difference: the Risorgimento and the gendering of writing in nineteenth-century Italian culture' in Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (eds.), *Making and remaking Italy: the cultivation of national identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), pp. 155-200.

⁷⁸ Ursula Fanning, Gender meets genre: woman as subject in the fictional universe of Matilde Serao (Dublin and Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2002).

⁷⁹ Katharine Mitchell, 'Narrativizing women's experiences in late nineteenth-century Italy through domestic fiction' in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 14: 4 (2010), pp. 483-501.

gossip; [...] elections are held so rarely! [...] God! how people will laugh in the Chamber in November!] Matilde Serao, 'Votazione femminile' in *Dal vero* (Milan: Perussia & Quadrio, 1879), pp. 33-37. Accessed from Project Gutenberg at http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19887 on 1 April 2013.

⁸¹ [too masculine to be genuine feminism]. Neera, *Le idee di una donna* (Milan: Libreria Editrice Nazionale, 1904), p. 6. Accessed from Internet Archive at

http://archive.org/stream/leideediunadonn00neergoog#page/n5/mode/2up on 2 April 2013.

⁸² Unione Femminile Nazionale, *Il voto alla donna. Inchiesta e notizie* (Milan: Tipografia Nazionale di V. Ramperti, 1905), p. 2; Nuova Antologia, 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo' in *Nuova antologia di lettere, scienze ed arti*, 5th series, vol. 154 of collection 238 (July-August 1911), pp. 121-28 (p. 127), accessed from <u>Internet Archive</u> at http://archive.org/stream/nuovaantologia238romauoft on 31 January 2013. These surveys are both referenced in Section 2, with the 1905 study being analysed in depth (Chapter 4).

Within my narrowed selection criteria, Franchi and Aleramo seemed obvious candidates for analysis: both were active suffragists in the first decade of the twentieth century (although Aleramo's relationship with feminism subsequently shifted considerably, as shall be seen), and both had written semi-autobiographical works dubbed 'feminist' at the time. Alongside Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna, I selected a third work; this was lo e il mio elettore. Propositi e spropositi di una futura deputata⁸³ (1910), by Donna Paola.⁸⁴ This latter text, fusing fictionalised dialogue and political propaganda, is less unequivocally literary than the others, but is intriguing precisely for its generic undecidability. It also fulfills the criterion of authorial involvement in suffragism; Donna Paola regularly voiced suffragist arguments in her journalism, which included writing for the pro-suffrage periodical La donna di Torino.⁸⁵

Neither Franchi nor Donna Paola has received much critical attention.⁸⁶ Aleramo's work, on the other hand, has been extensively analysed. While wide-ranging studies tend to posit her as the paradigmatic feminist among early-twentieth-century Italian women writers, more 'Aleramo-centric' research tends to explore the problematics of her relationship with organised feminism. Although a committed and self-identified feminist, including suffragist, during the first decade of the century (as chronicled, albeit somewhat tangentially, in *Una donna*), by 1911 she had rejected the movement as 'una breve avventura, eroica all'inizio, grottesca sul finire, un'avventura da adolescenti, inevitabile e ormai superata'.⁸⁷ Instead, she became increasingly frustrated by what she deemed the inadequacy of man-made literary forms to express specifically female experience: 'Oh, queste parole e questi nomi,

20; see also pp. 572-73.

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⁸³ Donna Paola, *Io e il mio elettore. Propositi e spropositi di una futura deputata* [My voter and I. Intentions and inanities of a future MP] (Lanciano: Carabba, 1910). My translation of the title, which inverts the order of the two characters named ('My voter and I'), operates on the premise that Donna Paola's positioning of the 'io' before the 'elettore' is less a deliberate statement that a result of the constraints of Italian grammar, whereby this ordering is obligatory. The rendering of 'propositi e spropositi' as 'intentions and inanities' seeks to carry over the self-deprecating aspect of the original, along with its phonetic playfulness.

As mentioned earlier, Donna Paola was the pen-name of journalist Paola Baronchelli Grosson (1866-1954).
 Rachele Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico delle donne lombarde, 568-1968 (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995), p.

Among the works that do consider Franchi are Cristina Gragnani, 'Avanti il divorzio e La mia vita: Anna Franchi tra autobiografia e autofinzione' in Mnemosyne, o la costruzione del senso, I (2008), pp. 127-38, and 'Un io titanico per un'"umile verità": ideologia e disegno letteraria in Avanti il divorzio di Anna Franchi' in Ombretta Frau and Cristina Gragnani (eds.), Sottoboschi letterari. Sei case studies fra Otto e Novecento. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2011), pp. 85-114; Michela Pierucci, 'Anna Franchi: il femminismo tra cultura del Risorgimento e interventismo' in Fabio Bertini (ed.), L'emancipazione: diritti e doveri. Conferenze livornesi sul giornalismo femminile tra Ottocento e Novecento (Florence: Centro editoriale toscano, 2004), pp. 157-67. Scholarship on Donna Paola is sparser still. When her writings are mentioned, it is usually in a more historical than literary context, as in Allison Scardino Belzer, 'The other army: Italian women on the home front during the First World War' in Minerva Journal of Women and War, 3: I (2009), pp. 6-23.

⁸⁷ [a brief adventure, heroic at its start, grotesque in ending, an adolescent adventure, inevitable and now outgrown]. Sibilla Aleramo, 'Apologia dello spirito femminile' (1911) in *Andando* e stando (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), p. 64. This declaration of Aleramo's lends further support to Debora Migliucci's tenet that Italian suffragism had grown stale by 1913 (see above, p. 11, n. 59).

[...] questo cozzo fra il mio ritmo interno e il ritmo delle forme da voi trovate!'88 Rather than seeking to change institutional, political sexism, she now sought to create a female style of writing. In *Il passaggio* [The passage], the 1919 novella which narratively picks up where *Una donna* left off, this is the primary aim.⁸⁹ There are striking affinities between these ideas of Aleramo's and those of secondwave Italian feminist philosophers such as Adriana Cavarero and Luisa Muraro,⁹⁰ who affirm and celebrate the idea of *differenza sessuale* [sexual difference] rather than egalitarian positioning; unsurprisingly, some readings of Aleramo use the work of these theorists as a lens.⁹¹ (Of course, affinities can also be drawn with the related second-wave French concept of *écriture feminine*,⁹² while, to a reader raised in an English-language tradition, some of Aleramo's ideas evoke those expressed by Virginia Woolf in *A room of one's own*).⁹³

Much critical attention to Aleramo focuses on signs of rupture and reworking in her body of heavily autobiographical texts,⁹⁴ while tensions between the general and the particular in her long process of

⁸⁸ [Oh, these words and these names, [...] this clash between my inner rhythm and the rhythm of the forms found by you [men]!] Sibilla Aleramo, 'La pensierosa' (1913) in *Andando* e *stando* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), p. 114.

⁸⁹ Interestingly, the narrator/protagonist's 'passage' through this book culminates with poetry; she appropriates this latter as a 'rorida potenza sorta in me' [dew-drenched power risen in me], a solution to the problem of the 'parole violatrici' [violating words] of what she sees as a confining, patriarchal linguistic tradition. Sibilla Aleramo, *Il passaggio* (Milan: Editori Riuniti, 1985; first publ. 1919), p. 103, p. 102.

⁹⁰ For Cavarero's approach, see for instance Adriana Cavarero, 'L'elaborazione filosofica della differenza sessuale' in Maria Cristina Marcuzzo and Anna Rossi-Doria (eds.), *La ricerca delle donne: studi femministi in Italia* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1988), pp. 173-87; *Nonostante Platone: figure femminili nella filosofia antica* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990); and 'Equality and sexual difference: amnesia in political thought' in Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds.), *Beyond equality and difference: citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 28-42; 'Who engenders politics?', trans. Carmen de Cinque, in Graziella Parati and Rebecca J. West (eds.), *Italian feminist theory and practice: equality and sexual difference* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont, 2002), pp. 88-103. For Muraro's approach, see for instance *L'ordine simbolico della madre* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1991); 'Oltre l'uguaglianza' in Diotima, *Oltre l'uguaglianza: le radici femminili dell'autorità* (Naples: Liguori, 1995), pp. 105-32; 'The passion of feminine difference beyond equality', trans. Carmen di Cinque, in Parati and West (eds.), *Italian feminist theory and practice*, pp. 77-87. For a useful overview of how *pensiero della differenza sessuale* has developed in an Italian context, see Graziella Parati and Rebecca West, 'Introduction' in Parati and West, *Italian feminist theory and practice*, pp. 13-27.

⁹¹ For instance, Ursula Fanning considers the place of Aleramo's work on a theoretical 'continuum' that includes Cavarero as well as French theorists such as Cixous and Kristeva ('Generation through generations: maternal and paternal paradigms in Sibilla Aleramo and Dacia Maraini' in Adalgisa Giorgio and Julia Waters (eds.), Women's writing in Western Europe: gender, generation and legacy (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), pp. 248-62 (pp. 257-59)). Barbara Spackman draws on Muraro's theory of separation from the mother as a symbolic disorder for women to interpret aspects of Aleramo's prose style ('Puntini, puntini; motherliness as masquerade in Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*' in *Modern Language Notes*, 124:5 (December 2009), pp. 210-23).

⁹² See especially Hélène Cixous, 'The laugh of the Medusa', trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in Signs 1:4 (Summer 1976), pp. 875-93.

⁹³ Virginia Woolf, A room of one's own (London: Penguin Classics, 2000; first publ. 1928).

⁹⁴ Susan Jacobs, for instance, maintains that 'there is no linear progress to chart in terms of [Aleramo's] self-understanding, but what become apparent are intersections and resistances with dominant narratives and genres, and the insistent dialogism with her own earlier texts in a process of repeating, revising, and justifying.' (Susan Jacobs, Constructing A Woman: gender, genre and subjectivity in the autobiographical works of Sibilla Aleramo (doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, 1994), p. 11. See also Susan Jacobs, 'In search of the other subjectivity: autobiography in the works of Sibilla Aleramo' in Literature and Quest, ed. Christine Arkinstall

personal myth-making are also probed (e.g. by Ann Hallamore Caesar⁹⁵ and Fiora Bassanese).⁹⁶ A tendency to foreground discomfiting or incoherent elements is taken to an extreme by Barbara Spackman, who identifies and theorises 'the irritating aspects of Aleramo's prose'.⁹⁷ I engage particularly with the work of Paola Polselli⁹⁸ and of Ursula Fanning,⁹⁹ both of whom attend to *Una donna*'s site at the interstices of factual and fictional genres. Polselli interprets it as a problematic *Künstlerroman*,¹⁰⁰ while Fanning suggests that, by repeatedly testing and rejecting romance plots within the book, Aleramo moves towards a new form of text that places the parent-child relationship centre-stage.

A significant body of critical work, then, engages with Aleramo as a woman writer, with the emphasis on woman. While drawing on this criticism, along with associated biographical work, 102 in my comparative reading of Franchi and Aleramo (Section 4, Chapter 9), my chief focus in that section will be on forging links between literary and socio-historical aspects of Italian feminist scholarship. Specifically, I harness my readings of Franchi and Aleramo, as well as of Donna Paola (Chapter 10), to the broader discursive analysis of Italian suffragism that I have undertaken. Political and literary discourses, I contend, can each illuminate the other's limitations and complexities.

(Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1993), pp. 53-64). Arguing against this grain, Carole Gallucci emphasises continuity in Aleramo's work, treating the later novels *Amo dunque sono* and *Il frustino* as 'sister' works to *Una donna* – although, interestingly, an analysis of the starkly revisionary *Il Passaggio* is omitted. (Carole C. Gallucci, 'The body and the letter: Sibilla Aleramo in the interwar years' in *Forum Italicum*, 33:2 (Fall 1999), pp. 363-91).

⁹⁵ Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Italian feminism and the novel: Sibilla Aleramo's A Woman' in Feminist Review, 5 (1980), pp. 79-87.

⁹⁶ Fiora A. Bassanese, 'Una Donna: autobiography as exemplary text' in *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 11: 1 (1990), pp. 41-60; 'Sibilla Aleramo: writing a personal myth' in Robin Pickering-lazzi (ed.), *Mothers of invention: women, Italian Fascism, and culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 137-65.

⁹⁷ Spackman, 'Puntini, puntini, puntini', p. 221.

⁹⁸ Paola Polselli, 'Una donna di Sibilla Aleramo ovvero come conciliare arte, vita, fantasche e donne metafisiche' in *The Italianist*, 18: 1 (1998), pp. 101-29.

⁹⁹ Ursula Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*: a case study in women's autobiographical fiction' in *The Italianist*, 19 (1999), pp. 164-77.

¹⁰⁰ A Künstlerroman is a novel describing the youth and development of an individual who becomes an artist (writer, painter, composer, etc.).

Much, although not all, of this critical work could be described as 'gynocritical', in Elaine Showalter's terminology: that is, as adopting a perspective centred on female difference, whereby writing by women is treated as a distinct and 'double-voiced' tradition. Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist criticism in the wilderness' in *Critical Inquiry*, 8:2 (Winter 1981), pp. 179-205.

¹⁰² See especially Bruna Conti, Sibilla Aleramo: coscienza e scrittura (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986); Annarita Buttafuoco and Marina Zancan (eds.), Svelamento. Sibilla Aleramo: una biografia intellettuale (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988); Emma Scaramuzza, La santa e la spudorata. Alessandrina Ravizza e Sibilla Aleramo: amicizia, politica e scrittura (Naples: Liguori, 2004).

1.2 Outstanding questions

The above review highlights two directions that are notably absent from the existing scholarship on the Italian women's suffrage movement. Firstly, Italian suffragism — and indeed first-wave Italian feminism more generally — has not been fully considered in its international context. While Rossi-Doria, Galeotti, Migliucci, and Sicari Ruffo, among others, make reference to the adherence of Italy's Comitato Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile [CNPSF; National Commitee For Women's Suffrage] to the IWSA, and allude to particular influences from Anglo-American and French feminisms, they do not dwell on these aspects with a level of detail sufficient to situate the Italian case on a map of 'world suffragisms'. Moreover, there is as yet no comprehensive study of the Italian suffrage movement in English, and English is still (ironically if inevitably) the dominant language of comparative and international suffrage studies.

Secondly, although the movement has been considered in its relation to other socio-political phenomena within Italy – socialism, Catholicism, and Fascism, to name a few¹⁰³ – its connections with literary production, and in particular with literature by and about women, have not been extensively examined. This fits with a broader tendency in Italian feminist studies towards the segregation of the historical (especially the politico-historical) and the literary.¹⁰⁴

My research question emerged with both these lacunae in mind, although I cannot claim to fill either gap within the scope of the present study. Rather, I remained mindful of them while asking how the Italian language functioned to construct not only the ideologies of a suffrage movement, but also the identities of those representing it and those it purported to represent. For instance, in analysing suffragist texts (Section 3), I pay especial attention to how Italian suffragists situated themselves in relation to concepts of *italianità*, and (given the extent to which the suffrage map was weighted as Anglo-American) in relation to their more world-famous neighbours. In analysing how the language of feminist literary works constructed individual identities, collective identities, and *italianità* (Section 4), I seek to integrate some historical and literary dimensions of first-wave Italian feminism by reading political and literary texts 'against' each other.

¹⁰³ See for instance Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile on suffragism and socialism; Paola Gaiotti de Biase, Le origini del movimento cattolico femminile (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1963), on suffragism and Catholicism; Mariolina Graziosi, 'Gender struggle and the social manipulation and ideological use of gender identity in the interwar years' in Robin Pickering-lazzi (ed.), Mothers of invention: women, Italian Fascism, and culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 26-51, on suffragism and Fascism.

¹⁰⁴ A recently-published volume edited by Katharine Mitchell and Helena Sanson, however, makes very welcome steps towards overcoming that segregation (Mitchell and Sanson (eds.), Women and gender in post-unification Italy: between public and private spheres (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013)). Taken as a whole, and in many cases individually, its chapters integrate literary and historical dimensions within a framework of cultural studies; Katharine Mitchell's contribution ("Sorelle in arte (e politica)": the "woman question" and female solidarity at the fin de siècle' (pp. 197-223)) is particularly deliberate in its fusion of these fields.

Chapter 2 A history of Italian suffragism

This chapter offers an overview of the development of suffragism in Italy. It considers the period between national unification and the turn of the century (2.1); the flourishing of suffragism in the first decade of the twentieth century (2.2); the schisms that rent the movement between 1909 and 1913 (2.3); the submerging of suffragism beneath patriotic and pacifist concerns during World War One (2.4); the fate of suffragism in the new, post-war political landscape (2.5); and the odd relationship between suffragist hopes and Fascism in the early years of Mussolini's government (2.6). Finally, it summarises the relevance of this material to the analyses that comprise the main bulk of my thesis (2.7).

2.1 Deferral: from unification to the turn of the century

The 'long road' ¹⁰⁵ of Italian suffragism is generally viewed as having its modern roots in 1861, the year in which the Kingdom of Italy was formed. From the outset, a strong distinction was assumed between the *voto amministrativo* [municipal vote] and the *voto politico* [parliamentary vote]. While certain women in Lombardy, Tuscany and the Veneto had, under pre-unification regimes, already been admitted to exercise municipal suffrage (via postal vote or a delegated representative), ¹⁰⁶ and while the restoration and extension of this state of affairs tended to be discussed as a real possibility, the idea of extending parliamentary suffrage to women was wildly alien in newly-unified Italy. ¹⁰⁷

Two distinct traditions of suffrage campaigning, then, can be traced between 1861 and 1900. The first and more potentially successful tradition limited itself to advocating for the *voto amministrativo* for particular groups of women. Into this bracket fell a petition advanced to parliament by the women of Lombardy in 1861, in which they requested the restoration of their former right; into it, too, fell bills presented in parliament by Ubaldino Peruzzi (1863), Giovanni Lanza (1865 and 1871), and Giovanni Nicotera (1876). It has been suggested that, at a time when the centralisation of Italy's government

¹⁰⁶ The fact that women's voting power was permissible but their physical presence at elections was not has been highlighted by Bigaran as signalling the location of the marker between a public sphere from which women were excluded – 'the concrete moment of voting' – and a private one in which, as possessors of property, they could have a place – 'the choice of those who would oversee their assets'. Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ Rossi-Doria, Diventare cittadine, p. 77.

¹⁰⁷ Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 76. Rossi-Doria explains that the concept of municipal suffrage for women was potentially compatible both with the lingering ideology of the *ancien régime*, whereby women had an important local role, and with that of newborn liberal Italy, whereby local administration was not viewed as inherently political (p. 76).

was still new and precarious, elements of this campaign may have been motivated less by a desire to empower women politically than by a wish further to depoliticise local government – since any organisational body that included women could not possibly be political.¹⁰⁸

The second tradition – 'very different, of a universalist and utopian stamp' 109 – sought the admission of women to both the *voto amministrativo* and the *voto politico*. The chief proponents of this campaign were MP Salvatore Morelli, 110 who twice presented a bill seeking the 'abolizione della schiavitù domestica con la reintegrazione giuridica della donna accordando alle donne i diritti civili e politici' 111 (1867 and 1877), and Anna Maria Mozzoni, 112 who backed the second presentation of Morelli's bill by organising a conference on the subject and a petition asking that parliament recognise women as

cittadine, contribuenti e capaci, epperò non passibili, davanti al diritto di voto, che di quelle limitazioni che sono o verranno sancite per altri elettori. 113

Morelli's bills were rejected; this was to be expected, considering that even male suffrage in the new Italian state was extremely limited. In 1861, when the existing rule in Piedmont was extended to the rest of the new state, only men of 25 and over who paid 40 *lire* or more in taxes, and/ or who possessed a university degree or professional qualification, were enfranchised. In practice, this amounted to an electorate of 420,000 – roughly 2% of the population. The principles upon which the electorate should be determined were a matter of on-going debate by successive governments: in fact, women's most realistic chance of gaining access at least to the *voto amministrativo* during this period lay not in overt and sex-specific campaigning, but within the framework of broader electoral

¹⁰⁸ See Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ Rossi-Doria, Diventare cittadine, p. 78.

¹¹⁰ Salvatore Morelli (1824-1880) was also the author of *La donna e la scienza* [Woman and science], a book that had been published in 1861 and that suggested, much as John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) would do, that women's inferiority was socially constructed rather than biologically inevitable. For biographical information, see Emilia Sarogni, *L'Italia e la donna. La vita di Salvatore Morelli* (Turin: D. Piazza, 2007); also Ginevra Conti Odorisio (ed.), *Salvatore Morelli* (1824-1880): emancipazionismo e democrazia nell'Ottocento europeo (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1992).

[[]abolition of domestic slavery with woman's legal reinstatement, through the granting of civil and political rights to women].

Anna Maria Mozzoni (1837-1920) had been a Mazzianian supporter during the Risorgimento, and subsequently applied her organising abilities and eloquence to women's emancipation and other areas of social justice. In 1864, she published a treatise on women's position in unified Italy (*La donna e i suoi rapport sociali, in occasione della revisione della Codice Civile italiano*); in 1870, she translated John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of women* into Italian (*La servitù delle donne*). For biographical detail, see Rachele Farina, 'Politica, amicizie e polemiche lungo la vita di Anna Maria Mozzoni' in Emma Scaramuzza (ed.), *Politica e amicizia. Relazioni, conflitti e differenze di genere* (1860-1915) (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2010), pp. 55-72; see also Franca Pieroni Bortolotti's introduction in Anna Maria Mozzoni, *La liberazione della donna*, ed. F. Pieroni Bortolotti (Milan: Mazzotta, 1975). On Mozzoni's collaboration with Morelli, see especially Fiorenza Taricone, 'Salvatore Morelli e Anna Maria Mozzoni', in Conti Odorisio (ed.), *Salvatore Morelli*, pp. 167-86.

[[]citizens, contributing and capable, and thus not subject, in relation to the right to vote, to limitations other than those which are or will be sanctioned for other electors]. Anna Maria Mozzoni, *La liberazione della donna*, ed. Franca Pieroni Bortolotti (Milan: Mazzotta, 1975), p. 129.

¹¹⁴ Christopher Duggan, The force of destiny: a history of Italy since 1796 (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 237.

reform. Right-leaning administrations tended to favour the existing wealth bias, while left-leaning ones tended to advocate for somewhat more democratic options. Stepping towards these latter, Agostino Depretis' government implemented a significant reform in 1882: voting age was lowered to 21, the tax requirement to 19.8 lire, and the educational requirement to two years of primary school or completed military service. This caused education, not property, to become the most common condition upon which men claimed the vote, and had the effect of more than trebling the electorate (to some 7% of the population). Prior to this reform, a commission had been set up to investigate the question of votes for women. Reporting to the Chamber, the commission produced an evasive formula: it did not dispute 'la eguaglianza dell'uomo e della donna', but considered them as 'individui esseri destinati a formare un'unità nel seno della famiglia' and thus left it 'ad altri e ad altro tempo il vedere quali e quanti diritti politici possano essere conferiti alla parte più gentile'. When Francesco Crispi investigated the possibility of further reform a few years later, a similar rhetoric of deferral was used in relation to the woman question. 118

Following the dead-end (for women) of the electoral reform discussions of the 1880s, there followed a hiatus of sorts. The 1890s were marked by extreme economic hardship, and, with it, social unrest; a socialist movement cohered into a political party, the Partito Socialista Italiano [PSI], in 1892. The governmental response to these developments was repressive. Any further expansion of the electorate would have been anathema to administrations which felt themselves beleaguered by rising socialism. In 1898, the tensions that had simmered in strikes and protests throughout various sectors of Italian society during preceding years came to a head: riots in numerous cities culminated in May with a Milanese demonstration against which the army reacted with excessive force, killing at least eighty people in what came to be known as the Bava-Beccaris massacre. Since this disaster cast the government in a negative light, efforts were made to ascribe it, implausibly, to socialist propagandists. To bolster this narrative, heavy-handed repression of all organisations deemed to have socialist or revolutionary links ensued. These organisations included various groups advocating for women's

115 Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 61.

Denis Mack Smith, Modern Italy: a political history (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 123. In Mack Smith's words, the effect of Depretis' reform was to enfranchise 'the petty bourgeois and the educated artisan' (p. 123).

¹¹⁷ [the equality of man and woman]; [individual beings destined to form a single entity in the bosom of the family]; [to others and to another time to determine which and how many political rights can be conferred on the gentler sex.] Camera dei deputati, *Il voto alle donne. Le donne dall'elettorato alla partecipazione politica* (Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1965), p. 25, p. 29, p. 31. Cited in Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, pp. 79-80.

As Rossi-Doria puts it, 'it was not women's right to the vote which was denied, but the appropriateness of her exercising it'. Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 80.

¹¹⁹ See Mack Smith, Modern Italy, p. 174.

rights, such as the several Leghe per la tutela degli interessi femminili [LTIF; Leagues for the protection of women's interests]. 120

However, the demolition of many nascent structures linked to Italian feminism may have facilitated the movement's resurgence in new, more dynamic, and more overtly political forms in the early years of the new century. With personal networks created and formal configurations broken down, those women interested in emancipation could use their existing connections to experiment with new modes of organisation, adapting these to changing national and international contexts.

2.2 <u>Coalescence: suffragist organisation, 1900-08</u>

A second and more dynamic phase in Italian suffragism developed between the turn of the century and the outbreak of World War One; it is on this phase that my thesis focuses most closely, a choice that chimes with the periodisations deployed by several historians.¹²¹ The shift in the movement's pace circa 1900 was mediated largely through the establishment of women's associations that were feminist, if not overtly suffragist, in their initial outlook, and that had a national or at least crossregional scope. The Unione Femminile Nazionale [UFN; National Women's Union] was founded in 1899 by Ersilia Majno Bronzini and others; it operated from Milan (and still does today), but rapidly established branches across other Italian cities. 122 The Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne [CNDI; National Council of Women] also had its roots in 1899, when a women's federation had been set up in Rome by Giacinta Martini Marescotti and others; however, it was officially launched as a national organisation in 1903 in order to satisfy the conditions of membership of the International Council of Women [ICW]. 123 Both the UFN and the CNDI had varied and elastic campaign aims, which sought the improvement of legislative, educational, and socio-economic conditions for Italian women. The vote was not explicitly included in either organisation's original programme, yet both had remits of interest wide enough to allow for lively internal discussion of the question and its place in official policy in subsequent years. Between 1903 and 1905, the socialist-leaning UFN would organise a survey of opinion on suffrage (analysed in Section 2), and would emerge as a body with an openly pro-

¹²⁰ Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile, p. 35. On the history of the Leghe, see especially pp. 36-57

¹²¹ Rossi-Doria dubs these years as the ones in which the international suffrage movement 'reached its climax', carrying Italy along with it (Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 80); Migliucci distinguishes the decade between 1903 and 1913 as a period in which 'the suffrage question was no longer debated only on an ideological and intellectual plane, but tackled concrete actions'. (Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 1).

¹²² Emma Schiavon, 'The women's suffrage campaign in Italy in 1919 and Voce Nuova ("New Voice"): corporatism, nationalism and the struggle for political rights' in Ingrid Sharpe and Matthew Stibbe (eds.), Aftermaths of war: women's movements and female activists, 1918-1923 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 49-60 (p. 54). On the UFN, see also Taricone, L'associazionismo femminile, pp. 139-73.

¹²³ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 4-6. On the CNDI, see also Taricone, L'associazionismo femminile, pp. 9-100.

suffrage position. The CNDI, with a more bourgeois and aristocratic membership, retained 'moderate politics', and, despite considerable internal argument, did not move to work officially for the vote.¹²⁴ However, both organisations proved vital to the establishment of a suffragist movement. Firstly (and in the case of the CNDI especially), they provided Italy with a foothold on the international stage of the women's movement. Secondly, they facilitated communication across Italy between people interested in women's emancipation.

This increased communication allowed considerable discussion to build up around the subject of a bill put forward by republican deputy Roberto Mirabelli, first in June 1904 and again in December 1905. The bill proposed universal suffrage, both municipal and political; it explicitly included women, as well as those men who were still debarred from voting due to the property, educational and/or military service requirement. In support of Mirabelli, women across Italy began to form local 'Comitati Pro Voto' [Pro-Suffrage Committees]. The bill failed to pass in the Chamber, and the new committees turned their attention swiftly to other avenues of attack.

Just as the need for Italy to be represented internationally in the forum of the ICW had triggered the establishment of the CNDI in 1903, so news of the upcoming Copenhagen congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance [IWSA]¹²⁷ spurred the Roman 'Comitato pro voto' to join with its equivalents in Lombardy, Turin and Bari to become the Comitato Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile [CNPSF] in 1906. As an apparently national suffrage society, the CNPSF could send delegates to IWSA events (Teresa Labriola was sent to Copenhagen). However, its 'national' status was the subject of some dispute. The committees varied significantly in their regulations: for example, while the Roman committee accepted only female members, the Turinese one included a male presence not only its membership, but in its steering group.¹²⁸ This latter group, along with the

¹²⁴ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 6.

¹²⁵ For an explication of Mirabelli's thinking on universal suffrage, and an account of his debates with fellow deputies on the subject, see Roberto Mirabelli and E. Leone, *Botte e risposte sul suffragio universale* (LaVergne: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2010. First publ. Rome: Tip. Industria e Lavoro, 1906). On women's part in universal suffrage, see especially pp. 14-20.

Migliucci notes that in addition to the committees formed in major cities (Rome, Turin, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Bari, Florence, Bologna, Padua, Piacenza, Reggio Emilia, Venice, and Pavia), some were established in much smaller towns, including Cerreto Sannito, Vigevano, Lecco, Abbiategrasso, Montalcino, Chiari, and Mondovì. Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 9.

The IWSA had been formally established in 1904, following international suffragists' frustration at the reluctance of the ICW to declare a pro-suffrage position. On its history, see Rupp, Worlds of women, pp. 21-26. See Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 9-10; p. 15. The contrasting discourses suggested by such decisions have been observed by Buttafuoco: while the Roman committee viewed a women-only structure as freeing its members to speak 'without having to [...] compare themselves [...] with men', and as enabling an image 'of autonomy, of specifically feminine strength', the Turinese committee viewed male participation as essential 'to show [...] that women's requests were not the result of "sex egoism", but [...] were geared towards the general interest of society'. Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, pp. 194-95.

Milanese committee (closely linked to the UFN), retained considerable autonomy in relation to the 'national' association.

The inadequacy of cross-regional communication was paradigmatically exposed in an early-1906 fiasco involving two simultaneous petitions. Immediately prior to its metamorphosis into the CNPSF, the Roman suffrage committee, under the leadership of Mozzoni, was gathering signatures for one petition, while the Milanese committee, led by UFN president Ersilia Majno, was gathering signatures for another. Incredibly, neither body seems to have been aware of the other's endeavour. When Majno discovered Mozzoni's petition, she signed it and relinquished her own, although this latter had already garnered around 10,000 signatures. PMozzoni's petition continued to be an important focus of the newly-consolidated CNPSF; although it was submitted to Parliament in 1906, it would not be discussed in the Chamber until the following year.

Meanwhile, suffragists explored another approach: that of enrolling on electoral registers, and consequently forcing the courts to consider whether they were technically entitled to vote according to existing law. The strategy of exploiting ambiguities in legal language had already been trialled by suffragists in other countries. Most famously, it had been attempted in Britain in 1868.¹³¹ Having had their enrolments struck off, British women had appealed in the London Court of Common Pleas on the grounds that: (a) the term 'man' was defined in law as including women, following Lord Romilly's Act of 1850; and (b) the Reform Act of 1867 declared that 'every man' could vote, and thus necessarily allowed for women to vote also. That case, known as 'Chorlton vs. Lings', ¹³² was dismissed by Chief Justice Bovill and three other judges on the grounds that 'man' might include women where taxation laws were concerned, but signified 'male persons' when used with reference to voting rights. ¹³³

¹²⁹ Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 10-14. Migliucci comments: 'the unsynchronised action of the two newborn suffragist organisations seems to testify to a lack of communciation, or at least of coordination, between the two important Roman and Milanese entities' (p. 14).

¹³⁰ The petition is one of the texts analysed in Section 3 (see Chapter 5).

¹³¹ Similar attempts occurred in the USA (1872 – see Elizabeth K. Helsinger et al., *The woman question: society and literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883. Vol. 2: social issues* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 50-54) and in France (on several occasions throughout the 1880s – see Stephen C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women's suffrage and social politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 9-12).

¹³² Chorlton was legal adviser to the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage, while Lings was the revising barrister who had removed the names of women from the electoral register.

¹³³ For a contemporary account of the case, see 'Law report' in *The Times*, 10 November 1868, p. 9. (<u>The Times</u> <u>Digital Archive 1785-2006</u>, accessed through Trinity College Dublin Library at

http://stella.catalogue.tcd.ie/iii/encore/record/C__Rb12707068~S9;jsessionid=66EF89CF9371A492FEB4F8E64C7800E6?lang=eng on 15 December 2012. See also Elizabeth Crawford, The women's suffrage movement: a reference guide, pp. 514-15.

In Italy, the relevant ambiguity was a similar one: Article 24 of the 1848 Albertine Statute (which functioned as the constitution of united Italy) stated that:

Tutti i regnicoli, qualunque sia il loro titolo o grado, sono eguali dinanzi alla legge.

Tutti godono egualmente i diritti civili e politici, e sono ammessibili alle cariche civili e militari, salve le eccezioni determinate dalle leggi. 134

The women's case rested on the potential significance of the word 'regnicoli' [subjects]. Linguistically, this was (and is) a masculine plural noun which, by tradition, could include females as well as males. Legally, the plausibility of women's inclusion was supported by the use of pronouns referring to 'regnicoli' in subsequent articles that definitely applied to women; Article 25, for instance, continued: 'Essi contribuiscono indistintamente, nella proporzione dei loro averi, ai carichi dello Stato'. Thus, the women's argument hinged on the injustice of taxation without representation, an injustice made linguistically manifest in the inconsistently gendered use of the word 'regnicoli'. 136

The case was taken to nine Italian courts. The verdicts in eight were negative, as was to be expected. Most of these judgements relied on a distinction between civil and political rights: according to historical precedent, 'regnicoli' might encompass women as well as men in relation to the former, but could not in relation to the latter.¹³⁷ An exception, however, occurred in the court of Ancona, where Judge Ludovico Mortara ruled that the 'regnicoli' of Article 24 could not, in the context of the whole Statute, be interpreted as excluding women.¹³⁸ A higher court in Rome overturned the Ancona ruling

[[]All subjects, whatever their title or station, are equal before the law.

All equally enjoy civil and political rights, and are admissible to civil and military offices, save for the exceptions determined by the laws.] Lo Statuto Albertino (Regno di Sardegna e Regno d'Italia, 4 marzo 1848, accessed from Quirinale.it at

http://www.quirinale.it/grnw/statico/costituzione/statutoalbertino.htm on 15 September 2013.

[[]They contribute without exception, according to the proportion of their assets, to the expenses of the State]. Lo Statuto Albertino, accessed from Quirinale.it.

lnterestingly, this argument could be applied only to parliamentary suffrage, as women were explicitly debarred from municipal suffrage (presumably because this latter had been a reality in some regions before unification, and had remained within the realms of possibility between the 1860s and the 1880s). See Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, p. 76.

¹³⁷ For a detailed analysis of the court verdicts in historical context, see Raffaele Romanelli, 'Circa l'ammissibilità delle donne al suffragio politico nell'Italia liberale. Le sentenze pronunciate dalla magistratura nel 1905-1907' in Paolo Pezzino and Gabriele Ranzato (eds.), *Laboratorio di storia: Studi in onore di Claudio Pavone* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1994), pp. 127-44. (Accessed from SISSCO at

http://www.sissco.it/fileadmin/user_upload/Risorse/biblioteca_digitale/pdf/romanelli_1994.pdf on 15 January 2013).

Ludovico Mortara's personal views on women's suffrage in Italy were not wholeheartedly favourable: in responding to the UFN survey of 1905 (analysed in Section One), Mortara did not state whether he approved of the general principle, but did deem its possible implementation in Italy dangerous on the grounds that Italian women were still more superstitious and reactionary than Italian men. See Unione Femminile Nazionale, *Il voto alla donna. Inchiesta e notizie* (Milan: Tipografia Nazionale di V. Ramperti, 1905), p. 8. Following the Ancona verdict, Mortara confirmed in a newspaper interview that he was 'personalmente contrario al voto alle donne, ma "giuridicamente" favorevole' [personally against women's suffrage, but "juridically" in favour]. 'Il voto politico alle donne', in *Giornale d'Italia*, I August 1908, cited in Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*, p. 133.

in December 1906, arguing, in line with the other regional judgements, that women's non-involvement in public affairs precluded them from the political vote, and that this was obvious enough not to require articulation in law.¹³⁹ However, the original judgement, and indeed the bevy of court cases in themselves, had provoked fresh debate about the suffrage question from a newly legislative angle.¹⁴⁰

This fallout coloured the subsequent parliamentary debate on Mozzoni's petition, held in February 1907, almost a year after the petition had been submitted. The debate ended with the establishment of a commission to investigate the social condition of women in Italy (with a view to determining their 'suitability' to vote). It would be late 1910 before the commission would report back; at that point, it would recommend, purportedly on the basis of extensive surveys of women's educational and social condition throughout Italy, that extending even municipal suffrage to women was premature.¹⁴¹

The coalescing of the wider women's movement in Italy continued apace, and 1908 saw the first national women's congress convened by the CNDI in Rome. The official congress programme was divided into six sections, dealing with: 1) education; 2) legislative issues; 3) aid and welfare; 4) emigration; 5) health and hygiene; and 6) art and literature. Significantly, there was no listed session dedicated to suffrage. However, following pressure from the CNPSF, a plenary meeting was scheduled to consider a motion supporting women's voting rights; this was inserted into the section on legislative issues.¹⁴²

The Roman congress, and in particular the suffrage session, sparked increased debate in the national media and especially in women's journals.¹⁴³ However, the congress also marked the first of many definitive schisms within the women's movement: namely, that between Catholic feminists and those

¹³⁹ Cassazione Roma 12.12.1906, in "Foro italiano" 1907, I, 73. Cited in Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*, p. 133. ¹⁴⁰ Romanelli, 'Circa l'ammissibilità delle donne al suffragio politico', p. 130.

A close analysis of the commission's studies and deliberations is offered by Bigaran ('Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', pp. 73-76). She notes that 'the opinion expressed by the commissioners at the end of the work, carried out over a full four years, was only partly or indirectly accounted for by the picture that had been so laboriously sketched' (p. 76).

¹⁴² Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI], 'Adunanza plenaria (organizzata dal Comitato Nazionale «Pro Suffragio Femminile»)' in *Atti del I Congresso Nazionale delle donne italiane, Roma, 24-30 aprile 1908* (Rome: Stabilimento tipografico della Società Editrice Laziale, 1912), pp. 604-19. The official report of the suffrage session is analysed in Section 3 (see Chapter 6).

¹⁴³ This media debate is analysed in some detail by Claudia Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*, *Roma 1908. Opinione pubblica e femminismo.* (Rome: Biblink, 2008), pp. 64-84; the responses of women's journals are also considered by Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 62-66.

who were non-religious if not vocally anti-clerical. The issue that caused the rift was not suffrage, but religious education in schools.144

Within the suffrage movement itself, other splits were beginning to become evident. Along three intertwined fault lines, the movement began to fracture: these lines concerned method, class, and attitude to war.

2.3 Schisms among suffragists, 1909-1913

2.3.1 Method

A division concerning method became evident when suffragists had to decide how to engage with the general election held in the spring of 1909. In the Roman pro-suffrage committee, a generally older and more traditional faction, including the CNPSF president, Giacinta Martini Marescotti, 145 believed that the non-party approach outlined in the statutes of both the CNPSF and the IWSA should be followed, and that no particular candidates should be supported by suffragists. However, a younger faction, led by Teresa Labriola, 146 preferred a method adopted by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies [NUWSS] in Britain: that of campaigning for candidates and parties that had declared themselves favourable to women's suffrage, and campaigning against those that had not.

¹⁴⁴ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 54-55. In fact, the annoyance of Catholic delegates (and indeed the Catholic hierarchy) at Linda Malnati's successful proposal of a motion to remove religious education from the curriculum spurred the foundation of a conservative organisation for Catholic women, the Unione fra donne cattoliche d'Italia [UDCI; Union of Catholic women of Italy], in 1909. The purpose of this group, supported by Pope Pius X, is described by Migliucci as being 'to fight the common enemy: feminism' (p. 55). For further details of the dispute at the congress, see Taricone, L'associazionismo femminile, pp. 49-58; on the later exploits of the UDCI, see Cecilia Dau Novelli, Società chiesa e associazionismo femminile. L'Unione fra le donne cattoliche (1912-1919) (AVE, Roma, 1988); for an overall account of the Catholic women's movement in Italy, see Gaiotti de Biase, Le origini del movimento cattolico femminile.

¹⁴⁵ Countess Giacinta Martini Marescotti belonged to the aristocracy on her mother's side, and was the wife of writer and politician Ferdinando Martini. Prior to becoming CNPSF president, she had been involved in establishing the organisation 'Per la donna'. See Taricone, Associazionismo femminile, p. 114.

¹⁴⁶ Teresa Labriola forms a perplexing figure in the history of Italian feminism. Although she originally held socialist views (her father was the Marxist philosopher Antonio Labriola), she would become militantly nationalist during both the Libyan war of 1911-12 and the First World War. Towards the end of this latter, she detached herself from existing feminist and suffragist associations, founding instead the Lega patriottica femminile [LPF; Women's Patriotic League] in 1917. In subsequent years she became disillusioned by the democratic parliamentary system, and consequently by the feminist claim for women's suffrage. For biographical detail, see Fiorenza Taricone, Teresa Labriola: biografia politica di un'intellettuale tra Ottocento e Novecento (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1994); Sara Follacchio, "L'ingegno aveva acuta e la mente aperta". Teresa Labriola: appunti per una biografia' in Maria Grazia Camilletti (ed.), Biografie. Storie, letteratura, didattica (Bologna: Clueb, 1996), pp. 65-89, and 'Da un secolo all'altro. Antonio e Teresa Labriola' in Itinerari, 2 (1998), pp. 61-79.

The tension generated by Labriola's stance, which sought to emulate not a tactic of Britain's militant WSPU, but of its non-militant NUWSS, serves usefully to highlight the contrast between the 'spectrums' of suffrage methodologies at play in the two countries by this point. ¹⁴⁷ In relation to the 1909 election, Labriola's faction prevailed, and the Roman committee gave its support to two prosuffrage parliamentary candidates, both of whom won seats. ¹⁴⁸ Throughout other Italian cities, too, the policy of intervening to support pro-suffrage candidates was advocated to members of the committees. ¹⁴⁹ By 1910, however, the policy-related fissures between 'two generations of suffragists, bearers of [...] different methods of combat ¹⁵⁰ had not been resolved; rather, they were deepening and spreading. At the Roman headquarters of the CNPSF, Martini Marescotti resigned her presidency after hearing that her opponents were to nominate a candidate to oppose her. ¹⁵¹ While the (largely autonomous) Lombard pro-suffrage committee did its best to contain the impact of the breach, reverberations were nonetheless felt in suffrage circles throughout Italy. ¹⁵²

2.3.2 Class

There had been a class element to this policy split: Martini Marescotti and several of her closest adherents belonged to the aristocracy, while Labriola was (at that time) sympathetic to socialism. However, a further split, following 1910, was more openly indexed to class loyalties. Since the Italian suffrage movement's inception, the place of socialist and working-class women within its ranks had been a precarious one: 153 they were persistently and justifiably fearful that, since the majority of working-class men did not yet have the right to vote, bourgeois and aristocratic suffragists would campaign to have the franchise extended firstly to women who could meet an educational and/or

¹⁴⁷ In Migliucci's terms, 'the steps being taken by the more moderate wing of the English suffrage movement were considered, in Italy, to have already gone too far'. Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁴⁸ These candidates were Pilade Mazza, a republican, and Leonida Bissolati, a socialist. (Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 69).

Indeed, in the province of Nuoro in Sardinia, a female candidate was put forward, albeit without her knowledge or consent: the novelist Grazia Deledda. Migliucci notes in positive tones that Deledda garnered 24 votes (*Per il voto alle donne*, p. 70); the literary critic Janice Kozma places the number at 34, yet cites this as evidence of the extent to which Deledda was personally detested in her home region (Janice M. Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's* eternal adolescents: the pathology of arrested maturation (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont, 2002), p. 170, n. 61). On Deledda's reaction and ambivalent relation to organised feminism, see Martha King, *Grazia Deledda: a legendary life* (Leicester: Troubadour, 2005), pp. 123-24.

¹⁵⁰ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 72.

This challenge was made in an anonymous letter, attributed by L'Alleanza to Bice Sacchi, another leading light of the 'younger' faction. See Maria Teresa Sega, 'Bice Sacchi e il suffragismo italiano', in Costanza Bertolotti (ed.), La repubblica la scienza l'uguaglianza. Una famiglia del Risorgimento tra mazzinianesimo ed emancipazionismo (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2012), pp. 79-94 (pp. 87-88).

Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 78-79. On this breach, see also Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, pp. 223-26; Taricone, L'Associazione femminile, pp. 117-19.

The leader of feminist socialists in Italy, Anna Kuliscioff, had not attended the 1908 CNDI congress on the grounds that it was an overly bourgeois, insufficiently revolutionary enterprise. (Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 61).

property requirement.¹⁵⁴ In practice, this would have made for a reinforcement of the middle- and upper-class composition of Italy's electorate; the women of the working classes might have been at *more* of a disadvantage than before.

If socialist suffragists were on the margins of the suffrage movement, however, they were also marginalised within the PSI.¹⁵⁵ In the first decade of the 1900s, they received no party funding to support their publications, and in the spring of 1910 the party leader, Filippo Turati, ¹⁵⁶ responded to a CNPSF request for clarification on his position by stating, in the pages of the PSI publication *Critica sociale*, that women's suffrage was not a priority for the workers' movement. With the party's tepidity on the suffrage question thus officially consolidated, Anna Kuliscioff responded furiously. Since she and Turati had been partners – romantically as well as politically – for over twenty years (and continued to be), the published exchange which followed became known as the 'polemica in famiglia' [family argument]. ¹⁵⁷ By the autumn of the same year, Turati spoke up at the PSI congress for votes for both sexes. While this marked a victory for socialist suffragists in terms of political recognition, it also triggered a shift in their allegiance: towards the newly-supportive Socialist party, and away from the still-perceived-as-elitist CNPSF. The start of this shift was evidenced by Kuliscioff's proposal, at the same PSI congress, of an official separation between the proletarian and bourgeois factions of the suffrage movement; it was the first time that she had overtly suggested such a step. ¹⁵⁸

The socialist suspicion of bourgeois feminism was amplified by the presentation to Parliament, also in 1910, of a bill to extend municipal suffrage to women of 25+ who met the existing qualifications for male voters. As was by then the custom, this resulted in the formation of a committee and little else. 159 Nevertheless, the government was beginning to work towards an electoral reform extending voting rights to almost all men (which would ultimately be passed in 1912, as detailed below). In this context, the socialist fear of a gradualist, bourgeois suffragism might have been expected to dissipate.

¹⁵⁴ The male option of qualifying through military service would not, of course, be open to women.

¹⁵⁵ See Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile, for an account of this. With regard to the period between 1900 and 1912, see especially pp. 105-123.

¹⁵⁶ Filippo Turati had been among the founders of the PSI in 1892. He belonged to the reformist current within the party, and, with Kuliscioff as his partner, edited the journal *Critica sociale* between 1891 and 1926 (when he fled Italy as a result of Fascist repression). For biographical information, see Renato Monteleone, *Filippo Turati* (Turin: UTET, 1987). See also Nino Valeri's joint biography, *Turati e la Kuliscioff* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1974).

¹⁵⁷ See 'Suffragio universale?' in *Critica social*e, 16 March – 1 April 1910; Anna Kuliscioff, 'Suffragio universale a scartamento ridotto' in *Critica social*e, 16 April 1910; Anna Kuliscioff, 'Per concludere' in *Critica social*e, 1 May 1910.

¹⁵⁸ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 85.

This bill, presented by left-wing deputy Carlo Gallini, also sought to abolish *autorizzazione maritale* (whereby married women had to gain their husband's permission for financial transactions, even those involving what were theoretically the women's own assets) and to grant women full access to the professions (they were still debarred from practicing law). See Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 87-89.

However, the events of 1911, and specifically the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war, would cement the divide between proletarian and middle-class sections of the movement.

2.3.3 Attitude to war

In September 1911, Italy mounted an invasion of Libya, then under the control of the Ottoman Empire. How While there was initial broad support for this war across diverse political currents (conservative, radical, and, predictably, nationalist), the PSI, despite some internal division on the subject, opposed it. However, Teresa Labriola and several of her close adherents in the CNPSF adopted a strongly interventionist position. Labriola's stance, in particular, deserves emphasis; although her background was a socialist one, she was perhaps sufficiently disillusioned, following the earlier lack of PSI support for women's suffrage, to undergo what Lucia Re terms 'a veritable conversion'. With Labriola as de facto leader of Italian suffragism, socialist women who were also pacifist began to find their level of alienation within the movement untenable.

This crisis was expedited by the actions of the PSI. At its congress in Modena in October 1911 (just after the outbreak of the war), a motion was passed advocating the resignation of socialist women from all non-socialist suffragist associations, including the CNPSF and the local pro-suffrage committees. Some of these organisations sought to stem the exodus of socialist women, and a few individual socialists defied the PSI edict – notably Emilia Mariani, less leader of the Turinese pro-

¹⁶⁰ On the Italo-Turkish war, see Timothy W. Childs, *Italo-Turkish diplomacy and the war over Libya*, 1911-1912 (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

On the relationship between Italian socialism and the Italo-Turkish war, see Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, Il socialismo italiano e la guerra di Libia (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1976).

^{&#}x27;The heroic Libyan war was the turning point that made [Labriola] finally feel a part of an 'Italian race' and hence finally of an Italian nation with which she could identify and for which it was worth – she argued – for women to commit their energies and sacrifices'.

Lucia Re, 'Italians and the invention of race: the poetics and politics of difference in the struggle over Libya, 1890-1913' in *California Italian Studies*, 1: I (2010), pp. 1-58 (p. 39).

¹⁶³ Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, p. 229; Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 94.

¹⁶⁴ In January 1912, for instance, the Lombard committee issued an assurance that it would continue to campaign for votes for all women, coupled with an invitation to the socialist women to withdraw their resignations. Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 95.

strongly attached to socialism, had founded the Turinese LTIF in 1895 and the journal *L'Italia femminile* in 1899, before establishing Turin's Comitato Pro Voto in 1906. She would remain the president of that Comitato until her death. See Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, pp. 101-02; Enzo Santarelli, 'Emilia Mariani' in Franco Andreucci and Tommaso Detti (eds.), *Il movimento operaio italiano. Dizionario biografico, 1853-1943*, vol. 3 (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1977), pp. 313-14; Silvia Inaudi, 'Emilia Mariani' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani, vol. 70* (2007), accessed from Treccani at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/emilia-mariani (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 14 July 2013. For further details on Mariani's role within the Turin committee, see Inaudi, *Una passione politica. Il Comitato Pro Voto Donne di Torino all'inizio del Novecento* (Turin: Thélème, 2003) esp. pp. 22-30, 37-49, 62-83.

suffrage committee, and, until 1913, Linda Malnati and Carlotta Clerici, ¹⁶⁶ leading lights of the Milanese committee. ¹⁶⁷ In general, however, membership of pro-suffrage organisations appears to have dropped radically during the *guerra di Libia*. ¹⁶⁸

The withdrawal of socialist women from organised suffragism is legitimately viewed by Migliucci as the 'final blow'¹⁶⁹ for the latter movement. However, the Libyan war also affected suffragism in another way: it elicited a shift of priorities in both middle-class (predominantly interventionist) and socialist (predominantly pacifist) suffragists. For many interventionists, the concept of belonging to the *razza italiana* became more salient than that of advocating for women's rights.¹⁷⁰ For pacifists, analogously, the cause of ending the war claimed urgent precedence over that of women's suffrage.

In 1912, while the war still raged, Giolitti's electoral reform bill came under discussion in parliament. Despite the efforts of Turati and the PSI to amend it to include women, it was passed in relation to men only. All men over 30, with the exception of those deemed mentally incompetent or criminal, could now vote; men between 21 and 30 could vote if they met the economic or educational criteria previously required, or if they had completed military service. The electorate had hitherto formed 8.2% of the population; it now formed 23.2%.¹⁷¹

Suffragists' responses, while attenuated and scattered due to the war-related claims on their attention, were predictably irate. However, their anger was also channeled along deep class lines. Bourgeois suffragists expressed their sense of offence that illiteracy was no longer an obstacle to voting, yet femaleness, even the highly-cultured variety, still was.¹⁷² Meanwhile, socialist suffragists

¹⁶⁶ Linda Malnati (1855-1921) and Carlotta Clerici (1851-1924) combined socialist and feminist concerns in their work. Working closely with Anna Kuliscioff, Malnati had helped to found the socialist women's publication La difesa delle lavoratrici in 1911, which she edited for a time. During World War One, both Malnati and Clerici would fall under police surveillance for their activism in favour of peace. See Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, p. 101; 'Malnati, Linda' pp. 676-79, and 'Clerici, Carlotta', pp. 314-15, in Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*; Enzo Santarelli, 'Malnati, Linda' in Andreucci and Detti (eds.), *Il movimento operaio italiano*, vol. 3, pp. 257-59.

¹⁶⁷ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 95.

Due to the pro-suffrage committees' habits of not keeping precise records of their membership numbers – probably so as not to advertise how low these were – it is difficult to obtain precise statistics concerning this drop. However, Buttafuoco cites one example from the Lombard CPSF: in 1913, it registered only 190 subscriptions, most of them renewals, and just 5 of which were listed as paying the reduced rate available for working-class women. (*Cronache femminili*, p. 233).

¹⁶⁹ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 95.

Lucia Re compellingly traces the contiguities between this nationalist choice and subsequent Fascist ideologies in the cases of Teresa Labriola and Margherita Sarfatti (Re, 'Italians and the invention of race', pp. 39-40). With regard to the international women's movement, Daniela Rossini observes that the CNDI withdrew from the ICW's permanent committee on peace and arbitration during the Libyan war. (Rossini, 'Nazionalismo, internazionalismo e pacifismo', p. 79).

More precisely, the electorate shifted from 2,930,473 men to 8,443,205 (Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 241). In the words of one correspondent of *Il giornale delle donne*, signing herself 'Stella solitaria': 'Evviva dunque l'analfabetismo gloria e vanto della nazione, il quale ha avuto il privilegio di passare avanti ad una giusta

argued that the methods of their bourgeois counterparts (who focused on individual politicians rather than parties) had been largely responsible for women's exclusion from the reform.¹⁷³

By 1913, then, it was a fractured, distracted, and discouraged group that constituted the Italian suffrage movement. The outbreak of World War One in the following year, and Italy's entry to it in 1915, would further divide remaining suffragists and deflect their focus. In broader terms, however, it would also create a radical remapping of the concepts of public and private spheres, and of women's places within or between them.

2.4 Suffragists and the First World War

Opinion on the Great War among Italian feminists, as throughout Italy in general, was multifarious – and this time it was less clearly demarcated along bourgeois-interventionist/ socalist-pacifist lines. Prior to 1915, the bourgeois feminist press featured widespread opposition to intervention, linked sometimes with the pacifist, internationalist position fostered by the journal of the IWSA, *Jus Suffragii*. ¹⁷⁴ However, this opposition was often set alongside articles advocating Italian women's preparation for the new roles that a war effort would demand of them, and commenting admiringly on the activities already being undertaken by women in belligerent countries. ¹⁷⁵ Among socialist women, opposition was countered by a faction of interventionists, including Kuliscioff, who had viewed the Libyan enterprise (accurately) as colonialist nationalism, but saw this new war as a struggle for European democracy in the face of the reactionary Central Powers. ¹⁷⁶

aspirazione della donna' [Then long live illiteracy, glory and pride of the nation, which has had the honour of outstripping a just aspiration of woman]. Cited in Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 108.

¹⁷³ In an influential pamphlet, Anna Kuliscioff exhorted the 'donne proletarie' [proletarian women] to ignore the 'signore suffragiste' [lady suffragists] and concentrate their efforts on campaigning for the PSI in forthcoming elections, as only through that party was women's suffrage likely to be given priority. (Anna Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile. Donne proletarie, a voi! (Milan: Società Editrice «Avanti!», 1913. Reprint N. 6: Biblioteca Rossa, 1976), p. 17. This text in analysed in Section 3 (see Chapter 7)).

Jus Suffragii was edited by the British feminist Mary Sheepshanks. There was considerable disagreement within the IWSA regarding war policies, but, while Sheepshanks published numerous letters from her interventionist opponents, she maintained her pacifist editorial line and continued to publish contributions from women of the various belligerent countries. See Sybil Oldfield, 'Mary Sheepshanks edits an internationalist suffrage monthly in wartime: Jus Suffragii, 1914-19' in Women's History Review, 12: 1 (2003), pp. 119-31; also Sybil Oldfield (ed.), International woman suffrage: Ius Suffragii, 1913 – 1920, vols. 1-4 (London: Routledge, 2003).

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Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy, p. 47. See also Maria Casalini, 'I socialisti e le donne. Dalla "mobilitazione pacifista" alla smobilitazione postbellica' in Italia contemporanea, 222 (2001), pp. 5-42 (pp. 10-14).

Following Italy's declaration of war on Austria-Hungary on 23 May 1915, even many feminists who had been in favour of neutrality began to contribute in practical ways towards the war effort. Humanitarian work, such as Red Cross nursing and involvement in war welfare organisations, ¹⁷⁷ segued fairly seamlessly from the established precedent of *maternità sociale* as an important female role. ¹⁷⁸ The drive to recruit women to jobs that had been men's – whether in munitions factories, as tram drivers, or as office clerks – constituted a more daring departure from tradition, and was legitimated only because of the context of the war as national crisis. ¹⁷⁹

While specifically suffragist concerns did not vanish entirely from Italy's feminist organisations during the war years (the CNPSF, now renamed as a Federazione [FNPSF], continued to hold congresses planning for the post-war attainment of women's rights, including the vote), 180 they were muted and overshadowed by war-related projects. Indeed, in 1917 the FNPSF faced an internal challenge from the Mantuan Pro-Suffrage Committee, which, despite its founding purpose, declared itself 'di non essere, nel momento storico che si attraversa, favorevole al suffragio universale femminile'. 181 Its rationale was that most working-class Italian women had neutralist tendencies which, in the event of their being enfranchised, could cause 'danni gravi alla nazione'; 182 in the words of the group's leader, Ada Sacchi: 183

Le donne del popolo, le contadine sono *inferocite* contro la guerra. Ora certamente, noi non vogliamo ottenere il suffragio universale a qualunque costo fino alla rovina del nostro paese. ¹⁸⁴

The coordinated response of the FNPSF was condemnatory: representing it, Romelia Troise¹⁸⁵ described the Mantuan women's stance as 'gravissima' because 'sovverte i principi per i quali la donna

¹⁷⁷ For instance, the Federazione Nazionale dei Comitati di Assistenza [FNCA; National Federation of Welfare Committees], formed as an alliance between a male-dominated welfare committee and most of the feminist organisations in Milan (excepting the UFN). (Willson, *Women in twentieth-century Italy*, p. 48). For further surveys of Italian women's involvement in welfare work during the war, see Stefania Bartoloni, 'L'associazionismo femminile nella prima guerra mondiale e la mobilitazione per l'assistenza civile e la propaganda' in Ada Gigli Marchetti and Nanda Torcellan (eds.), *Donna lombarda* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1992), pp. 65-91; Emma Schiavon, 'Interventismo al femminile nella Grande Guerra. Assistenza e propaganda a Milano e in Italia' in *Italia contemporanea*, 234 (2004), pp. 89-104.

¹⁷⁸ Pieroni Bortolotti argues that it was philanthropy which formed the conduit between many women's pre-war pacificism and their subsequent interventionism. (*Socialismo e questione femminile*, pp. 131-32).

¹⁷⁹ On Italian women's employment during the war, see Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy, pp. 52-55; Beatrice Pisa, 'La mobilitazione civile e politica delle italiane nella Grande Guerra' in *Giornale di storia contemporanea*, 4:2 (2001), pp. 79-103; Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro*, 1914-1920 (Venice: Marsilio, 1998).

¹⁸⁰ See Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 251.

[[]not, at the present historical moment, in favour of universal women's suffrage]. Cited in Paolo Camatti, 'Ada Sacchi e il movimento emancipazionista' in Bertolotti (ed.), *La repubblica la scienza l'uguaglianza*, pp. 95-110 (p. 96).

[[]grave harm to the nation]. Cited in Camatti, 'Ada Sacchi e il movimento emancipazionista', p. 96.

¹⁸³ On Ada Sacchi (1874-1944), see Camatti, 'Ada Sacchi e il movimento emancipazionista'; Farina (ed.), 'Sacchi, Ada in Simonetta' in *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 959-60.

¹⁸⁴ [The common women, the peasant women are *raging* against the war. Now, we certainly do not want to obtain universal suffrage at all costs, even the ruin of our country.] Cited in Camatti, 'Ada Sacchi e il movimento emancipazionista', p. 96. See also Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*, pp. 82-83.

chiede il voto e li subordina ad una questione politica'. ¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, this episode is significant in that, within international suffrage history, it is a rare instance of a body formed with the single purpose of campaigning for women's suffrage declaring itself temporarily opposed to the extension of that suffrage. ¹⁸⁷

As World War One drew to an end, feminist organisations had generally remained structurally intact, but had shifted their focus from political rights to war work and welfare more broadly; moreover, interventionist-pacifist acrimony within what remained of the movement had left profound ruptures. Paradoxically, though, the changes wrought by war in the Italian socio-political canvas created a set of circumstances in which the extension of women's suffrage became a more realistic possibility than ever before.

2.5 After the war: suffragist aspirations, 1918-22

Reporting on the national women's congress of October 1917, Margherita Ancona¹⁸⁸ sharply critiqued the subordination of feminist concerns exemplified in extreme form by the Mantuan 'Pro-Suffrage' Committee:

Leggano quelle donne i giornali, sentano i discorsi degli uomini politici e, senza bisogno di essere dotate di spirito profetico, vedranno profilarsi la politica antifemminista di domani. 189

Ancona was correct: the end of the war ushered in mass unemployment and a widespread rhetoric of bitterness against women, who were perceived as having 'stolen' men's jobs during the war (although

[very serious]; [it subverts the principles upon which woman asks for the vote and subordinates them to a

Romelia Troise began her working life as a telegraph operator, but would become a lawyer when the bar on women practicing law was removed in 1919. See for instance Taricone, *Teresa Labriola*, p. 16.

political issue]. Cited in Camatti, 'Ada Sacchi e il movimento emancipazionista', p. 96.

187 Instances of suffrage being de-prioritised by suffragist groups are far more common (the most oft-cited example being the patriotic 'ceasefire' officially offered by the British WSPU upon the outbreak of World War One). Instances of pragmatic stalling by individuals and groups who had previously supported the suffrage cause are also common. (In the Irish case, the extension of suffrage to women between 21 and 30, while in keeping with the principles upon which the 1916 rebellion had been fought, was delayed until 1922 so that women, who were seen as more intransigently nationalist than their male counterparts, could not vote against the Anglo-Irish Treaty). However, in no other country's history have I yet come across an instance of opposition to suffrage being voiced by a group founded as specifically and solely pro-suffrage.

¹⁸⁸ Margherita Ancona (1881-1966) was president of the Milanese Pro-Suffrage Committee at this time. For biographical detail, see Farina (ed.), 'Ancona Luisa e Margherita', in *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁸⁹ [Let those women read the newspapers, let them listen to the speeches of political men, and, without the need for the gift of prophetic spirit, they will witness tomorrow's antifeminist politics emerging.] Margherita Ancona, Relazione al Convegno Nazionale Femminile di Roma, 7-9 ottobre 1917 (Milan: Tip. F.lli Azimonti, undated), p. 15.

many were unceremoniously dismissed in the immediate post-war period),¹⁹⁰ and were also deemed to have enjoyed their wartime 'freedoms' rather too much.¹⁹¹

However, the post-war landscape also revealed an altered political jigsaw. Most notably for the purposes of this history, the Partito Popolare Italiano [PPI], a newly-formed Catholic party, joined in an alliance with the PSI to support measures increasing women's legal and political rights. ¹⁹² International trends were important: some of Italy's wartime allies had moved swiftly towards enacting women's suffrage, ¹⁹³ as had some of her wartime enemies. ¹⁹⁴ As Italy struggled for perceived international legitimacy, especially in relation to the disputed Dalmatian territories not granted to her in the Treaty of Versailles, ¹⁹⁵ there was a strong motivation to be seen as *au courant* with prevailing winds of progressiveness; votes for women seemed increasingly to be carried on those winds. Moreover, the women in the successfully annexed territories of Trento and Trieste had already enjoyed municipal suffrage; to remove their existing right would, it was argued, foster disunity. ¹⁹⁶

In 1919, then, MPs Luigi Gasparotto and Ferdinando Martini¹⁹⁷ proposed a bill which would extend municipal and parliamentary suffrage to women; a supportive majority in the Chamber included prime minister Francesco Nitti.¹⁹⁸ Parliamentary debates on the bill centred on two issues. One was the pragmatic question of whether it would be more advantageous to implement suffrage reform only

¹⁹⁰ Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy, p. 58.

¹⁹¹ In particular, women were chastised for suspected sexual promiscuity, in the absence, and at the expense, of their soldier husbands. See Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 254.

While not all Catholic organisations were in accordance with the PPI's position (the newspaper *Civiltà cattolica* evinced great doubt about women's suffrage), most were moving towards a view of women's participation in public life as a potential conservative bulwark against what they viewed as socialist attacks on the family – especially in the form of the campaign to legalise divorce. See Pieroni Bortolotti, *Femminismo* e partiti politici, pp. 66-68. On the unlikely accord between the Catholic left and socialists over some questions regarding women, see John M. Foot, 'Socialist-Catholic alliances and gender. Work, war and the family in Milan and Lombardy, 1914-21' in Social history, 21: I (1996), pp. 37-53.

¹⁹³ Britain passed legislation enfranchising women (over 30) in 1918; the US very nearly passed the Nineteenth Amendment in the same year, and eventually passed it in 1920, enfranchising women at a federal level.

¹⁹⁴ Most notably, Germany and Austria enfranchised women in 1918.

¹⁹⁵ On Italy and the peace settlement, see for instance Mack Smith, Modern Italy, pp. 276-94.

¹⁹⁶ Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 257. See also Pieroni Bortolotti, Femminismo e partiti politici, p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ Luigi Gasparotto (1873-1954) was a radical MP (see Lucio D'Angelo, 'Gasparotto, Luigi' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 52 (1999), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-gasparotto_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 29 July 2013). Ferdinando Martini was a liberal, and the husband of Giacinta Martini Marescotti, erstwhile president of the CNPSF. (See Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, p. 114).

Pieroni Bortolotti observes that Nitti's rhetoric privileged the *contadina* as the Italian woman par excellence, and that this seemed linked both to the need to remove women from industrial and office jobs, and to the increasingly prevalent discourse of nationalist racism. ("'Il voto delle contadine, soprattutto delle nostre contadine, me lo lascino dire con superbia, delle nostre contadine meridionali, [...] quelle donne che rappresentano la più mirabile forza della razza italica [...] sarà grandemente utile" ["The votes of peasant women, especially of our peasant women, let me say it with pride, of our southern peasant women, [...] those women who represent the most admirable strength of the Italian race [...] will be very useful"]. Cited in Pieroni Bortolotti, *Femminismo* e *partiti politici*, pp. 14-15.

after the next election; the second was the perceived problem of including prostitutes among the would-be female electorate. Prostitution had been legal and regulated in Italy since unification;¹⁹⁹ the numbers of women involved had increased during World War One, and the post-war backlash against female employment was frequently expressed in terms of sexually moralistic slurs against working women generally.²⁰⁰ Many deputies evinced deep investment in the maintenance of a rigid division between the 'madonnas' and the 'whores'. Physically, the polling station was deemed dangerous as a site at which these groups might mingle.²⁰¹ Symbolically, it was felt that the vote, if trusted to women at all, should be trusted only to women who embodied traditional female virtues: as Giuseppe Micheli of the PPI put it, 'opportunamente fu esclusa dal diritto al suffragio colei che ha perduto comunque la personalità muliebre'.²⁰² Despite Filippo Turati's defence of the rights of the 'salariate d'amore',²⁰³ the bill passed by the Chamber on 5 September 1919 upheld the position that all women except prostitutes would be entitled to vote.²⁰⁴

While the mere passage of the bill should seem of great significance, the government fell before the bill could go before the Senate, rendering it ineffectual. The odd situation of having theoretically won the vote detached the fraying strands of the women's movement from one of their last unifying bastions, as there seemed little purpose in continuing to campaign for something that had apparently already been conceded. External developments – most notably Gabriele D'Annunzio's occupation of Fiume in September 1919, the emergent Fascist movement, and the rising tension between socialist strikers and demonstrators and Fascist squads that characterised the *biennio rosso* (1919-20) – caused

¹⁹⁹ See Gibson, Prostitution and the State in Italy, pp. 2-4; pp. 13-16.

²⁰⁰ Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy, p. 55; p. 59.

²⁰¹ In Bigaran's words, the deputies feared the 'embarrassment that would be felt by chaste women if they should encounter the lipsticks, rouge, and plunging necklines of the "streetwalkers". Bigaran, 'll voto alle donne', p. 258.

²⁰² [quite rightly, she who has actually lost her womanly character was excluded from the right to vote]. Cited in Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 258.

²⁰³ [women who earn through love]. See Filippo Turati, 'II voto alle donne e le salariate dell'amore' in Camera dei deputati, *Discorsi parlamentari di Filippo Turati*, vol. 3 (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei deputati, 1950), pp. 1676-92. Turati's arguments included the injustice of discriminating against a group already 'avvilite e martoriate [...] per nostro egoistico piacere' [humiliated and tormented [...] for our selfish pleasure] (p. 1683); the fact that perpetrators of sexual crimes were not, in general, excluded from the franchise (pp. 1685-86); the prospect of prostitution registers, generally secret, being made public to facilitate the compilation of electoral registers, and the consequent closure of women's routes out of prostitution (p. 1689); and a reiteration of the trope of prostitution as a necessary 'safety valve' for male sexuality ('Immaginate una generazione di giovani, che non si sposano perché non si trovano ancora in una condizione economica soddisfacente, che si dedichino ai riti solitari? Sarebbe questa l'Italia che voi sognate?' [Imagine a generation of young men, who do not marry because they are not yet in a satisfactory financial position, who may devote themselves to solitary habits? Would this be the Italy you dream of?], p. 1690). Nitti's response exemplified the 'pudore' [prudery] of which Turati had accused the Chamber: the prime minister refused to enter into what he termed a 'discussione scabrosa' [coarse argument], but promised to ensure protection 'alla categoria delle persone di cui si parla' [to the category of people of which you speak]. Ibid, p. 1692.

Astonishingly, this concern still held sway in 1945, when women's suffrage was at last successfully legislated for; registered prostitutes were excluded (although this decision would be reversed two years later). See Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne, pp. 170-73; Rossi-Doria, Diventare cittadine, pp. 22-23.

further shifts in the ideological allegiances of politically-conscious women. Most notably, Teresa Labriola championed a transition from what she termed 'femminismo puro' [pure feminism] to 'femminismo politico' [political feminism].²⁰⁵ The latter tended to devalue gender equality, and even equivalence, in favour of a nationalist glorification of female difference. While Labriola was an 'extreme, but not isolated, example'²⁰⁶ of a convert to this form of thinking, hers was also the voice which emerged most dominantly in Italian feminist publications of this period.²⁰⁷

While formerly suffragist women were engaged in revising and adapting their claims and rationales (and on confirming their old rifts, in the context of a widespread rising bitterness between left and right, pacifists and 'patriots'),²⁰⁸ the civil unrest and political instability that characterised Italy in 1920 and 1921 meant that, in parliament, the question of votes for women paled in urgency.²⁰⁹ By 1922, the women's movement had unravelled into what one journalist described as 'varie correnti distinte che non si confonderanno più',²¹⁰ and had no unified response to Mussolini's March on Rome.

2.6 The suffrage question under Fascist rule

Mussolini's takeover on 28 October 1922 did not lead to any immediate effort to dismantle feminist organisations; indeed, some of these would survive for a further decade.²¹¹ As for suffrage, the change of administration spurred at least some bourgeois elements of that movement to renewed hope; it

²⁰⁵ Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, p. 275.

²⁰⁶ Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 255.

²⁰⁷ Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 275: '[Labriola's] byline is, in this post-war period, that which recurs by far the most frequently in the female political press, and her "theoretical" contributions stamp the whole of this final phase of the Italian women's movement, marking it with an attempt at formulating what was in fact a confused and disturbing theory; yet which cannot under any circumstances be dismissed by filing it under the category of proto-fascism or fascism *tout court*'.

²⁰⁸ Emma Schiavon has traced this process through the content of one short-lived post-war feminist journal, *Voce Nuova*. Exasperated by the failure of the new government to reintroduce the women's suffrage bill in November 1919, some contributors (including Labriola) proposed that women would best be represented within a new, corporatist system of government, which would represent social and occupational groups rather than individuals – a suggestion with complex overtones of developing Fascist ideals. Others, such as Margherita Ancona, opposed this new direction, but were edged out of the journal's editorial team. Schiavon, 'The women's suffrage campaign in Italy in 1919', pp. 59-60.

Ancona's national report at the 1920 IWSA congress. On behalf of Italian suffragists, Ancona declares a confident expectation that the 1919 bill would soon be re-published and passed by the Senate. IWSA, Report of eighth congress, Geneva, Switzerland, June 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1920 (Manchester: Percy Brothers, 1920), pp. 172-77. (Ancona's report is written in French).

[[]various separate currents that will no longer mingle]. Laura Casartelli Cabrini, 'Rassegna del movimento femminile italiano', in *Almanacco della donna italiana*, 1922. Cited in Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 260.

²¹¹ De Grazia, *How Fascism ruled women*, p. 11. See also Pieroni Bortolotti, *Socialismo* e *questione* femminile, p. 10: she suggests that Fascism would 'use feminism to take apart Italian democracy: first conquering feminist societies from within, through nationalist groups; then moving on to dissolve them when they refused Fascist protection'.

was not yet clear that Fascism could not be fused with a democratic parliamentary system.²¹² Moreover, as has been described, the IWSA held its congress in Italy in 1923, and Mussolini not only opened it, but promised to extend at least municipal suffrage to some women. Despite the limited scope and tenor of his declaration, it was reportedly met with great applause from the assembly of international suffragist delegates. (Indeed, Mussolini was then presented with a bunch of red roses and the conference rosette, along with a gold medallion; according to one report, 'Sorridendo il Presidente lascia che gli venga appuntata al petto').²¹³

Having pledged to move on the suffrage issue before representatives of the international feminist community, the onus was on Mussolini to follow through.²¹⁴ One month after the congress, he produced a bill that would grant municipal suffrage to certain categories of women. These included those of 25+ who had received medals for patriotic valour, or were mothers of soldiers who had died in action.²¹⁵ Other restrictions also applied: women could not run for local office, and the franchise could only be exercised by those who explicitly requested it.²¹⁶ The bill was supported by a majority, but, as with that of 1919, the legislature was dissolved too soon. Following the general election of 1924, the bill was re-submitted with minor changes;²¹⁷ despite opposition from many Fascist deputies, Mussolini successfully pushed it through.²¹⁸

However, it was rapidly becoming apparent that, as the Minister of the Interior had reassured the bill's opponents, the real interest of the Fascist government was less in granting votes to women than in removing them from some men.²¹⁹ In 1926, local elections were replaced with the *regime podestarile*, rendering municipal suffrage meaningless. As De Grazia remarks, 'For women whose political identity had now come to hinge on the vote, it was a crushing blow [...] With the new laws, the emancipationist movement disintegrated'.²²⁰

²¹² De Grazia, How Fascism ruled women, p. 36.

²¹³ [Smiling, the President allowed it to be pinned upon his chest]. 'Il voto politico dopo quello amministrativo promesso alle donne dal governo fascista' in *L'Epoca*, 18 May 1923.

²¹⁴ In Buttafuoco's word, Mussolini 'was then using any available occasion to present to foreign countries an image of Italy which, thanks to his government, had definitively embarked on the road of progress: and even women's suffrage could serve that end'. Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 283.

²¹⁵ In a move that recalled the debate about prostitutes in 1919, the widows of the same dead soldiers were excluded, on the grounds that among them were 'quelle che vivono in concubinato e che costituiscono un fenomeno [...] abbastanza esteso in questo periodo postbellico' [those living as concubines, who constitute [...] quite a wide phenomenon in this post-war period]. Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, session 1921-23, doc. no. 2121 (bill presented by Mussolini on admission of women to municipal suffrage). Cited in Bigaran, 'll voto alle donne', p. 260.

²¹⁶ Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', p. 260.

²¹⁷ This time, war widows were included, aside from those seen as having betrayed their dead husbands.

²¹⁸ On the detail of this parliamentary debate, see Bigaran, 'll voto alle donne', pp. 261-64.

²¹⁹ Bigaran, 'll voto alle donne', p. 264.

²²⁰ De Grazia, How Fascism ruled women, p. 38.

2.7 Relevant points for this research

The brief historical overview provided above offers a context in which to situate the analyses conducted in Sections 2, 3, and 4. In particular, it offers an arc of reference within which to read the political suffragist texts analysed in Section 3, which are selected as emerging at or from moments of particular crisis, i.e. accelerated change, in the movement.²²¹

Any effort succinctly to treat of the Italian suffrage movement throws the ideological complexity in which it operated into sharp relief.²²² From this perspective, my research question (how did language construct identity in relation to suffragism?) may seem impossibly broad; conversely, my methodology (analysing a very limited selection of texts in depth) may seem unrepresentatively narrow. Certainly, the few documents analysed cannot represent a singular 'movement', since Italian suffragism was disjointed along lines of region, method, class, religion, and attitude to war, and since these and other lines intersected in continually new ways during the eventful final decades of Liberal Italy. However, working within a cautious scope that seeks not to define *a* suffragist identity in Italy, but to explore some key threads linking suffragist, female, and Italian identities, I hope that this project can complement both more wide-ranging studies, such as Migliucci's, and those that focus on a specific type of source, such as Bigaran's.²²³

Chapter 3, which concludes the introductory first section, will focus on my theory and methodology, before providing a detailed thesis plan.

²²¹ In particular, this arc should help to clarify why Mozzoni's 1906 petition, the report of the suffrage session at the 1908 CNDI congress and Kuliscioff's 1913 pamphlet to the *donne proletarie* (Chapters 5-7) were chosen as fitting this criterion. It should also help the reader to situate Gina Lombroso's 1919 anti-suffrage tract (Chapter 8) in what formed a post-war 'coda' to the suffrage movement's heyday – for one of the curious patterns that emerges from Italian suffrage history is that the movement itself had lost much of its momentum by 1919, when its goal had a realistic chance of passing in Parliament.

Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne; Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari' and 'Il voto alle donne in Italia dal 1912'.

This complexity is often reflected in the vocabulary used by historians of the women's movement in Italy. Lucia Ferrante et al. entitle their edited collection of essays Ragnetele di rapporti: patronage e reti di relazione nella storia della donna [Webs of connections: patronage and networks of relation in women's history] (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1988). Fiorenza Taricone's study of the Federazione Italiana Laureate Diplomate Istituti Superiori (FILDIS), an organisation that came into bloom during the early Fascist years, is called *Una tessera del mosaico. Storia della FILDIS*. [One tile in the mosaic. A history of the FILDIS]. (Pavia: Antares, 1992). Mariapia Bigaran writes that 'Accounting for the distinctions and different nuances that coloured women's movements between the years immediately preceding and following the First World War is [...] a task that leaves margins of error, whether because of the need to chase down their many facets through dispersed and fragmentary sources, or because political positions, cultural subtleties and individual experiences, only partially studied in depth, interweave in those same sources'. Bigaran, *Il voto alle donne*, p. 247.

Chapter 3 Methodology and thesis outline

This chapter presents the process by which I selected texts for analysis (3.1); introduces the theoretical premises underpinning my methods (3.2); describes some of the ways in which discourse analysis can be practically applied, drawing on several traditions to outline the methodological approach applied in my research (3.3); and offers a summarised plan of the thesis structure (3.4).

3.1 Selection of texts

I began by compiling a list of texts produced during the years in question and which might be of import. Based on further investigations, I narrowed this list to political texts with overtly suffragist relevance, and literary texts with overtly feminist relevance.²²⁴ Using inter-library resources, book ordering services and archival research in the Unione Femminile Nazionale (Milan) and the Women's Library (London), I accessed as many of these as possible.

The eventual selection of texts for close analysis was dependent on a number of factors beyond availability. I did not wish to replicate the work done by Migliucci, who focuses on the suffrage question in women's periodicals (up to 1913),²²⁵ or by Bigaran, who gives detailed consideration to the relevant parliamentary debates.²²⁶ The diversity within the Italian suffrage movement was apparent; while this promised a rich field for investigation, it also prompted the question of how to represent the very varied stances taken even among strong proponents of the movement. Having located three surveys published in Italy on the question of women's suffrage, in 1899, 1905, and 1911 respectively, I decided that considering the range of responses in texts of this format could offer at least a partial solution. In Section 2, I provide an overview of the three surveys and a detailed analysis of the one from 1905, which provides the richest breadth of content.²²⁷

There were very few literary texts that had a suffragist focus at all -a state of affairs of course significant in itself, as discussed in the introduction to Section 4, pp. 197-98.

Migliucci divides her source periodicals into those which were 'femministi' [feminist]: L'Alleanza, Unione femminile, and Vita femminile italiana – and those which were 'femminili' [for women]: La donna, Il giornale della donna, Voci amici, Margherita, and Il corriere delle signore. (Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 119-27). Other salient studies that focus on specific periodicals have been published by Emma Schiavon, who considers Assistenza civile, the organ of the Italian federation of aid committees during World War One ('L'interventismo femminista' in Passato e presente, 54 (2001), pp. 59-72), and Voce Nuova, a weekly feminist paper that ran between 1919 and 1920 ('The women's suffrage campaign in Italy in 1919'); and by Mariolina Graziosi, who considers the metamorphoses of La difesa delle lavoratrici and Il giornale della donna as Italy transitioned into Fascism ('Gender struggle').

²²⁶ Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari' and 'Il voto alle donne in Italia dal 1912'.

²²⁷ I explain the reasons for choosing the 1905 survey in the overview of Section 2 (pp. 58-59).

Happily, the 1905 survey coincided with the emergence of an organised suffrage movement at national level. For Section 3, I sought overtly suffragist (and, in one case, anti-suffragist) texts that would acknowledge the movement's developments from that point on, while still reflecting the persistent rifts and shifts within it. While remaining cautious as to the limitations of the project, 228 I adopted the approach of selecting texts which, firstly, had coincided temporally with particularly notable changes in the movement's trajectory; and, secondly, had had a significant impact on the movement. The texts chosen include: the petition submitted to Parliament in 1906 (Chapter 5); the report of the suffrage session at the first national congress of women in 1908 (Chapter 6); the pamphlet published by Anna Kuliscioff following the extension of men's suffrage in 1912 (Chapter 7); and an anti-suffragist tract by Gina Lombroso, published in 1919 as the extension of women's suffrage seemed on the horizon (Chapter 8).

Regarding the literary texts of Section 4, my criteria were, of necessity, less stringent; the 'suffrage novels' so prevalent in British literature of the period are not to be found in the Italian canon.²³⁰ Rather, I sought texts widely perceived as being of significance for feminism more generally, and written by authors involved in the suffrage movement. This led rather inevitably, as has been indicated in Chapter I, to the selection of Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* [A woman] (1906), but also to that of Anna Franchi's less well-known *Avanti il divorzio!* [On with divorce!] (1902). Because of their thematic affinities, these texts are analysed together (Chapter 9). One exception to the absence of suffrage-

The constraints of the word limit for a doctoral dissertation meant that a maximum of four texts or text clusters could be analysed in detail in this section. No such limited analysis can possibly claim to represent the history of a movement across a quarter-century; instead, findings should be interpreted as deriving from a far-from-definitive list of some influential texts from that movement. Other texts which were strongly considered for inclusion include a number of works by Teresa Labriola (which represent her own changing outlook): Studio sul problema del voto alla donna (Rome: Loescher, 1904), Per il voto alla donna (Rome: Loescher, 1906), I problemi sociali della donna (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1918), and Il suffragio femminile nello Stato moderno (Rome: Soc. Ed. Athenaeum, 1919); Irene de Bonis dei Baroni de Nobili's comprehensive and fascinatingly-footnoted Per il voto alle donne (Rome: Tipografia Righetti, 1909); and a lengthy report published by the Comitato pro voto donne di Torino of its various activities, successes, and failures between its foundation in 1906 and 1922, Diciasette anni di lavoro e di lotta per la causa suffragista (Turin: Comitato pro voto donne, 1923).

²²⁹ This approach chimes to a degree with that taken by Marina D'Amelia in her anthology of texts relating to Italian suffragism (D'Amelia (ed.), *Donne alle urne*). Noting that the documents deserving inclusion 'richiederebbero ben più di un volume' [would require considerably more than one volume], she goes on to explain her selection process in terms of the suffrage movement's 'momenti di sedimentazione' [moments of slow build-up] and 'momenti di accelerazione' [moments of acceleration], as well as its 'momenti di pausa' [moments of hiatus] (p. 8): the selection and arrangement of texts seeks to 'dar conto di questa dialettica temporale' [account for this temporal dialectic] (p. 9). My focus on texts from what I have elsewhere termed 'moments of crisis' has strong links with d'Amelia's choice of works from 'momenti di accelerazione'. I hope that the historical account provided in Chapter 2 will assist readers in developing a sense of how these moments fit within the overall arc(s) of Italian suffragism.

²³⁰ However, in 1908 a play entitled 'Le Suffragette' [The Suffragettes], by Rodolfo Ludovici, was scheduled for performance in Aquila; it is described in the *Rivista teatrale italiana* as 'satira contro le femministe, occasionata dalla sentenza della Corte d'Appello d'Ancona, che concede il voto alle donne. – Pieno di movimento e di brio.' [a satire on the feminists, inspired by the sentence of the Ancona Appeals Court, which granted the vote to women. – Full of liveliness and vim.] (*Rivista teatrale italiana*, 14 (1910), p. 115). Unfortunately, I was unable to find a copy of the play.

specific literary texts was found in Donna Paola's *lo e il mio elettore. Propositi e spropositi di una futura deputata* [My voter and I. Intentions and inanities of a future deputy] (1910), which represents an interestingly hybrid genre (Chapter 10).

No such limited selection of texts can be definitive. Moreover, if the intention of my study were to produce an analysis distributed evenly across the whole period considered (i.e. between 1900 and 1922),²³¹ the omissions in text selection would be very problematic: both the surveys and the literary texts are limited to the pre-war period, and post-war suffragism is represented only by the 1919 text. However, this apparently uneven focus reflects the perceived significance, or lack thereof, of specific texts and times within the movement itself. While the earlier texts analysed in Section 3 tend to cross-resonate,²³² this is not so prevalent in texts produced in the post-war period. In fact, Migliucci's periodisation, whereby suffragism was already 'stale' by the outbreak of World War One,²³³ is supported by the limits of intertextual and media engagement with suffragist texts produced after 1913. Since my aim is not to produce a totalising historical account, a content bias that privileges the movement's heyday seems justifiable.

3.2 Theoretical assumptions

My analytical approach to the selected texts assumes the creative, constitutive power of discourse. Over the past fifty years, the term 'discourse' has been deployed in multiple ways within multiple disciplines, especially cultural theory, social psychology, and critical linguistics. As Sara Mills points out, it now has 'perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined'.²³⁴ Here, I specify the sense(s) in which I use the concept of discourse, and the precedents on which I draw in so doing.

In its many and overlapping uses, the term discourse tends to signal research carried out in following the linguistic/ cultural turn: that is, research which approaches language not as a transparent medium of expressing the real, but as a regulated and regulatory system which helps delimit and determine

²³¹ My original intention was to study documents from the wider period between unification (1861) and the Fascist takeover (1922). However, this proved unfeasible. I focused on the later phase due to the vibrancy of the Italian and international suffrage movements in these years.

For example, the 1906 petition offers an important landmark for suffragist speakers at the 1908 congress, while that congress session is referenced in the opening pages of Donna Paola's *lo e il mio elettore*.

²³³ See Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 113-15.

²³⁴ Sara Mills, Discourse (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 1.

'real' experience.²³⁵ While Michel Foucault's work has created an inescapable legacy in this regard, defining discourse in the Foucauldian sense is far from unproblematic; as Foucault himself observes:

instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. 236

In this account, 'discourse', singular and without an article, signifies 'the general domain of all statements', i.e. all texts and speech acts which have meaning and effect in the world. 'A discourse', however, can have two interrelated meanings. Firstly, it can signify 'an individualizable group of statements', i.e. a cluster of written or spoken representations that cohere towards a common effect.²³⁷ Secondly, it can signify 'a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements', i.e. a rule, norm or structure according to which a particular cluster of linguistic representations is produced.²³⁸ Mills notes that in the work of most theorists of discourse, 'these definitions are used almost interchangeably and one can be overlaid on the other'.²³⁹ In broad, conceptual terms, I find a Foucauldian approach to discourse useful because of its potential to explain the production and proscription of specific modes of thinking.²⁴⁰ Specifically, a conceptual vocabulary inspired by Foucault helped me to frame questions about the Italian suffrage movement in strongly constructionist terms.²⁴¹

²³⁵ See Mills, *Discourse*, p. 8: 'The use of the term discourse, perhaps more than any other term, signals this break with past views of language'.

²³⁶ Michel Foucault, The archaeology of knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 80.

²³⁷ In this sense, one might speak of 'a discourse of patriotic maternity' in suffragist writings, where several textual extracts emphasise motherhood as a patriotic endeavour.

²³⁸ For instance, there might be 'a discourse of maternity as inherently patriotic' informing suffragist writings if motherhood is mentioned exclusively in the context of patriotism. The overlap between the example in this note and that in the preceding one is obvious, but represents the reality of dealing with the polyvalence of Foucauldian 'discourse'. The examples are my own, but I draw on Sara Mills' reading of Foucault in teasing out these meanings – see Mills, *Discourse*, p. 7.

²³⁹ Mills, Discourse, p. 7.

ln particular, Foucault examines 'circulatory procedures' that sustain particular discourses: these procedures include commentary (whereby the selection of texts for commentary imbues those texts with worth and power, possibly 'canonising' them); the demarcation of disciplines (whereby specific methodologies and modes of speaking become de rigeur); and rarefaction (i.e. the normative limitation of possible utterances from which speakers and writers feel themselves to choose 'freely'). (On commentary and rarefaction, see Michel Foucault, 'The order of discourse' in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the knot: a poststructuralist reader* (London: RKP, 1981). On the demarcation of academic disciplines, see Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge*). Foucault also examines 'exclusionary procedures' that produce particular discourses by rendering others unspeakable: these include proscriptive taboos; value-laden dichotomies such as that of madness and sanity; and the 'will to truth' (i.e. the concern with recognising as 'true' only knowledge in some way institutionally sanctioned). (On taboo, see Foucault, *The history of sexuality: an introduction, vol. I* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978). On the dichotomy of madness and sanity, see Foucault, *Madness and civilization: a history of insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock Routledge, 1989). On the will to truth, see Foucault, 'The order of discourse').

²⁴¹ For instance, and with reference to the concepts described in the preceding note, one could ask: are the discourses of the Italian suffrage movement shaped by a need to provoke and sustain commentary (especially from the media); by the need to speak the languages of the recognised 'disciplines' of politics and legislature as

3.3 Methodological tools

How can these theoretical underpinnings be translated to a methodology that uses discourse effectively to analyse documents of wide-ranging genres?

The methodology of 'discourse analysis' is quite as protean as the concept of 'discourse' itself. My understanding of it builds on developments in the disciplines of social psychology and critical linguistics. As these traditions have tended to remain discrete, I review them separately (3.3.1 and 3.3.2); however, I also point to the affinities between, in particular, thematic discourse analysis (TDA) as practised by psychologists, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as practised by critical linguists. Since my project is unusual in using discourse analysis across time, I also review examples of this 'niche' application of the method (3.3.3). Each subsection includes both a broad introduction to the relevant literature and a detailed account of one 'exemplary' study; these latter vary widely in subject matter, but offer a sample version of the 'tripod' upon which I have crafted my own understanding of discourse analysis (described in 3.3.4).

3.3.1 Psychology and discourse analysis: DA, TA, and TDA

Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell,²⁴² founders of the social psychology-based stream of discourse analysis (DA), express concern that Foucault's theorisation can tend to isolate discourses from the socially interactive context in which they are constituted.²⁴³ Seeking to remedy this, they study closely the discursive features of interviews with individuals and groups. For example, in analysing the statements of white (Pākehā) New Zealanders about Māoris and Polynesian migrants, the researchers locate specific instances of rhetorical work being done by interviewees in order to

well as that of the subaltern 'discipline' of femininity; and/or by the rarefaction of discourses to which the speakers had access in their capacity as women, as Italians, as feminists, or as a mixture of these and other categories? Are the discourses of Italian suffragism constrained by specific taboos around sexuality or gender role transgression; by cultural definitions of sanity and insanity for women; and/or by a 'will to truth' that seeks institutionally to legitimise statements? I do not advance these questions as actual hypotheses, since my approach is more inductive than deductive; rather, I mention them as illustrations of how Foucauldian theory influenced my conceptual articulation of issues thrown up at various stages of the research.

²⁴² See Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and social psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour* (London: Sage, 1987); Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the language of racism: discourse and the legitimation of exploitation* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

²⁴³ Wetherell and Potter, *Mapping the language of racism*, p. 90: 'One of the dangers of this view is that the social practices of discourse use often disappear from sight altogether [...] Discourses become seen as potent causal agents in their own right, with the processes of interest being the work of one (abstract) discourse on another (abstract) discourse'.

present racist utterances without using a recognisable, 'traditional' racist discourse.²⁴⁴ However, Wetherell and Potter's conclusions reveal a will to integrate this kind of detailed, contextually-grounded work into a far-ranging, quasi-Foucauldian analysis of the operation of power in language.²⁴⁵ In recent years, the utility of this psychological brand of discourse analysis for exploring themes of gender has been widely and variously explored.²⁴⁶

DA in this form can also have strong affinities with another approach, namely that of thematic analysis (TA). The latter, as Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke point out, is 'poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used'.²⁴⁷ They offer a hesitant definition – it is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail'²⁴⁸ – but also emphasise its pliability. Depending on the researcher's standpoint and goals, thematic analysis can produce a description of an entire data set, or a more detailed account of one specific aspect; can work as a data-driven (inductive) or research-driven (deductive) methodology; can limit itself to description, or can pass beyond that into the sphere of interpretation; and can serve theoretical approaches that are either essentialist (where language is seen as reflecting 'real' experience) or constructionist (where language is seen as not only reflecting, but also constructing, experience and 'reality').²⁴⁹ What is crucial, Braun and Clarke stress, is that researchers declare and clarify their own assumptions in relation to these questions. Particular constellations of assumptions, moreover, produce methodologies that may overlap with other named approaches:

One interviewee states, for instance, that 'There have been you know ideas put out what it is, that the majority of rapes are committed by Islanders or Māoris [...] well, it's unfair to say the Māoris because the Māoris I know are quite nice really. Yes. Māoris. are quite good. It's the Islanders that come here and can't handle it'. Wetherell and Potter gloss this declaration as charged with a dilemma: the speaker seeks a discourse that will control the effect of potentially offensive opinions by neutralizing established linguistic markers of offensiveness. This dilemma 'is managed by constructing evaluations as part of the world, as a bad thing which is simply described, rather than an expression of personal negative attitudes' (thus 'there have been you know ideas put out [...]'); in addition, the speaker 'comes close to adopting the cliché that some of his best friends are Māori people'. Wetherell and Potter, *Mapping the language of racism*, pp. 96-97.

²⁴⁵ They reflect, for instance, that the pattern of subtle racism identified in quotes like that cited in the preceding footnote 'could be interpreted as showing how the fluidity of racist discourse provides resilience. The forms of legitimation are varied, florid and forever changing in remarkable ways, yet material disadvantage continues in much the same old direction. Ideological discourse sometimes seems simultaneously crucial and trivial: crucial to maintaining certain practices and yet trivial as an agent of social change.' Wetherell and Potter, *Mapping the language of racism*, p. 219.

²⁴⁶ See especially the volume edited by Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger, Feminism and discourse: psychological perspectives (London: Sage Publications, 1995). Further examples (not to be considered as a representative list) include Erica Burman, 'Feminism and discourse in developmental psychology: power, subjectivity and interpretation' in Feminism and psychology, 2:1 (1992), pp. 45-60; Sarah C. E. Riley, 'The management of the traditional male role: a discourse analysis of the constructions and functions of provision' in Journal of gender studies, 12: 2 (2003), pp. 99-113; Susan J. Lea, 'A discursive investigation into victim responsibility in rape' in Feminism and psychology, 17: 4 (2007), pp. 495-514.

²⁴⁷ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology' in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2006), pp. 77-101 (p. 77).

²⁴⁸ Braun and Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis', p. 79.

²⁴⁹ Braun and Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis', pp. 83-85.

most notably, 'thematic analysis that focuses on "latent" themes tends to be more constructionist, and it also tends to start to overlap with thematic DA [thematic discourse analysis] at this point'. ²⁵⁰

If both 'discourse analysis' and 'thematic analysis' are elastic terms, there is even less articulated consensus as to the precise meaning of 'thematic discourse analysis' (TDA).²⁵¹ However, a survey of studies which deploy this composite term suggests some prevailing characteristics.²⁵² Thematic discourse analysis takes place within a broadly constructivist framework; it generally involves the identification and codification of themes in texts as an initial process; the relevant data extracts are then submitted to detailed analysis, which may borrow more or less heavily from the conceptual toolkit of the DA tradition as instigated by Potter and Wetherell.²⁵³

I will use Clarke's study of attitudes towards gay and lesbian parenting as an example of how TDA can function in practice.²⁵⁴ Using the transcripts from 6 focus groups as data, and employing a constructionist approach that considered the import of factors such as who was moderating the groups, Clarke initially noted how participants' use of 'liberal discourse' (advocating heterosexual tolerance of homosexual families) was often linked to heterosexism. Framing a deductive research question based on this trend, she selected relevant excerpts for further analysis and identified three 'themes' (elsewhere, she calls these 'strategies [that communicate heterosexism by deploying liberal

²⁵⁰ Braun and Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis', p. 85.

²⁵¹ To add to the confusion, some researchers use the term 'thematic decomposition analysis' with very similar significance – see for instance Paul Stenner, 'Discoursing jealousy' in Erica Burman and Ian Parker (eds.), Discourse analytic research: repertoires and readings of texts in action (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 94-132; Anne Woollett et al., 'Young women's accounts of sexual activity and sexual/ reproductive health' in *Journal of health psychology*, 3: 3 (1998), pp. 369-81; Jane M. Ussher and Julie Mooney-Somers, 'Negotiating desire and sexual subjectivity: narratives of young lesbian avengers' in *Sexualities*, 3:2 (2000), pp. 183-200.

²⁵² Studies consulted include D. Singer and M. Hunter, 'The experience of premature menopause: a thematic discourse analysis' in Journal of reproductive and infant psychology, 17: I (1999), pp. 63-81 (p. 66); Gary W. Taylor and Jane M. Ussher, 'Making sense of S&M: a discourse analytic account' in Sexualities, 4:3 (2001), pp. 293-314 (pp. 296-97); Victoria Clarke, ' "We're all very liberal in our views": students talk about lesbian and gay parenting' in Lesbian and gay psychology review, 6: I (2005), pp. 2-15; Elizabeth Peel et al., 'Taking the biscuit? A discursive approach to managing diet in type 2 diabetes' in Journal of health psychology, 10: 6 (2005), pp. 779-91 (p. 782); David Rae, 'Entrepreneurial learning: a narrative-based conceptual model' in Journal of small business and enterprise development, 12: 3 (2005), pp. 323-35 (pp. 325-26); Glenn W. Muschert, 'Frame-changing in the media coverage of a school shooting: the rise of Columbine as a national concern' in The social science journal, 46: I (2009), pp. 164-70 (pp. 166-68); Sue Jackson with Tamsyn Gilbertson, "'Hot lesbians": young people's talk about representations of lesbianism' in Sexualities, 12: 2 (2009), pp. 199-224 (pp. 202-04); Natalie Armstrong et al., "'Oh dear, should I really be saying that on here?'": issues of identity and authority in an online diabetes community' in Health (London), 16: 4 (2012), pp. 347-65 (pp. 351-52).

²⁵³ TDA is typically, although not always, less concerned than DA with transcribing and analysing 'features such as in-breaths, a creaky voice and so on, which would serve only to render the transcript less intelligible to readers unfamiliar with [...] transcription conventions' (Victoria Clarke and Celia Kitzinger, 'Lesbian and gay parents on talk shows: resistance or collusion in heterosexism?' in *Qualitative research in psychology*, 1:3 (2004), pp. 195-217 (pp. 198-200)).

²⁵⁴ Clarke, "We're all very liberal in our views".

language and assumptions]'):²⁵⁵ I) depicting the focus group as 'not-prejudiced' via comparison with prejudiced others; 2) comparing having a gay parent with having a disabled family member; and 3) using the term 'heterophobia' as an opposite and equivalent of homophobia.²⁵⁶ Clarke uses quotation to illustrate each of these themes/ strategies, highlighting how their production is enabled through features like repetition,²⁵⁷ equation/ contrast,²⁵⁸ agency,²⁵⁹ and tense.²⁶⁰ Linking her analysis with previous studies of heterosexism, she reiterates the view that 'liberal discourse' cannot adequately challenge power structures,²⁶¹ and recommends that psychologists working with LGBT clients explore other epistemological perspectives.²⁶²

Clarke's study is relatively representative of the corpus of TDA studies,²⁶³ particularly in its dual focus on 'rhetorical design' and on 'ideological implications' in analysing data²⁶⁴ – that is to say, on the detailed linguistic constructions utilised and of the relevance of the data to broader systems of knowledge-making and power. This duality can bring TDA, rooted in a psycho-sociological tradition, very close to the borders of 'critical discourse analysis' ('CDA') as elaborated by critical linguists.

3.3.2 Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Discourse analysis in critical linguistics, as pioneered by Norman Fairclough²⁶⁵ and developed by others such as Ruth Wodak²⁶⁶ and Teun van Dijk,²⁶⁷ usually attends to systematic aspects of linguistic

²⁵⁵ The patterns are referenced as 'strategies' on p. 7 and as 'themes' on p. 17. Clarke, "We're all very liberal in our views".

²⁵⁶ See Clarke, "'We're all very liberal in our views", pp. 7-8.

²⁵⁷ For instance: 'The speakers are very clear that the group share the same view about homosexuality ("none of us", line 4, "we're *all* saying this", line 12, "we're *all* very liberal", line 15, "makes us *all*", lines 20-21)'. Clarke, "We're all very liberal in our views", p. 10.

²⁵⁸ For instance: 'There is also a strong implicit contrast between "Neanderthals" (line 6) and "people... like that" (line 4) and the group'. Clarke, "'We're all very liberal in our views'", p. 10.

²⁵⁹ For instance: 'Liz depicts [...] difficulties as inevitable and impervious to social change ("however much society changes... it would be hard...", lines 18-19) [...] There is no question of social change because it has no agent'. Clarke, "'We're all very liberal in our views", pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁰ For instance: 'Mark's use of the past tense ("[the battle that homosexuals have] gone through", line 8) suggests that lesbians and gays have already achieved equal rights'. Clarke, "We're all very liberal in our views", p. 16.

p. 16. ²⁶¹ 'Liberal discourse supports a worldview that ignores the power and privilege of heterosexuals and does not recognise lesbians and gay men [...] as potentially different from the norm. It also allows the participants to avoid personal responsibility for antihomosexuality.' Clarke, "'We're all very liberal in our views'", p. 17.

²⁶² Clarke cites 'radical' and 'feminist' perspectives as potentially useful, but does not go into much detail on precisely what she means. Clarke, "We're all very liberal in our views", p. 18.

²⁶³ I chose to describe Clarke's study because of this methodologically representative quality, rather than because I agree with all its observations or conclusions.

²⁶⁴ Clarke, "'We're all very liberal in our views", p. 7; E. Peel et al., 'Taking the biscuit?', p. 782.

²⁶⁵ See Norman Fairclough, Language and power (London: Longman, 1989); Discourse and social change (Cambridge: Polity, 1992); Analyzing discourse: textual analysis for social research (London: Routledge, 2003).

²⁶⁶ See for instance Ruth Wodak, Disorders of discourse (London: Longman, 1996); The discourse of politics in action: politics as usual (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

detail in a text or texts (e.g. on patterned choices of passive versus active voice, metaphors, turn-taking, etc.), and to 'interdiscursivity' (the process whereby texts draw, albeit not through explicit citation, on other texts – through generic conventions, style, register, and so forth). This tradition also advocates strong awareness of the conditions in which texts are produced (e.g. by powerful entities, such as national media organs, versus by apparently less powerful entities, such as non-funded activist groups).²⁶⁸

'Critical discourse analysis' (CDA), as this approach is frequently labelled, tends to draw together considerations of vocabulary, grammar and larger-scale textual structures in terms of their value as, in Fairclough's words, 269 'experiential' (what experience and knowledge is assumed/ created?), 270 'relational' (what social relationships are described/ enacted?), 271 and 'expressive' (what subjective affiliations are articulated/ constructed?) 272

²⁶⁸ See Fairclough, *Discourse and social change*. For a cogent synopsis of Fairclough's approach, see Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen, 'Critical discourse analysis' in *Annual review of anthropology*, 29 (2000), pp. 447-66.

²⁶⁷ See for instance Teun A. Van Dijk, *Elite discourse and racism* (London: Sage Publications, 1993); *Discourse and power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁶⁹ While this terminology is taken from Fairclough (*Language and power*, pp. 92-93), critical linguists may vary their terminology considerably. However, the *concepts* inherent in this categorisation remain broadly relevant.

²⁷⁰ In examining experiential value within a text, Fairclough suggests that salient features might include overwording (a degree of wording that seems semantically superfluous and may include many near-synonyms), often indicating 'a focus of ideological struggle' (Fairclough, *Language and power*, p. 96; in this thesis, I read Anna Kuliscioff's descriptions of the limitations of bourgeois suffragism as an instance of overwording – see Chapter 7, pp. 155). Other features indicating experiential value might be relations of synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy (Fairclough, *Language and power*, pp. 96-97; I draw on these concepts to illuminate relations between terms such as *donna*, *femmina*, and *madre* in Franchi's and Aleramo's texts – see Chapter 9, pp. 235-38). Still others might be the types of process and participant described: for instance, one could look at whether agency is clarified; how active/ passive verbs are distributed; and whether nominalisations, e.g. 'death of victim', obscure causality (Fairclough, *Language and power*, pp. 100-04; I look particularly at agency and its absence in the report from the 1908 congress, arguing that it functions to construct and reinforce a hierarchy among Italian women – see Chapter 6, pp. 133).

Relational value may be studied by observing formality or lack thereof (Fairclough, *Language and power*, p. 98; for instance, I note that a text like Mozzoni's petition is constrained by the norms of political language to a particular, formal style, while one like Donna Paola's *lo e il mio elettore*, as semi-personal, can adopt a jesting, often flirtatious tone – see Chapter 10, pp. 246-49). Relational value can also be manifested in sentence modes (declarative, imperative, or grammatical question), and in the various ways in which these position subjects (Fairclough, *Language and power*, pp. 104-05; I note, for instance, that the final section of Kuliscioff's pamphlet shifts to imperative mode in addressing its 'voi' – see Chapter 7, pp. 156-57). Relational value may also be shown through modality, e.g. modal auxiliary verbs such as 'may', 'might', 'must', 'should', 'can', 'can't and 'ought', and related power dynamics (Fairclough, *Language and power*, pp. 105-06; in my analysis of the 1908 congress report, I observe the polysemous potential of the phrase 'non dovremo', which can signify either 'we will not have to' or 'we ought not to' – see Chapter 6, p. 140). Finally, relational value may be accessed through the uses of pronouns such as 'we' as inclusive or exclusive of the readers or listeners (Fairclough, *Language and power*, p. 106; I discuss the challenges of positing a fully inclusive 'noi' for Italian suffragists throughout Section 2)

^{2/2} Expressive value, finally, can be approached through collocations of connotatively-loaded words (Fairclough, Language and power, pp. 98-99; for example, I consider references to English suffragettes both in the formal I908 congress report ('inglesi [...] dimostrazioni clamorose [...] scandalo' – see Chapter 6, pp. 140-41) and in Donna Paola's more irreverent text ('il feminismo [delle] anglo-sassoni, angoloso, disadorno, meschino, quacquero' – see Chapter 10, pp. 259-60). It can also be studied through expressive modality and 'the [...]

The precise methodology by which 'CDA' is brought to fruition varies widely. However, I have found an approach taken by Wodak et al. to be particularly helpful, and will use it as an example.²⁷³ Teasing out the discursive construction of Austrian national identity, these researchers distinguish between 'three closely interwoven dimensions of analysis'.274 The first involves 'contents': these are a few broad thematic areas (e.g. 'the narration and confabulation of a common political past' and 'the linguistic construction of a common culture').²⁷⁵ The second dimension is of 'strategies': Wodak et al. specify that strategies relating to national identity may seek to perpetuate, transform and/ or dismantle an assumed status quo. Within these 'macro' strategies, specific tactics isolated include: trivialising (e.g. downplaying historical crimes); dissimilation (e.g. emphasis on a difference between past and present); and negative presentation of own identity (e.g. vocalising negative qualities that make national character unique). The third dimension is that of 'means and forms of realisation': on this level, the researchers utilise close linguistic analysis akin to that which has been described in relation to Fairclough. For instance, a strategy of trivialising negative history may be broken down into such 'means' as 'lexical units indicating difference, personifications ("history") and metaphors ("zero hour")'.276 The strength of Wodak et al.'s methodology lies in its ability to move between these various levels. Metaphors, for instance, may be 'means' which can serve numerous strategies, which in turn may serve more than one 'macro-strategic' purpose, and these purposes may have resonances across several thematic 'content' areas.

3.3.3 Using discourse analysis across time

Most research projects that claim to deploy discourse analysis, whether drawing on the disciplinary legacies of psychology, critical linguistics or both, use contemporary texts as data. As a loose rule, psychological DA tends to use interviews carried out by the researchers; 'CDA' often uses a mixture of interviews and pre-existing texts, such as political speeches, newspaper reports and advertisements. In both cases, researchers often declare an ethical, 'activist' motivation: they seek to expose aspects of the discourses that regulate their own society, in the hope that challenge and

claims to knowledge which are evidenced by modality forms' (Fairclough, Language and power, p. 107; for instance, I note that when Donna Paola's character discusses the suffragettes with her interlocutor, his declarative assertion '(sono ridicole') is attenuated by her ('Non so dirvi. Forse sono ridicole') – see Chapter 10, p. 257).

²⁷³ Ruth Wodak et al., *The discursive construction of national identity*, 2nd ed., trans. Angelika Hirsch et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

²⁷⁴ Wodak et al., The discursive construction of national identity, p. 30.

²⁷⁵ There is a strong affinity between this level of analysis and that named as 'themes' in the psychologically-based forms of analysis discussed in 3.3.1 above.

²⁷⁶ Wodak et al., The discursive construction of national identity, pp. 30-42.

transformation may follow.²⁷⁷ How, then, can discourse analysis work in a historical project like mine, which seeks to expose aspects of the discourses that regulated gender and political aspiration in a temporally-distant society?

The number of historical studies that nominate discourse analysis as their methodological framework is quite small, yet includes diverse and fascinating research directions.²⁷⁸ However, researchers who have attempted such projects frequently recognise that the discursive mechanisms they study may have survived, albeit in adapted or altered form, into later times.²⁷⁹ Also, there may be considerable, if tacit, theoretical concordance between some of these studies and large swathes of feminist research that falls under the rubric of literary criticism.

The example I will examine is a study by Jean Carabine, ²⁸⁰ who applies discourse analysis to texts spanning a period of 160 years using a Foucauldian concept of 'genealogy'. ²⁸¹ She seeks to identify how discourses concerning unmarried motherhood developed across this period, while doing everything possible to 'contextualise the material in the beliefs, values and ideas of the time in which

²⁷⁷ This has been seen in the example of Clarke's study on lesbian and gay parenting ("'We're all very liberal in our views"), which ends by making recommendations for psychologists, albeit none-too-concrete ones (pp. 18-19).

²⁷⁸One eminent example is Sara Mills' application of discourse analysis to travel writings by women between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She argues that 'it is in their struggle with the discourses of imperialism and femininity, neither of which they could wholeheartedly adopt, and which pulled them in different textual directions, that their writing exposes the unsteady foundations on which it is based. Their textual unease is labelled as "bad writing"; [...] however, these tensions reveal some of the contradictions and silences implicit in writing of the period'. (Sara Mills, Discourses of difference: an analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 3). Mills draws on Foucault, albeit 'as a "tool-box" and not as totalising theory [...] [His] work is particularly useful because of his insistence on the centrality of power, especially when instantiated in knowledge' (Mills, Discourses of difference, pp. 7-8; pp. 15-16). A different form of historical discourse analysis is used by Julie Hepworth and Christine Griffin, who examine the 'discursive continuities and disjunctures' between late-nineteenth-century medical constructions of anorexia nervosa and late-twentiethcentury medical and feminist ones. (Julie Hepworth and Christine Griffin, 'Conflicting opinions? "Anorexia nervosa", medicine and feminism' in Wilkinson and Kitzinger (eds.), Feminism and discourse, pp. 68-85 (p. 68)). While this analysis is located in a psychological tradition, it is also markedly 'poststructuralist' (p. 80). Foucault is not mentioned, but the importance of networks of power and knowledge within and across specific cultural settings is evident in the conclusions, which suggest that the discourse of heavily-gendered individual pathology which developed around 'anorexia' in the context of nineteenth-century medicine has been challenged, but not overturned in any practical, clinical sense, by twentieth-century counter-discourses of social pressures (pp. 80-83).

²⁷⁹ In Stephanie Taylor's words, the aim of a historical discourse investigation (which she terms a genealogical study) is 'to explore how meanings and practices have operated in the past, without making predictions for the future. [...] However, it is also clear that discourses do not just disappear or stop functioning, so ultimately the interest of such an analysis is in its recognizable relevance to present-day situations and material'. Stephanie Taylor, 'Evaluating and applying discourse analysis' in M. Wetherell et al. (eds.), *Discourse as data: a guide for analysis* (London: The Open University, 2001), pp. 311-30 (p. 317).

²⁸⁰ Jean Carabine, 'Unmarried motherhood 1830-1990: a genealogical analysis' in Wetherell et al. (eds.), *Discourse as data*, pp. 207-310.

²⁸¹ 'Genealogy is about tracing the history of the development of knowledges and their power effects so as to reveal something about the nature of power/knowledge in modern society. It does this through the examination of discourses and by mapping the strategies, relations and practices of power in which knowledges were embedded and connected.' Carabine, 'Unmarried motherhood', p. 277.

it was created'.²⁸² Carabine's guide to doing what she terms 'Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis', in slightly abridged form, is as follows:

- Select your topic [...].
- 2. Know your data read and re-read. [...]
- 3. Identify themes, categories and objects of the discourse.
- 4. Look for evidence of an inter-relationship between discourses.
- 5. Identify the discursive strategies and techniques that are employed.
- 6. Look for absences and silences.
- 7. Look for resistances and counter-discourses.
- 8. Identify the effects of the discourse.
- 9. Context 1 outline the background to the issue.
- 10. Context 2 contextualize the material in the power/knowledge networks of the period.
- 11. Be aware of the limitations of the research, your data and sources. 283

Comparing Carabine's methodology with the examples previously outlined – by Clarke in 3.3.1 ('thematic discourse analysis'), and Wodak et al. in 3.3.2 ('critical discourse analysis') – yields both affinities and variations. Elements common to all three approaches include the emphasis on thorough familiarity with the data, as well as the initial identification of broad themes (or 'contents' for Wodak et al.). Both Wodak et al. and Carabine further highlight the identification of discursive *strategies*; where Wodak et al. suggest that the 'means and forms' whereby these strategies are realised be analysed in their turn, Carabine's points concerning 'absences and silences', 'resistances and counter-discourses', seem like specific cases of such means. Finally, Carabine advocates contextualising the analysis within 'the power/knowledge networks of the period'.²⁸⁴

There exist hundreds, perhaps thousands, of further variations on the methodology of 'discourse analysis'. I have given some detail on the approaches of Clarke, Wodak et al. and Carabine to illustrate the malleability of the methodology, yet also the broad principles that tend to persist: treating discourse as constitutive of 'reality'; identifying themes as a first analytical step; probing themes further through language-centred analysis of strategies; and re-establishing this analysis within wider social power structures. However, working within these principles, individual researchers may vary the detail of the questions they ask; the particular aspects of language on which they focus; and the order in which they complete analytical steps.²⁸⁵ Their choices are generally determined by the

²⁸² Carabine, 'Unmarried motherhood', p. 306.

²⁸³ Carabine, 'Unmarried motherhood', p. 281. (Italics in original).

²⁸⁴ (Italics added). In practice, such contextualisation is often done, albeit not flagged in such Foucauldian terms, by discourse analysts working with material from their own period and society. For instance, Clarke ("'We're all very liberal in our views'") noted the possible impact of her as moderator being 'out' as lesbian to postgraduate participants, but not to undergraduate ones (p. 6).

²⁸⁵ Furthermore, as Carabine observes, step-by-step methodologies should often be taken with a pinch of salt: 'It is difficult to identify the different stages step by step as though following a recipe because, in practice, some processes occur simultaneously and at other times different bits of information get added to the picture later on. So analysis is often a dynamic process of interpretation and reinterpretation.' ('Unmarried motherhood', p. 285).

exigencies of their research questions, their data, and their disciplines. In 3.3.4, I describe my own application of 'thematic discourse analysis', justifying my decisions with reference to the specificities of my project.

3.3.4 Discourse analysis as used in this thesis

I sought a methodology that would: (a) allow for the analysis of a wide range of written text types; (b) prove sensitive to linguistic and rhetorical nuance, while facilitating the linking of such observations to broader societal themes; and (c) accomplish all this across a temporal and linguistic divide.²⁸⁶

The various trends within discourse analysis have tended to concur as to its potential for flexibility across multiple text types. As Mills points out, the discourse analyst must remain vigilant to the 'institutionalised differences' between varieties of text — with historical texts being 'privileged in their relation to truth', autobiographical texts 'privileged in terms of their supposed authenticity in relation to an authorial voice', and literary texts having 'a complex relation to both truth and value' — yet, nevertheless,

for the discussion of the construction, say, of discourses of femininity and masculinity, it is possible to discuss literary texts alongside other texts, such as works of history and autobiography, and even more ephemeral texts [...] in order to reveal the similarities these texts display across generic boundaries.²⁸⁷

This is what I aim to do by including Section 4 (literary texts) as well as Sections 2 and 3. How, though, might I apply a *consistent* form of discourse analysis to a selection of texts that includes both the 'historical' (or political) and the literary? I summarise my practice in three broad steps, described below along with an example of how it works.

Step 1: The identification of themes: a 'funnel' approach

I began, in the Section 2 analysis of survey responses, with an inductive approach. That is to say, I did not seek out thematic patterns in accordance with any particular hypothesis, but rather sought to paint a picture of the data set as a whole.

Based on the Section 2 survey data, I argued that a tension existed within Italian suffragism between a discourse of individualism and one of group solidarity. This suggested a more deductive approach for Section 3, in which I organised my analysis around themes of individual and collective identity

²⁸⁶ That is to say, the methodology should allow me, as a 21st-century researcher and non-native speaker of Italian, to offer a reading of Italian texts from a hundred years earlier. That said, absolute objectivity is impossible for the researcher, and there is of course a possibility that I was influenced by familiar discursive formations into 'seeing what I know'.

²⁸⁷ Mills, Discourse, p. 23.

construction in the suffragist texts selected. In particular, I attended to identity differences among Italian women, and between Italian suffragists and those of other nationalities.

I applied a similar deductive approach in Section 4, reading the chosen literary texts with a view to isolating themes of identity. While the Section 3 analysis had pointed towards specific discursive strains relating to group identities (both intranationally and internationally), it had also highlighted a remarkable silence in relation to individual identities. This was explicable in part by the generical demands of political and propaganda documents. The largely autobiographical texts studied in Section 4, however, were predisposed by genre to articulate strongly individual identities. Their analysis explores how some of the group-related tensions manifested in Section 3 might be played out upon the individually-focused canvas of (semi-)autobiographical literary work.

I will use an example to illustrate how this 'funnel' approach to my initial thematic/ content analysis works. One theme identified is that of a sharp class-related divide among Italian women.²⁸⁸ This emerges in the inductive analysis of Section 2 as a popular concern in relation to suffrage; many participants, including female ones, deem women with less education unfit to exercise the vote. In Section 3, in which I directly seek out discourse relating to collective identities, the theme of the class divide is developed in various ways in the petition (which aims to elide differences), the congress report (presented from a bourgeois perspective) and Kuliscioff's pamphlet (addressing working-class women); it is deployed differently again by the anti-suffragist, and bourgeois, Gina Lombroso. In Section 4, I show that Franchi and Aleramo both evince individual ambivalence towards women of lower classes, while Donna Paola carefully associates herself with the accepted trappings of a middle-class woman. The inductive method used in Section 2 produces the narrowing, deductive method deployed in Sections 3 and 4, and readings in these latter sections illuminate similar themes from contrasting angles.

Step 2: Analysing discourse: rhetorical detail and wider power relations

I have borrowed from aspects of discourse analysis as used in both psychology and critical linguistics in order to produce nuanced, language-centred readings of the themes within the texts.

At the level of closest detail, examining what Wodak et al. term the 'means' by which discursive strategies are realised, I attend to lexical and grammatical features such as overwording; synonymy, hyponymy and antonymy; and inclusive vs. exclusive pronouns. I also make use some of Wodak et al.'s concepts, such as *miranda* (high-value words) and *antimiranda* (low-value words), and isolate other rhetorical tropes where appropriate.

²⁸⁸ As shall be seen, this divide is sometimes expressed more in terms of education and/or region than in terms of class; however, I use 'class' here as a shorthand.

Returning to the theme of cross-class differences as an example, in Section 3 I pay particular attention to pronominal choices and transitivity (i.e. agency) in relevant extracts, while in Section 4 I observe patterns of confused synonymy-antonymy ('donna'/ 'femmina', for Franchi), and of diminutive and/or pejorative suffixes ('donnina', for Aleramo; 'donnette e donnucce e donnaccole', for Donna Paola).²⁸⁹

However, the purpose of such close analysis, within a constructionist understanding of discourse, is not simply descriptive. Rather, linguistic detail should suggest broader lines of argument concerning the construction of power and knowledge – and, in this case, specifically gender – within a broader societal context. This is achieved in the third step of analysis, described below.

Step 3: Drawing conclusions

Having fleshed out the identification of themes with close analysis of language, questions remain around what Wodak et al. term 'strategies'. If the articulation of themes in particularly patterned ways can be said to represent some dominant discourses of Italian suffragism, what were those discourses doing? To what ends were they being used by those writing, and why? In other words, what strategies – the term does not necessarily imply deliberateness in this context – were at play when gender was constructed through the Italian language in relation to the specific issue of suffragism? In answering these questions, I have drawn, where appropriate, on a range of theoretical perspectives, drawn chiefly from feminist theory, that seemed to illuminate particular nodes of my analysis.²⁹⁰

The observations made about Italian women's class divide, for instance, can be read as signals of 'Othering' – whether bourgeois women are Othering proletarian women or (as in the case of Kuliscioff) vice versa. The emphatic pronoun *loro* [they], the denial of agency, and the addition of diminutive suffixes can all be read as symptomatic of a desire to empower the writer's in-group at the expense of the Othered out-group.

In the conclusions to chapters and sections, as well as in the overall conclusion (Section 5, Chapter II), I draw these kinds of suggestions together. For example, the analysis of Italian women's deeply-

²⁸⁹ See Chapter 9, pp. 237-40; Chapter 10, pp. 265-66.

These include the concept of the woman writer's 'anxiety of authorship' as developed by Gilbert and Gubar (The madwoman in the attic, pp. 45-53); the problematics of representing the 'Other', as elucidated by various thinkers including Adrienne Rich (Adrienne Rich, 'Notes towards a politics of location' (1984) in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.), Feminist postcolonial theory: a reader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), pp. 29-42; the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', as originated by R.W. Connell (Gender and power: society, the person and sexual politics (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept' in Gender and Society, 19 (2005), pp. 829-59); the idea of 'writing beyond the ending', as advanced by Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Writing beyond the ending: narrative strategies of twentieth-century women writers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); and the notion of gender as 'performative', as elaborated by Judith Butler (Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of 'sex' (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

felt class divide forms part of a broader problem of internally defining and delimiting the *donna italiana* while national identity was being consolidated. This in turn intersects with the question of how to represent Italian women in opposition to their foreign counterparts – another major theme in texts analysed.

In sum, the three broad steps in my analytical method involve: 1) the initial identification of themes; 2) the detailed analysis of language and discourse within the themes; and 3) the connection of these observations to wider ideas concerning the construction of meaning in the society of the time.

3.4 Thesis plan

In this introductory section, I have outlined the premises and context upon which my research is founded. Sections 2, 3 and 4 contain the main bodies of analysis.

In Section 2, I outline the benefits of using surveys as starting points and synopsise the relevance of three suffrage-related surveys from 1899, 1905 and 1911. Having explained my reasons for choosing to analyse the 1905 survey in particular depth, I present the results of this study (Chapter 4).

Using these results to guide the direction of subsequent analyses, I proceed to Section 3, which comprises a set of analyses of specifically suffragist – and, in one case, anti-suffragist – texts. The petition of 1906 (Chapter 5), the suffrage report from the 1908 women's congress (Chapter 6), and Anna Kuliscioff's 1913 pamphlet to women workers (Chapter 7) were all heavily influential at moments of accelerated change in the movement prior to World War One. Lastly, Gina Lombroso's anti-suffrage tract from 1919 (Chapter 8) was published as the suffrage battle seemed won, and illustrates the alteration of both anti-suffragist arguments and rebutted suffragist ones in the wake of the war.

Particular tensions between group identities, and strategies aimed at eliding those tensions, are identified throughout Section 3, and are borne in mind as I move on to Section 4, in which literary texts are analysed. These latter, however, also provide expressions of individual identity, often absent from the political texts considered in previous sections. I offer a comparative analysis of Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna (Chapter 9), and an individual analysis of Donna Paola's unique lo e il mio elettore (Chapter 10).

In Section 5 (Chapter 11), I draw the threads of Sections 2, 3 and 4 together in light of some of the pre-existing research already described. In particular, I suggest interlocking discursive patterns relating

to suffragist ideologies, identities, and language in an Italian context, and explore the ram	ifications of
these.	

SECTION 2: SURVEY RESPONSES

Section overview

This section comprises just one chapter (Chapter 4), which analyses a single but extensive document: a survey on suffrage published by the Unione Ferminile Nazionale [UFN] in 1905.

There are clear advantages to beginning this research with a survey-style text: the genre promises diversity of response content within a relatively strict form, which in turn promises rich yet internally comparable material from which to sketch initial impressions of suffrage-related discourse. However, the UFN survey is not the only one carried out on the woman question in Italy during my period. Other particularly notable examples include the lengthy Inchiesta sulla donna, published by Guglielmo Gambarotta in 1899, and 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo', published by the literary and cultural journal Nuova Antologia in 1911.

There is much to recommend both Gambarotta's survey and that produced by Nuova Antologia as sources in light of my research question. Gambarotta, who was inspired to conduct his survey in response to his own confusion when 'mi dissero feminista [...] Sentii desiderio di ribatterli',³ attempts to marry quantitative precision and qualitative fluidity in his question style, which incorporates a reference to the vote.⁴ He sent the

¹ Guglielmo Gambarotta, Inchiesta sulla donna [Survey on woman] (Turin: Bocca, 1899).

² 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo' in *Nuova antologia di lettere, scienze ed arti*, 5th series, vol. 154 of collection 238 (July-August 1911), pp. 121-28. (Accessed from <u>Internet Archive</u> at http://archive.org/stream/nuovaantologia238romauoft on 31 January 2013).

³ [They called me a feminist. I felt an urge to retort]. Gambarotta, *Inchiesta*, p. 3. The spellings used for 'feminista', 'feminismo', 'feminismo' and other related words remained interchangeable throughout the period in question; I have reproduced the orthography of source texts, flagging particularly inconsistent usage.

⁴ Gambarotta sought to elicit responses as to 'quale condizione sarebbe desiderabile che alla donna fosse fatta nella società?' [what condition should ideally be accorded to women in society?]; however, this question being 'troppo vasto, e perciò vago' [too vast, and thus vague], he frames it in the form of three options:

^{&#}x27;La donna uguale, giuridicamente, all'uomo: con diritti identici ai diritti dell'uomo.

La donna uguale, giuridicamente, all'uomo: con diritti differenti dei diritti dell'uomo, ma ad essi equivalenti.

La donna non uguale, giuridicamente, all'uomo: con diritti minori dei diritti dell'uomo.

Tre formule che sintetizzano tre programmi. Quale di essi è preferibile? Il preferito è realizzabile?

[[]Woman legally equal to man: with identical rights to the rights of man.

Woman legally equal to man: with rights different to man's, yet equivalent to them.

Woman not legally equal to man: with less rights than the rights of man.

Three formulations that sum up three agendas. Which of these is preferable? Is the chosen one achievable?

To this initial question are appended five others, defined by Gambarotta as 'secondarie complementari' [secondary complements]. These deal with specific legislative issues. The first asks whether women's 'diritto all'amore' [right to love] is equal to men's. The second asks whether a wife has the right to earn money by working, or, conversely, to expect her husband to keep her. The third and fourth ask whether a mother's right to be involved in, respectively, the education and the upbringing of her children is equal to the father's, or greater or less than his. Finally, and most pertinently for this thesis, the fifth question asks: 'È ammissibile per la donna il diritto di voto? politico e amministrativo, oppure l'uno o l'altro solamente?'

survey to what he describes as 'uomini insigni, notissimi',⁵ but published some unsolicited responses also. Of the 75 responses included, 11 are from women. The Nuova Antologia survey is both briefer and more general in its questions,⁶ and includes only 20 respondents. Much as in Gambarotta's text, these are described as 'illustri uomini', but include 3 women (only one of whom evinces open interest in feminism).⁷

I had initially intended this section to constitute a comparative analysis of the 1899, 1905, and 1911 texts. However, since spatial constraints compelled me to analyse just one,8 I chose the UFN survey (1905) for several reasons. Firstly, as shall be seen, it pertains the most directly to the question of suffrage.9 Secondly, while the respondent samples of all three surveys are selective and non-representative of Italian society (all are atypically highly educated, predominantly from northern and urban regions of Italy,10 and made up largely of public and semi-public figures), the UFN survey represents a much greater proportion of women's voices than the other two.11 Finally, since the 1905 survey was conducted and published by a feminist organisation just as suffragist organisations were on the brink of coalescing, strong links can be drawn between it and the overtly political documents considered in Section 3. The survey differs from these other texts, however, in that its structure allows for a quantitative analysis to precede and inform the qualitative thematic discourse analysis subsequently applied.

The overall aim of this section is to plot broad discursive patterns concerning the suffrage question in Italy as it stood in 1905; these patterns guide the more deductive approach of Sections 3 and 4.

[Can the right to vote be conceded to woman? parliamentary and municipal, or just one or the other?] The final question, which is 'molto facoltativa' [very subjective], asks: 'La donna vostra, quando avesse diritti uguali ai vostri, potrebbe parere – a Voi – meno seducente, meno amabile?' [Might your wife seem – to you – less attractive, less lovable, once she had rights equal to your own?] Gambarotta, *Inchiesta*, pp. 11-30.

⁵ [prominent, famous men]. Gambarotta, Inchiesta, pp. 9-11.

⁶ It asks, firstly, 'Qual'è il valore del femminismo, considerato sotto l'aspetto intellettuale?' [What is the value of feminism, from an intellectual perspective?], and, secondly, 'Qual'è il valore di esso sotto l'aspetto sociale?' [What is its value from a social perspective?] 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo', p. 121.

[What is its value from a social perspective?] 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo', p. 121.

This is Teresa Labriola. The other women included are Neera, who responds with disinterest (as she had in both the 1899 and 1905 surveys), and Grazia Deledda, who demurs that organised feminism is not her field: 'lo scrivo romanzi e novelle: quest'è la mia specialità. Trovo giusto che la donna *pensi, studi* e *lavori*.' [I write novels and stories: this is my area of expertise. I think it right that woman should *think*, *study* and *work*]. 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo', p. 123. Italics in original.

⁸ I intend to pursue the project of comparing the three surveys in a separate article.

⁹ While Gambarotta does include a question on the vote in his survey, comparatively few of his respondents engaged with it explicitly.

¹⁰ Gambarotta's survey includes some illustrious non-Italian respondents, also. Perhaps the most notable is Mark Twain, whose response, translated into Italian by Luigi Majno, advocates equality with tongue-in-cheek humour: 'Non essendo nella storia l'esempio di un uomo che abbia governato bene una nazione, potrebbe essere una buona idea che si lasciasse governare la donna in via d'esperimento. Che essa possa non fare buona prova in tale materia è certamente possibile: ma è sicuramente impossibile che essa possa aggiungere qualche cosa alle maschili puerilità e stupidità di ogni tempo'. [Since there is no instance in history of a man governing a nation well, it might be a good idea to let a woman govern by way of experiment. It is certainly possible that she might not make a good fist of it; but it is absolutely impossible that she could exceed the male childishness and stupidity of every age.] Gambarotta, *Inchiesta*, pp. 67-69 (p. 68).

Of 139 responses to the UFN survey, 86 are from women, 52 are from men, and one is signed jointly by a woman and a man.

Chapter 4 Surveys on suffrage: the case of the UFN Inchiesta (1905)

Primary text analysed: Unione Femminile Nazionale, Il voto alla donna. Inchiesta e notizie. 12

Between 1903 and 1905, a survey of opinions on women's suffrage was conducted on behalf of the Milanese *Unione Femminile* publication. While the group from which responses were drawn was far from representative of Italians generally – being relatively homogenous in terms of regional provenance, educational level, and political outlook – the survey nonetheless offers an unusually bountiful sample of arguments, images, tensions and rhetorical techniques present in the suffrage debate during the first years of the twentieth century.

I analyse survey responses with a view to describing the ways in which gender, suffrage and the interrelations between these are constructed therein. Such is the panoply of positions taken and expressive styles adopted that an attempt to identify dominant patterns threatens to be reductive. However, my aim is not to provide a finite and precisely quantified list of all themes and discourses present; rather, it is to paint a rich picture of strong currents and counter-currents, while remaining attentive to peculiar nuances of linguistic usage. The resultant, broad-stroked thematic 'map', coloured by discursive strategies, will be used in later chapters as a comparative source of reference when analysing more narrowly suffragist or anti-suffragist texts (Section 3) and those more concerned with individual self-representation (Section 4).

At this point, it is worth emphasising some cautions regarding qualitative analysis.¹³ In particular, while my mode of analysis is ostensibly 'data-driven' rather than 'theory-driven', it is most unlikely that my conclusions can be uninfluenced by my existing knowledge¹⁴ and by the cultural context in which I am reading.¹⁵ In light of similar issues, Ely et al. caution that the tendency to describe themes as 'emerging'

¹² Unione Femminile Nazionale [UFN], *Il voto alla donna. Inchiesta e notizie* (Milan: Tipografia Nazionale di V. Ramperti, 1905).

¹³ See also Section 1, Chapter 3 (especially p. 53, n. 286).

¹⁴ For instance, my education has focused on the widespread practice of classifying feminist arguments into those based on 'equality' and those based on 'difference'.

¹⁵ For instance, as a Western woman with an interest in and an awareness of both the development of the feminist movement throughout the twentieth century and the issues considered most relevant to it today, my eyes tend to be especially peeled for arguments pertaining to the idea of blurring, transcending or redrawing the boundaries of gender.

can be misinterpreted to mean that themes 'reside' in the data, and if we just look hard enough they will 'emerge' like Venus on the half shell. If themes 'reside' anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them. ¹⁶

I reflect on these issues as they arise.

The chapter is divided into four parts. 4.1 explains the circumstances in which the survey was conducted, accounts for some of its limitations in terms of representativeness, and critically examines the format of its questions; it also provides a quantitative report of the breakdown of respondents' answers in 'Yes'/'No' terms, and proposes a thematic framework for use in a more qualitative analysis. This framework is put into practice in 4.2 and 4.3, in which I illustrate the ideological strands identified by quoting data extracts and exploring how language functions to construct and consolidate positions.¹⁷ Finally, 4.4 draws together the chapter's findings and establishes their relevance for the overall research project.

4.1 Overview of the text

4.1.1 Contextual significance

The organisation known as the Unione Femminile had been founded in 1899. However, the monthly publication of the same name, also directed by Ersilia Majno Bronzini, ¹⁸ was not launched until 1901, and the first issue declared that the two UFs were separate entities. Although the distinction was rarely noticeable in practice, its emphasis at the outset may have served to shield the organisation from being identified with some of the more uncompromisingly feminist stances adopted in the publication.¹⁹

¹⁶ Margot Ely et al., On writing qualitative research: living by words (Falmer: Routledge, 1997), pp. 205-06.

¹⁷ The quotations used in this chapter are frequent and lengthy enough to require some defence. While my aim was to find a way of categorising responses, thus describing the data as a whole, I also found that the voices represented by the survey were too varied and too determinedly individuated to retain their character when sorted into thematic bundles. Since this heterogeneity is a striking feature in itself, and since my focus is on language as well as themes, I chose to allow respondents' voices to speak for themselves where possible. Also, by providing English translations (in the footnotes), I sought to provide a sense of the original 'flavours' for readers without Italian.

¹⁸ Ersilia Majno Bronzini (1859-1933) was a highly energetic feminist and socialist activist based in Milan. As well as being the founder of the Unione Femminile organisation in 1899, her initiatives included the Asilo Mariuccia, set up in 1902 to care for children at risk of violence or prostitution, and a committee set up to combat the 'white slave trade'. Her husband, Luigi Majno, was a lawyer and, between 1900 and 1904, an MP; he, too, was a committed socialist and feminist. See Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico delle donne lombarde*, pp. 223-26; Enzo Santarelli, 'Maino Bronzini Ersilia' in Andreucci and Detti (eds.), *Il movimento operaio italiano*, vol. 3, pp. 229-30. See also Buttafuoco, *Le Mariuccine*.

¹⁹ Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, p. 135.

In a circular letter sent to potential correspondents and subscribers, the interests of the would-be publication were set out as concerning: (I) associations and institutions set up to protect or help women and/or children; (2) women's employment; and (3) 'indicazioni sul movimento femminista, notizie sulla legislazione per quanto riguarda i diritti della donna e la tutela del suo lavoro, e sugli studi, pubblicazioni, giornali che mirano alla diffusione dell'idea'.²⁰ While suffrage could have been interpreted as falling within the 'diritti' mentioned, it was not explicitly broached as a potential topic.

Late in 1901, however, following a discouraging struggle to have new laws protecting women's working conditions properly implemented,²¹ the vote began to assume significance in the pages of *Unione Femminile*.²² An article by Elisa Boschetti²³ focused in pragmatic terms on suffrage as the 'mezzo fondamentale' [basic means] through which women could achieve other freedoms.²⁴ By 1903, however, Boschetti was veering towards gradualism, suggesting that women should at first be admitted to municipal suffrage only.²⁵ The resultant debate, with opinions varying not only between different correspondents but sometimes within individual outlooks, seems to have inspired the survey that followed.²⁶

The survey's very existence and its reasonably high response rate (139 responses from 500 questionnaires distributed) indicate the new significance that the suffrage question had gained in some sectors of the national consciousness. Nevertheless, the sample taken is a reminder of how limited these sectors were. Respondents are generally people who had some form of public influence in Italy at the time, whether through politics, law, writing, academia, social activism or aristocratic background. Most were from northern Italy, particularly Lombardy; all had a level of education that would have been far above the national average; and the majority had left-leaning political sympathies.

²⁰ [information about the feminist movement, news about legislation regarding the rights of the woman and the protection of her work, and about the studies, publications, and newpapers that aim to spread the idea]. Manuscript of circular letter, thought to be in Bice Cammeo's hand, undated (1900). Cited in Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 131.

²¹ On the uneasy relationship between the women's movement and the question of protective laws, see Pieroni Bortolotti, *Socialismo* e questione femminile, especially pp. 58-104. For an English-language discussion of the same, see Elda Gentile Zappi, *If eight hours seem too few: mobilization of women workers in the Italian rice fields* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), especially pp. 125-28. On the Unione Femminile's response to the eventual 1902 law, see Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, pp. 154-58.

²² Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, pp. 48-49.

²³ Elisa Boschetti (1869-1955) was a committed emancipationist and social reformer, and a founding member of the Unione Femminile (although she was to distance herself from the organisation after 1905, following a disagreement regarding her stipend). In the years leading up the First World War, she would move to London to work with suffragist and other feminist initiatives there. See Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 199-201; Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, pp.149-50.

²⁴ Elisa Boschetti, 'Il voto alle donne', p. I, in *Unione Femminile*, n. 10, 1901. Cited in Buttafuoco, p. 149.

²⁵ Elisa Boschetti, 'Il voto alle donne', in *Unione Femminile*, n. 8-9, 1903. Cited in Buttafuoco, p. 149.

²⁶ Although the survey was carried out in 1903, with responses appearing in successive issues of *Unione Femminile* as they arrived, all references here are to the collated document published by the UFN two years later: *Il voto alla donna. Inchiesta e notizie* (Milan: Tipografia Nazionale di V. Ramperti, 1905).

Moreover, Ersilia Majno, in coordinating the project, seems to have tried especially to elicit responses from women in whose sympathy she was confident, perhaps in order to counter the argument that Italian women were apathetic or averse to the idea of political involvement.²⁷ That said, she published all signed responses she received, whether positive, negative or ambivalent – although she added an emphatically-worded preface to the 1905 volume to rebut several anti-suffrage points that particularly irked her.

Publication of the survey coincided with, in Italy, a period of rapidly growing public and political recognition of the suffrage movement's potential momentum (particularly due to Mirabelli's bill for universal suffrage, first presented in 1904), and, internationally, a period of increasing cooperation between campaigners from different countries.²⁸ The survey's appendix is indicative of this wider context: after synopsising response trends, it summarises the status of the suffrage question in Italy and in 18 other places.²⁹ In Italy, it argues, the campaigning movement

è ben lontano da quella estensione, organizzazione e continuità che lo caratterizzano invece in altri paesi: da noi, anzi, non si sono avute sinora che manifestazioni isolate e sporadiche, importanti non tanto in se stesse, quanto come indice di uno stato d'animo che si va estendendo sempre più, quantunque non si imponga con clamorose manifestazioni esteriori.³⁰

However, reference is also made to the Mirabelli bill, interpreted as a promising signal that the issue of suffrage 'accenna di nuovo ad uscire dal campo dei dibattiti meramente teorici'.³¹

Within this framework of mounting national and international energy, the survey, with its eminent signatories and (as shall be seen) predominantly positive responses, became an effective instrument of propaganda. Its sample group is far too selective to allow it to provide, as one respondent claimed, 'un conto preciso dell'opinione pubblica'.³² However, in offering a cross-section of attitudes from

²⁷ Buttafuoco outlines the probable propagandist motive for this: 'so that in the survey the voices of emancipationists would prevail, to demonstrate the political maturity attained by women and the spread of a women's movement concerned with the vote'. *Cronache femminili*, p. 150.

²⁸ As described earlier, Italy's CNDI had joined the ICW in 1903, and the latter had spawned the offshoot IWSA in 1904 – see Chapter 2, pp. 23-24.

²⁹ 16 countries are listed independently; the Isle of Man and New Zealand are dealt with in subsections of the entries for Britain and Australia respectively.

³⁰ [is quite far from that breadth, organisation and continuity that characterise it in other countries: in our country, rather, there have so far been only isolated and sporadic manifestations of it, important not so much in themselves but as a sign of a state of mind that is spreading more and more, even if it does not assert itself through noisy outward manifestations]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 115.

³¹ [shows signs again of emerging from the field of merely theoretical debates]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 115-116.

³² [a precise account of public opinion]. This view came from Robert Michels (1876-1936), a socialist of German extraction with feminist sympathies (Robert and Gisela Michels, Letter to Ersilia Majno, Marburg, 10 September 1904, in *Fondo Ersilia Majno*, cart. XI, b.5). Michels lived in Italy for several periods and felt a very strong pull towards the Italian national identity (later, he would be a strong supporter of Mussolini's Fascist government). He has been described as one of the 'fathers of sociology' (see Juan J. Linz, *Robert Michels, political sociology, and the future of democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), pp. 3-7). Although he signed himself

northern Italy's élite, intellectual and/or activist circles, it is remarkable for the impressively broad spectrum of approaches to the suffrage question that are represented *despite* the restricted group.

4.1.2 Survey structure

The survey's format is at once problematic (for the would-be analyst) and revealing. The questions asked are as follows:

- I. Si deve riconoscere il diritto di voto, amministrativo e politico, alle donne
 - (A) in massima?
 - (B) attualmente, in Italia?
- II. Per quali ragioni?³³

This structure facilitates potential omissions and ambiguities in responses. Most notably, the very open question II does not specify that participants should provide reasons for their answers to both parts A and B of question I. Consequently, several respondents who answer yes to IA and no to IB give their reasons for only one of these decisions (generally IB), presumably deeming their reasons for the other too obvious to need stating. Furthermore, although municipal and political suffrage are mentioned as distinct entities in IA, the questions are not segmented in such a way as to facilitate clear, separate responses concerning these. Numerous respondents do introduce the distinction themselves, but this sometimes leads to further omissions in the subsequent responses to II (for instance, respondent Giselda Rapisardi³⁴ opines that women should, in principle, have both municipal and political suffrage (IA) but that at that moment in Italy they should have only municipal suffrage (IB); she offers justification only for the proposed exclusion of Italian women from political suffrage (II), without including reasons for their right to both in principle or for their admission to municipal suffrage in Italy). Finally, the questions omit references to other possible subtleties in responses. For instance, should some or all women have the vote (in principle, and in Italy at that time)? If some, on what basis should they be selected? If women should be electors, should they also be eligible for election (municipal and/or political)? Various respondents raise these matters themselves, and when

as Roberto in his survey response, I continue to refer to him as Robert due to his being internationally known under this name.

³³ [I. Should women's right to the vote, municipal and political, be recognised

⁽A) in principle?

⁽B) presently, in Italy?

II. For what reasons?]

³⁴ Giselda Fojanesi Rapisardi (1851-1946) was at various stages a teacher, school inspector, journalist and author, and was involved in several campaigns relating to gender equality, including those aiming to legalise divorce, determination of paternity and equal pay. She was married to poet Mario Rapisardi. (See Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, pp. 463-64; also Silvia Franchini and Paola Puzzuoli, Gli istituti femminili di educazione e di istruzione, 1861 – 1910 (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Fonti XLIV, 2005), pp. 331-32, accessed from http://archivi.beniculturali.it/DGA-free/Fonti/Fonti_XLIV.pdf on 19 Jan 2011).

they do, the urge to defend the particularities of their views tends to render their responses to II tangential in relation to the central thrust of questions IA and IB.

That said, the openness of the questions is likely to have been motivated primarily by a very understandable wish to avoid suggestion, perhaps coupled with a lack of prior certainty as to which details of the suffrage debate would be deemed most relevant by respondents. In this light, the distinction that is explicitly drawn between questions IA and IB – i.e. between the principle of women's suffrage and its practical appropriateness in Italy – appears especially significant, and speaks of a well-established fissure between theory and practice within existing discourses of suffrage. (Indeed, as mentioned above, the survey arose from a debate in the newspaper concerning a correspondent's growing reluctance to risk the outcome of the implementation of her pro-suffrage convictions in Italy). Whether influenced by the question format or not, responses bear out this divide, as shall be seen; 40% give different answers to the two parts of question I.

4.1.3 Quantitative results

Here, I set out the numbers and gender breakdown of survey respondents. I then examine the overview of responses to IA and IB that is included in the appendix to the published survey (no reference is made in this appendix to the more complicated breakdown of responses to II, i.e. to respondents' reasoning); I identify some problems with the categorisation system used here. I then present my alternative account of responses to IA and IB.

No list of all the intended survey recipients is available, but it is known that 500 surveys were sent out personally and 139 signed responses were received. Of these, 86 responses were signed by women, 52 by men, and I was signed jointly by a woman and a man (Ginevra Speraz and Mario Pilo, a married couple).³⁵ We do not know how many of the 500 recipients would have been known to Majno as pro-suffrage, but in terms of the 139 respondents, a self-selection bias was clearly operative. The motivation to respond to such a survey is likely to have been far higher for those who supported the idea of women's suffrage at least theoretically, especially since the survey was the initiative of the feminist publication *Unione Femminile*; anti-suffrage recipients may have refrained from dignifying the questions with answers due to a prescient fear that their responses would be published prefaced with a scathing rebuttal from Ersilia Majno (as was indeed the case with the 1905 volume). Those who were apathetic about suffrage are also likely to have abstained in large numbers. These probable

³⁵ Ginevra Speraz (1865–1936) was the pen-name of Giuseppina Levi, a teacher, author, primarily of children's books, and translator from Spanish (see Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 629-30). Mario Pilo (1859 –1920) was a scientist, musicologist, journalist and critic (see Comune di Mantova: Biblioteca Teresiana, <u>Fondo Mario Pilo</u>, accessed from http://www.bibliotecateresiana.it/content/view/31/92/ on 19 Jan 2011).

biasing factors should be kept in mind when interpreting the responses that were given, which, as we shall see, are overwhelmingly positive, at least in theory, toward women's suffrage.

The appendix to the published survey provides a synopsis of the responses to IA and IB (i.e. on the general principle of women's suffrage and its practical appropriateness in Italy). Most notably, the overview claims that 80 responses (an impressive 58%) answered Yes to both IA and IB (47 from women, 32 from men and I from a man and a woman), with a further 2 responses answering Yes to IA and Yes, for certain regions of Italy, to IB (both from men). 27 responses (19%) are coded as answering Yes to IA and No to IB (23 from women and 4 from men), with I response stating that IA was impossible to answer and answering No to IB (from a man). Only 3 responses (2%) are coded as answering No to both IA and IB (all from men).

These categories account for 81% of the responses. In coding the remaining 19%, however, some ambiguities arise. These remaining responses tend to stipulate particular conditions for an affirmative response either to IA, to IB or to both. In particular, these conditions may include the separate treatment of municipal and political suffrage, and/or limitations on the kinds of women to be admitted to either or both of these. To further complicate matters, the imposition of any combination of these conditions may be posited as a temporary or permanent measure, or this may be left unspecified.

Regarding the split between municipal and political suffrage, 11 responses are coded by Majno as answering Yes to IA and Yes, but only with regard to municipal suffrage, to IB (from 8 women and 3 men); a further I is reported as stating that IA is impossible to answer and answering Yes, but only with regard to municipal suffrage, to IB (from a man). 3 responses are coded as answering Yes, only with regard to municipal suffrage for the present, but with political suffrage as a stated future aim, to both IA and IB, while 2 are coded as answering Yes, for municipal suffrage only, to both IA and IB.

As regards limitations on the kinds of women who should vote, 4 responses are coded as answering Yes to IA and Yes, but only for certain kinds of women, to IB. 2 responses are coded as answering Yes, but only for certain kinds of women, to both IA and IB. I response is coded as answering Yes, but only with regard to municipal suffrage, to IA, and Yes, but only with regard to municipal suffrage and only for certain kinds of women, to IB.

Finally, three exceptional responses that resist categorisation are mentioned: that of the marquis Filippo Crispolti,³⁶ who answered No to IA and IB but added that women should be eligible for

³⁶ Filippo Crispolti (1857 – 1942) was a Catholic journalist, novelist and poet, later a politician. See Alessandro Albertazzi, 'Crispolti, Filippo' in <u>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</u>, 30 (1984), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/filippo-crispolti (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 9 September 2013.

election, both in principle and in Italy at that time; that of Neera,³⁷ who declared herself indifferent to the questions; and that of Laura Garsin,³⁸ who acknowledged that the vote might be necessary for women, both in general and Italy, as a transitional measure, but saw it as a far from ideal vehicle for women's participation in public life, since it was based in a system she regarded as alien to women's nature.

One immediate problem is that these figures sum to 140 responses, rather than 139. It is possible that one response might have been counted twice.³⁹ However, it is impossible to check this by allocating all responses to the categories given, as numerous responses involve a degree of ambiguity and the process by which they were assigned to categories is not transparent.⁴⁰

³⁷ As stated in Chapter I (p. 14, n. 73), Neera was the pen-name of Anna Radius Zuccari, well-known novelist and essay-writer.

³⁸ Laura Garsin's nephew, the artist Amadeo Modigliani, paid tribute to her great intelligence; I was unable to find further information about her. (See Jeffrey Meyers, *Modigliani: a life* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Books, 2006), pp. 7-8).

³⁹ For instance, Laura Garsin could have been counted within the 'Yes; Yes' camp as well as being singled out for comment, or Speraz' and Pilo's joint submission might have been classed as two responses.

⁴⁰ Consider, for instance, the response given by Bruno Sperani (Beatrice Speraz): she answers IA with an unproblematic 'Yes', but bases her answer to IB on the question of whether or not Italian women feel the need for the vote as yet:

^{&#}x27;lo vengo oggi a dirvi che sono con voi [...] Ora resta a vedere se le donne italiane hanno veramente coscienza del loro diritto al voto politico. Tutta la questione è qui. Se tale coscienza esiste, se la maggioranza delle nostre donne sente il dovere di combattere per la propria indipendenza, la vostra nobile iniziativa dovrà sollevarle tutte. Se rimangono indifferenti bisognerà accontentarsi di aspettare e continuare pazientemente nell'opera di propaganda educativa'. [I come today to tell you that I am with you [...] Now it remains to be seen if Italian women truly possess consciousness of their right to the political vote. The whole question lies here. If such consciousness exists, if the majority of our women feel the need to fight for their independence, your noble initiative must raise them all up. If they remain indifferent, one must settle for waiting and patiently continuing the work of educational propaganda]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 23. Sperani's solidarity with the campaign of the Italian suffragists could seem to justify her inclusion in the 'Yes; Yes' category. However, her final ambivalence makes this problematic. Neither can her response be boiled down to 'Yes; Yes for certain kinds of women', as the majority must meet her terms before any can begin to vote, and she seems unsure as to whether they can as yet. Moreover, she speaks specifically of 'il voto politico' but does not mention the municipal vote; although one could guess that she intends Italian women to have municipal suffrage immediately, there is no clear textual evidence for this. (Bruno Sperani was the pen-name of Beatrice Speraz (1840-1923), a teacher, translator, journalist and author. Her daughter, Giuseppina Levi, used the surname 'Speraz' for her own pen-name (Ginevra Speraz – see above, p. 65, n. 35). Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, p. 1035-6).

Another apparently ambiguous response comes from Irma Melany Scodnik, who also answers Yes to IA but borrows Hamlet's hesitancy in answering IB: 'That is the question! C'è da pensarci'. [That is the question! There is much there to think about]. (Il voto alle donne, p. 55). Melany Scodnik's reasoning, in response to question II, begins with her fear of the 'cattivo uso' [bad use'] of the vote, and ends with a suggestion that even this 'cattivo uso', by shaking alarmed Italians out of their apathy, might be a good thing — a suggestion that ends, however, with a question mark. It seems likely that the latter part of this reasoning, combined with Melany Scodnik's well-known feminist activism (indeed, in 1906 she was to organise a conference on 'La donna elettrice' in Naples — Rossi-Doria, Diventare cittadine, p. 83), might have persuaded Majno or her assistants to code the response as fully positive. Irma Melany Scodnik (1847–1924), of Hungarian origin, was a socialist and long-standing campaigner for women's emancipation. She would later become president of the Neapolitan Comitato Pro-Suffragio. See Fiorenza Taricone and Mimma de Leo (eds.), Elettrici ed elette. Storia, testimonianze e riflessioni a cinquant'anni dal voto alle donne (Rome: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione Nazionale Pari Opportunità, 1995), p. 12.

In re-coding the responses myself, I found it impossible to follow Majno in identifying 80 that could be legitimately categorised as 'Yes; Yes'. Given the partly propagandist aim of the survey, it seems possible that ambivalence such as that cited above may have been elided during analysis in order to produce stronger pro-suffrage statistics and more readily comprehensible groupings. I have attempted a re-coding system that takes account of ambiguities while still allowing for the observance of broad patterns. My results, summarised in the table below, use 7 broad categories:

- 1) Yes; Yes (= unambiguously positive responses to both IA and IB).
- 71 responses (51.1%) fall into this category. Of these, 42 are from women, 28 from men, and 1 from a woman and a man.
- 2) Yes; Conditional (=IA: unambiguously positive; IB: yes, but only under certain conditions).
- 23 responses (16.5%) fall into this category. Of these, 12 are from women and 11 from men. Subcategories recognise the variety in conditions proposed for IB: these include
 - (a) that female suffrage should be introduced gradually in Italy (2 responses, both from men);
 - **(b)** that female suffrage should be introduced only in certain regions of Italy (2 responses, both from men);
 - (c) that only municipal female suffrage should be introduced in Italy (8 responses, 5 from women and 3 from men);
 - (d) that only certain types of Italian women should have suffrage (5 responses, 2 from women and 3 from men); 41
 - (e) that only municipal female suffrage should be introduced in Italy, and then only for certain types of Italian women (I response, from a woman);
 - (f) ambivalence as to whether or under what conditions female suffrage should be introduced in Italy (4 responses from women, 1 from a man).
- 3) Yes; No (= IA: unambiguously positive; IB: unambiguously negative).
- 23 responses (16.5%) fall into this category. 19 are from women and 4 are from men.
- **4)** Conditional; Conditional (= IA: yes, but only under certain conditions; IB: yes, but only under certain conditions, which may be the same as or different from those described for IA).

10 responses (7.2%) fall into this category. 6 are from women and 4 are from men.

Subcategories recognise the different combinations of conditions desired. These include:

- (a) IA: municipal suffrage only; IB: municipal suffrage only (5 responses, 4 from women and 1 from a man);⁴²
- **(b)** IA: yes, but only for certain types of women; IB: yes, but only for certain types of women (1 response, from a woman);
- (c) IA: municipal suffrage only; IB municipal suffrage only, and only for certain types of women (3 responses, 2 from women and 1 from a man);

⁴¹ There is scope for further subcategorisation here, as the qualities required by voting women varied in different responses (these included working, paying tax, literacy and having a certain level of 'cultura' [culture], depending on the respondent).

⁴² 2 of these respondents (I female, I male) specifically state that they view municipal suffrage as a step towards political suffrage, in the case of IA as well as IB. 2 others (both female) are ambivalent, and I (female) is firmly opposed to the concept of political suffrage for women.

- (d) IA: impossible to answer the question theoretically; IB: municipal suffrage only, and only for certain types of women (1 response, from a man).
- **5)** Conditional; No (= IA: yes, but only under certain conditions; IB: unambiguous no).

5 responses (3.6%) fall into this category, 4 from women and 1 from a man. Subcategories include:

- (a) IA: municipal suffrage only; IB: no (1 response, from a woman);
- (b) IA: for certain types of women only; IB: no (2 responses, both from women);
- (c) IA: impossible to answer the question theoretically; IB: no (1 response, from a man);
- (d) IA: ambivalent; IB: no (1 response, from a woman).43
- 6) No; No (= unambiguously negative responses to both IA and IB).
- 3 responses (2.2%) fall into this category (all from men).
- 7) Other (= responses that did not fit in any of the above categories).
- 4 responses (2.9%) fall into this category (2 from women, 2 from men). These include:
 - (a) IA and IB: yes, temporarily, but involvement in the current political system is an unfortunate and transitory phase in women's progress to their true role in the social world; the political system is not suited to women's 'different' nature (I response, from a woman);
 - (b) IA and IB: ambivalent (I response, from a man);44
 - (c) IA and IB: indifferent (1 response, from a woman);
 - (d) IA and IB: no, but women should be eligible for election (I response, from a man).

⁴³ This ambivalent response to IA, from the writer Anna Evangelisti (1866–1945), is as follows: 'Al primo [quesito] si può rispondere sì, qualora l'uomo e la donna formino nella società due organismi separati e distinti; se si tratta invece di pura rappresentanza, allora si ha uno di quei duplicati che nella realtà della natura non si trovano mai.' [The first [question] can be answered yes, if man and woman form two separate and distinct organisms within society; if on the other hand it is to do with pure representation, then [we] have one of those duplicates that are never found in nature's reality]. (UFN, II voto della donna, p. 73). Evangelisti does not seem to come down on either side, yet does leave the possibility of theoretical female suffrage open, so I have included her in the 'Conditional; No' category rather than as 'Other'. However, other writings of hers indicate a strong distaste for the feminist movement in general, viewing it as un-Italian – see Madeleine Pelletier, 'Feminism in some European countries', in American Monthly Review of Reviews, 23 March 1906, pp. 357-60; reprinted in Lucy Delap, Maria DiCenzo and Leila Ryan (eds.), Feminism and the periodical press, 1900 – 1918, vol. 1 (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁴ This ambivalence is from Prof. Alfredo Panzini (1863–1939), novelist, lexicographer and historian, who can find no logical reasons against female suffrage, and goes so far as to maintain that women who are heads of families should *probably* have the municipal vote, but cannot overcome two doubts, based on the force of tradition and female psychology. His unresolved status at the end of his response caused me to categorise him here, rather than in a subsection of 'Conditional; Conditional'.

Table 1: Summary of responses to IA and IB (my categorisation system)

[Cond. = Conditional; munic. = municipal; F = female; M = male; F&M = female&male]

RESPONSES TO: IA; IB Yes; Yes		F (/86)	M (/52)	F&M (/I)	TOTAL (/139)	
		42	28	1		71
	Yes; Yes [gradually]	0	2	0	2	
Yes; Cond.	Yes; Yes [certain regions only]	0	2	0	2	23
	Yes; Yes [munic. only]	5	3	0	8	
	Yes; Yes [certain women only]	2	3	0	5	
	Yes; Yes [munic. only, certain women only]	1	0	0	I	
	Yes; Ambivalent	4	1	0	5	
Yes; No		19	4	0		23
Cond.; Cond.	Yes [munic. only]; Yes [munic. only]	4	1	0	5	10
	Yes [certain women only]; Yes [certain women only]	0	1	0	1	
	Yes [munic. only]; Yes [munic. only, certain women only]	2	ı	0	3	
	Unanswerable; Yes [munic. only, certain women only]	0	I	0	I	
Cond.; No	Yes [munic. only]; No	1	0	0	T	5
	Yes [certain women only]; No	2	0	0	2	
	Unanswerable; No	0	1	0	1	
	Ambivalent; No	1	0	0	1	
No; No		0	3	0		3
	Yes[temporarily]; Yes [temporarily] – but political system not suited to female expression	I	0	0	I	
	Ambivalent; Ambivalent	0	1	0	1	
Other	Indifferent; Indifferent	1	0	0	1	4
	No [but eligible for election];	0	1	0	1	
	No [but eligible for election]					

The most outstanding pattern here is the very significant body of support for the principle of women's suffrage (municipal and political) among respondents: 117 out of 139 (84%) unconditionally endorse this principle in their responses to IA. As mentioned above, this probably owes much to a self-selecting pro-suffrage sample.

Secondly, the results illustrate the extent of the aforementioned split between theory and practice, with 55 out of 139 respondents (40%) giving one answer to IA and a different answer to IB. Of this group, 28 respondents unambiguously oppose the immediate implementation of women's suffrage in Italy despite voicing full or partial support for the principle; a further 27 support its implementation under conditions that differ from those they view as theoretically appropriate.

In terms of gender breakdown, 61.9% of responses are from women, while 37.4% are from men (and .07% from a female and male couple).⁴⁵ Of the women, 49% unconditionally support both the principle of suffrage and its immediate application in Italy, compared to a slightly higher 54% of the men. At the other extreme, however, the 3 outright rejections of the idea of women's suffrage come from men (although this signifies only 6% of all male respondents). Interestingly, men who support women's suffrage in principle but have reservations about its practical application in Italy tend toward the nuanced views of the 'Yes; Conditional' category (21% of male respondents), rather than toward the clear-cut 'Yes; No' category (8% of male respondents). An opposite, although less dramatic, pattern holds for women: I4% of women's responses fit within the 'Yes; Conditional' category, while 22% fit into 'Yes; No'. This discrepancy may have been caused partly by a polite and cautious reserve on men's part when judging the fitness of Italian women as a body for political involvement, a reserve not felt so strongly by women themselves. Nevertheless, it points towards one major question: how did the women who answered 'Yes; No' position themselves in relation to the countrywomen whose fitness to vote they denied?

4.1.4 Framework for analysis

Moving beyond an enumerative approach, I will consider, in 4.2 and 4.3 below, the reasoning provided by respondents (usually in response to question II, although sometimes also included in the answers to IA and IB). My initial thematic coding yielded an unwieldy jumble of arguments and motifs. However, almost all of these, whether concerning pro-suffrage, anti-suffrage, mixed or ambivalent responses, can be conceptualised in their relation to one or both of two axes: the first representing the extent to which gender is presented in terms of equality versus terms of difference, and the

⁴⁵ The gender disparity may be due to Ersilia Majno's predominantly female contact list, and/or to the self-selection of interested respondents.

second representing the extent to which suffrage is discussed in terms of principle versus in terms of pragmatism.

While some responses (typically the shorter ones) can be described as statically positioned within this scheme, many others tend to shift back and forth along one or both axes. In some cases, such fluidity seems to emerge from ambivalent or conflicted attitudes towards women's suffrage.⁴⁶ However, fluidity can also manifest among respondents who present a coherent core stance and attempt to defend that stance against all possible angles of attack.⁴⁷ It would be futile, then, to try to pin all responses to frozen loci along my imagined axes, as respondents can deploy a rich range of arguments that sometimes, coherently or otherwise, manage to touch on all the outposts of 'equality', 'difference', 'principle' and 'pragmatism'. Rather, I explore each axis in turn, bearing in mind that individual responses can often illustrate several of the thematic threads identified.

4.2 The equality-difference axis

Here, I take the components of the first axis – equality and difference – and explore various thematic manifestations of each. These manifestations may deal with equality or difference in 'pure' form, or find ways of fusing them together, and/or blending them with other discourses.⁴⁸

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⁴⁶ Alfredo Panzini, for instance, moves from a discourse of equality in which woman are presented as 'metà del genere umano' [half the human race] to raising the difference-based objection of 'la psicologia muliebre' [female psychology], which he sees as based on love or hate for particular men; while he is undecided in general as to whether the principle of justice trumps the pragmatic problem of women's preoccupation with men in general, he treats women who are the heads of their families as a special category on pragmatic grounds, stating that for them the municipal vote is 'doveroso' [necessary]). UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ Guglielmo Gambarotta's response, which extends over four pages, provides one example of this: he begins by emphasising principle over pragmatism, declaring that to distinguish between the readiness of different countries for women's suffrage is false and untenable in the light of 'l'uguaglianza dei cittadini' [the equality of citizens]. However, he also makes an effort to counter the fears of the pragmatists as insignificant, and counters opposition based on women's difference with the argument, perhaps slightly tongue-in-cheek, that only those secure in their femininity will use their votes. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 35-39.

⁴⁸ The observation that Italian suffragists experienced particular difficulties in fusing arguments of equality with those of difference is not a new one (Bigaran, for instance, sums up the suffragism of the first years of the twentieth century by stating that 'emancipationists, in contradictory fashion, took on the idea of the social importance of the maternal role and defended, alongside the postulated theories of equality, the specificity of being woman' – 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 69). The original aspect of my contribution lies in an exploration of precisely how survey respondents attempted to integrate these discourses, in terms of textual arrangement, style, metaphor, citations and allusions, etc.

4.2.1 Equality

4.2.1.1 Principles of equality

The principle of 'giustizia' [justice] is by far the most recurrent subject in the survey. That said, it is not generally a topic to which respondents devote long disquisitions; relatively brief references are usually deemed sufficient. Among the pithiest of these is Filippo Turati's⁴⁹ response: 'Perchè la donna è un uomo.'⁵⁰

Turati relies for effect on an initial provocativeness: his phrasing immediately recalls the image of the unsexed, masculine woman (much brandished by 'difference'-fuelled opponents of the emancipation movement). However, this allusion becomes jesting as the response resolves itself into a play on the linguistic convention of 'man' as a category standing for all humankind. By pushing readers to arrive at this interpretation only by passing through the former one, Turati calls attention to embedded assumptions reflected (and perhaps in part constructed) by the 'man=human' convention: in particular, to the fact that this convention implicitly defines woman as an exception, a non-standard variety of human.

The notion that justice is based on shared humanity, on which Turati's six-word argument is founded, forms a core element of many lengthier but similarly favourable responses. Often an initial nod to the vocabulary of egalitarianism is all that is required, suggesting the pre-existing diffusion and power of this discourse within the emancipation movement, due in large part to the Enlightenment-based tradition of thought propounded by Anna Maria Mozzoni in the decades following unification. Linda Malnati,⁵¹ for instance, gives the first of her three reasons for supporting suffrage as 'Per giustizia elementare',⁵² and does not elaborate on this, although she uses detailed explanation to defend her second and third reasons (that women's suffrage is a means of safeguarding women's rights, and that

⁴⁹ Filippo Turati (1857 – 1932) was the leader of the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) and, with his partner Anna Kuliscioff, the editor of the socialist journal *Critica sociale*. This organ would be the medium for what became known as the *polemica in famiglia* [family quarrel] of 1910, when Turati wrote to urge women not to press their claims for the vote until working-class men had been enfranchised, and Kuliscioff responded with outraged disagreement. (See Chapter 2, p. 30). The *polemica* continued through several issues of *Avanti*, although during this period Turati and Kuliscioff continued both to work together and live together. By 1912, Turati had changed his position on the strategic appropriateness of pushing for female suffrage, as evidenced by his advocacy of a pro-women amendment to the electoral reform bill (see Chapter 7, p. 146).

⁵⁰ [Because woman is a man]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 10. This response fits neatly into the rhetorical trope of *horismus*, as defined by Sam Leith: 'a pithy, sometimes almost aphoristic definition [...] It is specially used when the definition involves a contrastive element.' Leith, *You talkin' to me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* (London: Profile p. 271).

⁵¹ On Linda Malnati, see Chapter 2, p. 32, n. 166.

⁵² [For basic justice]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 4.

it is a means of general social improvement). The MP Luigi Bossi⁵³ introduces his response to question Il with a slightly longer treatment of the subject of equality, although this, too, is short in proportion to his whole response, which extends over 3 pages:

Il negare alla donna il voto politico e amministrativo equivale a negare alla metà del genere umano uno dei mezzi più potenti di partecipazione alla vita sociale, e ciò già a priori costituisce quindi per sè socialmente una grave ingiustizia.54

Bossi's other arguments, like Malnati's, are pragmatic ones, centring on the potential good that women could accomplish in political life, the potential damage done (to women and, through women, to society) by keeping them out of political life, and the contention that they would quickly learn to use their new rights well. An opening allusion to the theme of equality, then, could serve as an acceptable jumping-off point from which to begin a defence of other perspectives on the suffrage question that may be more idiosyncratic and more vulnerable to challenge.

4.2.1.2 Practical equality

Affirmations of the principle of justice are often paired with, and always implicit in, statements of the 'No taxation without representation' principle (which, with its roots in the American War of Independence, was also used consistently by suffragists in the U.S. and in Britain). MP Dino Rondani,55 indeed, concludes his brief, equality-based defence of women's suffrage with the citation, in English, of this slogan:

Perchè le donne sono esseri umani che vivono nella nostra società, tenute al rispetto delle leggi che non concorrono a formare.

'No taxation without representation.'56

The decision to quote the line in English forges a particularly strong parallel between women and the American independence fighters of the eighteenth century. Other respondents use rhetorical tactics which similarly engage and transpose the reader's pre-existing sympathies for a group other than

⁵⁴ [Denying women the political and municipal vote is equivalent to denying half of the human species one of the most powerful means of participation in the life of society, and this already a priori constitutes in itself, then, a

⁵³ Luigi Maria Bossi (1859 –1919) was an obstetrician and socialist politician. See Francesco Cassata, *Building the* new man: eugenics, racial science and genetics in twentieth-century Italy, trans. Erin O'Louglin (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), pp. 64-68 (this reference deals with Bossi's contributions to debates on abortion during the First World War, when he would revisit his previous anti-abortion stance to argue that the women raped by enemy soldiers should be permitted to terminate resultant pregnancies).

grave injustice socially.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 47.

55 Dino Rondani (1868 – 1951) was a socialist politician; following the May riots of 1898 he had, perforce, left Italy to work in the U.S. before returning in 1900. His American sojourn probably influenced his choice of argument and language here. (See Michael Miller Topp, Those without a country: the political culture of Italian American syndicalists (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 32-33).

⁵⁶ [Because women are human beings who live in our society, bound to respect laws without contributing to their making. 'No taxation without representation.'] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 21.

women. Prof. Zaccaria Treves⁵⁷ compares the need to recognise gender equality with that to recognise the racial sameness of northern and southern Europeans, while others parallel women's position with the recent position of working class men; Maria Rygier⁵⁸ draws a particularly effective, because nationalist, comparison between the women of the early 1900s and the men of the Risorgimento:

Perchè supporre che le italiane contemporanee siano meno coscienti dei loro doveri di cittadine, di quel che lo erano le grandi masse popolari alla vigilia dei plebisciti, i quali dovevano decidere dell'unità italiana? Anche allora si poteva dire che il popolo era impreparato, eppure ci si rivolgeva a lui, rendendolo arbitro delle patrie sorti.⁵⁹

In a few cases, the 'no taxation without representation' argument is extended to include the children borne and raised by women, and specifically the sons who become soldiers, as 'taxes' of a sort. In Ida Zuecca's⁶⁰ terms:

Chi paga contributi di danaro e di sangue – finchè il militarismo imperi – per l'andamento della cosa pubblica, ha tutto il diritto di porvi anche occhio e mano.⁶¹

Vittorio Lollini⁶² couches this idea in still more emotive language:

Pagano pur esse le tasse, e tanto più quanto meno possiedono: generano i figliuoli che lo Stato strappa loro anche prima che abbiano raggiunta l'età virile per incoraggiarli nei reggimenti [...]⁶³

The pairing of taxes and children as contributions to the common good marks one significant nexus in which an argument founded on equality and one founded on (maternal) difference, along with the typical discursive modes of presenting these arguments (rational as opposed to affective) are welded together for the purposes of promoting women's suffrage.

⁵⁷ Zaccaria Treves (1869 –1911) was a medical doctor, particularly remembered for research into the psychology of work and fatigue. (See American Psychological Association, *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 8 (1911), p. 222; Roberta Passione, *Le origini della psicologia del lavoro in Italia: nascita e declino di un'utopia liberale* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2012), pp. 57-73.

⁵⁸ Maria Rygier (1885 – 1953) was a teacher, as well as a syndacalist and feminist; she would later combine these interests with anarchism. (See Topp, *Those without a country*, p. 107, p. 156; Maurizio Antonioli, 'Guerra, amore e amicizia. Tre anarchiche di fronte alla prima guerra mondiale' in Scaramuzza (ed.), *Politica e amicizia*, pp. 151-66 (especially pp. 151-52; 157-59)).

⁵⁹ [Why suppose that contemporary Italian women are less conscious of their duties as citizens than were the great masses of the people on the eve of the plebiscites that would decide on Italian unity? Then, too, one could have said that the people were unprepared, yet they were called upon, made arbiters of the fates of their country.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁰ Ida Zuecca (1865 – 1943) was a teacher and educational theorist (Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, p. 1176).

⁶¹ [Whoever pays contributions of money and of blood – as long as militarism reigns – towards the progress of public affairs, has the full right to fix their eye and hand on that progress also]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 53.

⁶² Vittorio Lollini (1860 – 1924) was a lawyer and socialist MP, married to feminist and social reformer Elisa Lollini Agnini; they collaborated on several bills on women's working conditions and the right to paternity searches (Sega, 'Beatrice Sacchi e il suffragismo italiano', p. 82).

⁶³ [They too pay taxes, and the less they have the more they pay: they produce sons that the State tears from them even before [the sons] have reached the age of manhood, to urge them into the regiments]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 34.

4.2.1.3 Selective equality: gender not the crucial variable

Ada Negri's⁶⁴ response, a single sentence like Turati's, approaches equality from a different perspective: 'Se può andare il mio portinajo, non so perchè non debba andarci anch'io.'⁶⁵

Here, gender is presented as an irrelevant variable in relation to suffrage. Rather surprisingly for a then socialist such as Negri, this is accomplished through the implicit suggestion that class, and perhaps education, may be more salient dividing lines (albeit ones already partly breached by the electoral reform of 1882).66 Negri is the only respondent to make this case using such a direct and personal voice, but others echo her sentiments at greater length: Ercole Bassi,67 for instance, argues in favour of women's suffrage (gradually introduced) because

mi sembra assurdo che sia concesso il voto elettorale a tanti ignoranti, mentre non è dato a tante donne colte e di carattere indipendente.⁶⁸

Similarly, Giacinta Martini Marescotti,⁶⁹ would-be president of the CNPSF, argues that since political suffrage was based on level of education,

non si capisce come donne che abbiano una cultura più che sufficiente, debbano essere considerate meno di un uomo il quale non ha fatto che la seconda elementare.⁷⁰

More overtly indignant variations on this theme come from, among others, Angelica Devito Tommasi⁷¹ and Rosa Bonarelli.⁷² Devito Tommasi declares that

Non è logico che possa essere elettore un facchino rozzo, semi-analfabeta (almeno è un operaio e s'evolverà); un usciere; un secondino; un furiere.... e debba essere non elettore⁷³ una insegnante, un'artista, una madre di famiglia colta e per bene.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Ada Negri (1870 –1945), poet and novelist, was at this point very involved in socialist and feminist campaigns (see Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 791-93). For a broader picture of her life and work, see for instance Bruce Merry, 'Ada Negri (1870 –1945)' in Russell (ed.), *Italian women writers*, pp. 295-301.

^{65 [}If my porter can go, I don't see why I shouldn't go there too.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 6.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 2, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Ercole Bassi (1851 –1930) was a judge, legal theorist and author. His works included Socialismo e cooperazione: questioni sociali (Milan: Agnelli, 1898); Le otto ore di lavoro e i doveri che ne derivano (Milan: Tip. L. Oliva, 1919).

⁶⁸ [it seems to me absurd that the electoral vote is granted to many ignorant [men], while it is not given to many cultured women of independent character]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 33.

⁶⁹ On Giacinta Martini Marescotti, see Chapter 2, p. 28, n. 145.

⁷⁰ [one cannot understand how it is that women of more than sufficient culture must be considered inferior to a man who has done no more than second class in primary school]. UFN, *II voto alla donna*, pp. 61-62.

Angelica Devito Tommasi was a teacher and writer, with a particular focus on domestic economy and hygiene (works included *Vita sana* (Rome: E. Loescher, 1897)). See also Pieroni Bortolotti, *Socialismo* e *questione* femminile, p. 117.

⁷² Unidentified.

⁷³ Very unusually, Devito Tommasi uses the masculine form 'elettore' to refer to a woman, rather than 'elettrice'. It is not easily possible to capture this in translation, as the English 'elector'/ 'voter' has no feminine form.

Her value judgements are made blatant in her adjectival descriptions, and the particular jobs she mentions allow her to counterpose a dingy, working-class, male world of train platforms, doorsteps, prison and barracks with a soft-lit, middle-class, female one of schoolrooms, writing desks and hearths. Bonarelli, having dubbed many male voters little more than 'analfabeti' [illiterates], states still more baldly that

Ve ne sono tante di donne che valgono dieci di quegli uomini elettori! È un'offesa alla loro dignità considerarle inferiori ad essi negando loro il voto politico.⁷⁵

In sharp contrast to this set of responses, others approaching equality from a practical perspective prioritise the need of working class women for political representation. Maria Montessori,⁷⁶ who opens her response with a typical appeal to the principle of equality in shared humanity – 'Perché c'è il suffragio universale: se è universale, come escluderne più di mezza umanità?'⁷⁷ – goes on to argue the case of Italy's working women:

Attualmente in Italia, c'è tanto numero di lavoratrici tra operaie, maestre e impiegate nelle pubbliche amministrazioni, ch'esse portano un serio contributo al lavoro sociale: mentre non hanno i diritti dell'uomo ed i suoi compensi al proprio lavoro.

Per raggiungere l'opera di giustizia sul lavoro della donna è necessaria la solidarietà e la difesa parlamentare. Ora non si troveranno deputati che per la solidarietà e la difesa della donna dedichino la loro esistenza di uomini politici – come sarebbe necesario – se le donne non potranno dare il loro voto, cioè farli eleggere deputati.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ [It is not logical that a coarse, semi-illiterate porter can be a voter (at least he is a worker and will develop himself); a doorman; a prison warder; a quartermaster... and a teacher, an artist, a cultured and respectable mother of a family, must not be a voter]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ [There are plenty of women who are worth ten of those men voters! It is an insult to their dignity to consider them inferior to those men by denying them the political vote.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 91.

⁷⁶ Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952) remains most famous as an educational theorist; she was also a qualified physician, and was very involved in various aspects of the feminist movement (she had represented Italy's would-be CNDI at the 1899 ICW congress in Rome; she would be a leading signatory of Anna Maria Mozzoni's petition to Parliament concerning suffrage in 1906; and she would speak about the figure of the 'madre possente' at the CNDI congress of 1908). See Pieroni Bortolotti, *Socialismo* e *questione* femminile, pp. 46-48; De Giorgio, *Le italiane*, pp. 508-09. See also Valeria Babini, 'Science, feminism and education: the early work of Maria Montessori' in *History Workshop Journal*, 49 (Spring 2000), pp. 44-67.

⁷⁷ [Because there is universal suffrage: if it is universal, how can more than half of humanity be excluded from it?] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁸ [Presently in Italy, there are such a number of women workers, between factory workers, teachers, and employees in public administration, that they make a serious contribution to society's work: while they do not have man's rights or his rewards for his own labour.

To achieve justice regarding woman's labour, parliamentary solidarity and defence are necessary. Now one will find no deputies who dedicate their existence as political men to solidarity with and defence of woman – as would be necessary – if women cannot give their vote, that is, cause them to be elected deputies.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 14-15.

Elisa Lollini,⁷⁹ who answers yes to IA and no, very regretfully, to IB, expressing her hope for future change – 'aspettiamo che un'altra generazione cresca'⁸⁰ – adds, as a coda, her dedication to the concept of suffrage for *all* women, and emphasises the pragmatic benefits of including those from the working class:

In ogni caso poi il suffragio amministrativo e politico dovrebbe essere concesso a tutte le donne, senza distinzione di condizione economica. La peggiore delle soluzioni sarebbe, a mio credere, quella di limitarlo alle donne abbienti, che sono, in generale, le più restie ad ogni progresso politico e sociale, e ciò non ridonderebbe che a vantaggio del partito conservatore.⁸¹

Maria Rygier spells out the idea that working class women are potentially equipped with particular political aptitude as part of her rebuttal of the 'pragmatic' anti-suffrage argument based on women's ignorance:

Alle donne inconscie noi opporremo le operaie, unite in leghe di resistenza e già acquistate ai moderni ideali, opporremo tutte quelle donne buone ed intelligenti che già militano sotto la bandiera del progresso. No davvero, noi non dobbiamo paventare il voto della donna italiana!⁸²

In the diverging emphases of those arguing the case of educated (and, by implication, middle and upper class) women and those arguing the case of all women but especially of workers, we can divine the cracks foreshadowing some of the schisms that would occur among Italian suffragists.⁸³ The survey responses demonstrate that even in 1905, before the different factions within the movement had fully crystallised, the images of the 'donna colta' and the 'operaia' were already present as opposing paragons of politically capable womanhood. If some women were more equal than others, there was no clear consensus on which these were.

⁷⁹ Elisa Lollini Agnesi (1858 – 1922) was a feminist journalist and social activist. She was married to the socialist MP Vittorio Lollini (see above, p. 75, n. 62). See also Silvia Mori, 'Elisa Agnini Lollini' in <u>Enciclopedia delle donne</u>, accessed from

http://www.enciclopediadelledonne.it/index.php?azione=pagina&id=1247 on 9 September 2013.

^{80 [}let us wait until another generation grows up]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 27.

[[]Then in any case municipal and political suffrage should be granted to all women, without distinction of economic condition. The worst of all solutions, in my belief, would be that of limiting it to the well-off women, who are, in general, the most resistant to all political and social progress, and the only effect of that would be to the advantage of the conservative party.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 27.

⁸² [Confronted with the unconscious women we hold up the women workers, united in resistance leagues and already won over by modern ideals, we hold up all those good and intelligent women who already serve under the banner of progress. No indeed, we should not dread the Italian woman's vote!] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 87.

⁸³ On class schisms, see Chapter 2, pp. 29-31.

4.2.2 Difference

4.2.2.1 Preservation of female difference

Two of the three wholly negative responses⁸⁴ base their arguments on women's innate difference, and on the undesirability of losing that difference. Paolo Lioy⁸⁵ expresses himself in a single sentence – 'Perchè la donna ha ben più alte missioni'⁸⁶ – but Prof. Domenico Zanichelli⁸⁷ expands on this theme at illuminating length.

Beginning with an assertion of his belief that women should be accorded 'ogni diritto civile' ['every civil right'], guaranteed dignity whether married or unmarried, and admitted to all careers in which they could retain that dignity, Zanichelli proceeds:

Mi piacciono le donne colte, istruite; non ho alcun pregiudizio contro le donne letterate o scienziate; ma poiché credo che la donna debba sempre essere donna, sono anche d'opinione che la partecipazione alla vita pubblica non le si confaccia, perché servirebbe a snaturarla, aiutando la formazione di quel tipo antipatico e pervertito che è conosciuto sotto il nome di terzo sesso.⁸⁸

Although it is made clear that the quintessence of womanhood could be corrupted by political involvement, this quintessence itself remains veiled; rather than asserting that 'la donna debba sempre essere...' and inserting a clarifying set of adjectives or different nouns, Zanichelli proffers the circular 'la donna debba sempre essere donna'. The womanly woman is defined by what she is not: once 'snaturata' ['de-natured' – a powerful verb in Italian whose effect in this context might better be captured by the more specific English 'unsexed'], she becomes one of the 'terzo sesso', and the choice of 'pervertito' as a descriptor of this group suggests an intentional implication of lesbianism.⁸⁹

86 [Because woman has much higher missions]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 2.

⁸⁴ The third is Enrico Corradini's terse and unenlightening 'Sono antifemminista' ['I am an anti-feminist']. UFN, // voto alla donna, p. I.

⁸⁵ Paolo Lioy (1836 –1911) was a naturalist, author and politician.

⁸⁷ Domenico Zanichelli (1858 –1908) was a lawyer, lecturer and historian. See Luca Borsi, *Nazione*, *democrazia*, *Stato: Zanichelli* e *Arangio-Ruiz* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2009).

⁸⁸ [I like cultured, educated women; I have no prejudice against women of letters or of science; but since I believe that woman must always be woman, I am also of the opinion that participation in public life does not become her, because it would serve to de-nature her, aiding the formation of that objectionable and perverted type that is known by the name of the third sex.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁹ Discourses of female homosexuality in Italy at this time were heavily influenced by scientific or pseudo-scientific studies dating back to 1883, when Guglielmo Cantarono had published an internationally influential study of a lesbian woman in whom, he wrote, 'tutti gl'istinti muliebri [...] sono pervertiti o meglio sono invertiti' ['all female instincts [...] are perverted, or rather, are inverted']. (Cited in Daniela Danna, 'Beauty and the Beast: lesbians in literature and sexual science from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries' in Gary P. Cestaro (ed.), Queer Italia: same-sex desire in Italian literature and film (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 117-32 (p. 119)). Cesare Lombroso, who translated Richard von Krafft-Ebing's work on sexuality from the German, contributed notably to the thinking in this field, linking homosexuality and androgynous appearance with criminal tendencies. The association of the concept of a 'terzo sesso' with a borderland of sexual deviance, then, would have been a ready one. See also Chapter 8, p. 179, n. 268.

Zanichelli does provide a somewhat clearer picture of his ideal vision of womanhood when he suggests alternate means whereby disenfranchised women could influence society: primarily by raising their children as good patriots, or, if they had no children, by embracing 'social maternity' as educators and philanthropists. His response concludes with a vehement rejection of the opinion of those who believe woman 'inferiore all'uomo' [inferior to man] in nature and intelligence; this stance, to him, is 'destituta d'ogni fondamento e immorale' ['devoid of all foundation and immoral'].90 Thus, even this, the survey's most thorough explication of an anti-suffragist belief based on innate difference, is framed by defensive statements of support: for other freedoms for women, at the start, and for women's mental capacities as equivalent to those of men, at the end. Zanichelli uses these statements to legitimise his adherence to a belief in different spheres; it is indicative of a swiftly-progressing society (and, admittedly, of the feminist nature of the forum to which he was contributing) that he should deem this strategy of self-vindication necessary.

Zanichelli is alone of survey respondents in explicitly dreading the onslaught of a depraved and politically active 'terzo sesso', but several supporters of women's suffrage take deliberate steps to debunk such an image. Paolina Schiff,⁹¹ for instance, arguing for suffrage as a natural right, clarifies:

La donna non ha d'uopo di mascolinizzarsi e non lo deve, ma semplicemente umanizzarsi nella sua individualità femminile spogliandosi di quanto le tradizioni, l'oppressione millenaria ha sviluppato in lei di impulsiva femmina a spese della mentalità lucida, obbiettiva ed in uno amorevole. 92

The lexical detail here is interesting. The 'donna' with whom Schiff's paragraph begins has a laudable 'individualità femminile', then, yet is exhorted to leave behind a flighty double described as an 'impulsiva femmina'. The distinction drawn between 'donna' and 'femmina' suggests an attempt to rescue the 'donna' from the type of fate prescribed by Zanichelli; although she can still remain 'sempre donna', not becoming a masculinised member of the 'terzo sesso', she does not always have to be the vapid 'femmina' of tradition. If Zanichelli's ideal 'donna' can be more or less aligned with the tradition of the domestic angel and his 'terzo sesso' with that of woman as monster, Schiff's passage can be read as attempt to 'kill the angel and the monster', in Gilbert and Gubar's terms: 93 specifically,

⁹⁰ UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 8.

⁹¹ Paolina Schiff (1841–1926) was an educator and author, deeply committed to the socialist and emancipationist movements; she had been especially instrumental in establishing Milan's LTIF in the 1880s. See Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, p. 994; Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile, pp. 54-56.

⁹² [Woman has no need to masculinise herself and should not, but should simply humanise herself in her feminine individuality, casting off as much of the impulsive female as traditions, millennial oppression, have developed in her at the cost of the lucid, objective and altogether loving mindset.] UFN, *II voto alla donna*, pp. 56-57

⁹³ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar expand on Virginia Woolf's concept of the woman writer 'killing' the oppressive image of the angel in the house, arguing that in order to escape existing myths as to her identity she must also 'kill' the opposite image of the monstrous woman. See Gilbert and Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic*, p. 44.

the angelic 'donna' is unmasked as a mere 'femmina' and the masculinised monster is dismissed out of hand – leaving the human 'donna' to make for the ballot box with ('amorevole') femininity intact.

Carlotta Clerici⁹⁴ rejects three major anti-suffrage arguments in succession: firstly, she states that 'la politica non distoglierà la donna dalle occupazioni affidate a lei dalla natura';⁹⁵ secondly, that 'la politica non è una scienza misteriosa inaccessabile alla mente femminile';⁹⁶ and, finally, that

La politica non è un arcano pericoloso che (come il frutto proibito della leggenda antica) la donna non deve tentare di conoscere sotto pena di perdere la santa ingenuità, il fascino della grazia, i privilegi del sesso, il paradiso in terra. 97

In yoking these three contentions together (through the repetition of the initial 'La politica...'), Clerici ensures that her argument against the supposed unsexing of women by politics is made on the heels of reassuring tropes of both difference and equality; woman will not abandon the different roles given her by 'natura', but is mentally man's equal. Moreover, Clerici's eventual allusion to the figure of Eve, along with the careful dismissal of that story as a 'leggenda antica', is a stroke which taints antisuffragism with a connotation of over-zealous adherence to Church teachings. The pro-suffrage side is thus implicitly aligned with secularism, a setup which challenges and potentially undermines the prevailing pragmatic qualms concerning women's susceptibility to ecclesiastical influence; ⁹⁸ nothing is risked by the venture of women's suffrage but a fantastical and outmoded 'paradiso in terra'. This anti-clerical subtext arches back to connect with a pragmatic argument offered earlier in Clerici's response: that the government would pay more heed to educating enfranchised women, which would in turn allow these women to raise their children within a secular tradition.

Guglielmo Gambarotta points out, with gentle irony, that there will be no obligation on women to vote if they feel that this might threaten their femininity:

È lecito far osservare (per tagliar corto a ridicule disquisizioni sulla bellezza della missione della donna o, meglio, su ciò che nella missione della donna piace... agli uomini) che non siamo ancora arrivati al punto di pretendere – per le donne o per gli uomini – il voto obbligatorio. Di modo che non faranno uso del diritto di voto se non quelle donne che non temeranno di offuscare la loro femminilità innanzi agli occhi ammiratori di una parte della virilità filosofante. [...]

La grande rivoluzione sarà così avvenuta: [...] – senza che il mondo crolli o le donne cessino di essere donne (che sarebbe proprio una disgraziata fine del mondo) [...]

⁹⁴ On Carlotta Clerici, see Chapter 2, p. 32, n. 166.

⁹⁵ [politics will not distract woman from the occupations entrusted to her by nature]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 104.

^{96 [}politics is not a mysterious science inaccessible to the female mind]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 104.

⁹⁷ [Politics is not a dangerous mystery of which (like the forbidden fruit of the old legend) woman must not seek knowledge, under pain of losing her sacred naïveté, the charm of her grace, the privileges of her sex, the earthly paradise.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 104.

⁹⁸ These qualms are discussed later in the present chapter – see especially pp. 100-02.

C'è da scommettere difatti che le elettrici dell'avvenire non saranno meno carine delle loro madri, e che l'amore non diventerà un ricordo storico. 99

Gambarotta's response counters Zanichelli's especially closely: the same circular language is used by Gambarotta to assert that 'le donne [non] cessino di essere donne', and the fears implied in Zanichelli's reference to the 'terzo sesso' are assuaged by the reassurance that 'l'amore non diventerà un ricordo storico'.

A few other respondents take the line that some women fall outside the norms of their gender already, and that to these alone political rights should be afforded (thus preserving the value of 'difference' in the majority). Prof. Giuseppe Sergi¹⁰⁰ answers Yes to both parts of question I, and quotes from his recently published book¹⁰¹ to justify this:

Quali siano le donne che possono aspirare alla vita pubblica, si comprende da sè; non sarebbero quelle che dividono con l'uomo i lavori, cioè le contadine o le operaie, nubili o maritate; ma quelle che non hanno un'occupazione definita nella famiglia e specialmente le signore ricche e che possono permettersi il lusso di persone numerose a loro servizio personale e della casa. Se si dovesse ammettere per tutte, come avviene per l'uomo, il problema diventa più difficile e più astruso a risolvere. 102

Setting aside the inaccuracy of the idea that all Italian men were enfranchised, this argument seems to share some elements of that proposed by Giacinta Martini Marescotti and others: namely, that women of wealth and education should enjoy the vote. However, the key variable, for Sergi, is neither wealth nor education per se, but the extent to which women are free of existing occupations; only those women who neither work for a living *nor* have a clear role in the 'famiglia' are eligible.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ [It is legitimate to point out (to cut short ridiculous disquisitions on the beauty of woman's mission, or, rather, on what of woman's mission appeals... to men) that we have not yet reached the point of demanding – for women or for men – the obligatory vote. So that the only women who will make use of the right to vote will be those who have no fear that they will cloud their femininity before the admiring eyes of a section of philosophizing manhood. [...]

The great revolution will happen thus: [...] without the world crumbling or women ceasing to be women (which would indeed be a terrible end to the world) [...]

We may bet, in fact, that the women electors of the future will not be less pretty than their mothers, and that love will not become a historical memory.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 37-39.

Giuseppe Sergi (1841–1936) was a psychologist, anthropologist and lecturer. (For details of his studies of women and the conclusions drawn, see Gibson, 'On the insensitivity of women', pp. 15-20, pp. 30-31).

¹⁰¹ Giuseppe Sergi, Evoluzione umana (Turin: Bocca, 1903).

¹⁰² [It is obvious which are the women who may aspire to public life; they would not be those who share jobs with men, i.e. the peasant or working women, single or married; but those who do not have a defined occupation in the family, and especially ladies who are wealthy and may allow themselves the luxury of many people to serve them personally and in the home. If one had to allow it for all, as occurs for man, the problem becomes more difficult and abstruse to resolve.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 28.

¹⁰³ Interestingly, Sergi's subsequent reasoning suggests that he does not view even these favourable conditions as entirely legitimising women's entry into all areas of public life: 'Se una parte del sesso femminile può giungere ad occupare alcuni posti che erano destinati o creduti solo per l'uomo, non è a credere che la parte maschile possa sempre essere sostituita dalla femminile. Abbiamo veduto che naturalmente si trova una limitazione nella donna e questa limitazione è naturale perchè biologica.' [If a portion of the female sex can arrive at the

Another solution to the question of exceptional women is proposed by Filippo Crispolti, who argues that women should not be permitted to vote, but should be eligible for election:

Appunto perchè ammetto nelle donne le professioni virili, quantunque in modo strettamente eccezionale, io ammetto nei comuni e nello Stato la donna eleggibile. Gli eletti, anche in fatto di candidature umane, son sempre pochi. Non ammetto invece la donna elettrice. Non l'ammetto perchè elettrici sarebbero tutte o molte, e ciò altererebbe gli uffici normali della donna. [...] Hanno le donne in genere abbastanza ingegno per essere elettrici? No. Ma in questo mio no non c'è nulla che offenda nessuna donna, perchè l'ingegno, per essere elettori oggi, non l'abbiamo nemmeno mai. 104

Crispolti then goes off on something of a tangent, bemoaning the current state of Italian government and emphasising the need for reform. His final burst of rhetoric has echoes of that used by Zanichelli, in which (most) women are portrayed as too precious for the trials of political life:

Fare il radicale per ottener ciò [un programma di profonda riforma], lo capisco; ma farlo per addossare anche alle donne l'accusa d'incompetenza universale che già pesa su noi uomini, no. Fortunate le donne che non sono costrette dalle leggi a fare, come noi, mille e mille cose che ignorano!¹⁰⁵

Crispolti's view, unique in the survey responses, forms part of what Galeotti sees as a line of reasoning that would ultimately be adopted by Mussolini (in his early years of leadership), according to which political involvement could be accorded to the rare, exceptional women who, 'due to necessity, vocation, social work and so on – would have ended up renouncing part of their being as women, or who at any rate would have assumed roles and duties transcending those of their sex'. ¹⁰⁶ There is a thin line, however, between a transcendence of traditional roles that can be explained away as generous social maternity, and a transgression of them that can lead to the development of characteristics of the 'terzo sesso'.

occupation of some posts that were destined or believed to be for man alone, it should not be believed that the male can always be substituted by the female. We have seen that naturally one finds a limitation in woman and this limitation is natural because it is biological.] (UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 28). It remains unclear whether Sergi is proposing that a few (rich, unburdened) women may prove exceptions to their biology, or whether he simply feels that voting is not a sphere in which women's inevitable 'limitazione' will be particularly in evidence.

¹⁰⁴ [Precisely because I allow the virile professions for women, albeit in strictly exceptional fashion, I allow for the *electable* woman in the municipalities and in the State. The elected, even in terms of general human nominations, are always few. However, I do not allow for the woman voter. I do not allow for it because women electors would be all or many, and that would change women's normal offices. [...] Have women in general enough intellect to be voters? No. But in this no of mine there is nothing that offends any woman, because intellect is not something we have at all in those who are voters today.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 105-06.

¹⁰⁵ [Adopting radical measures so as to achieve that [a programme of deep reform], I understand; but doing it so as to saddle women, too, with the accusation of universal incompetence which already weighs on us men, no. Happy the women who are not, like us, forced by laws to do thousands and thousands of things they don't understand!] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 105-06.

¹⁰⁶ Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne, p. 128.

4.2.2.2 Difference as beneficial to politics and society

Pellizza di Volpedo¹⁰⁷ approves women's suffrage in principle and its gradual introduction in Italy on the grounds that

Sarebbe l'immissione nel corpo elettorale di una buona dose di sentimento ad equilibrio di una troppo fredda ragione, di un po' d'amore nel regno del calcolo utilitario. 108

[It would mean the influx into the electoral body of a good dose of sentiment to balance too-cold reason, of a little love into the realm of utilitarian calculation.]

This kind of argument, which presents qualities traditionally attributed to women, such as emotional warmth, as being of great potential benefit to the political system, is put forward by a handful of respondents. Of all the survey respondents, this group tends most towards flights of quasi-poetic language; it is also predominantly male.¹⁰⁹

One prime example is provided by Osvaldo Gnocchi Viani,¹¹⁰ who begins by establishing his support for women's suffrage on the basis of an equivalence that allows for difference:

Diverse, sì; inferiori, no: le facoltà dell'uomo e quelle della donna sono equivalenti e devono pesare ugualmente sulla bilancia dei destini umani.

From here, he builds a metaphor of women as rising floodwater:

Non se ne dubiti: [la donna] farà affluire nella società una più turgida ondata di sentimenti, di affettività e di altruismo, che varrà a contemperare più equamente la fiumana di razionalità gelida e di tornaconto egoistico, che diffonde oggi troppo spesso e intensamente l'uomo.

L'ondata femminile non sarà subito la piena ubertosa del Nilo?.... Abbiate pazienza; lo diventerà.

La fiumana maschile è sempre stata forse ed è sempre ora lavacro purificatore sulle zolle umane? 112

[Different, yes; inferior, no: men's faculties and women's are equivalent and should weigh equally on the scales of human destinies.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ Pellizza di Volpedo (1868–1907) was an artist, especially noted for his depictions of the problems of the poor. See Anna Maria Damigella, *Pellizza da Volpedo* (Florence: Giunti, 1999).

¹⁰⁸ UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 35.

However, one woman, Virginia Olper Monis, can also be classed here: she claims that once women gain the vote, they will renew political life 'come un soffio d'aria pura immesso in una gran sala rinchiusa e ammuffita, che rinfresca senza guastare' [like a breath of pure air let into a great room that is closed and musty, which refreshes without destroying]. (UFN, *II voto alla donna*, p. 68). Olper Monis (1856–1919) was an author and journalist, and was committed to various emancipationist causes, especially the campaign to legalise divorce. See Fiorenza Chiarot, *Una donna senza 'festa'*. *Vita e scritti di Virginia Olper Monis* (Portogruaro: Nuova dimensione, 2002).

Osvaldo Gnocchi Viani (1837–1917) was a historian and politician. He was instrumental in founding the workers' party, later the Socialist Party, and in 1901 helped establish Milan's Università Popolare. See Franco Della Peruta, Osvaldo Gnocchi Viani nella storia del movimento operaio e del socialismo (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1997).

Finally, this mystical floodwater is given (slightly) more specific form as a dissemination of the values of idealised maternity:

Possa la donna valersi anche del voto, per dare elaterio alla Maternità ancora rattrappita; per imperniare su essa, a poco a poco, la Famiglia rinnovata; per sviluppare della donna tutti i naturali attributi e tutta la potenza civile nella società; e vedremo prodigi.¹¹³

By linking women's potential societal influence with the effect of the Nile on its plains, Gnocchi Viani taps into powerful associations of fecundity while also, perhaps, evoking the mysteriously advanced civilisation of ancient Egypt as enabled by this 'ondata'. The allusion to a universally hallowed image of nature's fertility ushers in the lofty tone of the subsequent paragraph, with its capitalised 'Maternità' and 'Famiglia' – quasi-deities? – and its triple justifications ('per [...]; per [...]; per [...]') rhetorically building towards the final vague prophecy of future glory ('e vedremo prodigi').

Luigi Bossi's response incorporates a very similar metaphor used to somewhat different effect. Bossi also declares himself in favour of women's suffrage both in principle and in practice in Italy; although he begins his argument with a thoroughly equality-based assertion of the 'ingiustizia' ['injustice'] of denying the vote to half the human race, his emphasis moves swiftly to the potential benefits for society of women's specific contribution:

Nella donna poi dobbiamo considerare che abbiamo una grande forza, un grande elemento psichico e intellettuale, che, se usufruito opportunamente, in modo sommo contribuirà coll'altra metà dell'uman genere al progresso civile dei popoli. 114

Thus far, this seems a similar line of reasoning to Gnocchi Viani's, albeit less floridly expressed. However, Bossi proceeds not by expanding on the advantages of women's involvement, but by elaborating on the dangers arising from their exclusion:

Il non permettere ad essa di partecipare direttamente alla vita politica e amministrativa equivale a rinunciare a tale contributo [...]

E poichè nulla in natura si perde, così accade che parte di tali energie, che potrebbero spendersi per il bene della vita pubblica, vengono a svolgersi o negativamente nell'ozio, nell'inerzia, o parassitariamente in una vita artificiosa e di lusso [...] o, non meno

¹¹² [Do not doubt it: woman will cause a swelling wave of emotions, affectivity and altruism to pour into society, which will serve to more evenly counter the deluge of icy rationality and selfish profit that today man spreads too often and too thoroughly.

Will not the female wave immediately be the fertile flood of the Nile?Have patience: it will become so. Has the male deluge perhaps always been, and is it always now, a purifying basin for human clay?] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 45-46.

[[]Let woman avail also of the vote, so as to give a stimulant to still-numb Maternity; to base upon Maternity, little by little, the renewed Family; to develop in woman all her natural attributes and all her civic power in society; and we shall see wonders.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 45-46.

[[]In woman, then, we must consider that we have a great strength, a great psychic and intellectual element, which, if used advisedly, will contribute in the highest way, along with the other half of humankind, to the civilised progress of peoples.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 47.

dannosamente, nella superstizione e nel pietismo religioso nemico d'ogni progresso scientifico e, se settario come il clericale, fatale al progresso civile. [...]

Il torrente che scende irruente dalla montagna giungendo al piano sradica, invade, distrugge se non è disciplinato, incanalato; muove le industrie, irriga, porta gran contingente di utilità se è opportunamente usufruito.

This use of flood imagery goes beyond Gnocchi Viani's in that it explicitly acknowledges the dual possibilities inherent in any comparison with natural forces; imagined as a mountain torrent, Bossi's women can harm or help, but are likely to accomplish either with considerable power. Although a certain innate difference seems to be assumed (in the reference to the 'elemento psichico e intellettuale'), Bossi does not dwell on this. Indeed, in dubbing women's allegiance to superstition and religion an ill effect of their exclusion from public involvement (in another section of his response, he blames anti-suffragists for pushing women ever deeper 'nel baratro di tali psicopatie'), 116 he seems to reject, at least up to a point, the notion of inherently different predispositions between the genders. There are no overt allusions here to fertility or maternity, and indeed the first positive effect of the river of women is cited as that of spurring on industry rather than enriching domestic life.

Later in Bossi's response, maternity does emerge as crucial, but is presented more as a practical sphere in which women's exploitation is most demonstrable than as a sacred one through which women can heal society's ills:

Per comprendere d'altronde quanto rusticana sia la cavalleria mascolina 117 e come l'uomo sappia usare e abusare dei suoi poteri, bisognerebbe assistere quotidianamente alle intime macabre pene a cui assistiamo noi ostetrici. 118

As an obstetrician, Bossi's perspective on birth contrasts markedly from that of male respondents like Gnocchi Viani; he does not subscribe to their nebulous reverence, but views the hardship of the process (and, often, the context) as grounds for extending women's political rights.

[[]Refusing to permit her to participate *directly* in political and municipal life is equivalent to rejecting that contribution [...]

And since nothing in nature is wasted, thus it happens that some of these energies, which could expend themselves for the benefit of public life, come to develop either negatively, in idleness, in inertia, or parasitically, in a life of artifice and luxury [...], or, not less damagingly, in the superstition and religious pietism that is inimical to all scientific progress and, if sectarian like the clerical variety, fatal to civic progress. [...]

The torrent that comes gushing down from the mountain and reaches the plain uproots, invades, and destroys if it is not disciplined, channelled; it moves industries, irrigates, and offers a great amount of utility if it is advisedly used.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 47-48.

[[]into the chasm of such psychopathies]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 48.

This phrase is a reference to *Cavelleria Rusticana* [Rustic Chivalry], a short story and later play by Verga, which was adapted as an opera by Pietro Mascagni. The opera had its premiere in Rome in 1890. The story follows a young man, Turiddu, who has seduced and abandoned a girl, Santuzza. In Verga's original, Santuzza is left pregnant and is afraid that her brothers will kill her if they find out.

[[]Besides, to understand just how rustic is masculine chivalry and how man knows how to use and abuse his powers, one would have to be present daily at the intimate, macabre pains at which we obstetricians are present.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 48.

More specific predictions as to how women's 'difference' will aid society vary somewhat. The veteran social reform worker Alessandrina Ravizza, 119 advocating the immediate introduction of women's suffrage, envisions it as ushering in an era of new enthusiasm and social conscience:

Spero dunque, io, che sto per finire la mia esistenza, che le donne, nuove pioniere, porteranno una corrente sana vivificatrice, ch'esse salveranno l'organismo sociale, ora rovinato dall'apatia, dalla burocrazia, che giovani forze di fede, d'entusiasmo si risveglieranno e sostituiranno alla «routine» di azioni vuote di pensieri delle attività feconde; che colla loro intuizione, esse sapranno fare davvero il bene, il bene! Credo fermamente che da esse verrà una completa rigenerazione, e saluto quest'alba nuova, che porterà all'umanità delle nuove fedi, e delle più elette forme di governo. ¹²⁰

It is not fully clear whether Ravizza sees women's energising potential as being due to their inherent difference or their historically different circumstances; however, her mention of their 'intuizione', as well as the choice of vocabulary closely tied to maternity ('una corrente sana vivificatrice' ['a healthy life-giving current']; 'attività feconde' ['productive activities']; 'rigenerazione' ['regeneration']) suggests that she believes to some degree in the former.

Prof. Amato Amati,¹²¹ also arguing for women's suffrage as a means of social regeneration, focuses on how skills of 'good housekeeping' might apply in the political community, and gives a concrete example from New Zealand:

la donna dovrebbe cooperare coll'uomo al buon governo della famiglia e della comunità, specialmente in quei rami per i quali è dotata di speciali attitudini, quali sono quelli che richiedono ordine, economia, sentimento. La sua parola e la sua opera hanno certamente un valore assai notevole nelle questioni riguardanti le spese e l'erogazione della pecunia, in quelle della beneficenza [...] di correzione morale [...], di educazione e di istruzione popolare [...], di igiene e temperanza, (come è provato nella Nuova Zelanda, dove la donna, eletta, ha combattuto con buon successo l'alcoolismo) ed in altre. 122

¹¹⁹ Alessandrina Ravizza (1846 – 1915) was of Russian origin. As well as being committed to the principles of feminism and socialism, she was an especially prolific exponent of the kind of activity variously thought of as 'practical feminism' or as 'social maternity'. Among the many initiatives launched or supported by her were a kitchen for those who were poor and sick, a free medical service, and a campaign to improve the conditions of prostitutes' lives. (Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, pp. 716-17; Scaramuzza, La santa e la spudorata; Wania Mazzoni, 'Alessandrina Ravizza: la contessa ribelle' in Fabio Bertini (ed.), L'emancipazione: diritti e doveri. Conferenze livornesi sul giornalismo femminile tra Ottocento e Novecento (Florence: Centro editoriale toscano, 2004), pp. 105-27)).

¹²⁰ [I hope therefore, I who am soon to end my existence, that women, new pioneers, will bring a healthy lifegiving current, that they will rescue the social organism, presently ruined by apathy, by bureaucracy, that young forces of faith, of enthusiasm will awaken and replace the "routine" of actions empty of thought with productive activities; that with their intuition, they will know how to really do good, good! I firmly believe that from then will come a complete regeneration, and I salute this new dawn, which will bring humanity new faiths, and more elect forms of government.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 65.

Amato Amati (1831-1904) had been a nationalist fighter, then a prolific historian and geographer. His response was published posthumously by Ersilia Majno. See Renzo De Felice, 'Amati, Amato' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 2 (1960), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/amato-amati_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 9 September 2013.

¹²² [woman should cooperate with man in the good management of the family and of the community, especially in those branches for which she is gifted with special aptitudes, which are those that require order, economy,

Carlotta Clerici takes a similar argument slightly further: having specified that woman's political strength will be 'quello spirito di altruismo che fu trasfuso in lei colle aspirazioni al cielo',¹²³ she specifies that

oppressa e conoscitrice dei dolori degli oppressi, [la donna] s'adopererà perchè tali dolori siano ad altri risparmiati – la sua voce sorgerà sempre a difesa dei deboli, dei vinti; varrà a mitigare l'asprezza degli attuali ordinamenti sociali, a frenare ogni tentativo di violenza. 124

Two points here are taken up individually in other answers. Firstly, a variation on Clerici's portrayal of women as instinctive defenders of the weak is provided by respondents who consider that women need political power so as to safeguard the rights of children and families. Larissa Pini's 125 response exemplifies this; although basing her argument on the principle of equality, she also opines that

la donna sola, anche se non perfettamente evoluta nel pensiero, ribellandosi col suo buon senso e col suo sentimento a tutto ciò che di inumano hanno finora votato gli uomini, saprà sopratutto volere salvaguardati i diritti del fanciullo. 126

Zaccaria Treves proposes a similar view, but explicitly blames men's less welfare-centred priorities on their traditional social roles rather than on innate differences:

l'intervento diretto del voto delle mogli e delle madri potrebbe essere grandemente utile, perchè esse molto spesso apprezzano l'urgenza e l'indole dei provvedimenti che ad alta voce reclamano la salute, l'ordine e la dignità della famiglia, più da vicino che non l'uomo completamente assorbito dal turbinio degli affari, o dall'orario inesorabile della fabbrica, o distratto dalle cattive abitudini. 127

Secondly, Clerici's idea that women's influence would 'frenare ogni tentativo di violenza' is developed by several respondents. Giulia Ernesta Marangoni Pelizza, 128 although she does not believe Italy quite

and feeling. Her words and her work certainly have a most notable value in questions regarding expenses and the allocation of money, in those of charity [...] of moral correction [...], of development and mass education [...], of hygiene and temperance, (as is shown in New Zealand, where woman, elected, has combated alcoholism with considerable success) and in other questions.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 8-9.

¹²³ [that spirit of altruism which was transfused to her along with sky-high aspirations]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 103.

¹²⁴ [oppressed and experienced in the sorrows of the oppressed, woman will do her utmost to ensure that others are spared such sorrows – her voice will always rise in defence of the weak, the vanquished; it will serve to mitigate the harshness of present social systems, to curb every attempt at violence.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 103.

¹²⁵ Larissa Pini (Boschetti) was Ersilia Majno's close confidante and assistant in organising the Unione Femminile (Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, p. 226; p. 870).

[[]woman alone, even if her thinking has not perfectly developed, will know, rebelling with her good sense and feeling against all the inhuman things for which men have voted until now, that she wants the rights of the child safeguarded above all.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 83.

^{127 [}the direct intervention of the vote of wives and mothers could be hugely useful, because they very often appreciate the urgency and nature of provisions that loudly demand health, order and the dignity of the family more closely than man, who is completely absorbed in the whirlwind of business, or the inexorable schedule of the factory, or else distracted by bad habits.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 93.

¹²⁸ Usually known as Ernesta Marangoni Pelizza (1876-1972), a chemist and salonnière. (Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, p. 687).

ready for women's suffrage (predicting that France and England will be the first European countries to implement it), hopes that this may soon change and that subsequently

forse comincerà da quel giorno una nuova storia d'Italia; meno militaresca, più sostanzialmente civile. 129

This prediction of women's pacifism is also implicit in Robert Michels' argument; having given a hypothetical declaration of war on China as one scenario in which voteless women would have no say but would suffer, he affirms his confidence in women's superior regard for the value of human life:

Sono convinto che la donna possiede tutta una serie di qualità che all'uomo mancano, e che, quindi, la vita politica della nazione possa avvantaggiarsi per molti lati. Specie credo, che una partecipazione delle donne al potere politico debba ea ipsa re avere come conseguenza che la vita umana venga considerata più sacra che non la si consideri adesso. ¹³⁰

Michels' view may be contrasted with that of Countess Evelina Martinengo-Cesaresco, ¹³¹ who sees only one pragmatic difficulty with granting women the right to vote:

Ma col suffragio universale o molto esteso si avrebbero in vari paesi più elettrici che elettori. Le elettrici potrebbero forzare il governo a fare la guerra alla quale esse non prenderebbero parte. Questo non sarebbe giusto. 132

As with the question of gradualist versus socialist approaches to the issue of the franchise, that of interventionism versus pacifism was to cause irreparable fissures in the suffrage movement in subsequent years – provoked firstly by the 1911 war in Libya, and then by World War One. Speaking of the first split, in which the interventionist faction was led by Teresa Labriola, Buttafuoco comments that 'thus [...]that pacifist tradition that had been intrinsic, one might say, to the struggles for female emancipation, was abandoned'.¹³³ Responses to the survey generally reflect an existing association of feminism and pacifism, but Martinengo-Cesaresco's contribution is a reminder that, even at this early stage in the debate, that link was not universally assumed.

¹²⁹ [perhaps from that day a new history of Italy will begin, less military, more solidly civil.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 58.

¹³⁰ [I am convinced that woman possesses a whole series of qualities that man lacks, and that, therefore, the political life of the nation may profit on many sides. In particular, I believe that women's participation in political power must, ea ipsa re, have the consequence that human life is considered more sacred than it is considered at present.] On Michels, see pp. 63-64, n. 32.

UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 95.

Evelina Martinengo-Cesaresco (1852–1931) was of British birth – her maiden name being Carrington – and was a writer. Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 271-72.

¹³² [But with universal or greatly extended suffrage there would, in various countries, be more women voters than men voters. The women voters could force the government to declare a war in which they [the women] would not take part. This would not be fair.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 11.

¹³³ Buttafuoco, 'Straniere in patria', p. 116.

4.2.2.3 Difference as requiring a different system

Just one response proposes that, although suffrage may be a necessary intermediary stage in women's involvement in public life, the political system is ultimately incompatible with their 'different' modes of operating. Laura Garsin is the proponent of this minority view:

Le circostanze attuali c'impongono [...] la conquista del diritto di voto [...] In questa lotta, presto o tardi, riusciremo vincitrici,... purtroppo!

Sento, infatti, che a noi non manca solamente l'educazione necessaria per prender parte alla vita sociale esterna, ma ch'essa non è fatta per noi nè ci appagherà mai; sento che, almeno momentaneamente, falserà l'intelligenza nostra e la distoglierà dalla mèta ideale verso la quale è avviata. Per quanto possa essere transitoriamente necessaria un'aperta ingerenza della donna nella vita pubblica, sento che la sua influenza sociale sarà più grande, più sicura, più efficace quando (tra secoli?) potrà finalmente ridiventare indiretta, quando, cioè, la donna, non più costretta ad esercitare professioni virili ed a lottare coll'uomo per potenza di ragionamento e altezza di genio inventivo, potrà pienamente manifestare in sè l'armonia delle più diverse facoltà psichiche nella serena purezza degli affetti. 134

There seem to be some distinct pre-echoes here of the discourses of difference that would come to play such a key role in second-wave Italian feminism. For instance, Luisa Muraro writes of women's lack of interest in the 'messe in scena' [staged set-ups] that accompany men's fascination with questions of power. Rather than seeking to engage more women in politics as it currently exists, she is intrigued by what will happen when 'we start to think that there a female absence that does not depend so much on possible exclusions, but rather responds to a wish not to be there'. While Muraro advocates a separatist approach, Adriana Cavarero seems to posit the possibility of women developing a new political language that might work for people more generally, but that would constitute a radical revision of 'the entire Western tradition', in which 'politics never has anything to do with the *who*, because it concerns itself instead with the *what* [...] Politics never looks its subjects in the face'. Such difference-based approaches have carved out a privileged space in the landscape of recent Italian feminism (although, as Cavarero points out, they have often been unpopular with English-speaking feminists for their perceived essentialism). In the context of the early twentieth

¹³⁴ [Present circumstances impose on us [...] the conquest of the right to vote [...] In this battle, sooner or later, we will emerge victors,... unfortunately!

I feel, indeed, that we not only lack the education to take part in external social life, but that it is not made for us and will never satisfy us; I feel that, at least momentarily, it will distort our intelligence and distract [that intelligence] from the ideal purpose towards which it is directed. However much an open intrusion of woman into public life may be temporarily necessary, I feel that her social influence will be greater, surer, more effective when (in centuries?) it can at last become indirect again, when woman, that is, no longer forced to carry out manly jobs and to struggle with man over the power of reason and the height of inventive genius, can fully manifest in herself the harmony of the most diverse psychic faculties in the calm purity of the affections.] UFN, II voto alla donna, pp. 69-70.

¹³⁵ Muraro, 'Oltre l'uguaglianza', p. 109; p. 118.

¹³⁶ Cavarero, 'Who engenders politics?', p. 98.

¹³⁷ 'Any Italian feminist espousing the theory of sexual difference, when participating in a meeting with English-speaking feminists, knows that if she does not pronounce the magic words "multiple subjectivity," she will

century, however, Laura Garsin's vision is unusual for its blending of traditionally 'different' qualities – 'l'armonia delle più diverse facoltà psichiche nella serena purezza degli affetti' – with the radical vision of direct political involvement as a temporary and tedious necessity. 138

4.2.2.4 Female superiority

Responses endorsing suffrage on the grounds that women, rather than being equal to men, are superior to them (a sweeping argument distinct from the pragmatic, class-based one discussed earlier that held educated women superior to uneducated men) are few and generally undeveloped. There seems a certain self-conscious chivalry in Giustino Fortunato's words: 139

Perchè credo la donna italiana più savia, più equanime, più retta dei signori uomini. Sinceramente, così. 140

Chivalry gives way to mild irritation when a woman, Maria Mariangeli, 141 argues for superiority:

Perchè in tutte le cose della vita la donna ha mostrato sempre di possedere maggiore buon senso dell'uomo. 142

However, both these responses may have been intended to function more as swipes at (political) men than as paeans to women. There is a sense in which the deployment of women's alleged superiority for this purpose – especially when done in conjunction with Fortunato's sarcastic 'signori uomini' and emphatic reiteration ('Sinceramente, così') may entail a certain complicity in the notion that in an ideal world, men's superiority would be unassailable.

probably be attacked as an across-the-board antiquated, European, essentialist, metaphysical thinker'. Cavarero, 'Who engenders politics?', p. 89.

¹³⁸ Some comparisons may perhaps be drawn with the unusual anti-suffragism of the British journal *The Freewoman*, in which Teresa Billington-Greig, once a committed suffragist, would declare in 1911 that 'If government exists, women are of course entitled to share in it. Their right is not the question at issue here. It is granted. The question at issue is whether it is worth while, whether some other movement outside politics, independent of the governing machine, would not provide a surer and a speedier way to full human liberty.' (Teresa Billington-Greig, *The Freewoman*, 21 December 1911, p. 86. Cited in Lucy Delap, "Philosophical vacuity and political ineptitude": *The Freewoman*'s critique of the suffrage movement in *Women's History Review*, 11:4 (2002), pp. 613-30 (p. 622)). However, as the anarchist ideology of *The Freewoman* decried all use of the rhetoric of 'difference', both by more typical anti-suffragists (arguing that women should remain in their sphere) and by suffragists (presenting the state as woman's sphere writ large), Laura Garsin's vision certainly does not overlap fully with this approach.

¹³⁹ Giustino Fortunato (1848–1932) was a right-leaning MP with a particular interest in the problems of the south of Italy. See Maurizio Griffo, 'Fortunato, Giustino' in Dizionario biografico degli italiani, 49 (1997), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giustino-fortunato_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 9 September 2013.

¹⁴⁰ [Because I believe the Italian woman wiser, more impartial, more upright than the gentlemen. I honestly do.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ Unidentified

¹⁴² [Because in all things in life, woman has always shown she possessed more common sense than man.] *Il voto alla donna*, p. 90.

Unlike Fortunato and Mariangeli, Robert Michels alludes to the possible superior social value of women as part of a lengthy reasoning process, and bases his argument on the relative weights of motherhood and military service within society. Since Michels considers military service a "dovere" brutale', which could and should be abandoned entirely in 'una nazione veramente civile, e circondata da altre nazioni civili', ¹⁴³ his verdict is predictable:

E poi, anche se questo dovere esistesse 'de jure umano', bisogna pure convenire che la donna compie dei doveri oltremodo più importanti del servizio militare, cioè quelli della continuazione e dell'allevamento della specie mediante il parto e l'allattamento. Da questo punto di vista, per quanto siano naturalmente indispensabili tutt'e due i sessi, mi pare che la femmina possa vantare una *importanza sociale maggiore* dello stesso maschio. 144

Michels, it may be recalled, also uses arguments based on the pragmatic political effects of women's difference, specifically what he anticipates as their pacifist nature. His rebuttal of the popular argument that women could not vote or be considered citizens because they did not fight – an argument which, interestingly, is almost entirely absent in its original form in survey responses He differs from the typical feminist rebuttal which would most famously be condensed by Anna Kuliscioff as 'se non fanno il soldato [...] fanno i soldati'. Michels opposes childbearing to arms-bearing not because the former produces new men to do the latter, but as an entirely separate and more worthwhile endeavour. Precisely because he does not draw a direct relation between the two, his argument can push past women's equivalence to the more mystical terrain of female superiority – a rhetorical strategy that gains impact due to his cluster of carefully placed 'motherhood' words ('continuazione'/ 'allevamento', 'parto'/ 'allattamento').

4.3 The principle-pragmatism axis

In examining the thematic relationships between principle and pragmatism in survey responses, I firstly consider the arguments which allow for the two to function in tandem (many of which have already been discussed in the above section on the equality-difference axis). I then move to discuss various ways in which, rather than complementing each other, principle and pragmatism can create tensions in respondents' views.

¹⁴³ [brutal 'duty']; [a truly civilised nation, surrounded by other civilised nations]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 94.

[[]And then, even if this duty existed 'de jure humano', one must still agree that woman performs duties that are far more important than military service, i.e. those of perpetuating and nurturing the species through giving birth and nursing. From this point of view, as much as both the sexes may naturally be indispensable, it seems to me that the female may boast a greater social importance than the male himself.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 94.

¹⁴⁵ See p. 89 above.

¹⁴⁶ An exception is the already-cited response of Evelina Martinengo-Cesaresco, who is concerned that women could vote for wars in which they would not fight.

¹⁴⁷ This pun is roughly translatable as: [if they do not turn into soldiers [...] they turn out soldiers]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 11. See also Chapter 7, pp. 164.

4.3.1 Principle and pragmatism as complementary

Among the arguments considered in the analysis of the equality-difference axis are various instances of principled and pragmatic approaches to the suffrage question working in tandem. In particular, prosuffrage reasoning founded on the principle of equality is frequently coupled with perceived pragmatic benefits, e.g. women's votes as safeguarding women's rights or other aspects of social welfare; alternately, the equality principle can be embedded in pragmatism when it is stated in tangible terms of taxes and/or educational or foreign policy decisions. A principle of equality or equivalence may also be used to contain and frame a pro-suffrage difference-based argument, which tends to be more inherently pragmatic (difference is presented as positive because of anticipated consequences, whether these are of the vaguer 'flood of empathy' variety or the more specific kind concerning social regeneration, protection of children's rights or pacifist policies).

One pragmatic pro-suffrage argument has not yet been dealt with, as it focuses neither on women's equality nor their difference but instead emphasises men's contentment in their relationships with women. It is considered in the following subsection.

4.3.1.1 Making worthy companions for men

A small number of suffrage supporters emphasise men's enhanced domestic contentment as a reason to give women the vote. As with many other pragmatic arguments, this works well when coupled with a reference to the principle of justice. Rina Faccio (who had not yet adopted the pen name of Sibilla Aleramo)¹⁴⁸ is among the proponents of this view. Having begun her argument with the almost *de rigueur* statement of men's and women's equality, she goes on to explain the advantages, for men, of having an enfranchised partner:

Il voto sarà come un segno visibile del loro dissidio, del loro dislivello, per esprimermi chiaramente, che gli farà considerare gravemente se egli abbia al fianco un essere degno o suscettibile di divenirlo, o se debba proprio risolversi nel suo progresso a lasciarla in basso per esser libero di ascendere.

Quanto tempo perde oggi l'uomo superiore nel tirar la sua donna, a cui non ha dato basi di coltura, a rimorchio, quando pure ci riesce e non rimane sopraffatto nello sforzo! Quanti infelici, in periodi recenti e al dì d'oggi, esempio Leopardi, per non essere stati compresi dalla donna!

 $^{^{148}}$ Rina Faccio/ Sibilla Aleramo (1876 – 1960) was a journalist and writer of autobiographical fiction and poetry. In the early years of the twentieth century, she was very involved with emancipation and social reform movements, under the guidance of Alessandrina Ravizza. See also Chapter 9.

Quando la donna sarà chiamata a parte di tutta coltura, di tutte le esplicazioni civili e sociali che le permettano di divenire, di progredire, di diventar vera collaboratrice dell'uomo, tutto ciò sarà chiarito.¹⁴⁹

While this point constitutes the bulk of Rina Faccio's response, Maria Rygier works a similar argument into her much longer answer, which touches on many of the major discourses of difference, equality, principle and pragmatism, but builds towards the notion of worthy companions as a final point:

Non è anzitutto interesse degli stessi uomini, di aver madri e spose intelligenti, di non dover consumare tante forze nell'ingrata lotta con una donna, che per simpatie, per principî, sembra appartenere ad un'altra epoca, che non capisce e spesso teme le idee di suo marito o di suo figlio?

[...] Date alla donna il voto [...] e ne avrete una compagna e un'amica, un appoggio nelle ore meste, una lavoratrice instancabile; ed avrete madri, spose e figlie degne di voi [...] e mai vi verrà meno il dolce e tenero affetto che nasce dalla comunanza dei pensieri e degli scopi. 150

The language here – portraying the ideal woman as an 'appoggio', a 'lavoratrice instancabile', yet 'degna' of man – is reminiscent of the Biblical figure of Eve as she is first introduced, created for man as 'adiutorium similem sui', according to the Vulgate edition that would have been read in Italy at the time. It is possible to read Rygier's account as presenting suffrage as a means to remedying a societal 'fall' and returning to a natural, utopian condition of egalitarianism – although, notably, she does not use overtly religious language in making this suggestion, a choice which may be contrasted with Carlotta Clerici's explicit use (cited above) of 'il paradiso in terra' to represent the false, antifeminist delusion of women's ignorance/innocence as idyllic.

4.3.2 Principle and pragmatism clashing

¹⁴⁹ [The vote will be like a visible sign of the rift between them, of their disparity, to make myself clear, which will make him seriously consider whether he has at his side a worthy being or [someone] capable of becoming so, or if, as he goes forward, he must really resolve to leave her low so that he may be free to ascend.

How much time today does the superior man lose in towing his wife, to whom he has given no cultural grounding, behind him, that is when he can manage it and is not overwhelmed by the effort! How many men, in recent times and today, like Leopardi, have been unhappy due to not being understood by woman!

When woman is called to participate in the whole of culture, in all the civic and social tasks that will allow her to transform, to progress, to become man's true partner, all this will be cleared up.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ [Is it not above all in the interest of men themselves to have intelligent wives and mothers, not to have to spend so much effort in thankless conflict with a woman who, in sympathies [and] principles, seems to belong to another era, who does not understand and often fears the ideas of her husband or son?

^[...] Give woman the vote [...] and you will have in her a companion and a friend, a support in the hours of sadness, a tireless worker, and you will have mothers, wives and daughters worthy of you [...] and you will never go without the sweet and tender affection which is born from the communion of thoughts and ambitions.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 87-88.

¹⁵¹ Genesis 2:18. A Papal ban on vernacular versions of the Bible was in place at this time.

Tension between principle and pragmatism undercuts a striking number of responses, to the effect that IA is answered in the affirmative and IB is answered either negatively or with greater circumspection. By far the most common reason given for this kind of answer concerns fear of women's reactionary politics; while the principle of equality/equivalence may also be present in these responses, as may the concept of innate difference as potentially advantageous, respondents' preoccupation is with a second form of difference, not made up of qualities universally intrinsic to women, but of ones developed due to the particular conditions of Italian women in the early twentieth century.

The response of Elisa Norsa Guerrieri¹⁵² (who answers Yes to IA and No to IB) is a good example of how intricately pragmatic concerns could be woven as counter-threads into essentially pro-suffrage arguments; she begins by upholding not only the principle but also the practical necessity, for women, of equality.¹⁵³ She goes on, however, to defend her negative answer to IB with one of the neatest summaries given of the reasons for which women's suffrage might, at that time, be 'pericoloso' ['dangerous'] in Italy:

In molte regioni italiane la donna è ancora soggetta al triplice giogo dell'ignoranza, della superstizione religiosa e della tirannia maschile. Non sa ancora pensare e molto meno volere. [...]

Credo quindi che la sua compartecipazione alla vita pubblica non porterebbe, presentemente, alcun vantaggio sociale. 154

Despite the emphatic egalitarianism of Guerrieri's concept of gender (her outright rejection of relevant differences in 'biologia' is rare in survey responses), her pragmatism rules that although the vote *should* be a useful means of safeguarding women's rights, the Italian women of the time would be unable to use their vote to help anyone, including themselves.

¹⁵² Elisa Norsa Guerrieri/ Gurrieri was a scientist (she had graduated with honours in mathematics and science from the University of Bologna in 1894), and was committed to several emancipationist causes. (See Axel Körner, *Politics of culture in Liberal Italy: from unity to Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 75-76; Miriam Focaccia, 'Norsa, Elisa' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 78 (2013), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elisa-norsa (Dizionario Biografico)/ on 25 March 2014.

¹⁵³ 'Sono convinta che si debba, *in massima*, riconoscere il diritto di *voto* amministrativo e politico alle donne perchè non vi ha nulla nella loro biologia che le dimostri virtualmente inette a questa funzione.

Praticamente poi parmi il solo mezzo per ottenere che tutte quelle leggi che ora rappresentano un privilegio sessuale si trasformino in modo da considerare il solo essere umano, senza distinzione di sesso.'

[[]I am convinced that one should, in principle, recognise women's right to the municipal and political vote because there is nothing in their biology that shows them potentially inept at this task.

In practice, then, it seems to me the only means of ensuring that all those laws which now represent a sex privilege may be transformed so as to consider only the human being, without distinction of sex.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 61-62.

[[]In many Italian regions woman is still subject to the triple yoke of ignorance, of religious superstition and of male tyranny. She does not yet know how to think, much less to want things [...]

I believe then that her participation in public life would not, at present, bring any social advantage.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 61-62.

The strands of the 'triplice giogo' conceptualised by Guerrieri are dissected with varying emphases by respondents in this category. I will now deal with each strand in turn, examining how worried respondents present it and how other respondents may rebut these concerns.

4.3.2.1 'Ignoranza'

The problem of 'ignoranza, in a sense, encompasses the other more specific strands of this yoke. It is a problem most frequently discussed using the concept of 'coscienza'/'incoscienza'. For Rosa Jacobacci, for instance, 'coscienza' is the sole determining variable of whether or not women should be voters:

In massima ritengo che la donna cosciente abbia diritto al voto tanto amministrativo quanto politico.

In quanto all'opportunità che le venga riconosciuto attualmente questo diritto, non ne sono altrettanto sicuro, perchè mi pare che la grande maggioranza delle donne non sia atta ad emettere detto voto con vera coscienza. 157

Jacobacci goes on to name the feminist movement as a mechanism for change:

Sono però convinta che il movimento femminista [...] con l'estendersi rialzerà il livello generale della coscienza e della dignità nella donna, ed allora questa si sentirà forte e preparata all'adempimento dei più elevati doveri. 158

However, most respondents who are preoccupied with Italian women's lack of 'coscienza' prescribe the more generic remedy of better education for women; Ida Baccini¹⁵⁹ offers a widely representative version of this argument:

Per il voto politico, penso che le donne non conoscano ancora che cosa la politica sia; sicchè, prima di concederlo, è necessaria tutta una educazione, e un'educazione seria e profonda. 160

Ida Cammeo¹⁶¹ sums up this particular pragmatic argument neatly with a proverbial saying: "che le case non si cominciano dal tetto".¹⁶²

These terms are difficult to translate satisfactorily in this context; possible solutions are 'consciousness'/'unconsciousness' and 'awareness'/'unawareness'.

¹⁵⁶ Unidentified.

¹⁵⁷ [In principle I hold that the conscious woman has the right to both the municipal and the political vote.

As for the appropriateness of recognising her right to it at present, I am not at all sure about it, because it seems to me that the great majority of women would not yet be able to deliver that same vote with true consciousness.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p.68.

¹⁵⁸ [I am however convinced that the feminist movement [...], as it spreads itself, will raise the general level of woman's consciousness and dignity, and she will then feel strong and ready to fulfil higher duties.] UFN, *II voto alla donna*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁵⁹ Ida Baccini (1850 –1911) was an educator, writer (especially for children), and editor, post-1984, of the journal *Cordelia*. De Giorgio, *Le italiane*, especially pp. 384-85.

¹⁶⁰ [As for the political vote, I think that women do not yet know what politics is; so, before granting it, a whole education is necessary, and an education that is serious and deep.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 90.

Arguments rebutting the objection of women's ignorance may rely on principle as overriding pragmatic qualms, as in the case of Angiolo Cabrini, 163 who distances himself scornfully from

quegli allegri liberali i quali – mentre teoricamente sono per il suffragio alle donne – in pratica si schermiscono con dei se e dei *ma*, affacciando le solite stupide obbiezioni onde i valantuomini oppugnano il suffragio universale: il *babau clericale*, *l'incoscienza* e via dicendo. ¹⁶⁴

Guglielmo Gambarotta begins with an indictment similar to Cabrini's, condemning any distinction between countries where the suffrage question is concerned as 'arte maliziosa' ['wicked art'], then dismisses pragmatists' fears as relatively insignificant as well as immoral:

lo affronterei volentieri il pericolo di un quarto d'ora di dominio dei preti pur di vedere le donne d'Italia dibattere la politica nelle aule elettorali [...] perché la mia sicurezza nei destini della Libertà è così tranquilla che l'eventuale quarto d'ora di dominio politico dei preti mi fa pensare (ammetto) alla probabilità di un ritardo, nel divenire della Libertà; non al pericolo di una sconfitta. Ed il tempo conta così poco, nella secolare, faticosa conquista, se il ritardo può fecondare una vittoria più solida, più completa! 165

Gambarotta's view of a brief period of reactionary politics as probable but not devastating is shared by several respondents. A couple of these, however, take the argument one step further by declaring that such a development would teach anti-feminist men a lesson. There is a definite sense of 'serve them right' about Maria Verdun Barberis' 166 statement that reaction due to women's ignorance

servirà a persuadere gli avversari dello sbaglio loro d'aver così trascurato chi poteva essere d'utilità, e non già d'inciampo al progresso. 167

Luigi Majno 168 makes a similarly threatening prophecy in veiled terms:

¹⁶¹ Ida Cammeo was the mother of Bice Cammeo, a stalwart of the *Unione Femminile*. See Patrizia Guarnieri, 'Tra Milano e Firenze: Bice Cammeo a Ersilia Majno per l'Unione Femminile', in Giovanna Angelini and Marina Tesoro (eds.), De *amicitia*. *Scritti dedicati a Arturo Colombo* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2007), pp. 504-15 (p. 514).

^{162 [&#}x27;houses do not get built from the roof down']. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 31.

Angiolo Cabrini (1869–1937) was a socialist politician. See Enzo Santarelli, 'Cabrini, Angiolo' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 15 (1972), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angiolo-cabrini (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 9 September 2013.

^{164 [}those jolly liberals who – while theoretically they are for women's suffrage – shield themselves in practice with *ifs* and *buts*, raising the usual stupid objections with which gentlemen oppose universal suffrage: the *clerical ogre*, *lack of consciousness* and so on.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 26. (Rather inconsistently, Cabrini goes on to expressly veto his support for any practical 'agitazione' ['agitation'] in favour of women's suffrage on the basis that other questions take precedence, exhorting, 'Come gli inglesi, una questione alla volta!' [Like the English, one question at a time!] – an unfortunate comparison, given the fairly spectacular 'agitazione' that the English suffragettes would manage during the subsequent decade).

ltaly debate politics in the electoral halls [...] because my confidence in the destiny of Liberty is so calm that the possible quarter-hour of political rule by priests makes me think (I admit it) of the probability of a delay in the advent of Liberty; not of the danger of a defeat. And time counts for so little, in the secular, exhausting conquest, if the delay may generate a more solid and complete victory!] UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 35-36.

¹⁶⁶ Maria Verdun Barberis was a writer.

[[]will serve to persuade the opponents of their mistake in having so neglected those who could have been of use and not of hindrance to progress]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 4.

Gli uomini, nel nostro paese come dovunque, non sono migliori delle donne. La estensione a queste del diritto di voto varrà a farlo meglio apprezzare dagli uomini. 169

Others who acknowledge the probability of women's initial conservatism defend the introduction of suffrage with a further pragmatic argument: that experience of politics is the only teacher, and that further general education and involvement in other areas of public life will not serve as substitutes for this. In Domenico Giuriati's 170 words:

Amministrando liberamente i proprii beni, ovvero influendo sui destini della propria famiglia, [la donna] non imparerà a condursi nella vita pubblica più di quanto andando in bicicletta non s'impara a cavalcare.¹⁷¹

Giuriati's use of a very down-to-earth image recalls the house-building metaphor used by Ida Cammeo to make the opposing argument; indeed, the use of everyday, common-sense comparisons becomes a particularly popular rhetorical strategy where the debate centres on the pragmatic; Robert Michels asks, 'Chi ha mai sentito che un uomo abbia potuto imparare il nuoto... senza prima buttarsi nell'acqua?', 172 while the MP Luigi de Andreis, 173 arguing for the initial introduction of municipal suffrage and, subsequently, political, makes the same point in figurative terms of especial interest: 'Finchè al bambino non date il coltello, non si taglierà ma non imparerà mai a tagliare'. 174

Two stock metaphors of the suffrage debate are combined here: woman as child, and the vote as weapon. De Andreis' use of the latter fits into a pattern within survey responses; direct references to the vote as weapon arise exclusively in the context of pragmatic arguments. Bice Campolongo 175

Luigi Majno (1852–1915) was a lawyer, lecturer and socialist politician. He was married to Ersilia Majno, and had defended PSI leader Filippo Turati in the trial that followed the 1898 riots. See Claudia Gori, *Crisalidi. Emancipazioniste liberali in età giolittiana* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2010) p. 21.

¹⁶⁹ [Men, in our country as everywhere, are no better than women. The extension to these latter of the right to vote will serve to make this right more appreciated by men.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 105. The assumptions behind these arguments do not take account of men who were anti-feminist *and* strongly conservative (positions likely to be complementary); such a group, however much they might have despised the idea of women voting, would presumably have been more pleased than otherwise if the predicted political reaction had come to pass.

Domenico Giuriati (1829–1904) was a nationalist, lawyer and legal theorist. See Giuseppe Monsagrati, 'Giuriati, Domenico' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 57 (2002), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-giuriati (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 10 September 2013.

[[]Freely managing her own assets, or rather influencing the fortunes of her own family, woman will not learn how to act in public life any more than one learns how to ride a horse by riding a bicycle.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 30.

¹⁷² [Who ever has heard that a man could learn to swim... without first throwing himself into the water?] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 96.

¹⁷³ Luigi de Andreis (1857-1929) was a republican politician. See Giuseppe Sircana, 'De Andreis, Luigi' in Dizionario biografico degli italiani, 33 (1987), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigide-andreis (Dizionario Biografico)/ on 10 September 2013.

¹⁷⁴ [As long as you don't give the knife to the child, he won't cut himself, but he will never learn to cut.] UFN, *II* voto alla donna, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ Beatrice [Bice] Campolongo (1867–1936) was a teacher, author and educational activist. Campolongo worked closely with Ersilia Majno in the first decade of the twentieth century, initially on the Asilo Mariuccia and later in the Unione Femminile itself. (Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biográfico*, pp. 255-56).

provides one example, expressing her ambivalence about the immediate introduction of suffrage in the following terms:

Non oso rispondere in modo assoluto, perchè il voto è un'arma e le armi non si pongono o non si dovrebbero porre in mano a chi non presenta garanzia di saperle usare rettamente. ¹⁷⁶

On the other hand, Luigi de Andreis' is one of several responses to use weapon imagery in countering such concerns. Elvira Rampini Torazzi¹⁷⁷ declares that 'per apprendere il maneggio dell'armi bisogna usarle'.¹⁷⁸ Bice Cammeo¹⁷⁹ portrays political involvement more generally as a battlefield, envisaging an initial defeat followed by resurrection of the fighting (i.e. voting) woman:

Entrare nella lotta con vigoria e entusiasmo – commettere degli errori – se occorre cadere – per rialzarci poi – anche noi donne con una coscienza più limpida e giusta dei doveri e dei diritti sociali. ¹⁸⁰

Finally, the most explicit image of woman as warrior is offered by one of the youngest respondents, Rina Melli:181

Come un duellante si affretta ad imparare le nozioni fondamentali e la pratica della scherma, così la donna votante si affretterà a rendersi atta all'esercizio del nuovo sacrosanto diritto conquistato.¹⁸²

A very few respondents reject pragmatic fears of women's ignorance on the basis of patriotic pride. Adele Tondi Albani¹⁸³ draws on the legacy of the Risorgimento to argue that Italian women are particularly ready for the suffrage campaign and conquest:

Le donne d'Italia (che vanta sommo tra i filosofi umanitari e sociali Giuseppe Mazzini, e conta tante illustri e generose donne che sacrarono l'animo e la intelligente operosità alla grandezza

 $^{^{176}}$ [I do not dare to respond in absolute fashion, because the vote is a weapon and one does not or should not place weapons in the hands of those who do not give a guarantee of knowing how to use them rightly.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 80.

¹⁷⁷ Unidentified.

¹⁷⁸ [to learn to handle weapons one must use them]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 66.

¹⁷⁹ From the early 1900s, Bice Cammeo (1875–1961) worked for the Unione Femminile. See Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, pp. 250-51; Guarnieri, 'Tra Milano e Firenze: Bice Cammeo a Ersilia Majno'.

¹⁸⁰ [To enter the fight with vigour and enthusiasm – to make mistakes – if need be to fall – so as then to rise again – we women, too, with a clearer and more correct awareness of social duties and rights.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 90.

Rina Melli (1882–1958) was a socialist, feminist and political activist. See Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, p. 731).

¹⁸² [As a duellist hastens to learn the basic principles and practical use of the shield, so the voting woman will hasten to make herself adept at exercising the new sacred right that has been won.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 59.

¹⁸³ Adele Tondi Albani, also known by the pen name Alina, was married to Felice Albani, and they were both heavily involved in the small Partito Mazziniano Italiano [Italian Mazzianian Party]. In 1907, Alina was to start the journal Fede Nuova [New Faith], which set out to address the woman question from a Mazzinian perspective. (See Claudia Gori, 'Oltre domani: futuro, progresso e divino nell'emancipazionismo italiano tra Otto e Novecento' in Storia delle donne 1;1 (2005), pp. 239-55 (pp. 246-48)).

della patria ed ai migliori destini dell'umanità) dovrebbero segnalarsi in prima linea in tale movimento.¹⁸⁴

Robert Michels considers the threat of political reaction lessened by the 'specifiche qualità della donna italiana', 185 which he identifies as natural intelligence and moral courage; these, he claims, will

rendere facile il convertirla per qualsiasi uomo moderno che se ne dia la pena. Più di tutte le sue sorelle la donna italiana, una volta estinto il suo senso di credulità atavica, è destinata ad aprire il suo cuore a questo grande ideale umanitario e scientifico che si chiama socialismo. 186

4.3.2.2 'Superstizione religiosa'

The second strand of the 'triplice giogo' was women's perceived 'superstizione religiosa'. This fear elicits some of the bitterest comments found in the survey. Indeed, the prevalence of references to religious beliefs as 'superstizioni' or 'pregiudizi' seems indicative both of the extent of respondents' impatience with the Church and of their confidence that most readers would automatically share their views. At the calmer end of the scale, Cesare Lombroso¹⁸⁷ speaks of 'l'influenza fatale del prete';¹⁸⁸ Argentina Altobelli¹⁸⁹ considers most Italian women still 'imbevuta dei pregiudizi religiosi';¹⁹⁰ Ethel MacMahon Magri¹⁹¹ describes them as being 'in mano al clero';¹⁹² and Virginia Olper Monis achieves an especially scornful effect by referencing 'la pressione pretina'.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁴ [The women of Italy (which boasts Giuseppe Mazzini, highest among humanitarian and social philosophers, and numbers many illustrious and generous women who sacrificed heart and intelligent industry for the greatness of the country and for better futures for humanity) ought to distinguish themselves in the first ranks of such a movement.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 88-89.

[[]specific qualities of the Italian woman]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 98.

[[]make it easy for any modern man who should take the trouble to convert her. More than all her sisters the Italian woman, once her atavistic credulity is extinguished, is destined to open her heart to this great humanitarian and scientific ideal called socialism.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 98.

¹⁸⁷ Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) was a psychiatrist and anthropologist, who focused particularly on identifying the qualities of the criminal. For a discussion of some of his findings in relation to gender difference, see Gibson, 'On the insensitivity of women'. See also Chapter 8 of this thesis, which analyses a tract by his daughter, Gina.

¹⁸⁸ [the fatal influence of the priest]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 18.

Argentina Bonetti Altobelli (1866–1942) was a socialist and syndacalist. See Bruno Anatra, 'Bonetti, Argentina' in Dizionario biografico degli italiani, 11 (1969), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/argentina-bonetti (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 13 September 2013. For a collection of her writings, along with a detailed introduction to her life and work, see Argentina Altobelli, *Un alito di vita nuova: scritti 1901-1942*, ed. Silvia Bianciardi (Rome: Ediesse, 2010).

^{190 [}saturated with religious prejudices]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 33.

Ethel MacMahon Magri was of Anglo-Irish origin. Her son, Alexander (Alessandro) Magri MacMahon, would publish books such as *Italian literature in the first half of the twentieth century* (Bangalore: Indian Institute of World Culture, 1958); most of the information available on Ethel is routed through references to Alexander.

¹⁹² [in the hands of the clergy]. UFN, Il voto alla donna, p. 60.

This phrase is challenging to translate, due to the adjective 'pretina', which has a pejorative connotation due to its appearance of having a diminutive suffix ('in'). One possible translation might be: [the petty priestly pressure]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 68.

Olper Monis offers women's majority attitude to divorce as evidence of their religious indoctrination, and this point is also taken up by Filomena Cuman Fornasari, 194 who provides a particularly detailed and damning analysis of the system of Church influence:

Bisogna vivere nei paesi e in certe città di provincia per vedere come pecorilmente molte donne (la più parte anzi) pensino con la testa del marito, del prete o dell'amante, e come le questioni sociali più degne d'interesse sieno lettera morta per quelle anime avide di pettegolezzi.

lo ho seguito con viva curiosità la battaglia fatta dai clericali al progetto sul divorzio e ho ammirato il lavoro paziente, instancabile, per raccogliere le firme protesta. Ho interrogato donne del popolo che mi dissero un sacco di corbellerie fatte digerir loro, ed ho interrogato delle persone istruite, e le une e le altre avevan firmato perchè così voleva la chiesa. Se domani queste donne avessero il diritto di voto, farebbero lo stesso. Figurarsi che retata di voti per il candidato moderato clericale! 195

Cuman Fornasari is unusual in that she goes on to spell out the mechanisms whereby women themselves perpetuate and spread Church influence, and to draw conclusions as to how voting patterns would be affected. She acknowledges that in some of the more industrial cities women workers are gaining in 'coscienza', but maintains that in other cities, women workers in mutual aid societies

devono (e lo sottosegno) dipendere dal prete o da chi per esso, tanto è vero che il sussidio alle socie non si concede che presentando un certificato del parroco. Le patronesse, signore religiosissime, finirebbero, data la loro veste di protettrici del sodalizio, per avere dalla loro tutti i voti delle socie. – Poi vi sono le cosidette "madri cristiane", dame caritevoli che visitano gli infermi e lasciano dei soccorsi e raccomandano prima di tutto di osservare le pratiche del culto; esse certamente consiglierebbero le soccorse a dare il voto al deputato del loro cuore. – E poi vi sono [...] le bigotte superstiziose che hanno paura dell'inferno e credono alla voce del prete, voce di Dio. 196

¹⁹⁴ Filomena Cuman Fornasari was an emancipationist and social reformer. Unusually for the time, she contributed to the debate on prostitution by decrying the trade while also maintaining that women possessed strong, healthy, sexual desires. See Bruno Wanrooij, 'Josephine Butler and regulated prostitution in Italy' in Women's history review, 17: 2 (2008), pp. 153-71 (pp. 160-61).

¹⁹⁵ [One must live in the villages and in certain provincial cities to see in how sheeplike a fashion many women (indeed, the majority) think with the head of their husband, priest or lover, and how the social questions most worthy of interest are a dead letter for those souls greedy for gossip.

I have followed, with lively curiosity, the battle by the clergy against the divorce bill and have admired the patient, inexhaustible work to collect protest signatures. I have questioned common women who told me a load of nonsense that they had been made to digest, and I questioned educated people, and both groups had signed because that was what the Church wanted. If these women should have the right to vote tomorrow, they would do the same thing. Imagine what a haul of votes for the moderate clerical candidate!] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 81.

^{196 [}must (and I underline it) depend on the priest or his representative, as indeed benefits are not granted to the members except on presentation of a certificate from the priest. The patronesses, most religious ladies, would, given their role as society protectors, end up having all the votes of the members of their societies. — Then there are the so-called "Christian mothers", charitable gentlewomen who visit the sick and leave supplies and above all else urge the observation of the practices of the cult; they would certainly advise the beneficiaries to vote for the deputy close to their own hearts. — And then there are [...] the superstitious bigot-women who fear hell and believe in the voice of the priest as the voice of God.] UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 81-82.

Rebuttals of the theory that women would be swayed by 'superstizione religiosa' take several forms. Robert Michels makes an argument based on women's presumed common sense, stating that the great majority of working- and lower middle-class women

sarà indotta dal puro bisogno materiale a non dare il proprio voto ad un candidato reazionario, neanche se si vestisse da apostolo. La coscienza di classe [...] chiede ad alta voce – non un bel pranzo in cielo! – ma un tozzo di pane in terra. 197

Nina Sierra¹⁹⁸ backs up her opinion by painting Church opposition to women's suffrage as self-serving and logical:

Ma come [le donne] scuotono volentieri il giogo appena lo possono fare! Lo sa così bene il partito clericale che non è certo lui che incoraggia l'elettorato femminile. Il partito che invece dovrebbe più caldamente incoraggiarlo è il socialista perchè è quello che, a parer mio, ci guadagnerebbe maggiormente. ¹⁹⁹

Paolina Schiff compares the difference between 'i maneggi piccini del clericalismo' and 'l'aspirazione ad una idealità superiore' with that between 'civetteria' and 'vero amore', 201 arguing that women with strong enough minds will know which to choose; and Giovanni Cena, 202 personalising the case rather than offering a line of reasoning, states flatly that

Se facessi differenze fra me e mia sorella, dovrei farne ben maggiori fra lei e qualsiasi pantalone del mio collegio che elegge, putacaso, un sagrestano o un asino d'oro. ²⁰³

4.3.2.3 'Tirannia maschile'

¹⁹⁷ [will be led by pure material need not to give their vote to a reactionary candidate, even if he dresses up as an apostle. Class consciousness [...] loudly demands – not a fine lunch in heaven! – but a scrap of bread on earth.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 98.

Nina Sierra was a UFN activist, with a particular focus on issues relating to motherhood, such as the establishment of a national maternity fund. See Buttafuoco, 'Motherhood as a political strategy', p. 187.

¹⁹⁹ [But how willingly women will throw off the yoke as soon as they are able! The clerical party knows this so well that it is certainly not the one encouraging female suffrage. The party that should however encourage it most warmly is the socialist one, because it is this [party] which would, in my opinion, gain most from it.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 54-55.

²⁰⁰ [the miniscule manoeuvres of clericalism]; [the aspiration to a higher ideal]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 57.

²⁰¹ [flirtation]; [true love]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 57.

²⁰² Giovanni Cena (1870 – 1917) was a poet, journalist, editor of *Nuova Antologia*, and a socialist. In 1905, he was also Sibilla Aleramo's partner. See Piero Craveri, 'Cena, Giovanni' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 23 (1979), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-cena (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 10 September 2013.

²⁰³ [If I were to make distinctions between me and my sister, I would have to make much greater ones between her and any buffoon from my constituency who should happen to elect a sacristan or a golden ass.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 22. 'Pantalone' here may be a reference to the Commedia dell'Arte character of the same name; the 'golden ass' may recall that mentioned in Apuleius' novel known as Metamorphoses or The Golden Ass, in which the character of Lucius transforms into the ass in question due to his uninformed over-enthusiasm for magic – which Cena may intend as an analogy for politics.

The third strand of Elisa Norsa Guerrieri's 'triplice giogo' was 'tirannia maschile'. If the influence of the priest is portrayed as a particularly worrisome instance of male domination, this concern also appears in other forms.²⁰⁴ Fears about male influence from non-clerical quarters may be expressed with less frequency and less venom, but are persistently present; Adolfo Padovan,²⁰⁵ for instance, opines that the vote of the 'clamorosa falange femminile italiana'²⁰⁶ would be only 'l'eco incosciente delle idee altrui, vale a dire idee di padri o di fratelli, di mariti o di amanti esortatori'.²⁰⁷

Amalia Moretti-Foggia²⁰⁸ presents male influence as deriving from Italian women's excessive emotionality:

La donna italiana non è preparata alla lotta politica e – troppo schiava del sentimento – il suo voto non potrebbe essere che un voto di simpatia individuale o un voto consigliato dall'uomo ch'essa ama.²⁰⁹

As a kind of corollary to this assertion of women's allegiance to men, Moretti-Foggia adds an allegation of women's antagonism to other women; she is the only survey respondent to raise this particular point.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Indeed, this is evident from the first paragraph of Filomena Cuman Fornasari's response quoted above (see p. 100), in which the priest is tellingly sandwiched between husband and lover in a list of potential male indoctrinators.

²⁰⁵ Adolfo Padovan was a film director, probably best known for the Dantesque film *L'Inferno* (1911). See for instance Raffaele De Berti, 'Milano Films: the exemplary history of a film company of the 1910s' in *Film history*, 12 (2000), pp. 276-87 (in which Padovan is described as a 'director-intellectual' (p. 280)).

²⁰⁶ [noisy female phalanx of Italy]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 15.

²⁰⁷ [the unconscious echo of the ideas of others, that is to say the ideas of fathers or brothers, of husbands or of exhorting lovers]. Padovan goes on to produce an example of (literally) flowery language that stands out as unusual among responses that prioritise pragmatic difficulties: 'Le poche eccezioni non giustificano ancora la nobile crociata. Una glicine che sogna nell'inverno i grappoli dei fiori o una crisalide sopita che cova nel sonno la resurrezione futura: ecco lo stato attuale della questione' [The few exceptions do not justify the noble crusade as yet. A wisteria vine that dreams in winter of clusters of flowers or a dormant chrysalis that nurtures its future resurrection as it sleeps: this is the present state of the question.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 15.

²⁰⁸ Dr Amalia Moretti-Foggia (1872–1947) was a physician, and was also the writer behind two rather different pseudonyms in the *Domenica del Corriere*: the masculine Dottor Amal, who dispensed medical advice, and the feminine Petronilla, who offered recipes and household tips. A recent book has sought to explore the contradictions in Moretti-Foggia's personae: see Roberta Schira and Alessandra De Vizzi, *Le voci di Petronilla* (Milan: Salani, 2010).

²⁰⁹ [The Italian woman is not prepared for the political struggle and – too enslaved by sentiment – her vote could not be anything other than a vote of personal liking or a vote recommended by the man she loves.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 24.

²¹⁰ 'Non parlo poi della rivalità femminile. Io credo che se una donna venisse portata come candidata politica o amministrativa, quella donna riscuoterebbe pochissimi voti di donne. Basta pensare a certe istituzioni femminili che tra di loro si combattono [...], basta assistere a certe sedute di donne per accertarsi come troppo spesso una questione anche alta degeneri in beghe, in pettegolezzi individuali, basta infine constatare come non siano per nulla aiutate e sorrette dalla gran massa delle donne così dette femministe (eccettuate poche elette) quelle altre donne che con studi, fatiche e sacrifici hanno conseguito e fatto ciò che pur le femministe predicano si faccia'. [Not to talk, then, of female rivalry. I believe that if any woman were put forward as a political or municipal candidate, that woman would garner very few votes from women. It's enough to think of certain women's organisations that fight among themselves [...], enough to attend certain women's meetings to assure oneself of how too often even an elevated question degenerates into squabbles, into the gossip of individuals,

Rebuttals of the 'male influence' fear also take several forms. Matilde Mauro's²¹¹ one-line response in support of extending the franchise to women makes no reference to the 'excessive male influence' hypothesis, but does function to contradict it fairly dramatically: 'Perchè io voto già per mezzo di 27 voti di uomini miei amici'.²¹² Prof. Teresa Magnani,²¹³ rather more modestly and impersonally, opines that 'da secoli, in ogni famiglia, la donna sa esercitare una valida influenza sulla coscienza dell'uomo'.²¹⁴ Linita Beretta²¹⁵ weaves an unlikely pro-suffrage argument by subtly underlining the incompatibility of the discourse of 'tirannia maschile' with other anti-suffrage arguments such as women's vote as useless doubling of men's, and women's influence over men as constituting sufficient political representation for them:

Nessun partito deve temere il voto della donna perchè essa è sempre stata in genere l'ispiratrice del voto dell'uomo. Il risultato pratico dunque sarebbe che ogni partito raddoppierebbe i proprii voti [...] Già quindi l'uomo sostanzialmente vota all'unissono coi sentimenti della sua donna; con molto garbo ha un animo gentile intuito che la donna voterebbe all'unissono con chi ella ama. 216

Giacinta Martini Marescotti dismisses the objection that there would be excessive male influence over women as 'ridicola' [ridiculous], insinuating that corruption among the existing electorate takes more sinister forms:

Perchè avesse peso bisognerebbe dimostrare che gli elettori maschi non subiscono nel loro voto influenze meno confessabili di quelle che provengono da vincoli domestici o da naturali affezioni.²¹⁷

Finally, Bona Viterbi²¹⁸ – rather peculiarly, as she answers 'No' to IB on the basis of the Italian woman's lingering 'romanticismo' ['romanticismo'] – defends her countrywoman against one form of the charge of malleability:

enough in short to observe how the great mass of so-called feminist women (with the exception of a few elect ones) do not in any way help and support those other women who, with studies, efforts and sacrifices, have achieved and done that which the feminists preach.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 24-25. Perhaps partly due to these rather-too-close-to-the-bone criticisms of Italian feminist organisations, Ersilia Majno singles out Moretti-Foggia for especial scorn in the preface to the volume, using her as a 'straw woman' of sorts to represent all the fearful pragmatists.

Matilde Mauro was a writer; among her accomplishments was *Biografia di Carlo Cadorna* (Rome: Tip. della Camera dei Deputati, 1888).

²¹² [Because I vote already through 27 votes of men who are my friends.] UFN, II voto alla donna, p. 27.

²¹³ Unidentified.

²¹⁴ [for centuries, in every family, woman has known how to exert a valuable influence on man's consciousness]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 61.

²¹⁵ Dr Linita Beretta worked as a physician in Milan. See Maria Malatesta, 'Le professioni e la città. Bologna 1860-1914' in *Società* e *Storia*, 111 (2006), pp. 51-112 (p. 53).

²¹⁶ [No party should fear woman's vote, because she has always been, in general, the inspirer of man's vote. The practical result, therefore, would be that every party would double its votes [...] Already, then, man by and large votes in accordance with the sentiments of his woman; it is with great tact that some kindly mind has figured out that woman would vote in accordance with him who loves her.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, pp. 100-01.

²¹⁷ [For it to bear weight, it would be necessary to show that male electors, when voting, are not subject to influences less admissible than those that arise from domestic ties or natural affections]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 62.

In una cosa grave sì [...] non si lascerà sedurre, nè da un pajo di occhi espressivi, nè da un pajo di baffi provocantemente voltati all'insù.²¹⁹

There is a humorous inversion here of traditional gender roles; Viterbi casts man as the pretty beguiler only to rubbish the notion that woman would fall for his charms, thus undermining the stereotypes both of woman as seductress and of woman as seduced.

4.4 Conclusions

The opinions offered by the UFN survey – captured before the Italian suffrage movement had been consolidated (the CNPSF not being founded until 1906), and hence before it had developed an 'official' repertoire of arguments – are often striking for their individuality, although some shared legacies, such as the vocabulary of Mozzoni's emancipationism, are also present. If by 1913 Italian suffragism would have lost momentum to the point where its debates 'seemed poor in content',²²⁰ these survey responses, materialising near the start of the movement's coalescence, are marked by freshness and originality.

The myriad images of women constructed in the survey responses seem to illustrate the truth of Sibilla Aleramo's later declaration that 'la donna italiana ha mille volti, mille anime'.²²¹ Women are depicted as equal to men and as utterly different, as literal and symbolic mothers, as patriots and pacifists, practical and mystical, ignorant and wise, religious and socialist, ruled by men's will and rulers of that will. Moreover, while discourses of gender equality are, predictably, used exclusively as part of pro-suffrage arguments, the various discourses of difference and pragmatism tend to manifest themselves in both anti- and pro-suffrage contexts. Thus, the specifically feminine qualities attributed to women are used by some as a reason to refuse the vote (preserving difference) and by others as a reason to grant it (channelling difference for the benefit of society); similarly, women's alleged ignorance is cited by many as grounds for refusing suffrage (danger of reaction), and by others as the most pressing reason to give it (political experience as the only means of achieving change).

²¹⁸ Bona Benvenisti Viterbi was a writer and music critic, who would be most noted for her biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning (*Elisabetta Barrett-Browning* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arte grafiche, 1913)).

²¹⁹ [In such a serious matter [...] she will not let herself be seduced, neither by a pair of expressive eyes nor by a set of whiskers provocatively twirled upwards.] UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 78.

²²⁰ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 113.

²²¹ [the Italian woman has a thousand faces, a thousand souls]. Sibilla Aleramo, 'Appunti sulla psicologia femminile italiana' (1910); reprinted in *La donna* e *il femminismo*. *Scritti* , ed. Bruna Conti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1978), pp. 153-60 (p. 154).

The diversity of approaches even within the suffragist camp, then, is striking. In 1910, Aleramo would identify this diversity as a weakness of the Italian emancipation movement: 'manca il nucleo ideale'.²²² In the context of the 1905 survey, however, emerging as it does just prior to the main organised campaigns of the suffrage movement, the multiplicity of suffragist themes might have appeared rather a potential advantage than otherwise; there is no single nucleus, but the most eloquent respondents demonstrate an ability to knit several sub-nuclei together creatively.

One of the most striking trends in the survey is the use of discourses of egalitarianism or equivalence, with their Enlightenment and Risorgimento connotations, as scaffolding within which to package discourses of gender difference. Even the most lyrical pro-suffrage depictions of women as emotionally intelligent mother-figures with the potential to heal an ailing society tend to come on the heels of dry and almost formulaic statements of the principles of equality and justice, while the only lengthy anti-suffrage portrayal of women as naturally belonging to an apolitical sphere (from Zanichelli) is defensively enclosed in similar declarations. While there is a great deal of lexical overlap between the numerous expressions of arguments on equality and principle, the content of the discourses of difference is far more varied; respondents draw freely on archetypes of the donna angelicata, the loving wife, the sacrificing mother, the woman of culture, and so forth, and their descriptions tend to be more noticeably coloured by their individual writing styles. It is in discussions of difference that figurative language is used most freely and creatively. Similarly, pragmatic arguments, as opposed to the fairly homogenous principled ones, showcase a vast range of predictions of women's impact on politics, and tend to use colourful, earthy metaphors to illustrate these.

Given the especial pervasiveness among female respondents of the opinion that Italian women are not prepared to use the vote wisely, questions arise as to how these respondents conceptualise themselves in relation to the mass of their 'ignoranti' countrywomen. Several mention exceptions or 'donne elette' ['elect women'] in passing, but none explicitly deal with what it means to be one of these outliers, yet to speak on behalf of the unconscious majority. In fact, there is a notable lack of personal narratives in responses generally; apart from Ada Negri, Giovanni Cena, Matilde Mauro and a couple of others, most respondents, male and female, voice their opinions with a degree of detachment, making frequent use of the impersonal constructions enabled by Italian syntax.

Along with this impersonal style of argument, a reader familiar with the fierce, polemical rhetoric of the militant suffrage movements in English-speaking countries cannot but notice the lack of battle cries. The use of the imagery of weapons and war has been noted as a discursive technique used in the construction or demolition of arguments based on pragmatism; however, with perhaps the sole

²²² [it lacks an ideal[istic] nucleus]. Aleramo, 'Appunti sulla psicologia femminile', p. 158.

exception of Bice Cammeo, whose use of repeated dashes to punctuate her battle metaphor creates a sense of crescendo reminiscent of an oratory style favoured by Britain's Women's Social and Political Union [WSPU], even this imagery is used by respondents in a carefully measured fashion. Considering the efforts made by several respondents to resist the stereotype of the politically involved woman as an unsexed harridan, a member of the 'terzo sesso', it seems likely that rhetorical restraint in this regard may have been adopted, especially by female respondents, to protect against similar accusations.

While some respondents opt, as do Filippo Turati and Ada Negri, to distil their responses to a memorable soundbite, most pro-suffrage respondents opt for a lengthier format of logical argument. An academically sophisticated style is adopted by many of these, but is particularly noticeable – perhaps predictably – in answers written by politicians and lawyers (all men; the practice of law was barred to women in Italy until 1919). Perhaps the most flamboyantly erudite style is Robert Michels', however; his response is positively peppered with Latin phrases. Other respondents make references to historical personages and events (Mazzini; the Risorgimento), to literary figures (Leopardi), to other emancipation movements (the male proletariat), and to relevant developments in other countries (the successes of Australia's enfranchised and electable women); all these, as well as fulfilling their specific argumentative purposes, showcase the learnedness of the respondent. For women, especially those approving suffrage in principle but expressing reservations about it in practice due to perceiving most Italian women as unfit for immediate political involvement, this kind of strategy may have been especially important; it may have served as an indirect means of distancing themselves from the uncultivated multitudes of whom they wrote.

Ersilia Majno's *Inchiesta* offers a kaleidoscopic insight into the plethora of shades and nuances at play during the early stages of cohesion of the Italian suffrage movement. While hindsight allows us to read the future fault lines of the movement in its responses, it is most interesting for its collection of individual voices, and for the way that so many of these voices resist simplistic classification. The 'axes' of equality-difference and of principle-pragmatism are only one of many possible frameworks for approaching the responses; however, the patterns that these axes make visible provide a thematic and discursive map to which I will refer when analysing later suffrage texts.

SECTION 3: SUFFRAGIST AND ANTI-SUFFRAGIST TEXTS

Section overview

This section includes four chapters (5-8). Each one analyses a text from a 'moment of acceleration' in the course of the Italian suffrage movement, to borrow D'Amelia's term. That is to say, the texts emerge from moments that were, in varying ways, critical in determining the progress and direction of the campaign for the vote in Italy. The selection criteria required that the texts should not only coincide temporally with periods of intense development in the movement, but should show evidence of having had a significant impact on the movement's subsequent directions. While there were many documents that would have fulfilled these criteria to a greater or lesser degree, spatial constraints limited the possibilities of inclusion. The four texts chosen were considered to represent a set of particularly crucial moments, a wide range of positions and intended addressees, and a high level of influence upon perceptions of the movement and its subsequent trajectory.

Three texts are pro-suffrage. These are the petition sent to Parliament by Anna Maria Mozzoni and others in 1906, which, in conjunction with the attempts to enrol on electoral registers during the same year, had the effect of bringing the suffrage question to the attention of the Chamber of Deputies while also marking the first major coordinated action taken by suffragist women since the turn of the century (Chapter 5); the report of the suffrage session from the first national congress of Italian women, organised by the CNDI in Rome in 1908, which signalled a key moment in suffragists' efforts to inscribe their agenda within a broader programme of women's rights in Italy (Chapter 6); and Anna Kuliscioff's pamphlet Per il suffragio femminile. Donne proletarie, a voi!, produced in 1913 in the immediate aftermath of both the electoral reform of 1912 (which had extended suffrage to virtually all Italian men, while excluding women) and the guerra di Libia (which had had the effect of cementing schisms within suffragist ranks), and seeking to incite a new phase of suffragist activism among working-class women (Chapter 7). One text is anti-suffrage: this is Gina Lombroso's II pro e il contro. Riflessioni sul voto alle donne, published in 1919 in an attempt to stymie what appeared to be the imminent passage of the Martini-Gasparotto suffrage bill, within the post-World War One context of widespread female enfranchisement across Europe and the US (Chapter 8).

The inductive analysis applied to the UFN survey in Section 2 revealed a profound difficulty in fixing and representing the figure of the donna italiana. There, I concluded that multiple and often not fully successful

D'Amelia (ed.), Donne alle urne, pp. 8-9. (See also Chapter 3, p. 42, n. 229 of this thesis).

² As discussed in Chapter 3 (see p. 42, n. 228), strong contenders that were not ultimately selected included Irene de Bonis, Per il voto alle donne (1908); multiple works by Teresa Labriola, including Studio sul problema del voto alla donna (1904), Per il voto alla donna (1906), and Il suffragio femminile nello Stato moderno (1919); and the summary report by the Comitato pro voto donne di Torino of its activity between 1906 and 1922, Diciasette anni di lavoro e di lotta per la causa suffragista (1923).

strategies were deployed in attempts to harness this protean character to the evolving ideologies of suffragism, on the one hand, and to the identities of individual survey respondents, on the other. This observation prompts a narrowing focus in the present section: what bearing did the articulation of suffragist belief have on the representation of identity?

With that question in mind, two sub-strands of analysis are pursued with particular attention. The first concerns the representation of individual and collective identities within the category of Italian women: what discursive strategies are used in the various texts to navigate between individual exceptionality and collective solidarity, and what difficulties are confronted in relation to constructing such solidarity (e.g. divisions of class, region, religion, education, views on war, etc.)? The second concerns the positioning of the problematic donna italiana upon an international stage: is international female solidarity drawn upon and/or problematised in the texts, and how is language used to achieve this?

The overall aim of Section 3 is to investigate, within a limited selection of texts, how suffragism worked when mixed into an already uneasy confederacy of Italian, female and perhaps more broadly feminist aspects of identity.

Chapter 5 Anna Maria Mozzoni's petition (1906)

Primary text analysed: 'Petizione al Parlamento presentata dal Comitato pro suffragio femminile nel marzo 1906'.³

La grande influenza delle signore che hanno presentato la petizione è dimostrata dalla grande attività che oggi, diversamente dagli altri lunedì, la Camera dimostra. (Si ride). Ma quelle gentili presentatrici di petizioni hanno compiuto un altro miracolo, hanno messo d'accordo cioè l'onorevole Mirabelli, il più erudito dell'estrema sinistra, con l'onorevole Luzzatti la voce più eloquente e il cuore più tenero della destra. (Vivissima ilarità).

- Giovanni Giolitti, 1907, debating Mozzoni's petition.4

The 1906 petition for women's suffrage was not the first to be sent to the Italian parliament, as shown in Chapter 2.5 In 1861, immediately following unification, a group of Lombard women had sent a petition to the newly formed Chamber requesting that the previous right of single, property-owning women in Lombardy (and Tuscany and the Veneto) to cast a postal vote in local elections be preserved. Later, in 1877, Anna Maria Mozzoni had organised a petition calling for full civil and political rights for women, which was dispatched to Parliament to coincide with Salvatore Morelli's second presentation of a bill with the same aims. The 1877 petition was briefly worded, spanning only five paragraphs, and focused only on the removal of sex as a barrier to the ballot box, rather than seeking universal suffrage.⁶

³ 'Petizione al Parlamento presentata dal Comitato pro suffragio femminile nel marzo 1906' in Camera dei deputati, *Il voto alle donne. Le donne dall'elettorato alla partecipazione politica* (Rome: Camera dei deputati, 1965), pp. 108-14 (accessed from <u>Camera dei deputati: portale storico</u> at

http://documenti.camera.it/bpr/3108_testo_completo.pdf on 10 June 2013). (The text is also available in slightly abridged form in d'Amelia (ed.), *Donne alle urne*, pp. 71-78; however, all page references used in this thesis refer to the reproduction in Camera dei deputati, *Il voto alle donne*).

⁴ [The great influence of the ladies who have presented the petition is made evident by the great activity which, unlike on other Mondays, the Chamber is showing today. (*Laughter*). But these courteous presenters of petitions have achieved a further miracle, that is, they have placed the honourable Mirabelli, the most erudite of the far left, in agreement with the Honourable Luzzatti, the most eloquent voice and the tenderest heart of the right. (*Great hilarity*).] See 'Petizione alla Camera. (Tornata del 22 febbraio 1907)', reproduced in De Bonis, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 175-241 (pp. 234-35).

⁵ See Chapter 2, pp. 20-21. However, the fact that the Italian petitions are easily enumerable forms in itself a striking contrast to the situation in Britain, where 'there were a thousand petitions, with more than three hundred thousand signatures'. M. Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 67.

⁶ Specifically, it asked that women be recognised 'per quello che siamo veramente: cittadine, contribuenti e capaci, epperò non passibili, davanti al diritto di voto, che di quelle limitazioni che sono o verranno sancite per gli altri elettori' [for what we truly are: women citizens, contributing and able, and thus not subject, regarding the right to vote, to any limitations other than those which are or which may be recognised in the case of the other electors]. Anna Maria Mozzoni, 'Petizione per il voto politico alle donne' in A.M. Mozzoni, ed. F. Pieroni Bortolotti, *La liberazione della donna* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1975), p. 129.

Nevertheless, the petition of 1906, again masterminded by Mozzoni, was the first that was discussed in the Chamber with any apparent possibility of success. General consideration of the suffrage issue was gaining momentum. Roberto Mirabelli's bill for universal suffrage had been discussed and rejected in 1905; publications (such as the UFN survey) were increasingly bringing the matter to wider public attention. It is indicative of this growth of interest that Mozzoni was not alone in her initiative; while her petition was being organised in Rome, another with similar aims was being organised by Ersilia Majno's UFN in Milan. Despite the failure of the two groups to coordinate their efforts, 7 national organisation around suffrage was increasing, at least in theory: the first 27 signatories of Mozzoni's petition drew together to form the Roman Pro-Suffrage Committee, which in turn formed the basis of the CNPSF.8 In the same year, this body orchestrated the campaign for inclusion on the electoral register, based on the Civil Code's silence on the subject of the parliamentary vote for women. These requests led, as has been seen, to a number of legal challenges; while most courts ruled against women's eligibility for inclusion, an exception emerged from the ruling in Ancona.9 Although the Ancona verdict was overturned by a higher court in December 1906, the effect of Mortara's original judgement, and of the court cases in general, had given a significant fillup to debate around women's suffrage, and had channeled this debate into the language and logic of legislative detail as well as principle and opinion. Mozzoni's petition, dispatched in March 1906, preceded the court challenges, but the verdicts of all these, including the overturning of Mortara's verdict by the Roman Cassazione, were available by the time that the petition was discussed in Parliament on 22 February 1907; responses to the petition, as articulated in the Chamber of Deputies, would be coloured heavily by these developments.

So that the opening of this section may segue easily from Section 2, I begin by providing an overview of the petition with reference to its navigation of the ideological axes identified previously: equality-difference and principle-pragmatism (5.1). Next, I investigate the text's construction of collective

⁷ As has been described (see Chapter 2, p. 25), in spite of the prominence of both Majno and Mozzoni in Italian feminist circles, neither party seems to have been aware of the others' efforts until after both had gathered large numbers of signatures. In the end, the Unione Femminile withdrew its petition so as not to detract attention from Mozzoni's (see Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, pp. 202-03; for the text of the UFN petition, see p. 201). Although perhaps due mainly to a hitch in the technology of communication, this incident can be read as symptomatic of the regionalism and segregation that beset the fledgling suffrage movement in Italy. Buttafuoco observes that it also created a certain amount of residual bad feeling, since the UFN felt that their efforts in gathering an impressive 10,000 signatures had gone unappreciated (*Cronache femminili*, p. 203).

⁸ Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, p. 190.

⁹ As has been seen (Chapter 2, pp. 26-27), Ancona's judge Ludovico Mortara argued, based on the wording of Article 24 of the Albertine Statute of 1848, whereby all 'regnicoli' [subjects] were pronounced equal before the law and entitled to full civil and political rights, that 'regnicoli' encompassed both men and women, since in Article 25 the same word was used in relation to taxes, and 'nessuno ha dubitato mai che le donne non siano contribuenti in proporzione dei loro averi al pari degli uomini'. [nobody has ever doubted that women contribute, in proportion to their possessions, just as men do]. (Corte d'Appello Ancona 25.7.1906, in "Foro italiano" 1906, I, 1060. Cited in Galeotti, Storia del voto alle donne in Italia, p. 131).

identities within the category of Italian women (5.2). I then ask how suffragism is harnessed to *italianità* in an international context in the petition (5.3). Lastly, I draw the threads of these arguments together (5.4).

5.1 Overview of the text: equality-difference and principle-pragmatism

I have shown in Section 2 that neither the axis of equality-difference nor that of principle-pragmatism was necessarily approached by proponents of suffrage as a polarised 'either-or' choice; the Unione Femminile survey of 1905 provides multiple instances of equality-based arguments being used to frame or contain difference-based ones, and of reiterations of the *principle* of extending suffrage being bolstered by predictions of the positive *practical* consequences of that extension. This tendency to fuse equality and difference, principle and pragmatism is further illustrated in the composition of the petition.

As Mozzoni was its prime mover, and as she had been known since the 1870s for a radical egalitarianism influenced by, among others, John Stuart Mill, ¹⁰ it would be reasonable to expect the document to evince a strong emphasis on equality and on principle. It does, yet this emphasis is interwoven with allusions to the positive practical implications of female difference. ¹¹ Thus, the petition's key statement of why women are entitled to vote, positioned roughly midway through the document, is as follows:

Vi abbiamo diritto perché siamo cittadine, perché paghiamo tasse ed imposte, perché siamo produttrici di ricchezza, perché paghiamo l'imposta del sangue nei dolori della maternità, perché infine portiamo il contributo dell'opera e del denaro al funzionamento dello Stato. ¹²

Notably, the text adopts the strategy, already demonstrated by some responses to the 1905 survey, of incorporating women's maternal role into an egalitarian argument of 'no taxation without representation' by positing maternity as a tax of sorts – an 'imposta del sangue', or blood tax.

The relevance of maternity is picked up with a slightly different twist following the text's direct confrontation of the principle-pragmatism problem (which, as was seen in Section 2, concerned the argument that although women should have the vote in principle, in practice they were not ready to

¹⁰ Mozzoni, it may be recalled, had translated Stuart Mill's *The subjection of women* into the Italian *La servitù delle donne* (see Chapter 2, p. 21, n. 112).

This makes sense in the light of Bigaran's reading of the petition as having the chief aim of 'reassuring legislators about one of their most persistent and recurring obsessions, that of the "leap in the dark". Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 53.

¹² [We have this right because we are women citizens, because we pay taxes and charges, because we are producers of wealth, because we pay the blood charge in the pangs of motherhood, because in summary we bear a contribution of labour and money to the functioning of the State.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110.

exercise it wisely). 'Affrontiamo una buona volta l'argomento mistico del salto nel buio', ¹³ declares the petition; it goes on to suggest that while this argument might have been understandable some decades previously, the women of early-twentieth-century Italy were already organised into unions and associations based on their fields of work, and 'voterebbero colle rispettive collettività, e pel loro pane'. ¹⁴ Pragmatic objections, then, are refuted in pragmatic terms rather than by means of an overriding principle – and this pragmatic refutation emphasises sociocultural rather than innate determinants of women's voting preferences. However, a coda is added which does tap into ideas of inherent difference:

Vogliamo [...] richiamare l'attenzione delle Camere sulla speciale missione della donna – non già quella nella quale l'egoismo dell'uomo l'ha circoscritta per conservare a sé stesso indisturbato il monopolio di tutti i benefici della convivenza sociale, ma quella che la natura con le sue manifestazioni imperiose, costanti e universali ci dimostra come una legge incontestabile.

Benché le donne al pari degli uomini siano accessibili agli entusiasmi ed alle grandi idealità – come ne sono documento i martirologi religiosi e politici – pure l'amore dei figli le fa generalmente ritrose ed esitanti di fronte alle manifestazioni della violenza con qualunque nome si chiamino. In questo istinto profondo e tenacissimo sta il segreto delle eroiche abnegazioni materne e quindi la più grande guarantigia della specie. In essa sta la più efficace e sapiente provvidenza che possa proteggere l'umanità contro le ricorrenti ubbriacature di sangue e di distruzione che armano gli uomini gli uni contro gli altri. ¹⁵

The language of this passage is infused with favourite adages of essentialist discourse: 'la speciale missione della donna'; the feminine noun 'la natura' as the constant and universal maker of a 'legge incontestabile'; and 'l'amore dei figli' as an 'istinto profondo e tenacissimo'. ¹⁶ The conclusion drawn posits a more peaceful and humanitarian political system as a *pragmatic* advantage of granting the vote to women:

¹³ [Let us confront once and for all the mysterious subject of the leap in the dark]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', pp. 110-11.

¹⁴ [they would vote with their respective groups, and for their own bread]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', pp. 110-11.

¹⁵ [We want [...] to recall the attention of the Chambers to woman's special mission – not the one within which man's egoism has confined her so that he can keep undisturbed for himself the monopoly of all benefits of social co-existence, but the one which nature, with her imperious, constant and universal demonstrations, displays to us as an incontrovertible law.

Although women, just like men, can be touched by enthusiasms and instances of high idealism — as evidenced by religious and political martyrologies — nonetheless love for their children makes them generally reluctant and hesitant when faced with manifestations of violence under any name. In this deep and most tenacious instinct lies the secret of heroic maternal self-sacrifice, and thus the greatest safeguard of the species. In this is the most efficient and wise provision that can protect humanity against the recurrent orgies of blood and destruction that arm men against one another.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 112.

¹⁶ This endorsement of universal maternal instinct is followed by a specifically Italian example from 1898; the significance of this will be discussed below (5.2).

l'avvento della donna – che rappresenta l'amore e la tutela della umanità nella vita pubblica – sarebbe presagio di vittoria sulla residua barbarie e di rapida evoluzione verso una politica più umana e una legislazione più provvida e materna.¹⁷

As a whole, then, the petition refers predominantly to a rhetoric of egalitarianism, within which women's difference – specifically, their maternal role – occasionally surfaces as a supporting argument. However, this egalitarianism, while implicitly principled, is expressed in very pragmatic terms; the focus returns again and again to the *specific* condition of Italian women in the early twentieth century. 'Giustizia' is presented not as an abstract construct, but as a potential means to avoid the kinds of laws that had been passed in Italy in previous years; the argument of the 'salto nel buio' is rejected as outdated rather than inherently invalid; and women's presumed pacifist 'instinct', deriving from their position as mothers, is appropriated as evidence of the benefits to Italian society that would result from the extension of the franchise.

From this analysis, and especially from the extent to which the petition's reasoning is grounded in the condition of Italian women at the time of writing, strong questions arise as to how the petition presents the category of *donne italiane*, and how it engages with discourses of national and international identities. These are addressed in 5.2 and 5.3 respectively.

5.2 The category of 'Italian women': collective identity

The petition's very first line demands the vote 'per noi ed in rappresentanza di tutte le italiane'. ¹⁸ This phrasing conveys both the desire to speak for Italian women as a unified category, and the impossibility inherent in that desire: it is doubtful whether speaking for oneself and speaking on behalf of others can ever truly coincide, ¹⁹ and this is syntactically marked by the different prepositional phrases allocated to the two entities ('per' and 'in rappresentanza di').

Buttafuoco argues that the petition's claim to represent all components of Italian suffragism could be more or less vindicated: looking at the signatories, she identifies 'proponents of the "old" democratic suffragism', as well as 'women closer to the workers' movement or linked [...] to socialist suffragism' and, especially, representatives of 'the new expression of broad layers of bourgeois and aristocratic

¹⁷ [the advent of woman – who represents love and guardianship of humanity in public life – would be an augury of victory over residual barbarity and of swift evolution towards a more humane politics and a more provident and maternal legislative approach.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 113.

¹⁸ [for ourselves and on behalf of all the women of Italy]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

¹⁹ This idea has received considerable critical attention in the post-structuralist period. In Linda Alcoff's terms, 'the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation [...] And the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of [...] hierarchies.' Linda Alcoff, 'The problem of speaking for others', in *Cultural Critique*, 20 (Winter 1991), pp. 5-32 (p. 29).

feminism'.20 However, the petition's initial inclusive depiction of the spoken-for as 'tutte le italiane' becomes problematic as the text progresses. Two major groups are delineated: the 'operaie' [working-class women, particularly factory workers] and the 'borghesi' [bourgeois or middle-class women]. Once these categories have been introduced, there is an attempt to hold them together:

Le operaie non si lagnano della trasformazione delle industrie, che allargò il loro campo d'azione e le tolse da una condizione poco dissimile da quella dell'utile animale domestico né le borghesi rimpiangono il parassitismo legale, economico donde scendeva per esse inevitabile la ignoranza e la servitù.

Le une e le altre si sono buttate al lavoro ed allo studio, affrontando coraggiosamente il problema della vita, irto per esse di triboli e di spine che gli uomini non conobbero mai - ma reclamano contro l'assurdo crudele che le ha gettate nella lotta per la esistenza disarmate della sola arma efficace nei paesi retti a regime rappresentativo – il voto.²¹

In the first of the two paragraphs quoted above, the 'operaie' and the 'borghesi' are presented as separate, named entities, while a conjunction ('né') links their similar positive attitudes towards the societal change that has affected both their groups. Distinct verbs are used: the working-class women 'non si lagnano' of industrial development, while middle-class women do not 'rimpiangono' their past status as legal parasites.

In the opening phrase of the second paragraph ('Le une e le altre'), the groups' status as discrete entities is syntactically inscribed through the same conjunction that draws them together ('e'). However, this passage, unlike the preceding one, sees both groups of women sharing in the action of a single verb (firstly 'si buttano', later 'reclamano', and they are all passive objects of 'gettate'). Moreover, by introducing the oppositional group of 'gli uomini', who are not here subcategorised by class, a female group identity overriding class distinctions is posited.

Nevertheless, the experiential gulf between the operaie and the borghesi re-emerges at several subsequent points in the petition. The creed-like paragraph near the middle of the text represents perhaps the most determined attempt to overcome it:

Premettiamo che tutte le donne (come tutti gli uomini) hanno diritti al voto, con e senza l'alfabeto, il quale se è massimo strumento di coltura, non crea però né la intelligenza, né il

²⁰ Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili, p. 204.

²¹ [Working-class women do not complain about the transformation of industries, which broadened their field of action and removed them from a condition not dissimilar to that of the useful domestic animal - nor do middle-class women lament the passing of the legal, economic parasitism which inevitably engendered, for them, ignorance and servitude.

One group and the other flung themselves into work and study, bravely confronting the problem of living, beset for them with troubles and thorns that men never knew - but they protest against the cruel absurdity that has tossed them into the struggle for existence disarmed of the only weapon that works in countries governed by a representative regime – the vote.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 112.

buon senso, né la visione cosciente dei propri interessi. Vi abbiamo diritto perché siamo cittadine [...]²²

The emphatic 'we' voice and high idealism of this passage, however – reminiscent of a discourse of equality and principle as filtered through Mazzini, with *diritti* and *doveri* as dual components of *cittadinanza*²³ – are muddled by gradualism almost immediately:

Non possiamo quindi ammettere che alle donne si neghi l'esercizio del voto per altre ragioni da quelle, per le quali temporaneamente si nega all'uomo [...]

Non possiamo pertanto non rilevare con quanta stridente ingiustizia e non senso – nella ristretta legge attuale – si neghi l'esercizio del voto alle donne maggiorenni che hanno [...]²⁴

As to what these adult women 'hanno', there follows an extensive list of academic and professional qualifications and achievements. Although disenfranchisement is an injustice for all women, then, there is the awkward implication that it is a more 'stridente ingiustizia' for the educated than for others. The petition moves with ungainly speed from a plea for universal suffrage to a realistic supposition that the *borghesi* will win the vote before the *operaie*.²⁵

Although the *operaie* and *borghesi* dominate the text, a third category of Italian womanhood is briefly mentioned in the sixth paragraph, and is particularly interesting as regards the problem of locating speakers in relation to spoken-for:

Il vecchio idillio del focolare non esiste più che pei poeti e per una categoria di privilegiate — quelle che posseggono, o i cui padri e mariti posseggono, o guadagnano quanto basta alla vita.²⁶

²² [We assert that all women (like all men) have rights to the vote, with and without literacy, which, while it is the greatest instrument of education, does not however create either intelligence, or good sense, or a conscious vision of one's own interests. We have this right because we are [women] citizens [...]] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110.

²³ See in particular Mazzini's 1860 work *I doveri dell'uomo* – which closes with the reflection that 'L'emancipazione della donna dovrebbe essere continuamente accoppiata per voi coll'emancipazione dell'operaio e darà al vostro lavoro la consecrazione di una verità universale' [The emancipation of woman ought to be constantly paired with the emancipation of the worker, for you, and will give to your work the consecration of a universal truth]. (Giuseppe Mazzini, *I doveri dell'uomo* (Florence: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1953; first publ. 1860), p. 177.

²⁴ [We cannot then allow that women should be denied the exercise of the vote for reasons other than those for which it is temporarily denied to man [...]

We cannot moreover refrain from pointing out with what blatant injustice and lack of sense – within the restricted current law – the exercise of the vote is denied to adult women who have [...]] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110.

²⁵ As Bigaran points out, 'the coherence and rigour of emancipationist discourse are weakened precisely when [the petition] isolates social and professional groups for whom to demand an immediate reform'. Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 52.

²⁶ [The old idyll of the hearth no longer exists except for the poets and for a category of privileged women – those who possess, or whose fathers and husbands possess, or earn, enough to live by.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

This is the only reference in the text to these 'privilegiate', and the tone is dismissive; their experience is coupled with the dreams of the 'poeti', and as such is connotatively tarred with anachronism. If Italy's *operaie* and *borghesi* have moved out into the public world of employment, but the *privilegiati* are still living the 'vecchio idillio del focolare', the implication is that this latter group is out of step with the country's progress.

Problematically, however, membership of the *privilegiate* category was often a requirement for those devoting significant amounts of time to the suffrage cause. At no point do the signatories of the petition point out that many of them are 'privilegiate';²⁷ indeed, the brief reference to the *privilegiate* is followed immediately by the contrasting image of Italy's women as a hardworking 'massa' [mass], with the writers implicitly affiliated with this group: 'La massa delle donne lavora oggi con la mente e col braccio'.²⁸

This use of 'massa' to describe women as potential voters is one which will recur six times in the petition. Here, it marks the renewed tension between the will to merge the *operaie* and the *borghesi* and their obdurate distinctness; they are a lumpen 'massa', a word with potent connotations of group identity, yet they work in divided ways: 'con la mente' (the *borghesi*) and 'col braccio' (the *operaie*). The connotation of 'massa', however, is decidedly proletarian. Its repeated use gains significance when read in tandem with the particular Italian instance chosen to illustrate the protective value of maternal instinct:

[...] nei tumulti che afflissero nel maggio del 1898 varie regioni d'Italia, le donne alla testa delle folle insorgenti, sfidavano i fucili e le baionette tenendosi dietro gli uomini. Una falsa nozione di fatto fondata in logica (logica che il legislatore non ebbe) persuadeva allora il popolo addietrato del contado che le donne, non essendo contate nei diritti e benefici politici, non contassero neppure davanti alle responsabilità politiche e penali.

Forti di questa fede le donne proteggevano coi loro corpi i padri, i mariti ed i figli [...]²⁹

The image is a vivid one, depicting in visual and historically specific form the concept of maternal instinct shielding humanity from harm. Politically, however, it represents a striking choice on the part

in this conviction, the women protected their fathers, husbands and sons with their bodies [...] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 112.

²⁷ The first 26 signatures include three named *contesse*, one *marchesa* and one *principessa*, as well as other names belonging to aristocratic circles, such as Giacinta Martini Marescotti. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 114. Interestingly, Mozzoni herself had in the past been sarcastically described by socialist campaigner Anna Kuliscioff as 'la contessa' (see Beatrice Pisa, 'll lavoro femminile nella struttura sociale italiana' in Fiorenza Taricone and Beatrice Pisa (eds.), *Operaie, borghesi, contadine nel XIX secolo* (Rome: Carrucci, 1985), pp. 119-264 (p. 122)). ²⁸ [The mass of women work today with minds and hands]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

²⁹ [[...] in the riots that afflicted various regions of Italy in May 1898, women at the head of the rebel crowds faced down the guns and bayonets, keeping the men behind them. A false common-law notion founded in logic (logic that the legislator did not possess), then, convinced the backward country people that women, not being counted in political rights and benefits, would not count before political and penal responsibilities either. Strong

of the petition's authors: to align their cause, and by implication themselves, with the rioters of 1898, and thus with the class group exemplified by the *operaie*.

If three groups of Italian women are distinguished in the text – the *operaie*, the *borghesi* and the *privilegiate* – the authors attempt, but never fully manage, to assimilate at least the first two groups in a 'noi' [we] voice, and refrain from overtly identifying themselves with any one of them. Paradoxically, however, the group from which most distance is kept is that to which many of the leading signatories, objectively speaking, belonged, i.e. the *privilegiate*. The other group to which the signatories could claim affiliation, the *borghesi*, are expected to get the vote before the working classes, but there is little enthusiasm about this. Finally, the *operaie*, the group with which the literate, erudite signatories would seem to have least in common,³⁰ emerge, through lexical and anecdotal choices (the repetition of 'massa'; the reference to the 1898 rioters), as the group with which there is the strongest emotional identification.

5.3 Harnessing suffragism to italianità?

This section examines national identity in the petition, and asks how it interacts with the other ideologies and identities therein.

The national specificity of the petition's request for suffrage is emphasised from the outset, when the country's Parliament is addressed on behalf of 'tutte le italiane'. Here, I deal firstly with national specificity as presented in legislative and sociological terms. I then show how this facilitates both the pragmatic framing of the suffrage question and the rhetorical insertion of women's suffrage into a set of stepping stones leading Italy, and Italians, towards membership of a golden circle of 'progressive', 'civilised' nations.

The 1865 civil code ('il codice civile patrio') is introduced as one of the three agents of social change from which women's suffrage emerges as the 'prodotto naturale e ormai maturo'.³¹ In the third paragraph, this is expanded upon:

Quanto alle borghesi – dacché il codice civile dispensò i padri dall'obbligo di dare la dote alle figlie, soppresse la inalienabilità della dote, impose alle mogli di contribuire con tutte le loro forze alla famiglia in aiuto del marito, ed in sostituzione di esso ove del caso, ed esonerò i più

³⁰ Among the leading signatories, as representatives of the borderland between the *borghesi* and the *operaie*, are Cleofe Leoni, 'telefonista' [telephone operator], and Romelia Troise, 'telegrafista' [telegraph operator]. Of these, however, Troise at least was decidedly atypical: she was to work as a secretary of the CNPSF, and would become a lawyer in 1919, when the bar on women entering that profession was finally removed. (See Taricone, *L'Associazionismo femminile*, p. 114; *Teresa Labriola*, p. 16).

³¹ [natural and now ripe product]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

o meno prossimi parenti dal mantenere le vedove e zitelle – come sancivano le leggi anteriori – la legge ha detto come logica conseguenza alle donne della classe borghese – studiate e lavorate.³²

The specifics of the Italian legislative system are reiterated again in the ninth paragraph:

Il codice civile, che ci tolse gli appoggi economici e ci buttò disarmate nella lotta per la vita – le leggi amminstrative che tolsero alle lombarde, alle venete ed alle toscane il voto – la legge elettorale che ci pone a fascio con gli incapaci e i delinquenti – la nuova legislazione sociale che con la legge di protezione del nostro lavoro ci inferiorizzò come operaie, rendendoci ancora più penosa la concorrenza con gli uomini nelle industrie comuni – i disegni di legge riguardanti la donna e la famiglia subito soffocati o lasciati cadere per chiusura di sessione e non più ripresi, – tutto ci ha ormai persuaso che la giustizia, che suona così alto nei discorsi elettorali, non riguarda che gli elettori e non si estenderà fino a noi se non quando, e in quanto saremo elettrici.³³

Although many of the legislative developments cited here were common to other countries at the time, they are presented here in their peculiarly Italian context. The inclusion of the loss of the pre-unification system in Lombardy, Tuscany and the Veneto, whereby propertied single women had been entitled to vote in local elections, heightens the *italianità* of the list.

This insistence on legislative specificity feeds, firstly, into the petition's treatment of women's suffrage as pragmatically propitious, and secondly, into its insertion of suffrage into a national programme of progressive development. These two discursive threads are interdependent; both are manifested in the argument presented to counter that of the 'salto nel buio':

Alcune diecine d'anni fa gli elettori erano una massa grigia e ondivaga – clientela ora di questo ora di quello – oppure infeudata per apatia, o per interessi singoli al solito deputato, facile conquista della retorica dei partiti, o dell'affarismo mascherato, o di un piccolo interesse locale. In quell'ambiente e con l'attitudine del Vaticano che teneva il partito clericale al di fuori d'ogni azione politica, nella quale tutti i partiti hanno diritto di esercitare la influenza e fare la propaganda, poteva supporsi che l'intervento di una massa di elettrici – nuovissima alla cosa pubblica –potesse determinare un imprevisto, davanti al quale l'esitazione era spiegabile.

Parlamento', p. 108.

³³ [The civil code, which took economic supports away from us and flung us unarmed into the struggle for life – the municipal laws that took the vote away from the Lombard, Venetian and Tuscan women – the electoral law that bands us with those of unsound mind and with criminals – the new social legislation which, along with the law protecting our work, rendered us inferior as workers, making competition with men in shared industries even more painful – the bills concerning woman and the family that are immediately suppressed or else allowed to drop due to the close of a parliamentary session and not taken up again – everything has now persuaded us that justice, which strikes such a lofty tone in election speeches, only concerns [male] voters, and will not extend to us unless except when, and in so far as, we will be [female] voters.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 109.

³² [While as for the middle-class women – since the civil code relieved fathers from the obligation of giving daughters a dowry, abolished the inalienability of the dowry, obliged wives to contribute with all their strengths to the family as an aid to the husband, and as a substitute for him where necessary, and exonerated closer or more distant relatives from supporting widows and spinsters – as had been sanctioned by previous laws – the law as a logical consequence said to women of the middle class – you must study and work.] 'Petizione al

Ma oggidì un imprevisto è impossibile per chi esamini obbiettivamente l'ambiente elettorale.³⁴

As has been seen (5.1), the suggestion that follows is that the 'ambiente elettorale' of early-twentieth-century Italy would see women voting on the basis of collective, largely labour-based loyalties, and thus in a responsible, intelligible and not-to-be-feared fashion. Again, the specifics that are set out (especially the mention of the Vatican's *Non Expedit* policy)³⁵ contain this pragmatic pro-suffrage argument neatly within Italian borders.

These points of reference also contain the argument within a timeframe that loosely stretches from unification to the time of writing, thus inscribing the suffrage question within a particular narrative of Italy's development as a nation. The sense of progress is strong: if a 'massa di elettrici' was perhaps too risky 'alcune diecine di anni fa', the situation has now changed, hence the triumphant 'Ma oggidì ...'. I will now elucidate how this narrative of Italian nation-building emerges at other points in the petition, and will argue that, although its link to the suffrage question is never explicitly set forth, its presence in the text performs an important discursive function.

After the initial introduction of the two main groups of Italian women, the *operaie* and the *borghesi*, paragraph 5 describes how both groups protest not against the changes that have moved them into the workplace in themselves, but against the system which 'le ha gettate nella lotta per la esistenza disarmate della sola arma efficace nei paesi retti a regime rappresentativo – il voto'.³⁶ This marks the first point in the petition at which Italy's place, real or desired, in an international community of 'progressive' nations becomes significant. It is a place which the text simultaneously affirms (Italy *is* governed by a representative regime) and contests (the vote is the only effective weapon in such countries, and Italy withholds that from certain groups, among them women). Thus, subtly, the

³⁴ [A few decades ago, the electors were a grey and formless mass – clients now of one patron, now of another – or else bound hand and foot to some established parliamentarian by apathy or by individual interests, easily won over by party rhetoric, or by masked profiteering, or by a small local cause. In that environment and with the Vatican's position which kept the clerical party out of all political activity, in which all parties have the right to exercise influence and produce propaganda, one could imagine that the intervention of a mass of women electors – very new to public affairs – could bring about an unforeseen result, which made the hesitation understandable.

But nowadays an unforeseen result is impossible to anyone who objectively examines the electoral environment.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 111.

³⁵ The *Non Expedit* policy had been declared by Pope Pius IX in 1868, and instructed Catholics not to participate in elections, either as electors or as candidates. In 1905, the policy was attenuated somewhat, with Pius X authorising Catholics to vote when Church interests demanded it (i.e. to vote against socialism) in the encyclical *II fermo proposito*. See for instance Mario Benediscioli, 'Italian Catholics between the Vatican and the Quirinal: The Non expedit at the time of Leo XIII' and 'The Roman question and Italian Catholicism – the Non expedit in the pontificates of Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius IX (until 1925)', both in Hubert Jedin (ed.), *History of the Church, vol. IX: The Church in the industrial age*, trans. Margit Resch (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), pp. 84-96 (esp. pp. 84-86); pp. 481-93 (esp. pp. 482-83).

³⁶ [has tossed them into the struggle for existence disarmed of the only weapon that works in countries governed by a representative regime – the vote]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

legitimacy of Italy's identity as an advanced and modern nation is harnessed to the question of women's suffrage.

A stronger indictment of Italy's record on women's rights appears in paragraph 8, which refutes the argument that men are the natural public representatives of women's interests:

In quarantacinque anni di vita legislativa nazionale abbiamo imparato a memoria ed apprezziamo al suo valore questa rappresentanza retorica ed onoraria.³⁷

Here, the (admittedly stale) myth of national unification as the starting point for the development of an Italy built on modern, enlightened values is bitterly demolished from a female viewpoint.

The petition thus sets up a challenge to the ideal of 'progressive Italy', yet also offers resolutions to that challenge. These resolutions take the form of interwoven 'counter-narratives' of women's progress in unified Italy. If the nation has disappointed at an institutional level, it is implied, its women, excluded from those institutions, have nonetheless undergone rapid development as a group (I have already charted the pragmatic analysis of Italian women as having become ready to vote through being propelled into social and economic worlds beyond their domestic walls). Moreover, these women, having undergone their own quiet transformation towards modernity, are presented as possessing the remedy for the disenchanting stagnation of 'official' Italy. Maternal instinct is depicted as a wellspring of pacifist and humanitarian politics; very interestingly, while this is presented as a universal truth, the example given to tie it to an Italian context is that of the protective women at the forefront of the 1898 riots, as has already been discussed. This concrete representation of women opposing violence forms a bridge to a more generic summary of the same tenet, in which lexical choices position this opposition firmly within a narrative of progress, advancement and modernity:

In un tempo – in cui la coscienza dei popoli incivili sente e l'indirizzo delle scienze sociali comprende essere la misericordia tanta parte della giustizia, e reagiscono contro quei criteri ritardatari che affidano alla violenza organizzata ed alla barbarie delle leggi e delle pene l'ordine sociale – l'avvento della donna – che rappresenta l'amore e la tutela della umanità nella vita pubblica – sarebbe presagio di vittoria sulla residua barbarie e di rapida evoluzione verso una politica più umana e una legislazione più provvida e materna.³⁸

Particularly noteworthy is the contrast between, on the one hand, 'criteri ritardatari' and the repeated use of 'barbarie', and, on the other, 'rapida evoluzione' towards a legislative system that is

³⁷ [In forty-five years of national parliamentarianism we have learned by heart, and we appreciate at its true value, this rhetorical and honorary representation.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 109.

³⁸ [At a time – in which the conscience of uncivilised peoples feels, and the discipline of social sciences understands, that mercy is a great part of justice, and they react against those regressive criteria that entrust social order to organised violence and the barbarity of laws and punishments – the advent of woman – who represents the love and guardianship of humanity in public affairs – would be an augury of victory over remaining barbarity and of swift evolution towards a more humane politics and a more provident and maternal law.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 113.

'più provvida e materna'. This serves to locate 'l'avvento della donna' as the agent of a drastic transformation: that of a savage, out-of-date Italy into a modern, caring nation. (Some resemblances to those survey responses that drew on 'flood' metaphors of female difference may be observed).³⁹ The discourse of natural feminine instinct, which has been emphasised in preceding paragraphs, is here carefully paired with one of scientific progress: the need for mercy is not only *felt* by the conscience of uncivilised peoples, but also *understood* by the social sciences.

There is an implication, then, that the tension in Italian identity which is referenced early in the text can be resolved by the admission of women to the public, political sphere, and specifically to the polling station. The petition's closing passage can be read as clinching this argument in emotive if not logical terms:

Noi confidiamo infine che – considerando la legge universale di evoluzione, che tutto va trasformando, metodi e istituti, usi e costumi – i legislatori italiani si persuaderanno essere assurdo che solo la donna – la cui attività e interessi si vanno sempre più estendendo – rimanga perennemente inchiodata alla croce delle secolari esclusioni. 40

While the use of the term 'evoluzione' in earlier passages (e.g. the 'rapida evoluzione' cited above) does not necessarily evoke Darwinian theory, since the term was and is commonly used to signify 'development' in Italian, its repetition here in the context of 'la legge universale di evoluzione' suggests that the scientific nuance may be at least partly deliberate. The effect of this 'legge' ('tutto va trasformando') is established, by means of syntactic parallel, as a general principle of which the changes in women's activities are a specific instance ('si vanno sempre più estendendo').

This invocation of a subtly scientific language in relation to women's development serves to underline the contrasting language drawn on in the final clause: that of religion. On the one hand, the image of woman as crucified martyr is undeniably forceful (albeit quasi-sacrilegious)⁴¹ in a language and culture steeped in Catholicism. Within the text of the petition, women's places in religious as well as political martyrologies have already been cited, and the charged tone of this final image echoes that of the earlier reference to women's payment of 'l'imposta del sangue nei dolori della maternità'.⁴² On the other hand, the effect of this sudden swerve to religious discourse is to daub the Italy of

³⁹ See Chapter 4, pp. 83-86.

⁴⁰ [We trust, finally, that – considering the universal law of evolution, which is transforming everything, methods and institutions, habits and customs – the Italian legislators will persuade themselves that it is absurd that only woman – whose activities and interests are expanding ever further – should remain forever nailed to the cross of centuries-old exclusions.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 113.

⁴¹ As Anne-Marie Korte points out, albeit in the rather different context of analysing the imagery of pop icon Madonna, 'The image of female crucifixion enacts an iconoclash: the density of meaning of the Christian cross and the crucifixion of Jesus as the 'Son of God' collides with the problematic status of femaleness, corporeality, and sexuality in Western religious and secular imagination'. Anne-Marie Korte, 'Madonna's crucifixion and the woman's body in feminist theology' in Rosemary Buikema and Iris van der Tuin (eds.), *Doing gender in media, art and culture* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 117-33 (p. 123).

⁴² [the blood charge in the pangs of motherhood]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110.

disenfranchised women with the connotation of clericalism, while enfranchisement, as has been shown, has already been linked with progress, modernity and science. In Section 2, I discussed several examples of survey responses that posited women's susceptibility to clerical influence as a pragmatic argument *against* women's suffrage; here, by contrast, the anti-clericalism rife in Italy in the early 1900s is exploited to pro-suffrage ends.

Although Italian specificity dominates the bulk of the text, there are framing references to a broader international context. While the Italian Civil Code is one of the factors named in the opening paragraph as having prepared the way for women's suffrage, the other two – 'la crisi economica' and 'la trasformazione delle industrie'⁴³ – were both applicable across Europe. Near the end of the petition, it is emphasised that the masses

si agitano oggi per la conquista del suffragio universale per i due sessi, non che in Italia, in tutta Europa. [...]

La presente petizione non è perciò che la nota riassuntiva della gran voce pubblica. 44

Italianità, then, provides the pragmatic context for suffragist arguments and a strong affective narrative within which to frame them, yet it is itself framed within brief, almost perfunctory, nods to the world beyond the national borders.

5.4 Conclusions

Some of the difficulties identified in survey responses (Section 2) – specifically, the challenge of steering between discourses of equality and difference, principle and pragmatism – seem magnified in Mozzoni's petition of 1906. The petition draws on a rhetoric of equality to a greater extent than did most survey responses, perhaps due to the perceived need for it to speak the 'language' of the forum in which it sought an effect, i.e. political debate.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, women's difference, and particularly

44 [agitate today to win universal suffrage for both sexes, not just in Italy, but throughout Europe. [...]

⁴³ [the economic crisis]; [the transformation of industries]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 108.

The present petition is none other, then, than the note encapsulating the great public voice.] 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 113.

⁴⁵ In fact, the parliamentary discussion of the petition contains a good deal more reference to female difference and to pragmatic arguments than does the original text; MP Luigi Luzzatti, for example, argued for the women's cause on the grounds that 'manca lo aiuto dell'ingegno delle donne, mancano quella vita nuova, quello spirito di ringiovinimento, che porterebbero nel nostro consorzio politico' [we are missing the aid of women's intellect, we are missing that new life, that spirit of renewal that they would bring to our political establishment]. (See 'Petizione alla Camera' in De Bonis, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 208)). If Mozzoni did hope to convince her audience members by referencing 'their' language, she may have overestimated the weight that would be carried by discourses of equality and principle in the Chamber of Deputies.

their maternal role, is also liberally referenced, while the principles espoused are illustrated with very concrete pragmatism.

The petition also points towards some problems associated with constructing collective identities for Italian women. Semantic and syntactic features of the text signal both the will to hold sub-categories together, and the impossibility of doing that. The signatories themselves refrain from identifying with any one group, although there are hints of a strong will to be associated with the *operaie*.

Finally, although the text features only minimal references to the international canvas, it demonstrates complex discursive strategies surrounding *italianità* and the relation of national identity to the suffrage question (and to the woman question more broadly). Italian women are positioned both as symbolic of the best aspects of the Risorgimento and as a potential salve for the disappointed hopes of nationalists. Through the use of contrasting associative vocabularies, the petition not only aligns the cause of women's suffrage with that of national development and status, but aligns anti-suffragism with the despised 'clericalismo' commonly seen as frustrating the achievement of Risorgimento goals.

Chapter 6 Report of the suffrage session from CNDI congress (1908)

Primary text analysed: Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI], 'Adunanza plenaria' in Atti del I Congresso Nazionale delle donne italiane, 1908. 46

Secondo gli avversari femminismo dovrebbe significare... mi si permettea un'altra brutta parola: sfemminizzazione della donna. [...] Ora, questa non è neppure una caricatura di buon genere del femminismo [...] Nessuna delle più ardimentose iniziatrici del movimento femminile, specialmente in Italia, può meritare l'accusa di [...] aver rinunciato alle più belle attrattive della femminilità.

- Irene De Bonis, 1909.47

This chapter analyses the official report of the suffrage session from the first national congress of Italian women, held in Rome in April 1908.⁴⁸ The congress was organised by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI], and suffrage was not included on the official programme of topics for discussion.⁴⁹ However, following pressure from the Comitato Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile [CNPSF], a plenary meeting was scheduled to debate the following order of business:

Il Congresso delle donne italiane, su proposta del Comitato Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile, fa voti perché sia riconosciuto il diritto elettorale alle donne nella stessa misura e alle stesse condizioni che agli uomini; ed invita le aderenti a una indefessa propaganda individuale e collettiva, affinché l'aspirazione di poche a tale giustizia divenga reale conquista di molte.⁵⁰

The last-minute incorporation of suffrage into the congress programme seems emblematic of its ideological place within Italian feminism at the time; far from becoming the feminist issue that

⁴⁶ Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane [CNDI], 'Adunanza plenaria (organizzata dal Comitato Nazionale «Pro Suffragio Femminile»)' in *Atti del I Congresso Nazionale delle donne italiane, Roma, 24-30 aprile 1908* (Rome: Stabilimento tipografico della Società Editrice Laziale, 1912), pp. 604-19.

⁴⁷ [According to its opponents, feminism ought to mean... if I may be allowed another ugly word: the defeminisation of woman. [...] Now, this is not even a good caricature of feminism. [...] None of the most dedicated instigators of the feminist movement, especially in Italy, could deserve the accusation of [...] having rejected the loveliest charms of femininity]. De Bonis, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 9-12.

⁴⁸ Mozzoni did not attend the congress; along with Emilia Mariani and a more vociferously disapproving Anna Kuliscioff, she considered its aims too moderate and its ethos too exclusively bourgeois. Migliucci refers to the absence of Mozzoni and Kuliscioff, in particular, as a 'paradigm of the lack of unity within the women's movement' at this point. (Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 61; see also p. 57).

⁴⁹ See Chapter 2, p. 27. For a detailed account of the congress and its reception in the media, see Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*. See also Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, pp. 51-66.

⁵⁰ [The Congress of Italian women, at the suggestion of the National Committee for Female Suffrage, advocates that the electoral right be recognised for women to the same extent and under the same conditions as for men; and it calls supporters to an indefatigable individual and collective propaganda campaign, so that the aspiration to such justice of a few may become the real conquest of many.] 'Donne italiane, nel vostro interesse, leggete!' in *La vita*, 23 April 1908. (See also Frattini, *Il primo congress delle donne italiane*, p. 93, n. 94). I have translated 'poche' and 'molte' as 'a few' and 'many' respectively; however, the English does not allow for the female specificity present in both nouns in Italian.

symbolised all others, as was to a degree the case in Britain, the vote was an aspiration of 'poche', and was with difficulty inserted into a programme in which questions such as girls' education, autorizzazione maritale,⁵¹ acknowledgement of paternity and the 'white slave trade' had far more unquestioningly been included.⁵²

If the congress overall was far from being a suffragist one, it was somewhat problematic even to identify it as a feminist event.⁵³ Teresa Labriola (a committed suffragist at this stage, and the final speaker in the suffrage session),⁵⁴ in an interview with the journal *L'illustrazione popolare*, responded to the question, 'Congresso *femminile* dunque, non *femminista*?'⁵⁵ as follows:

Sì, femminile [...] Le femministe schiette seguono, per lo più, il sistema di affermare recisamente i loro diritti; noi, invece, riteniamo più opportuno di dimostrare l'attitudine della donna al lavoro ed al pensiero, sperando che a questa dimostrazione di attitudine seguirà una spontanea concessione di diritti da parte degli uomini.⁵⁶

Here, Labriola establishes the 'femministe schiette' as a group from which the congress delegates must be emphatically distinguished ('noi invece [...]'). It is a significant choice from a determined suffrage campaigner, and indeed Labriola goes on to hint at the precarious position of suffrage in the congress:

Noi non faremo ciò che comunemente si chiama politica – ad essa è avversa specialmente la presidentessa del Consiglio Nazionale delle donne italiane, contessa Gabriella Spalletti Rasponi – ma, ripeto, ci batteremo anche pel voto da concedersi alle donne.⁵⁷

The Countess Spalletti Rasponi herself,⁵⁸ in her opening address as president of the CNDI, *did* openly identify the Congress with feminism (though not suffragism), but cautiously:

⁵¹ Autorizzazione maritale referred to the requirement for married women's financial transactions to be approved by their husbands. (See also Chapter 2, p. 30, n. 159).

⁵² The official congress programme was divided into six sections, dealing with: 1) education; 2) legislative issues; 3) aid and welfare; 4) emigration; 5) health and hygiene; and 6) art and literature. The suffrage session was inserted into the section on legislative issues. (See CNDI Atti).

That said, one gendered policy of the congress suggested – perhaps unintentionally – a wry, suffragist irony: men were permitted to attend as guests, but could not vote on motions. (See Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 52). Both Roberto Mirabelli (of the 1905 bill) and Ludovico Mortara (of the 1906 Ancona judgement) are recorded as having made notable contributions to the debate on the suffrage session. (Ibid, p. 58).

⁵⁴ Labriola was by this point the author of two pro-suffrage tracts (*Studio sul problema del voto alla donna* (1904) and *Per il voto alla donna* (1906)) and had delivered the Italian CNPSF report at the congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in Copenhagen in 1906. See Marina Tesoro, 'Teresa Labriola' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 62 (2004), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-labriola_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 2 February 2012. See also Chapter 2, p. 28, n. 146 of this thesis.

⁵⁵ [A female, not feminist, Congress, then?]

⁵⁶ [Yes, female [...] The plain-spoken *feminists* mostly pursue the method of flatly declaring their rights; we, however, deem it more opportune to display woman's capacity for work and thought, in the hope that this display of capability will be followed by a spontaneous concession of rights by men.] 'Il Congresso femminile a Roma' in *L'illustrazione popolare*, 18 (3 May 1908). Italics in original. (See also Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*, pp. 27-30 and p. 89, n. 45).

⁵⁷ [We will not be doing what is generally termed political – the president of the National Council of Italian Women [CNDI], Countess Gabriella Spalletti Rasponi, is particularly opposed to it – but, I repeat, we will fight also for the vote to be conceded to women.] 'Il Congresso femminile a Roma'.

Il nostro femminismo non suona lotta, come molti credono [...] La donna resterà sempre donna, e non ha certo la stolta quanto grottesca aspirazione di prendere il posto dell'uomo [...] Da noi dipende il rendere simpatico il nostro lavoro e provare che non è un pericolo, ma un vantaggio per l'intera società.⁵⁹

Alongside a circular definition of femininity reminiscent of Domenico Zanichelli's response to the UFN survey,⁶⁰ Spalletti Rasponi's systematic use of the first person plural is noteworthy: 'il *nostro* femminismo' means that 'da *noi* dipende il rendere simpatico il *nostro* lavoro'. Against what other feminisms, then, did this *noi* define and distinguish itself? By April 1908, the WSPU members in Britain had been intermittently deploying militant, or at least disruptive, tactics for two and a half years;⁶¹ although their campaign of window-smashing would not begin until June 1908, and the policy of hunger-striking the following year, the movement had nonetheless already gained international notoriety, with roughly 130 suffragettes having been arrested in 1907 alone.⁶² If, in Spalletti Rasponi's terms, 'il nostro femminismo non suona lotta', this identity position seems perhaps constructed in opposition to the growing belligerence of the British militant movement.

For the president of the CNDI, then, the 1908 congress was an opportunity to present the face of *Italian* feminism as distinctly feminine and socially palatable – and, indeed, reports of the welcoming tea held for congress delegates by Queen Margherita⁶³ have quasi-Boccaccian undertones (it took place in the 'ombroso e fiorito giardino' of Villa Maraini, amid 'una musica deliziosa e un'onda di

⁵⁸ Gabriella Spalletti Rasponi was among those who had responded to the Unione Femminile survey of 1905 by favouring the concession of municipal suffrage only, both to women in general and to Italian women, deeming discussion of political suffrage to be premature. (UFN, *II voto alla donna*, pp. 11-12). She was to retain this position until after World War One; as late as 1914, she stated in an interview with *La Tribuna* that 'All'estero si occupa sopratutto del voto alle donne... Le donne italiane non si propongono cotesta conquista come necessaria e urgente. A molto altre cose, per noi più importanti e vitali, dobbiamo pensare.' [Abroad they concern themselves above all with women's suffrage. Italian women do not view this conquest as necessary and urgent. We need to think about many other things, for us more important and immediate.] (Cited in Rossini, 'Nazionalismo, internazionalismo e pacifismo femminile', p. 76).

⁵⁹ [Our feminism does not sound out war, as many believe [...] Woman will always remain woman, and certainly does not have the aim, as stupid as it is grotesque, of taking man's place [...] It is up to us to render our work agreeable and prove that it is not a threat, but an advantage for the whole society.] CNDI Atti, pp. 20-24. (See also Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*, pp. 20-21).

⁶⁰ See Chapter 4, pp. 78-80.

⁶¹ The first act of suffragist militancy is usually held to have been that of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney on 13 October 1905, when they interrupted a Liberal Party meeting and, on ejection, were arrested when Pankhurst allegedly committed a technical assault on a policeman by spitting at him. See for instance June Purvis, 'Doing feminist women's history: researching the lives of women in the suffragette movement in Edwardian England' in Mary Maynard and June Purvis (eds.), Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective (Abingdon and New York: Taylor and Francis, 1994), pp. 166-87 (p. 168).

⁶² Sophia A. Van Wingerden, The women's suffrage movement in Britain, 1866-1928, The women's suffrage movement in Britain, 1866-1928 (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. xiv.

⁶³ Margherita was by 1908 the dowager queen; Queen Elena, the consort of the reigning king Vittorio Emanuele III, was also present at the congress. Frattini quotes a report of the congress from *II giornale d'Italia* which waxes lyrical about the glamour of the queen's outfit: she wore a 'tailleur azzurro elettrico, con un grande boa candido, ed un cappello piumato bianco e nero' [electric blue suit, with a large white boa, and a black and white feathered hat]. 'II primo congresso delle Donne italiane inaugurato in Campidoglio', in *II giornale d'Italia*, 24 April 1908 (cited in Frattini, *II primo congresso delle donne italiane*, p 18).

cortesie squisite').⁶⁴ For those involved in the controversial suffrage session, then, identity positioning on two interrelated planes was critical. Firstly, there was a strong onus to establish the position of suffragists in relation to the broader Italian feminist or (broader still) women's movement; secondly, and in order to fulfill that first requirement, the position of Italian suffragists in relation to international suffragisms – specifically militant British suffragism – needed to be defined.

I analyse the report of the suffrage session with these two exigencies in mind in sections 6.2 and 6.3 respectively. First, however, I present an outline of the session's structure (6.1).

6.1 Overview of the text

Following an initial address from Giacinta Martini Marescotti,⁶⁵ Anita Pagliari⁶⁶ delivers a brief report on the progress of the CNPSF and explains that the session will be structured according to five 'temi' [topics], to be addressed by different speakers, as follows:

'Quali interessi economici e civili può la donna difendere solo col mezzo del voto e quali vantaggi può ottenere.'67

Speaker: Prof. Anita Zampetti Dobelli.68

'Come si possa influire sul Governo e Parlamento per ottenere il suffragio femminile.'69 Speaker: Prof. Anita Pagliari.

'Come educare le donne all'esercizio dell'elettorato.'⁷⁰ Speaker: Marchesa Elena Lucifero.⁷¹

⁶⁴ [shady and flowery garden]; [delightful music and an abundance of exquisite courtesies]. Sofia Bisi Albini, 'Il primo congresso delle donne italiane' in *Vita femminile italiana* (May 1908). (Cited in Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*, p. 18).

⁶⁵ Although the report was written by Martini Marescotti, it was delivered on her behalf by Anita Pagliari, as the former was unwell (Frattini, *Il primo congress delle donne italiane*, p. 93, n. 100). On Martini Marescotti, see Chapter 2, p. 28, n. 145 of this thesis.

⁶⁶ Anita Pagliari (1879-1965) was Secretary of the CNPSF. (See Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 820-21). She would form part of the 'young' faction, along with women like Teresa Labriola and Bice Sacchi, in the schism of 1909-10. She seems to have been unusually intransigent among Italian feminists in her approach to relationships with men: in 1911, Bice Sacchi would describe her as 'così nemica degli uomini' [such an enemy of men] that she could not comprehend the marriages of women like Bice. (Cited in Sega, 'Bice Sacchi e il suffragismo', p. 80).

⁶⁷ [What economic and civil interests can woman defend only by means of the vote, and what advantages can she obtain.]

⁶⁸ Anita Dobelli Zampetti, in addition to her activities with the CNPSF, was an integral part of the campaign to reform women's education in Italy. Described by Taricone as a 'philo-socialist republican' (*L'associazionismo femminile*, p. 25), she would become very involved with the international suffrage movement; in 1914, she would be the Italian signatory on an IWSA petition to President Woodrow Wilson, asking him to intervene to end the First War. (See Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (eds.), *Women, the family, and freedom: the debate in documents, vol. 2, 1880-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 265-66).

⁶⁹ [How may one influence the Government and Parliament so as to obtain female suffrage.]

⁷⁰ [How to educate women to use the vote.]

'Perchè il voto femminile incontra tante ostilità?'⁷² Speakers: Elena Ballio;⁷³ Baroness Irene de Bonis;⁷⁴ Giuseppina Martinuzzi.⁷⁵

'Quali vantaggi ha portato l'elettorato femminile nei paesi ove venne concesso.'⁷⁶ Speaker: Teresa Labriola (this presentation was made only orally,⁷⁷ and is therefore synopsised but not transcribed in full in the report).

To summarise, then, the session deals with: 1) suffragist motivations; 2) suffragist methods; 3) preparing women to vote; 4) reasons for anti-suffragism, and 5) results of suffrage abroad.

6.2 <u>Suffragism and feminism: strategies of integration</u>

If the impromptu inclusion of this session in the congress indicates the peripheral place of suffrage within the field of Italian feminism, the session's structure indicates the anxiety of suffragists to render their aims acceptable and intelligible to non-suffragist delegates – in short, to integrate suffrage into a broader Italian feminist programme. Especially significant is the fact that the CNPSF speakers, rather than assuming the pre-established allegiance of listeners, begin by justifying the reasons for demanding the vote; it is also noteworthy that they go on to discuss methods of campaigning (reassuring listeners as regards possible militant behaviour), and methods of educating women to use the vote (reassuring listeners concerned by the idea that Italian women were not yet ready to vote wisely).

Three extracts relate particularly to the strategic integration of suffragism and the wider women's movement. The first two, from Giacinta Martini Marescotti's and Elena Lucifero's speeches, attempt this integration by subsuming all congress delegates within a common identity group. Specifically, through the marked 'Othering'⁷⁸ of women of lower classes and/ or from southern/ rural regions, the

⁷¹ Elena Lucifero was a *marchesa* of Austrian origin. In addition to being a member of the Tuscan pro-suffrage federation, and a vice-president of the CNPSF at this stage (Frattini, *Il primo congresso delle donne italiane*, p. 93), she was a vocal advocate of sexual education in schools – a theme she also addressed during the 1908 Congress. (See Fiorenza Taricone, *Teoria e prassi dell'associazionismo italiano nel XIX e XX secolo* (Cassino: Università degli Studi di Cassino, 2003), p. 46; Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, p. 64).

^{72 [}Why does women's suffrage meet with so much hostility?]

⁷³ Elena Ballio, originally a Mazzinian supporter, was a journalist and contributor to *La donna*. (See Pieroni Bortolotti, *Alle origini del movimento femminile*, p. 107; Scaramuzza, *Politica e amicizia*, p. 102).

⁷⁴ Irene de Bonis dei Baroni de Nobili, a baroness, was a writer; the year after the congress, she would publish the pro-suffrage volume *Per il voto alle donne* (Rome: Tipografia Righetti, 1909).

⁷⁵ Giuseppina Martinuzzi (1844-1925) was a teacher, poet and socialist. (See Patrizia Gabrielli, 'Martinuzzi, Giuseppina' in Dizionario biografico degli italiani, vol. 71 (2008), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppina-martinuzzi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 5 February 2012. For further information, see Marija Cetina (ed.), *Giuseppina Martinuzzi: documenti del periodo rivoluzionario*, 1896-1925 (Pula: Naučna biblioteka, 1970)).

⁷⁶ [What advantages has women's suffrage brought in the countries where it has been granted.]

⁷⁷ CNDI, Adunanza plenaria, p. 607; p. 617.

⁷⁸ I use the term 'othering', here and in subsequent chapters, to indicate a process whereby, in Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger's terms, 'the notion of who and what Others are […] is intimately related to 'our' notion of who and what 'we' are. That is, we 'use' the Other to define ourselves: 'we' understand ourselves in relation to

presumed commonalities of the congress delegates (as middle- or upper-class and of northern/ urban extraction) are brought into focus. The third extract, from Elena Ballio's speech, attacks a particular group of female anti-suffragists, yet carefully refrains from suggesting that some of her listeners may be among their number. I argue that, in different ways, all three extracts elide divisions between suffragists and non-suffragists present by fortifying aspects of identity in which speakers and listeners can share.

6.2.1 Giacinta Martini Marescotti

Giacinta Martini Marescotti begins her presidential introduction by firmly establishing a sense of Italian nationality; the first words of her speech are 'A voi convenute qui da ogni parte d'Italia',⁷⁹ and, in referring to the location of the congress in the Palazzo di Giustizia, she both invokes and adapts the familiar rhetorical strategy of exalting ancient Rome:

È di ottimo augurio a tutte noi perfino il luogo dove siamo adunate [...]

Non ci sgomonentino le immagini dei grandi romani, per i quali il tipo ideale della donna fu quella che rimase in casa e filò la lana; perché [...] sollevata a dignità maggiore e ottenute facoltà che oggi la legge le nega, [la donna] sarà più savia custode delle sorti della famiglia che qualche volta l'uomo non sia.⁸⁰

Martini Marescotti does not reject the Ancient Roman epitaph inscribing domestic femininity within a myth of a nation – 'domo mansit, lanam fecit' 81 – but rather adapts it, suggesting that the voting woman will be an improvement rather than a dissolution of the Roman ideal of a family woman.

what 'we' are not.' Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (eds.), Representing the Other: a feminism and psychology reader (London: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 8.

⁷⁹ [To all of you gathered here from every part of Italy]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 604.

⁸⁰ [The very place where we are convened is a great omen for us all [...]

We are not perturbed by the images of the great Romans, for whom the ideal type of woman was she who stayed at home and spun wool; because [...] raised up to greater dignity and having obtained abilities that today the law denies her, [woman] will be a wiser guardian of the fortunes of the family than man may sometimes be.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', pp. 604-05.

This epitaph [she stayed at home and spun wool] made frequent appearances in political debates on the Italian suffrage question. In the 1907 parliamentary discussion of Mozzoni's petition, for instance, it is first quoted directly as a reason against allowing women to vote ('anche nell'antica Roma, ove più che mai la donna si sentì cittadina [...] era altresì encomio accettato e meritato il domi mansit et lanam fecit' [even in ancient Rome, where more than at any other time woman felt herself to be a citizen [...] the domi mansit et lanam fecit was still an accepted and well-deserved acclamation]); it is subsequently picked up and used with an un-Italian connotation by the pro-suffrage Mirabelli ('Il vecchio idillio del focolare, il Domi mansit lanam fecit dell'antica Roma [...] su cui l'Imperatore tedesco ha ricamato le sue famose K, sfuma dinanzi al gran fermento del tempo nostro' [The old idyll of the hearth, the Domi mansit lanam fecit of ancient Rome [...] upon which the German emperor stitched his famous Ks, fades away before the great ferment of our times]). 'Petizione alla camera' in De Bonis, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 182-83; p. 191. This is a microcosmic example of the struggle of both anti- and pro-suffrage campaigners to harness their side of the argument to something perceptible as authentic italianità.

However, this reference to Italy as a united nation is swiftly followed by an admission of class segregation:

importa sempre più le simpatie, l'adesione, la cooperazione delle proletarie che diffidarono di noi, credendo questo un movimento puramente borghese, e fatto per avvantaggiare noi sole: l'adesione e la cooperazione delle molte donne che ignorano i nostri intendimenti.⁸²

Although the stated aim is to convince working-class women that suffragism is not 'un movimento puramente borghese', the repeated use of 'noi' ('che diffidarono di *noi*'; 'noi sole'; 'i *nostri* intendimenti') reinforces existing class borderlines, enclosing both the speakers on the suffrage panel and all their hearers within a bourgeois identity-group.

6.2.2 Elena Lucifero

Regional rather than overtly class-based divisions are underlined by Elena Lucifero, whose short speech deals with the question of how to prepare women to use the vote. Having initially spoken in general terms about the need for women to involve themselves in social and educational work, 'perchè così s'apre il loro intelletto ed il loro cuore all'interesse publico [sic]',83 she goes on to advocate a missionary role for educated women:

Bisogna esercitare una influenza continua di esempio e di propaganda nelle provincie e nelle campagne, massime del mezzogiorno, mediante le maestre e le mogli degli impiegati e degli ufficiali che vanno nei paesi lontani dal pensiero e dalla vita moderna; fare un'azione sistematica di organizzazione fra di esse, affinché ognuna di loro si senta missionaria di civiltà, di progresso e di emancipazione della donna esercitando la sua influenza civilizzatrice coll'esempio e colla parola nei luoghi remoti men progrediti.

Bisogna servirsi dei giornali di moda per svegliare nelle donne ancora incolte ed inevolute, l'interesse per i problemi sociali senza che esse stesse se n'accorgano, intercalando altri di forma facile, ma atti ad interessare, specialmente sotto la veste di novelle che mettano in luce deficienze ed abusi dei pregiudizi, delle consuetudine e delle leggi.⁸⁴

The construction of southern, rural areas as an internal Other to an Italy characterised by progressive modernity is exemplified in the repetition of descriptive phrases used here: having identified the

⁸² [ever more important are the sympathies, support, cooperation of the proletarian women who distrusted us, believing this to be a purely bourgeois movement, and created to benefit us alone: the support and the cooperation of the many women who are ignorant of our intentions.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 605.

^{83 [}so that thus their intellect and their heart may open up to public welfare]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 611.

⁸⁴ [There is a need to exercise a constant influence by example and by propaganda in the provinces and the countryside, especially those of the south, through the schoolteachers and the wives of employees and officials who travel to the villages far away from thought and from modern life; to systematically organise among them, until each one of them feels herself a missionary of civilisation, of progress and of women's emancipation, exercising her civilising influence by example and by word in the remote and least developed places.

There is a need to use fashion journals to awaken an interest in social problems in the still uncultured and undeveloped women, without them being aware of it themselves, inserting other problems – in simple form, but likely to arouse interest - especially under the guise of stories that shed light on deficiencies and abuses resulting from prejudices, customs and laws.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 611.

problematic areas as '[le] provincie e [le] campagne, massime del mezzogiorno', Lucifero subsequently refers to them within the same paragraph as '[i] paesi lontani dal pensiero e dalla vita moderna' and 'i luoghi remoti men progrediti'.

A focus on this kind of 'Othering' of Italy's south (an instance of what has more generally been termed 'internal orientalism')⁸⁵ has become a trope of scholarship on Italian national identity.⁸⁶ John Dickie, for instance, explains the role of the southern Other by suggesting that

to define Italy as civilized, one has to have a sense, albeit perhaps implicit, of where that civilization fades at its boundaries into the barbarous [...] The barbarous, the primitive, the violent, the irrational, the feminine, the African: these and other values [...] were repeatedly located in the Mezzogiorno as foils to definitions of Italy.⁸⁷

The paradoxical status of Italy's south and similarly 'internally Othered' regions is further elucidated by Johnson and Coleman, who argue that such areas

become the spatial containers that are home to impediments to *national* progress [...]. Discourses of difference often say as much *about the anxieties of the nation at large* as they do about a specific othered region.⁸⁸

In other words, the faults attributed to the south may in fact be those also attributed to the entire nation; it is only by containing and circumscribing them regionally that a contrasting national image may be created.⁸⁹

In the quoted extract from Elena Lucifero's speech, this discourse of regional alterity is applied specifically to women.⁹⁰ However, while the repeatedly-referenced 'backward' regions are given

⁸⁵ The notion of 'internal orientalism' was coined by Louisa Schein with reference to China (see Louisa Schein, 'Gender and internal orientalism in China' in *Modern China*, 23:1 (January 1997), pp. 69-98).

⁸⁶ See for instance Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (eds.), *The new history of the Italian south: the Mezzogiorno revisited* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997); Jane Schneider (ed.) *Italy's 'Southern question: orientalism in one country* (Oxford: Berg, 1998); John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: the nation and stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999); Lucy Riall, 'Which road to the south? Revisionists revisit the Mezzogiorno' in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 5:1 (2000), pp. 89-100; John A. Agnew, *Place and politics in modern Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Anna Triandafyllidou, 'Italy and Europe: internal Others and external challenges to national identity' in Atsuko Ichijo and Willfried Spohn, *Entangled identities: nations and Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 88-104; Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the nation in liberal Italy, 1861–1911: meridionalism, empire, and diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Corey Johnson and Amanda Coleman, 'The internal Other: exploring the dialectical relationship between regional exclusion and the construction of national identity' in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 102: 4 (2012), pp. 863-80.

⁸⁷ Dickie, Darkest Italy, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Johnson and Coleman, 'The internal Other', p. 3; p. 13. (Italics added).

⁸⁹ This idea is discussed in rich detail by Silvana Patriarca, who considers the evolution of Italy's internal 'self-Othering' from unification to the early 21st century. Pertinently, she notes that the South was not always the most despised region: in 1868, for instance, Cristina di Belgioiso had criticised Tuscans, rather than southerners, as the laziest of Italians (Patriarca, *Italian vices*, p. 68).

⁹⁰ It has been argued that an analogous ideological stance operated on the international plane of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance: 'Leaders of the IWSA [...] tended to be ethnocentric in their outlook, sharing the assumptions of their class and generation that the West signified "progress and civilization"

verbal embodiment in the 'donne ancora incolte ed inevolute', the contrasting, idealised national identity is more recurrently and insistently concentrated in the figures of the 'maestre e [...] mogli' who find themselves sent to such quasi-colonies; each of these is potentially a 'missionaria di civiltà' bearing an 'influenza civilizzatrice'. This functions as an adaptation of the representative strategy, discussed above, of containing problems through internal 'othering'; in this case, the oft-cited problem of Italian women's lack of political *coscienza* is fixed within particular geographical (and sociological) boundaries. Meanwhile, a strong rhetorical case is made for educated women as the ambassadors of a 'civilità' which implicitly holds together the broad notion of 'true' *italianità*, the popular emancipationist discourse of social maternity, and the particular cause of suffragism.⁹¹

An analysis of pronominal and transitivity choices, 92 however, reveals that Lucifero is not necessarily positioning her listeners as the missionaries in question. There are in fact at least three groups of women in the text. The 'donne [...] incolte' are given no agency of their own, either material or mental; they are to be acted on 'senza che esse stesse se n'accorgano' by the educated 'maestre e [...] mogli', and by the editors and writers of fashion journals. However, the 'maestre e [...] mogli' are not referred to as noi or voi, but as loro [they], and they are in turn acted on, or, more precisely, used as instruments, by a third group whose activities are presented using the impersonal construction 'bisogna'. Selective italicisation makes visible the much stronger agency of this last group: 'Bisogna esercitare una influenza [...] mediante le maestre e le mogli [...]; fare un'azione sistematica di organizzazione fra di esse, affinché ognuna di loro si senta missionaria [...]'. Here, it is proposed that the unspecified group carry out intentional material actions ('esercitare', 'fare'), while the initial action attributed to each 'missionary' woman ('si senta') is contingent and mental. The reiteration of the 'bisogna' construction in the second paragraph suggests that this third group also wields direct power over print media, as here no intermediaries are mentioned. Although this group is never explicitly referred to as noi, its agency and the choice of loro to refer to the 'maestre e [...] mogli' make the suggestion implicit. By subtly aligning herself and her listeners with the powerful position of suffragist organisers rather than that of suffragist 'foot soldiers', Lucifero augments the class-based identity of congress delegates suggested earlier in Martini Marescotti's speech.

compared in particular with "Oriental" societies that were dominated in their eyes by "savage brutality". They saw it as part of their role, therefore, to stimulate suffrage activity elsewhere in the world.' June Hannam, 'International dimensions of women's suffrage: at the crossroads of several interlocking identities' in Women's History Review, 14: 3-4 (2005), pp. 543-60 (p. 552).

⁹¹ Migliucci makes especial reference to Lucifero's contribution at the congress as evidencing 'great strategic and communicative lucidity and a particular understanding of the mental condition of certain women, reduced to victims of prejudices and cultural backwardness' (*Per il voto alle donne*, p. 60). My purpose here is not to undermine this view of Lucifero's speech, but to point to the discursive processes whereby her undeniable 'lucidity' constructs sub-groups within the category of *donne italiane*.

Transitivity is defined by Sara Mills, following Michael Halliday, as 'concerned with the representation of who acts (who is an agent) and who is acted upon (who is affected by the actions of others).' Sara Mills, Feminist Stylistics (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 143.

6.2.3 Elena Ballio

In contrast with the two extracts analysed above, Elena Ballio, in her speech on why so much hostility is directed at the suffrage campaign, launches an overt attack on anti-suffragist women. Specifically, she censures

l'egoismo delle donne intellettuali: dottoresse, letterate, artiste, signore colte dell'alta società, conferenziere, giornaliste. Chi non ha udito dalla bocca di molte di queste, o letto nei loro scritti, le solite rancide teorie intorno all'inferiorità costituzionale del nostro sesso [...]? [...] Lo strano spettacolo di queste intellettuali che, per la stessa consapevolezza del proprio valore, e per il fatto delle loro occupazioni non esclusivamente muliebri, dovrebbero essere le vessilifere, e sono invece le nemiche più accanite di ogni rivendicazione sociale del loro sesso, meraviglia e rattrista. E non potendo supporre che la loro mente sia annebbiata dagli stessi pregiudizi del volgo, è necessario concludere ch'esse sono ispirate dal meno simpatico dei sentimenti umani. Paghe degli omaggi che il mondo tributa alla loro superiorità intellettuale, orgogliose dell'influenza che indirettamente esercitano sulle questioni politiche e sociali, beate dei loro trionfi letterari o artistici, nulla importa loro del voto amministrativo o politico. Forse (esse pensano), il giorno in cui potremo competere cogli uomini nei consigli e nel parlamento, cesserà il nostro prestigio e la nostra influenza su di essi, e cadremo al livello delle altre donne che ci sorgeranno d'accanto! Severo giudizio questo che, sinceramente, vorrei mi fosse dimostrato ingiusto e immeritato; poichè non giova certamente alla causa femminile il pensare che in mezzo a tanto altruismo esista una classe di privilegiate, egoisticamente ostili e sorde ai lamenti ed ai bisogni del sesso a cui appartengono. 93

It is not difficult to think of high-profile examples of such anti-suffragist 'donne intellettuali': the authors Matilde Serao and Neera are two obvious ones.⁹⁴ Indeed, it is known that a number of prominent women who had taken anti-suffragist lines were present at the congress (Giselda Chiarini

⁹³ [the egoism of the intellectual women: doctors, scholars, artists, cultured women of high society, lecturers, journalists. Who has not heard from the mouth of many of these, or read in their writings, the usual stale theories about the constitutional inferiority of our sex [...]? [...] The strange spectacle of these intellectuals who, given their very awareness of their own worth, and the fact of their not exclusively feminine occupations, ought to be the standard-bearers, and are instead the bitterest enemies of every social demand of their sex, shocks and saddens. And, being unable to suppose that their mind is clouded by the same prejudices of the common people, it must be concluded that they are moved by the least pleasing of human sentiments. Replete with the tributes that the world pays to their intellectual superiority, proud of the influence that they indirectly exert on political and social questions, happy in their literary or artistic triumphs, the municipal or political vote matters nothing to them. Perhaps (they think), the day on which we can compete with men in councils and in parliament our prestige and our influence over them will end, and we will fall to the level of the other women who will rise up from alongside us! This is a harsh judgment which, in truth, I would like to see proved unjust and undeserved; since it is certainly of no benefit to the women's cause to think that in the middle of so much altruism there exists a class of privileged women, selfishly hostile and deaf to the cries and the needs of the sex to which they belong.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 613.

⁹⁴ See Serao, 'Votazione femminile'; Neera, *Le idee di una donna*. However, as indicated in Chapter I, both these writers have in recent years been critically considered in terms of an 'uneasy discrepancy between ideology and the practicalities of life' (Sharon Wood, *Italian women's writing, 1860-1994*, p. 46) – that is, in terms of a tension between overtly declared anti-feminist stances and implicitly feminist sympathies in their fictional works. See especially Kroha, *The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy*; Fanning, *Gender meets genre*; Mitchell, 'Narrativizing women's experiences in late nineteenth-century Italy'.

is recorded as having spoken against the motion in the discussion during the suffrage session). However, Ballio cautiously refrains from levelling her accusation at her audience members. Rather, through the construction, 'Chi non ha udito dalla bocca di molte di queste, o letto nei loro scritti, le solite rancide teorie intorno all'inferiorità costituzionale del nostro sesso?', the listeners' agreement with the speaker is pre-supposed – especially since 'chi' carries with it an inclusive implication of 'chi di noi' [who of us].

While the female sex is described as 'nostro sesso' during this initial establishment of an oppositional relation between the donne intellettuali in question and the congress delegates, Ballio subsequently uses 'loro sesso' and '[il] sesso a cui appartengono' as the emphasis shifts to the inconsistency inherent in these women's refusal to support the emancipation of other women. The accusation of betrayal is sharpest at the point where she reverses her pronominal usage by appropriating the collective voice of these anti-suffragists: 'Forse (esse pensano), il giorno in cui potremo competere cogli uomini [...] cesserà il nostro prestigio e la nostra influenza su di essi, e cadremo al livello delle altre donne che ci sorgeranno d'accanto!' This can be read as a form of imaginative 'reverse Othering'; where Martini Marescotti and Lucifero implicitly positioned their listeners as part of a presently privileged in-group, Ballio forces hers to see themselves through the eyes of the still more privileged as, literally, the suppressed 'altre donne' [other women]. Although this positioning turns that of the previous speakers on its head, the discursive function is similar: the solidarity of speaker and listeners is as effectively reinforced by this momentary 'Othering' of selves as it was by the earlier 'Othering' of others. It is only after this strong reinforcement of a shared position that there is any hint that the menace of such 'donne intellettuali' may have infested the congress itself: in the apparently conciliatory final line quoted, Ballio laments the thought 'che in mezzo a tanto altruismo esista una classe di privilegiate, egoisticamente ostili e sorde [...]'.

The three extracts analysed above all illustrate the anxiety of suffragist speakers to embed their cause securely within the broader women's movement in Italy, and to win the sympathies of their listeners. A strategy common to all three extracts involves the rhetorical homogenisation of congress delegates, whether within the flattering and powerful role of Italian feminism's colonising 'missionaries' (Martini Marescotti and Lucifero) or within the victimised and silenced role of the 'others' dismissed by those few women who had found means other than the vote of gaining political power (Ballio).

⁹⁵ I° Congresso delle donne italiane. La vittoriosa verità' in Avanti!, 26 April 1908. (Cited in Frattini, *Il primo congress delle donne italiane*, p. 49).

6.3 <u>International suffragisms and Italian ambivalence</u>

The third and final point on Elena Lucifero's list of 'bisogna' proposals is as follows:

Bisogna pure mantenere il pubblico al corrente del movimento internazionale pel voto, per dimostrare la fatale marcia verso il progresso e l'elettorato tutto. ⁹⁶

The comparative terseness of this suggestion hints at the problems it entailed. Specifically, the need to remain 'al corrente' with the international suffrage movement was countered by the difficulties of squaring aspects of that movement — in particular, its militant British manifestation — with the project of integrating suffragism into an Italian feminism largely preoccupied with the genteel mores of social maternity.

The English suffragists are explicitly mentioned by three of the speakers: Giacinta Martini Marescotti, Anita Pagliari, and Elena Ballio. Each of these, in different ways, attempts to delineate the relation of these to the suffragists of Italy. The discursive tactics used reveal both individual ambivalences and a more general irresoluteness of international identity within Italian suffragism.

6.3.1 Giacinta Martini Marescotti

Martini Marescotti opens her speech, as shown in 6.2.1, with a forceful establishment of Italian national identity, only to suggest the fragmentation of this along class lines in her plea for the conversion of the proletarian women to suffragism. Arguably, she rhetorically restores Italian unity when, later on, she devotes approximately one-third of her speech to the position of Italian suffragists in relation to those of other nations, creating an external 'Other' and thus a strong 'self'.

Having already linked suffragism once with 'dignità' [dignity], she states:

A raggiungere il fine che ci siamo proposte, noi dobbiamo continuare con la dignitosa costanza che dimostrammo sin qui [...]

Ma la dignità del procedere non dev'essere confusa con l'inerzia: combattere bisogna e se non con i mezzi usati in altri paesi dove l'educazione femminile [...] ha tolto alla donna quella timidezza istintiva che rimane nelle donne della nostra razza, dobbiamo tuttavia combattere [...]. 97

⁹⁶ [There is a need also to keep the public up to date with the international suffrage movement, to demonstrate the inexorable march towards progress and the full electorate.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 611.

 $^{^{97}}$ [To achieve the aim we have proposed, we must persist with the dignified constancy we have shown thus far [...]

But the dignity of proceeding should not be confused with inertia: fight we must, and if not with the methods used in other countries where female education [...] has divested woman of that instinctive timidity that remains in the women of our race, we must still fight [...]]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 605.

Several uncertainties are voiced here. Firstly, there is the repetitive insistence on both dignity ('dignitosa costanza [...] la dignità del procedere') and the need to fight ('combattere bisogna [...] dobbiamo tuttavia combattere'), without a clear indication of how to marry these elements. Secondly, the description of 'altri paesi' is ambivalent in the extreme: it is education, presumably considered a force for good, that has removed foreign women's 'timidezza', yet this timidity is qualified as 'istintiva'. Is Martini Marescotti suggesting that timidity is innate in women, hence that foreign education has in some way overcome feminine nature, or that it is rather endemic in Italian culture, hence 'rimane' among 'le donne della nostra razza'? The amplification of national identity into racial identity in this last phrase cements the essentialism of the adjective 'istintiva' and the verb 'rimane'; however, this essentialism could have multiple significations. On the one hand, it could indicate that the 'timidezza' of Italian women is being portrayed as natural, ancient and perhaps covertly indexed to their aforementioned 'dignità'; on the other, it could be an instance of what Silvana Patriarca describes as 'a process of "self-Othering," an absorption and redeployment of negative sterotypes relating to the Italian people as a whole [...] and coexisting with the patriotic denunciation of the foreigners' misrepresentations of Italy.'98 The co-presence of these different ideological references, without the clear dominance of either, suggests a not-easily-articulated dissonance concerning the relation of sex and nationality.

Where does this leave the educated and less-than-timid women of 'altri paesi'? Martini Marescotti goes on to refer to them in plainer terms:

E del resto, se altrove la battaglia si combatte più fieramente che noi non vogliamo, noi non possiamo non ammirare le coraggiose inglesi che, animate da un alto ideale, sopportano con abnegazione danni materiali e morali, affrontano ciò che forse è più duro del disprezzo stesso: il ridicolo; ciò che è anche più duro del ridicolo, la perdita della libertà. 99

The 'coraggiose inglesi' in question are clearly the militant suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) rather than the constitutionalist suffragists of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS); while both groups might have attracted contempt and ridicule, only the former suffered 'la perdita della libertà' in the form of prison sentences. Again, there is a perceptible tension in Martini Marescotti's attitude to these women: they fight 'più fieramente che noi non vogliamo', yet represent something that 'noi non possiamo non ammirare'. The repetition of the grammatically unnecessary *noi* in these statements draws an emphatic line between the Italian women and the English ones, while admiration for the latter is expressed in the convoluted form of a double

⁹⁸ Silvana Patriarca, 'Indolence and regeneration: tropes and tensions of Risorgimento patriotism' in *The American Historical Review*, 110: 2 (April 2005), pp. 380-408 (p. 383).

⁹⁹ [And besides, if elsewhere the battle is fought more fiercely than we ourselves desire, we cannot fail to admire the brave Englishwomen who, moved by a high ideal, suffer material and moral harm with abnegation, face that which is worse than contempt itself: ridicule; and that which is even worse than ridicule, the loss of freedom.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 605.

negative. Despite this grudging syntax, the subsequent praise for the suffragettes' 'abnegazione' seems both high and sincere. Martini Marescotti then tells an anecdote that further illuminates her conflicted feelings:

Un illustre parlamentare [...] ebbe a dire l'estate scorsa a una giovane donna meravigliata dell'audacia delle suffragiste inglesi: Sì certo, le donne inglesi lasciano le vie più facili del buon senso per ingolfarsi in quelle scabrose della follia; le donne italiane più fredde, più timide, non le seguiranno nel loro cammino, ma tenete a mente che senza un grano di follia nessuna grande conquista fu fatta dall'umanità. 100

If the English women are here associated with an 'audacia' that easily becomes 'follia', the description of Italian women is perhaps more surprising: they are 'fredde' as well as 'timide'. This seems to run counter to the stereotype of the 'fiery', 'warm-blooded', 'sensual' Italian woman, often presented in opposition to a 'cold', even 'frigid' Anglophone female typology. However, it is possible that this description tacitly recognises that Italian *suffragists* may not be typical of Italian *women*. If the English-speaking world 'Othered' Italian femininity as exotically warm and passionate, Italian culture, as has been seen, internally 'Othered' southern (and less educated) Italian femininity in a similar way. As Sibilla Aleramo would write in 1910:

Fra [...] due estremi, per tutta la penisola, fioriscono temperamenti femminili chiaramente determinati dalle singolarità del suolo che li espresse [...]. 103

The women of the south could be conceptualised by determined suffragists as a missionary project, as seen in Elena Lucifero's speech (6.2.2),¹⁰⁴ and by more hesitant ones as a genuine reason for delay, as seen in several 'pragmatic' responses to the UFN survey.¹⁰⁵ The women described in Martini Marescotti's anecdote as 'fredde, timide', then, belong to the vanguard of exceptions – the literate, privileged, predominantly northern women with the time, education and resources to get involved in the suffrage campaign. In challenging a national stereotype, the adjectives used by Martini Marescotti

¹⁰⁰ [A distinguished member of parliament [...] had this to say last summer to a young woman who was astonished by the audacity of the English suffragists: Yes indeed, English women are abandoning the easiest roads of good sense to engulf themselves in the rough ones of madness; Italian women, colder and more timid, will not follow them in their path, but bear in mind that without a grain of madness no great conquest was ever made by humanity.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 605.

Stephen Gundle, in a treatise on the concept of female beauty in Italian culture, concludes that in the nineteeth and early twentieth centuries, 'compared to the refined and artificial Frenchwoman, the remote and composed English rose and, later, the sporty and emancipated American, the vital and untamed Italian woman offered a promise of warmth and passion, a sense of full acceptance of her biological destiny'. Stephen Gundle, Bellissima: feminine beauty and the idea of Italy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 261.

Gundle cites Paolo Mantegazza's *Fisiologia della donna*, a work published in 1893, as referring to the diversity of Italian women, with those of darker colouring (predominantly found in the south) being 'warm, passionate, provocative'. Gundle, *Bellissima*, pp. 56-57.

[[]Between [...] two extremes, throughout the peninsula, feminine temperaments flourish [that are] clearly determined by the unique aspects of the land that expresses them [...]]. Sibilla Aleramo, 'Appunti sulla psicologia femminile italiana' in *La donna* e *il femminismo*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁴ See above, pp. 131-33.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 4, especially pp. 94-104.

also – and presumably inadvertently – challenge the place of suffragists within broader Italian femininity, thus disrupting the strategies of integration discussed in 6.2.

The naming of the suffragettes' approach as 'follia' seems so inherently damning that Martini Marescotti can afford to be surprisingly positive towards them otherwise. Her final reference to the English movement notes that its 'follia' concealed a 'singolare spirito pratico', as demonstrated by their intervention in the recent national elections. ¹⁰⁶ This tactic – one which *could* perhaps combine dignity and a fighting spirit – is praised: 'E questo dev'essere a noi di ammaestramento e di esempio'. ¹⁰⁷ However, even this praise is not unambiguous. The lesson at stake is not that party political campaigning works, but rather that

occorre che, quando venga il momento, ognuna si studi di fare, sacrificando, se sia necessario, ogni spirito di parte, ogni opinione particolare a quello che dev'essere il nostro scopo supremo.¹⁰⁸

Martini Marescotti's interpretation of the English suffragists' electoral intervention as a superseding of political allegiances, rather than a foray into the murk of these latter, seems implausibly convoluted (since the WSPU in Britain opposed the Liberals as a party, despite the sympathy of individual Liberal candidates). However, her take on their policy was in harmony with the explicitly anti-party spirit of the CNDI congress¹⁰⁹ – and would clash, as shall be seen, with the views of the 'younger' faction of the CNPSF, exemplified by Anita Pagliari. Moreover, even the transcendent loyalty to a 'scopo supremo' that is envisaged for Italian suffragists by Martini Marescotti is postponed until a time described with the uncertainty of the subjunctive mode ('quando *venga* il momento').

6.3.2 Anita Pagliari

Anita Pagliari, in her talk on methods of influencing parliament, describes again this strategy of electoral intervention on the part of the English 'suffragiste', but seems to take a far more plainly approving view of it than Martini Marescotti: she deems it 'necessario' [necessary] both that 'il gruppo

The WSPU policy was to oppose any ruling party that did not support women's suffrage. In early 1908, they intervened in five by-elections to campaign against the Liberal candidates (even if these candidates, as *individuals*, supported suffrage). Constance Rover comments that 'it is impossible to prove how much, if at all, the suffragettes affected by-election results, but certainly some of the candidates involved and certain newspapers considered they did so'. Constance Rover, *Women's suffrage and party politics in Britain, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 79.

¹⁰⁷ [And this must be for us a lesson and example]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 606.

¹⁰⁸ [this demands that should the moment come, then every woman among us must strive to take action, laying aside, if needs be, all partisan spirits, all private opinions, in favour of what has to be our supreme objective]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 606.

The congress regulations prohibited the 'degenerazione della discussione in questione politica o di partito' [degeneration of the argument into political or party matters]. Cited in Sega, 'Beatrice Sacchi e il suffragismo italiano', p. 87; see pp. 87-88 for a discussion of the views of those CNPSF members opposed to Martini Marescotti's non-party stance.

suffragista s'interessi alle elezioni', and that 'la donna [...] si ascrivesse ai vari partiti maschili'. However, she adds:

Non credo che noi donne italiane dovremo arrivare alla lotta eroica delle sorelle inglesi e credo che non dovremo com'esse battere per mezzo secolo alla stessa porta inesorabilmente e disperatamente chiusa; tuttavia è necessario che il Governo veda in noi un esercito nuovo.

As in Martini Marescotti's speech, an emphatic pronoun ('noi donne italiane' [we Italian women]) stakes a strong claim for the demarcation of feminine and feminist identity along national borders; yet, significantly, the English suffragists are described, by Pagliari as 'sorelle'. They are not, however, described as 'nostre sorelle' [our sisters], and it is not clear whether this meaning is implied or whether the reference is to a suffragist sisterhood internal to England. A related ambiguity appears when Pagliari declares that the English methods are ones at which, as Italians, 'non credo che [...] dovremo arrivare'. I have translated this below as 'I do not believe that [...] we will have to go as far'; however, 'dovere' is a potentially polysemous verb. While it can signify 'to have to', it can also signify 'should'. Another viable translation, then, would be: 'I do not believe that [...] we ought to go as far'.

Despite these syntactic indicators of an undetermined stance on suffragette tactics, the military language used to describe the British suffragette campaign (a 'lotta eroica') is echoed in Pagliari's vision for the Italian movement: the government must perceive them as an 'esercito nuovo'. In fact, this coincidence of references to the British movement and the deployment of a militarised lexicon to describe the Italian movement is common to all three speakers under consideration. Martini Marescotti, as has been seen, positioned her differentiation of English and Italian femininities between the collocations 'combattere bisogna' and 'bisogna tuttavia combattere'. However, the most contradictory instance of such battle language comes from Elena Ballio, as shall be seen.

6.3.3 Elena Ballio

Ballio's mention of foreign suffragists appears as a caveat within a rallying cry:

Coraggio dunque, o suffragiste! [...] Stringiamoci in saldo manipolo e [...] marciamo impavide e fidenti alla conquista del voto, senza lasciarci fuorviare dall'esempio d'oltre mare. Certo le suffragiste inglesi e americane¹¹² avranno le loro buone ragioni di ricorrere alle dimostrazioni

[[]the suffragist group involves itself in elections]; [woman enrols in the male political parties]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 609.

^{111 [}I do not believe that we Italian women will have to go as far as the heroic struggle of the English sisters, and I believe that we will not, like them, have to knock for half a century on the same inexorably and hopelessly closed door; nonetheless it is necessary that the Government sees in us a new army.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 610. III2 Militancy was only beginning to form part of the American suffrage movement in 1908. Ellen Carol DuBois traces its origins to Harriot Stanton Blatch's foundation of the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women in early 1907, which was invigorated and spurred toward militancy by the visit from Britain of Anne Cobden-Sanderson, one of the first WSPU prisoners, a year later; she also cites the importance of a small group called

clamorose ed allo scandalo per ottenere il loro scopo. A noi, gentil sangue latino, disdice la violenza ed ogni atto incomposto. 113

The density of military language here is immediately evident: Ballio is the only speaker to address her listeners with the vocative 'o suffragiste', as part of a call for 'coraggio' that would not have been out of place at a WSPU rally in Britain;¹¹⁴ the verbs she chooses are 'stringersi' and 'marciare'; and she envisages Italian suffragists as a 'manipolo' heading towards the 'conquista' of the vote. However, within the space of a single sentence she shifts from this bellicose idiom to a rejection of the English and American suffragists' behaviour as 'clamorose' and involving 'scandalo'. The foreign suffragists, Ballio allows, may have 'le loro buone ragioni', but she sets them apart from Italian suffragists in no uncertain terms in the final sentence, which merits a more detailed analysis.

The Italian women are 'gentil sangue Latin', a direct and italicised allusion to Petrarch's canzone CXXVIII, better known as 'Italia mia' [My Italy]. In this poem, Petrarch exhorts the Italian nation to cease employing mercenaries from northern lands to fight its civil wars:

Latin sangue gentile, sgombra da te queste dannose some; non far idolo un nome vano senza soggetto: ché 'l furor de lassú, gente ritrosa, vincerne d'intelletto, peccato è nostro, et non natural cosa. 115

the American Suffragettes, led locally by Maud Malone, which held its first open-air meeting at the end of 1907. (See DuBois, 'Working women, class relations and suffrage militance: Harriot Stanton Blatch and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894-1909' in The Journal of American History, 74: I (June 1987), pp. 34-58 (pp. 47-53)). However, American militancy did not gain mainstream international recognition until Alice Paul and Lucy Burns founded the Congressional Union in 1913. It is uncertain, then, whether Elena Ballio had specific instances of American militancy in mind or whether she was simply grouping Anglophone suffragists together.

[Courage then, o suffragists! [...] Let us rally together in a strong maniple and [...] march boldly and confidently towards the conquest of the vote, without letting ourselves be led astray by the example from overseas. Certainly the English and American suffragists will have their own good reasons for resorting to noisy demonstrations and scandal in order to achieve their aim. To us, gentle Latin blood, violence and all unseemly acts are not becoming.] CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 613. (A note on the translation: 'manipolo' would more intuitively be translated as 'handful'; however, this would involve the loss of the military connotation (a 'manipolo' signifying a small body of soldiers, as derived from the Latin 'maniplus' and the Roman army). This connotation is amplified by the use of the English 'maniple', but, given its salience in my analysis, I deemed amplification better than obliteration).

114 A fairly representative example of WSPU rhetoric is found in a speech given by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1912: "We women Suffragists have a great mission, the greatest mission the world has ever known. It is to free half the human race... You, women in this meeting, will you help us do it? ["Yes!"] Well, then, if you will, put aside all craven fear. However, Pankhurst, unlike Ballio, elaborates on how her listeners might reject their 'craven fear': 'Go and buy your hammer: be militant. [...] I incite this meeting to rebellion'. ('Emmeline Pankhurst at the Albert Hall', *The Suffragette*, 25 October 1912; reproduced in Harold L. Smith, *The British women's suffrage campaign*, 1866-1928, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 127-28.

115 [Gentle Latin blood,

cast from yourself these damning loads; make not an idol of a vain name without a subject: The final and most famous line of the *canzone* runs: 'I' vo gridando: Pace, pace, pace.'¹¹⁶ In the context of comparing suffragisms, the Petrarchan intertext underscores the point that militant suffragette tactics ('I furor de lassú, gente ritrosa'?) are alien to Italian women's 'intelletto'.¹¹⁷

The three passages considered above exemplify the quandary in which Italian suffragists were placed by the need to represent their relationship to their militant counterparts in Britain. Each speaker cited evinces a degree of ambivalence as to the desirability of identifying with the British suffragettes (although it is interesting that the lexical differentiation between 'suffragette' and 'suffragist', in vogue in Britain since March 1906, is not used by any of them).¹¹⁸ I have suggested that such ambivalence is directly manifested in the ideological undecidability of phrases such as 'la timidezza istintiva [...] delle donne della nostra razza' (Martini Marescotti) and 'le sorelle inglesi' (Pagliari), and finds expression at a broader discursive level through the frequent proximity of *statements* explicitly dissociating the Italian movement from the English one and *metaphors* connoting the militancy of the latter (a feature found in all three extracts).

However, the individual differences between the three speakers' approaches to this problem also merit attention. Where Martini Marescotti and Pagliari use, albeit in conjunction with distancing

should the frenzy from above, that backward people,

conquer our intellect,

the sin is ours, and not a natural thing.]

For the Italian original, see Francesco Petrarca, 128, Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, ed. and trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 205-10 (p. 206). However, the above translation, like others cited in this thesis, is my own.

116 [I go crying out: Peace, peace, peace.']

The structure of Ballio's sentence may also suggest a further literary allusion with a similar function. 'A noi [...] disdice la violenza ed ogni atto incomposto' is reminiscent of lines spoken by David in Vittorio Alfieri's Saul, an influential tragic play of 1782:

'Non brando io cingerò nè scudo;

Nella reggia del mio pieno Signore

A me disdice ogni arme, ove non sia

Pazienza, umiltade, amor, preghiere,

Ed innocenza.'

[I bear neither girdle nor shield;

In the palace of my most abundant Lord

To me no weapon is becoming, except it be

Patience, humility, love, prayers,

And innocence.]

If Alfieri's David states that 'A me disdice ogni arme', Elena Ballio's claim that 'A noi [...] disdice la violenza [...]' associatively positions the Italian suffragists as wise and peace-loving Davids to the well-meaning but hot-headed Sauls of more militant Anglophone suffrage movements. (Vittorio Alfieri, Saul, in Tragedie di Vittorio Alfieri con un discorso su la vita del medesimo, ed. Pietro dal Rio (Naples: Andrea Testa, 1846), pp. 209-24 (p. 215). This translation of Alfieri is my own).

The journalist Charles Hands, writing for the Daily Mail, is thought to have been the first to coin the sobriquet 'suffragettes' to distinguish the militants of the WSPU from the constitutionalist suffragists, in 1906. (See Elizabeth Crawford, *The women's suffrage movement: a reference guide, 1866-1928* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 452. That this term had gained some general currency in Italy by 1910 is shown by the fact that Roberto Ludovici's play entitled 'Le Suffragette' was performed in L'Aquila in that year (see Chapter 3, p. 42, n. 230 of this thesis).

strategies, a generally positively-loaded lexicon to describe the British movement ('coraggiose [...] animate da un alto ideale'; 'lotta eroica'), Ballio is more emphatically negative ('dimostrazioni clamorose [...] scandalo [...] la violenza'). This variety indicates that even within a small group of speakers, selected from the committee of the only national suffrage society in Italy, there was an uncertainty and a lack of coherence as to how best to present the problem of suffragist militancy in foreign lands.

As a coda to this discussion, it may be interesting to note how the British newspapers' brief coverage of the Italian women's congress also tended to view the delegates by means of comparison with the homegrown suffragettes. An article in the *Manchester Guardian* announcing the impending congress observes (with a degree of nationalistic pride?) that

of late times there has been a limited agitation for the extension of the suffrage to Italian women. But while Italy has produced no "suffragettes," there is a certain number of lady novelists [...] Still, all branches of female activity outside the home are far more restricted here than in England, with the possible exception of the stage. Probably at the present moment the most desirable movement on the part of Italian women would be that in favour of a better education, which would give them wider interests. 119

However, in the wake of the congress, the *Times* correspondent admits that 'it would seem that the question of votes for women was, after all, that which most interested the delegates at the Woman's Congress'.¹²⁰

6.4 Conclusions

Italian feminist historians have taken varied views of the 1908 congress as a whole. Where Pieroni Bortolotti reads it as evidence of the power of the Italian right to defuse progressive aims, arguing that 'it ended by dispersing the righteously demanding *animus* at the root of suffragism in a series of initiatives relating to philanthropy and general activism', ¹²¹ Taricone opines that the congress has left scholars with 'an almost complete picture of clues to the mentality of the time in relation to the woman question'. ¹²² It seems fair to say that records of the congress do reflect a specific (predominantly bourgeois and aristocratic) element of the Italian women's movement as well as more

^{119 &#}x27;Women's congress in Rome' in The Manchester Guardian, 11 April 1908, p. 6.

¹²⁰ 'The Woman's Congress' in *The Times*, 28 April 1908, p. 5. The article also notes that 'the women who spoke showed at any rate marked capacity for intelligent exercise of the right to vote and not the least eloquent of them was the solitary woman who had the courage to speak against the motion. Although her voice was the only one raised at the congress on that side, there is some reason to suspect that she still represents the feeling of the vast majority of Italian women'. (This lone voice was presumably Giselda Chiarini – see pp. 134-35 above).

¹²¹ Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile, pp. 112-13.

¹²² Taricone, L'associazionismo femminile, pp. 48-49.

general features of the prevailing mindset. However, the report of the suffrage session offers very particular insights into two interrelated facets of the problem of defining a collective Italian suffragist identity: firstly, that of integrating suffragism within the broader Italian women's movement, and secondly, that of locating Italian suffragism on an international canvas.

Discussing the relation of 'Othering' to national identity, Johnson and Coleman remark that 'although there might be multiple oppositional identities, in practice it is often the "significant Other," or the identity conceptualized as most opposed, most pressing, or most timely, that is brought to the forefront of identity questions'. ¹²³ The text under consideration, however, presents a shifting set of 'significant Others' within Italy as the speakers' focus changes – although these Others are invoked for a single discursive purpose: to bolster the group identity of the women present (an in-group) through implicit contrast with an out-group. ¹²⁴ The variety of out-groups posited reflects and articulates the complexity and evolving nature of the social matrix within which Italian feminism was operating. The text as a whole presents a vision of the suffrage movement as a problematic island, segregated from less privileged women by chasms of class and locality and from more privileged women by chasms of sociocultural prestige, and uncertain in which direction to focus its bridge-building efforts.

When the primary 'significant Other' is no longer internal to Italy, however, it is concentrated in the figures of the British (and occasionally American) suffragettes. There is considerable individual variation in the approaches taken towards militant Anglophone suffragism, but all three speeches analysed contain syntactic and stylistic indicators of intense ambivalence towards that movement, especially in its relation to the identity of Italian suffragists. These findings establish the Italian suffragist 'island' in a stormy global context. The foreign 'lotta eroica' further destabilises what is already a tenuously constructed domestic position as middle-class missionaries, battling both the ignorance of poverty and the ignorance of privilege. Simply put, international suffragism is too unladylike to form a comfortable frame for the Italian version, at least as the latter is presented at the very bourgeois 1908 Congress.

In understanding the discourses used to define and demarcate *Italian* suffragist identity, Silvana Patriarca's approach to 'the Italians' preoccupation with their national character [...] in its rhetorical aspects and as a discourse' 125 may be of use. Patriarca pays especially close attention to gendered

¹²³ Johnson and Coleman, 'The internal Other', p. 865.

Patriarca, Italian vices, p. 6.

¹²⁴ The terms 'in-group' and 'out-group' are from Henri Tajfel's and John Turner's work on intergroup relations, as part of what has become known as social identity theory. See especially Henri Tajfel and John Turner, 'An integrative theory of intergroup conflict' in William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (Monterey, CA: Wadsworth, 1979), pp. 33-47.

aspects of *italianità*. In particular, she notes that during and after the Risorgimento, indolence, often deemed a national flaw requiring redemption, tended to be harnessed rhetorically to effeminacy. ¹²⁶ Conversely, the national regeneration called for tended to be expressed in terms of re-virilisation – which, as Patriarca points out, really meant the polarisation of sex roles: 'A patriotic discourse imbued with gendered metaphors had difficulties escaping a patriarchal type of politics requiring the restriction of women's presence in the public sphere [...] Distinction between appropriate "male" and "female" behaviors and spheres of activity had to be strengthened'. ¹²⁷

The suffragists, then, were faced with a dominant narrative whereby their place within Italian regeneration was contingent on their satisfactory performance of femininity. Nonetheless, as has been seen, the attitudes expressed at the 1908 Congress towards the British suffragettes, who certainly do *not* perform femininity according to the required pattern, is not simplistically condemnatory but densely ambivalent.

Both in this text and in the 1906 petition (Chapter 5), I have noted the problems associated with an unstable group identity – in Adrienne Rich's terms, 'even ordinary pronouns become a political problem', 128 the difficult pronoun in this case being *noi*. In both these texts, a key difficulty has been that of middle- and upper-class female authors articulating a *noi* that does not comfortably include working-class women. In Chapter 7, I will consider a text which to some degree reverses this situation.

¹²⁶ For instance, Vincenzo Gioberti, in an influential tract of 1843, demanded: 'Chi obbliga i giovani gentiluomini a infemminire nell'ozio [...]?') [Who forces young men to become effeminate in their indolence?] Vincenzo Gioberti, *Del primato morale* e *civile degli italiani*, (Brussels: Meline, Cans e Compagnia; first publ. 1843), p. 520. (Accessed from Google Books at http://tinyurl.com/pym8yyu on 15 April 2012. Cited in English translation in Patriarca, *Italian vices*, p. 25.

¹²⁷ Patriarca, Italian vices, p. 48.

¹²⁸ Adrienne Rich, 'Notes toward a politics of location', p. 37.

Chapter 7 Anna Kuliscioff's address to proletarian women (1913)

Primary text analysed: Anna Kuliscioff,
Per il suffragio femminile: Donne proletarie, a voi! 129

Solo quando la richiesta del voto scenderà dai salotti alla piazza operosa, e anche fra noi le schernite suffragette esprimeranno quel "grano di follia" che la Giacinta Martini confessava necessario alle più ardue conquiste, la causa del suffragio universale – forse non soltanto femminile – sarà prossima al trionfo.

- Anna Kuliscioff, 1908. 130

The text for analysis in this chapter is Anna Kuliscioff's 1913 pamplet *Per il suffragio femminile: Donne proletarie, a voi!* It was published as a direct response to the 1912 electoral reform, whereby (almost) all adult Italian men became eligible to vote, regardless of literacy or property.¹³¹ Women were ignored by this bill, despite Filippo Turati's¹³² attempt to introduce an amendment that would include them. One of the effects of the bill, then, was to cast the gendered aspect of the suffrage question into much sharper focus. The reform caused significant shifts in the 'themescape' of the Italian suffrage debate, several of which are recognised and articulated in Kuliscioff's text. Where literacy, rights over property and military service had previously been raised as obstacles to women's enfranchisement that were *not* (wholly) based on sex, sex itself was now the sole obstacle: as Kuliscioff puts it,

Ormai l'italiano, per esser un giorno cittadino, non ha che una sola precauzione da prendere: nascere maschio. 133

The 1912 electoral reform may have precipitated another 'crisis' moment in the development of Italian suffragism, but it is not the only major catalyst of change which is dealt with in this pamphlet.

Anna Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile. Donne proletarie, a voi! (Milan: Società Editrice «Avanti!», 1913. Reprint N. 6: Biblioteca Rossa, 1976).

¹³⁰ [Only once the demand for the vote comes down from the salons into the working *piazza*, and once the scorned suffragettes express in our midst, too, that "grain of madness" acknowledged by Giacinta Martini as necessary for the most difficult victories, will the cause of universal suffrage – perhaps not women's alone – be close to triumph]. Anna Kuliscioff, 'Il Congresso delle donne italiane' in *Critica sociale*, 16 May 1908. Cited in De Giorgio, *Le italiane*, p. 507.

¹³¹ See Chapter 2, p. 32. Specifically, all literate males of 21+ were enfranchised; illiterate males of 30+ were enfranchised; and males of 21+ who had completed military service, regardless of literacy or illiteracy. See for instance Christopher Seton-Walsh, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism*, 1870-1925 (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 282. ¹³² On Filippo Turati, see Chapter 2, p. 30, n. 156.

¹³³ [Today the Italian, in order to be a citizen one day, must take just one precaution: be born male.] Kulisicoff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, pp. 15-16. The male specificity of 'l'italiano', in which women are nevertheless included, cannot easily be rendered in English. (Note on the translation: Both 'italiano' and 'cittadino' present translation problems here, since the male form of both is used – a male form which can, however, include both men and women. The grammatical 'invisibility' of the feminine-specific 'cittadina' commonly used in suffrage debates could linguistically represent the invisibility of women in the supposed democracy of post-1912 Italy. There is no English equivalent that can capture this).

The 1911-1912 Italo-Turkish war – in which Italy invaded Libya, then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and won, but at a far greater cost of life and money than had been anticipated ¹³⁴ – not only shook up international relations throughout Europe and beyond, but also led to reconfigurations within Italian politics. Pieroni Bortolotti pinpoints this war as a crux in her periodisation of the women's movement:

The story of Italian feminism from the turn of the twentieth century until Fascism can be subdivided into two periods: from 1900 to 1911, that is until the Libyan war, which changed so deeply the character of political struggle in Italy, and with this the meaning and import of individual claims in our field too; and from 1911 to 1921, that is to say until the beginning of a new era on the world stage [...]¹³⁵

The war's significance to feminists was due in large part to the fact that it split the Socialist party [PSI], which had become a strong ally of the suffragist cause. The PSI had already been divided along reformist/ revolutionary lines (with Turati leading both the reformist wing and the party as a whole). However, as one historian puts it, 'Libya was the testbed of the PSI'. Specifically, the Libyan invasion provoked a schism within the reformists, with Turati's 'sinistra riformista' [left-wing reformist] group opposing the war and a 'destra riformista' [right-wing reformist] group, led by Leonida Bissolati, Ivanoe Bonomi and Angiolo Cabrini, supporting it. At an emergency party meeting in 1912, the latter group was expelled from the PSI. The party which remained, then, possessed reduced numbers but a clarified anti-war position.

This clarified position in turn produced a new drive of what might be termed socialist 'separatism': a tendency to encourage party members and sympathisers to withdraw from other cross-class affiliations, since the war was considered a bourgeois undertaking. Of particular relevance to my research, almost all suffragists who continued to pledge allegiance to the PSI resigned from the various Pro-Suffrage Committees from 1912 on. Those who initially refused, such as Linda Malnati and Carlotta Clerici, capitulated when threatened with party expulsion. This mass withdrawal from the official suffragist organisations was heavily significant: Migliucci, whose periodisation sees 1912 as

¹³⁴ On the Italo-Turkish war, see Childs, Italo-Turkish diplomacy and the war over Libya, 1911-1912.

¹³⁵ Pieroni Bortolotti, Socialismo e questione femminile in Italia, 1892-1922, p. 105.

¹³⁶ Reformist socialists sought to work within and utilise the existing political system to achieve their aims, while revolutionary socialists believed that this approach was futile and that lasting change could only come about through proletarian revolution. While reformism had been dominant in Italian socialism since the failure of Andrea Costa's separate revolutionary party, the Partito Socialista Rivoluzionario Italiano, in the 1890s, a revolutionary strand had continued to exist within the PSI, albeit in a mainly dormant state.

¹³⁷ Giorgio Galli, Storia del socialismo italiano da Turati al dopo Craxi (Milan: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2007. First publ. 1980), p. 125.

An exception was Emilia Mariani, president and founder of the Turin Pro-Suffrage Committee, who continued in this role until she died, and distanced herself further from the PSI by taking an interventionist stance on the First World War. (See Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 95; Silvia Inaudi, 'Emilia Mariani' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 70 (2007), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/emilia-mariani (Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 2 April 2012).

marking 'the twilight of suffragism' ¹³⁹ in Italy, opines that 'the withdrawal of the socialist women inevitably represented the final blow for the movement'. ¹⁴⁰

In terms of 'crisis' moments, I chose Kuliscioff's text for analysis because it emerged at a time when Italian suffragism was just beginning to grapple with a number of dramatic reorderings within the political scene: firstly, the extension of the franchise to illiterate men, which set the women's claim in a new and purely sex-based context; secondly, the invasion of Libya and the resultant Italo-Turkish war, which forced the polarisation of interventionist or pacifist stances; and thirdly, the splintering of the socialist party, largely in response to the Libyan question, a splintering which led in turn to a socialist separatism that considerably weakened the cross-class Pro-Suffrage Committees. However, it must also be borne in mind that the text is far from being a neutral reflection on any of these matters; Kuliscioff writes as a suffragist angered at the exclusion of women from the 1912 electoral reform, as a party-affiliated socialist of the 'sinistra riformista' [left-wing reformist] line, and as an opponent of colonialism in general and the Italo-Turkish war in particular. A chief interest of my analysis of her text will be to identify the strategies whereby these various identity positions are articulated and *integrated* (successfully or not), in a climate where such integration has become urgently necessary.

I will firstly summarise the structure of Kuliscioff's text (7.1). My analysis, which focuses on the discourses used to express and construct identity, is divided into two main parts. In section 7.2, I employ an analysis of the pronominal choices in the text as a means of investigating the articulation of group identities in the complex political climate described earlier. In 7.3, I focus on the presence of national identity within Kuliscioff's text, asking how *italianità* is integrated, or not, with the group identities already posited. In section 7.4, I draw these lines of argument together, and link them with my analyses of earlier texts.

7.1 Overview of the text

Per il suffragio femminile. Donne proletarie, a voi! is a small, 29-page pamphlet divided into three major sections. The first of these is entitled 'La "grande" riforma elettorale. Perchè furono escluse le donne', 141 and consists of reprinted material first published in the socialist women's journal La difesa

¹³⁹ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 103.

¹⁴⁰ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 94-95.

[[]The "great" electoral reform: Why women were excluded].

delle lavoratrici (no. 7) in 1912.¹⁴² Written before the 'grande riforma' had taken place, this section summarises the planned legislation; presents the women's claim as being relegated 'ai secoli venturi' [to the coming centuries]; decries the 'regno femminile' [female realm] of the home as an outdated, unrealistic ideology; scathingly tears apart 'bertolinerie' [Bertolini-isms]¹⁴³ concerning a double standard regarding illiteracy in the two sexes; points out that, if having interests to defend is now being set out as the criterion for having a vote, women have interests too; links suffragism and socialism by harnessing together 'il diritto di voto e la difesa del lavoro'; ¹⁴⁴ alludes to countries in which women's suffrage had been introduced as having seen positive results, suggesting a broad link between 'il voto alle donne e la civiltà d'un paese'; ¹⁴⁵ rejoices sincerely that at least bourgeois women have not been granted the vote before proletarian ones; and tackles 'l'ultimo argomento' [the final argument] against women's suffrage, i.e. that women could not be soldiers.

The second section, entitled 'II suffragio femminile alla Camera', ¹⁴⁶ traces politicians' responses to the proposed electoral reform and to the associated question of women's suffrage, noting that only 6 out of 508 deputies opposed the extension of the vote to illiterate men. The sardonic tone of the first section continues: 'Che miriade di precursori, che pleiade di sanculotti nei panni di quei bravi conservatori! Chi l'avrebbe mai sospettato!' Kuliscioff notes that when the question of women's suffrage was broached in the discussion, Giolitti commented that it was a very serious problem: 'E bastò questo richiamo alla serietà, perchè la Camera – nota il resoconto ufficiale – si abbandonasse alla più amabile "ilarità". ¹⁴⁸ However, she observes that municipal suffrage seemed considerably more achievable than parliamentary suffrage in the short-term, and that, with this in mind, 'i nostri compagni deputati socialisti' ¹⁴⁹ had put forward an amendment to Article I 3 of the bill which would include women in the extension of municipal suffrage. (They also put forward an amendment to Article I of the bill, including women in general suffrage, but this was roundly defeated on 15 May 1912, with only 48 votes in favour and 209 against).

La difesa delle lavoratrici [The defence of women workers] had been founded by Kuliscioff in January 1912; other collaborators included Linda Malnati, Carlotta Clerici, Margherita Sarfatti and Gisela Brebbia. See Tamara Ermini, La difesa delle lavoratrici: un giornale di lotta e di coscienza, 1912-1925 [series: Il lungo risorgimento delle donne, 3] (Florence: Centro editoriale toscano, 2005).

¹⁴³ Pietro Bertolini, a liberal politician close to Giolitti, presented the extended suffrage bill. In November 1912 he was appointed Minister of Colonies, becoming heavily involved in the Libyan question, which would presumably have heightened Kuliscioff's disdain for him by the time of this pamphlet's publication. (See Richard Bach Jensen, 'Bertolini, Pietro (1859-1920)' in Melvin E. Page (ed.), *Colonialism: an international social, cultural and political encyclopedia, vol. 1* (Santa Barbara: Abc-Clio, 2003), p. 59).

^{144 [}the right to vote and the defence of work].

^{145 [}women's suffrage and the civilisation of a country].

^{146 [}Women's suffrage in the Chamber].

¹⁴⁷ [What a multitude of pioneers, what a galaxy of sans-culottes under the clothes of those good conservatives! Who would ever have thought it!] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 12.

[[]And this call to seriousness was all it took – as noted by the official report – for the Chamber to give itself up to the most amiable "hilarity"]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ [our comrades, the socialist deputies].

Section 2 continues with another reprint from *La difesa delle lavoratrici* (no. 10), this one reflecting on the passage of the reform bill in the Chamber and on the meaning of this for women. This treatise includes a severe attack on suffragists of the middle and upper classes for their depoliticised tactics, and points out that of the 48 votes in favour of amending the bill, 27 came from socialist deputies. With this in mind, it advocates that women become as involved as possible in workers' organisations, so as to campaign for a predominantly socialist government, which, it is assumed, will bring with it full women's suffrage: 'Al lavoro, dunque, o compagne!' 150

The final subsection of Section 2, 'Intermezzo sul suffragio amministrativo', ¹⁵¹ is a satirical summary of the fate of the socialist deputies' amendment on municipal suffrage. It came up for discussion in the Chamber immediately before the parliamentary holidays (on 10 June 1912), giving Giolitti an 'ottimo pretesto' [excellent pretext] for rejecting the amendment as too likely to delay the implementation of the main text of the bill until after the forthcoming local elections. Here Kuliscioff comments, bitterly, that 'tutte queste gherminelle sono possibili soltanto, quando le questioni non appassionano il Paese'. ¹⁵² However, the socialist deputies were persistent, and Kuliscioff approvingly quotes excerpts from the speeches of Claudio Treves ¹⁵³ and Filippo Turati. The end result saw 31 votes in favour of the amendment and 129 against – but, as Kuliscioff points out, 'una buona cinquantina si squagliarono, 26 dichiararono di astenersi [...] La maggioranza vinse bensì, ma dandosi a una fugga precipitosa'. ¹⁵⁴

The third and final section of Kuliscioff's pamphlet is entitled, 'In marcia per la conquista!',¹⁵⁵ and constitutes a manifesto for future action. On the premise that 'il momento favorevole è questo',¹⁵⁶ Kuliscioff urges her readers to endorse, in practical as well as idealistic ways, the programme of the socialist party as a route to gaining suffrage; she runs through each major element of this programme to demonstrate its relevance to women. Finally, in the subsection 'Donne proletarie, a voi!...', she hammers home this union of suffragism and socialism, her rhetoric becoming increasingly militant as the pamphlet crescendos to a close.

The three sections of Kuliscioff's text, then, address the impact of the 1912 reform on women from three different angles: Section 1 recapitulates the socialist women's position immediately prior to the electoral reform, Section 2 deals with attempted feminist interventions during and immediately after

¹⁵⁰ [To work, then, o [female] comrades!] Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile p. 19.

[[]Interlude on municipal suffrage].

¹⁵² [all these tricks are possible only with questions that do not fire the Nation's interest]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile p. 19.

¹⁵³ Claudio Treves (1869-1933) was, like Turati and Kuliscioff, committed to a reformist, non-interventionist line of socialism.

¹⁵⁴ [a good fifty or so melted away, 26 abstained [...] The majority won all right, but while beating a hasty retreat]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ [Marching towards victory!]

^{156 [}this is the opportune moment]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 22.

the bill's passage, and Section 3 looks to the future and proposes a strategic agenda that uses the bill as a springboard to a more socialist (and hence, it is assumed, a more feminist) government. The overall tone is wryly acerbic, bordering on satirical, for much of the first two sections, and shifts to a more idealistic solemnity during the third section's call for action.

7.2 Articulating identities: noi, voi and loro

My previous analyses - in particular, of the UFN survey (Chapter 4) and the 1906 petition (Chapter 5) - have touched on the difficulty of articulating individual identities within the complex matrix of group affiliations, based on sex, class, region, nationality, religion and politics, in which Italian suffragisms developed. In particular, I have discussed textual strategies through which individual exceptionality was downplayed to facilitate 'speaking for others'. Anna Kuliscioff, however, possessed such multiple guarantees of outsider status that any effort to construct a public self as other than exceptional would have been futile.¹⁵⁷ Born in Crimea as Anja Rosenstein, she adopted the Slavicsounding surname Kuliscioff upon her flight to Western Europe as a political refugee. 158 Kuliscioff was a non-Italian Jew dedicated to changing the face of Italian politics; she was a woman who challenged the norms of sex not only through her outspoken political activism, but through qualifying and practicing as a doctor, and the norms of sexuality through cohabiting with, but not marrying, firstly Andrea Costa and subsequently Filippo Turati; she was a socialist devoted to improving the lot of the proletari (of both sexes), yet she did not live a typically proletarian life, but worked as a writer, lecturer and 'la dottora dei poveri'159 in the poorest areas of Milan, where she worked pro bono as a clinician. In speaking to and for Italian women of the working classes, then, Kuliscioff was nonrepresentative on every level: that is, she was of foreign birth and Jewish extraction; she was unusually emancipated both professionally and privately; and she was an advocate and ally for labourers rather than one of their number. 160

¹⁵⁷ On Kuliscioff's life, see Maria Casalini, La signora del socialism italiano: vita di Anna Kuliscioff (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987); Marina Addis Saba, Anna Kuliscioff. Vita private e passione politica (Milan: Mondadori, 1993).

One historian has argued that the chosen name 'Kuliscioff derives from a Russian surname indicating 'a woman from a far-off Eastern land' (Naomi Shepherd, A price below rubies: Jewish women as rebels and radicals (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 70). However, I have been unable to find confirmation for this.

Discussing the use of 'dottora' rather than the more standard 'dottoressa' in this appellation, Miguel Malagreca considers that 'it most probably indicates a linguistic twist of Kuliscioff's lower class patients. Later, it might have been kept for its stressing of her radical ideas and anarchic attitude towards gender.' Miguel Malagreca, 'Lottiamo ancora: reviewing one hundred and fifty years of Italian feminism' in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 7: 4 (2006), pp. 69-89 (p. 71, n. 6).

¹⁶⁰ This last paradox is well summed up in the title of Casalini's biography of Kuliscioff: La signora del socialismo.

Given what might be termed Kuliscioff's exceptional exceptionality, even among suffrage leaders in Italy, ¹⁶¹ it is unsurprising that *Donne proletarie*, *a voi!* does not contain a single instance of the first person singular. If Kuliscioff's explicit *io* is submerged, however, other pronominal choices in the text indicate a degree of shift and slippage both in her positioning of herself in relation to her readers, and in the group identities that she ascribes to those readers. The articulation of these groupings provides intriguing evidence of how the problematic 'matrix', referenced above, was developing in the Italy of 1913.

The text is framed – in its title and in its homologous concluding line – as an address to a second-person plural *voi* with well-defined parameters: 'donne proletarie' [proletarian women]. However, within the body of the text, the first and third person plural are more prevalent. The first person plural tends to appear in non-emphasised form to delimit the readers (and writer) of the text within the broader category of women, who are more often referred to using the third person plural. Thus, in the following examples, readers and writer are unobtrusively bound together in an assumed ideological alliance, without the addition of stressed subject pronouns (e.g. 'scrivevamo', not 'noi scrivevamo', is used):

scrivevamo [...] queste brevi note polemiche [...] 163

Senonchè, voltiamo qualche pagina e, nello stesso documento, leggiamo queste parole [...];164

L'argomentazione è abbastanza ovvia per entrare, crediamo, anche nel cervello di un qualsiasi deputato della maggiorenza.¹⁶⁵

By contrast, a certain distance is drawn between this in-group and women more generally, who are most commonly referred to as *loro*:

[...] che nel concetto dell'illustre Relatore e della sua Commissione, le donne non abbiano bisogni, aspirazioni, sentimenti, non abbiano, insomma, interessi loro proprî [...]

Maria Casalini sees this kind of 'exceptional exceptionality' as a commonality, and perhaps a prerequisite, among female socialist leaders in other European countries also: 'It was always women uprooted from their own situation, devoid of links with a specific historical context, like Rosa Luxembourg, Clara Zetkin and, indeed, Anna Kuliscioff: the golden-haired Russian woman who brought the breeze of the Ukrainian Steppes into our home, a kind of valkyrie who had nothing in common with the then-prevalent image of woman'. Maria Casalini, Socialismo e femminismo. Un incontro mancato (Rome: Calice, 1993), p. 13.

¹⁶² Both 'donne' and 'proletarie' can function as nouns or adjectives in this context. I have translated 'donne' as the noun and 'proletarie' as the adjective since the norms of word order in Italian make this a more instinctive reading; however, a translation of 'women proletariats' would also be valid. In fact, the grammatical ambiguity that results from this apposition of 'donne' and 'proletarie' seems rather representative of the shifting balance of loyalties (to feminism and socialism) that challenged Kuliscioff and others like her.

¹⁶³ [we wrote [...] these short, polemical notes [...]]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ [Except that we turn over a few pages and, in the same document, we read these words [...]]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ [The argument is obvious enough, we believe, to enter even into the brain of any government deputy.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 8.

Infatti – per limitarci agli interessi propriamente loro specifici – sarebbero soltanto quelli della maternità conculcata [...]¹⁶⁶

Here, the pronominal distinction is illustrated clearly: there is a transition from the *loro* of unspecified women ('non *abbiano* [...] interessi *loro* proprî'), to the briefly referenced *noi* of writer and readers ('per limitar*ci*'), and back again ('interessi propriamente *loro* specifici').

Kuliscioff's reluctance to include herself (and her readers) in a group demarcated solely by sex becomes more intelligible when we examine other uses of *noi* in the text. While the choice of *noi* rather than *io* could be read as simply marking the text's place within the contemporary rhetoric of socialism, with its insistence on class solidarity and the ideal of the common good, the precise pattern in which the *emphatic* third person plural is used in Kuliscioff's text suggests a slightly more complex agenda. Specifically, instances of the emphatic *noi* function predominantly to underline the separateness of Kuliscioff's ideology, and of the group identity of her proletarian readers, from the ideologies and identities of what she terms the 'signore suffragiste' [suffragist ladies]. Ideologies and identities of what she terms the 'signore suffragiste' [suffragist ladies].

Having described with acerbic relief how the Commission had chosen *not* to begin by granting suffrage to educated, privileged women – 'tanto per offrirci un briciolo di consolazione' ¹⁶⁹ – she goes on to present this decision as the right response to the wishes of 'un certo femminismo borghese di nostra conoscenza'. ¹⁷⁰ Later, she elaborates as follows on the relationship between the suffragisms of different classes:

Alle suffragiste borghesi noi lasciamo volontieri la illusione che'esse conquisteranno il diritto di voto, convertendo ad uno ad uno i signori deputati [...]

E lasciamo loro l'altra illusione, anche più ingenua: il professato e ostentato apoliticismo femminista [...]

Concezioni così puerili della dinamica politico-sociale certo non allignano nel campo delle donne socialiste. Noi sappiamo dalla nostra esperienza [...] che la rivendicazione del diritto politico alle donne solo allora viene preso sul serio, quando esse seriamente combattono nei loro rispettivi partiti [...]¹⁷¹

^[...] that according to the distinguished Spokesman and his Commission, women do not have needs, aspirations, feelings, they do not have, in short, interests of their own [...] In fact – to limit ourselves to interests that are specifically their own – there would only be the interests of oppressed motherhood [...]]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶⁷ In Italian, it is not essential to use subject pronouns with verbs, as the verb endings already denote the subject (for instance, 'lasciamo' = 'we leave'; 'lasciate' = 'you (all) leave'). Thus, 'the use of pronouns is limited to situations where we need to give special emphasis to the subject' (Anna Proudfoot and Francesco Cardo, Modern Italian grammar: a practical guide, 2nd ed. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 66).

¹⁶⁸ Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 17.

^{169 [}so as to offer us some scrap of consolation].

[[]a certain bourgeois feminism of our acquaintance]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 10.

¹⁷¹ [To the bourgeois suffragists we willingly leave the illusion that they will win the right to vote by converting the gentlemen deputies one by one [...]

There are two instances here of stressed subject pronouns: 'Alle suffragiste borghesi *noi* lasciamo [...]', and 'Noi sappiamo dalla nostra esperienza [...]'. In the first of these cases, the emphatic *noi* functions to configure a group identity in marked opposition to that of the 'suffragiste borghesi'; in the second, it follows directly after the naming of this identity (as the 'campo delle donne socialiste'), and, especially when coupled with '*nostra* esperienza', reiterates the distinctness of 'in-group' (socialist women) and 'out-group' (bourgeois feminists). The repetition of the emphasised *noi* at this juncture in the text, and its absence at other points, suggests that the single most salient means of defining the category occupied by writer and readers is through contrast, not with men, nor with anti-suffragists, but with the feminists of the middle and upper classes. This last group, in other words, is foregrounded as the most 'significant Other' 172 in the text.

If pronominal choices sharply demarcate class factions among suffragists, other lexical features more subtly nuance the contrasts between these groups. In the excerpt quoted above, two 'illusioni' [illusions] are ascribed to the bourgeois suffragists, the second of which is qualified as 'anche più ingenua' [even more ingenuous]; subsequently, 'concezioni' [ideas] are ascribed to them and qualified as 'puerili' [puerile]. The ideologies of middle-class suffragism are thus assigned to a theoretical, impractical realm characterised by extreme naïveté, a process further developed in the section below:

Eppure, se le donne di altre classi sociali, di tutte le classi sociali, anzichè gingillarsi nella comoda chimera di un imbelle apoliticismo, stilando platonici ordini del giorno, o inviando Commissioni al Parlamento e al Presidente del Consiglio nella lusinga di guadagnare alla loro causa singoli uomini politici di tutti i partiti – che è sinonimo di nessuno [...]; se, anzichè proseguire ad agitarsi nel vuoto, partecipassero con tenacia ed abnegazione alla vita politica dei loro partiti [...] dando la prova della utilità e della forza che esse possono mettere al servizio di ideali precisi e di interessi concreti – oh! allora, ma soltanto allora, affretterebbero anch'esse la fine dell'odierno monopolio politico maschile [...]¹⁷³

Here, the activity of the bourgeois suffragists is described using two verb phrases: 'gingillarsi nella comoda chimera di un imbelle apoliticismo' and 'proseguire ad agitarsi nel vuoto'. Both phrases use a quasi-literary, perhaps parodically 'high' register; the verbs 'gingillarsi' and 'agitarsi' convey the fruitless

¹⁷² See Johnson and Coleman, 'The internal Other', p. 865: 'although there might be multiple oppositional identities, in practice it is often the "significant Other," or the identity conceptualized as most opposed, most pressing, or most timely, that is brought to the forefront of identity questions'.

And we leave them the other illusion, still more ingenuous: the professed and vaunted feminist apoliticism [...] Such puerile ideas of the political-social dynamic certainly have no roots in the camp of socialist women. We know from our experience [...] that the demand for women's political rights will only be taken seriously when they fight seriously within their respective parties [...]]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷³ [And yet, if the women of other social classes, of all social classes, rather than fiddling about in the cosy chimera of a craven apoliticism, drafting abstract bills, or sending Commissions to Parliament and to the Prime Minister in the delusional hope of recruiting to their cause individual political men from all the parties – which is synonymous with none [of the parties] [...]; if, rather than continuing to flounder in the void, they were to participate with tenacity and abnegation in the political life of their parties [...] giving proof of the usefulness and strength that they can put at the service of precise ideals and concrete interests – oh! then, but only then, they too would hasten the end of the present male political monopoly [...]]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 18.

expenditure of energy; and the domains in which these are depicted ('nella comoda chimera' and 'nel vuoto' respectively) heighten the associations of vague, detached impracticality.

The alternative proposed for the middle-class suffragists, on the other hand, aims at 'ideali precisi' and 'interessi concreti'. The verbal expressions used here include 'partecipare' [to participate], 'dare la prova' [to give proof], 'mettere al servizio di' [put at the service of] and 'affrettare' [to hasten] – all of which, in contrast to the more belletristic 'gingillarsi' and 'agitarsi', belong to a lexicon of workaday groundedness. Similarly, where the existing attributes of the bourgeois suffragists were expressed through adjectives gilding nouns ('illusione [...] ingenua'; 'concezioni [...] puerili'; 'imbelle apoliticismo'), the qualities to which they should aspire are expressed as blunt, unmodified nouns: 'tenacia', 'abnegazione', 'utilità' and 'forza'.

The piling up of near-synonymous phrases, both to express the bourgeois suffragists' limitations and to envision their alternative path, suggests overwording, which, in Norman Fairclough's terms, 'shows preoccupation with some aspect of reality - which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle'. 174 However, while ideological struggle between proletarian and bourgeois feminists is certainly present, does this passage really represent an attempt at converting middle-class suffragists to socialist methodologies? Since the pamphlet is explicitly addressed to 'donne proletarie', assumes unequivocally that the readers fall into that category (as evidenced by the emphatic and oppositional use of noi discussed above), and harshly denigrates the practices of the signore suffragiste, a sincere conversion agenda seems implausible. Rather, it is likely that Kuliscioff references this other group's present failings and potential reforms so as indirectly to mark out both a positive group identity for the donne proletarie, and a trajectory for their improved cohesion. Since the donne proletarie are defined in forceful pronominal opposition to the bourgeois suffragists, it it implicit that their qualities must be the antithesis of these latter's - specifically, they must be the reverse of 'ingenue', 'puerili' and 'imbelli'. Moreover, by describing the possible turnaround of the bourgeois women, devoting themselves to 'their' political parties with 'tenacia', 'forza' etc., Kuliscioff subtly sets out her expectations of the donne proletarie - the implication is that they are already engaging in this commitment, but the underlying message is that if they are not, they should be.

This message is reiterated more openly in the final section of the text, in which Kuliscioff makes her only prolonged use of direct *voi* address:

Una nuova êra è dischiusa al proletariato cosciente. Non lasciamo sole le avanguardie a lottare per noi. Non siete, donne del lavoro, le *krumir*e insieme del vostro sesso e della vostra classe. Non tradite, per pigrizia, per leggerezza, per viltà, o per falsi e funesti rispetti umani, i mariti, i

¹⁷⁴ Fairclough, *Language and power*, p. 96. Overwording is here defined by Fairclough as 'an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms'.

compagni, i padri, i figliuoli – i figliuoli del vostro sangue e della vostra tenerezza. Non tradite voi stesse e l'umanità.

La grande ora sta per suonare. Non lasciate che scatti invano.

Donne proletarie, a voi!.. 175

The use of noi in the second sentence is a curious one as regards Kuliscioff's location of self; she advocates not leaving the 'avanguardie' to fight 'per noi', yet if her individual io was to be positioned anywhere in this text, it would surely be as a paradigmatic avanguardia. As was the case for the signatories of Mozzoni's petition, Kuliscioff seems to be going to considerable lengths to avoid openly identifying herself as an exceptional woman. Subsequent sentences, however, build to a rhetorical climax through the increasingly emphatic use of the second person plural ('non siete [...] non tradite [...] non tradite voi stesse [...] donne proletarie, a voi!'). The consolidation of the group to whom Kuliscioff addresses herself is accomplished in this final phrase, but is prefigured in the striking metaphor of the krumire [female strike-breakers]. This choice draws socialist jargon and female specificity together, but also performs further ideological functions. If 'when you use a metaphor, you are drawing on a body of thought or background knowledge which might in fact skew your analysis or thinking of that particular object',176 then Kuliscioff's use of krumire is decidedly incendiary.177 The term derived from the name of the Khumir tribe in Tunisia, whose alleged raids on Algerian territory had been used as a pretext for the French invasion of Tunisia in 1881, to the displeasure of many Italians, as Italy had its own colonial interests there. 178 Vilfredo Pareto explains (in a text originally published in Italian in 1916) that 'when Italian working-men came to feel other unpleasant sentiments for men who they thought were betraying them in times of strike, they forthwith labeled them crumiri', but remarks also on how easily this etymology could be obscured: 'If this word were Latin or Greek, we might derive many pretty etymological theories from it: crumiro, or krumiro [...] from χρούω, "to knock" or "beat" [...] the etymology so indicating that the crumiri, or krumiri, were

¹⁷⁵ [A new era has unfolded before the conscious proletariat. Let us not leave the vanguard women to fight for us. Do not, working women, be at once the blacklegs of your sex and your class. Do not betray, through laziness, through carelessness, through cowardice, or through wrong-headed and deadly obsequiousness, your husbands, your partners, your fathers, your sons – the sons of your blood and of your care. Do not betray yourselves and humanity.

The great hour is about to sound. Do not let it strike in vain.

Over to you, women workers! [...] Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile p.29. (The bold here is in the original).

176 Mills, Feminist stylistics, p. 136.

¹⁷⁷ The strongly condemnatory connotations of the word are underlined in an open letter written in 1904 by another socialist leader, Argentina Altobelli, to a set of 'krumire': 'Krumire! Ah, lo so bene: in questo nome sentite una grande offesa che profondamente vi ferisce e vi sdegna [...] Voi non vorreste essere chiamate krumire, perché sentite quanto questo nome sia spregevole e odioso, eppure lo siete!' [Krumire! Ah, I know: you take grave offence at this name, which wounds and slights you deeply [...] You would not wish to be called *krumire*, because you feel how despicable and hateful this name is, yet that is what you are!] Argentina Altobelli, 'Lettera aperta alle Krumire' (1904), reprinted in Altobelli, *Un alito di vita nuova*, pp. 97-99 (p. 97).

¹⁷⁸ See Arnold H. Green, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873-1915* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), pp. 129-30.

"beaten" by their fellow-workers." Given the intense tensions existing between strikers and strikebreakers in the working-class Italy of 1913, it is possible to read an element of threat into Kuliscioff's condemnation of non-suffragist proletarian women as double *krumire*.

So far, I have traced pronominal and related choices in Kuliscioff's text. I have suggested, firstly, that a complicit in-group identity including both writer and readers is set up by the unostentatious use of an unemphasised first person plural, in combination with a third person plural for the category of women generally. Secondly, I have identified instances of an emphasised first person plural as indicative of an intensification of oppositional identity; in this case, the group presented as the 'Other' par excellence is that of the bourgeois suffragists. I also explored other lexical decisions which contribute to the 'Othered' depiction of this group (and, less directly, to the 'Self' group of the *donne proletarie*). Finally, I have examined the repeated use of the second person plural in the final passage of the text, proposing that the metaphor of *krumire* is significant, both in fusing together the terminologies of Kuliscioff's feminist and socialist ideologies and perhaps invoking, albeit faintly, a suggestion of threat to readers who deviate from the path she prescribes.

7.3 Suffragism and italianità

In asking how Kuliscioff relates her lines of argument to the notoriously nebulous and contested concept of *italianità*, I looked initially for direct textual references to national character(s) as starting points. When Kuliscioff quotes Turati's 1912 speech to parliament (near the end of Section 2 of her pamphlet), she includes the following extract:

"Se si considera la questione col sorriso abituale degli italiani quando parlano di questo argomento, allora il voto è un atto di galanteria e la soluzione si può rimandare alla prossima legislatura, alla successiva, a quando si vuole. Domani si farà credenza, oggi no; e intanto si sta in buoni rapporti colle nostre amiche." ¹⁸⁰

The accusation that anti-suffragists used chivalry to mask chauvinism was familiar in the suffrage debate – in the parliamentary debate on Mozzoni's petition in 1907, for instance, pro-suffrage MP Alfonso Lucifero had demanded that the extremely gradualist Alberto Marghieri display 'un po' meno

¹⁷⁹ Vilfredo Pareto, *The mind and society, vol. 1: non-logical conduct,* trans. Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 421. (Pareto (1848-1923) was a sociologist, economist, and political scientist; this text was first published as *Trattato di sociologia generale, vol. 1* (Florence: Barbéra, 1916). ¹⁸⁰ ["If one considers the question with the habitual smile that Italians wear when they speak of this topic, then the vote is an act of chivalry and the solution can be postponed until the next legislative term of office, to the one after that, to whenever one likes. Tomorrow we will make good on our promises, but not today; and in the meantime we stay on good terms with our lady-friends."] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 20.

di galanteria e un po' più di giustizia'. ¹⁸¹ In Kuliscioff's text, however, the offending 'sorriso' is also defined as a typically *Italian* attitude.

The quotation from Turati goes on to insist that the question of an amendment be put to a parliamentary vote, because 'si deve fare come si fa nei paesi serii'. 182 Significantly, this quotation is swiftly followed by Kuliscioff's own declaration, at the opening of the militant and optimistic Section 3 of the pamphlet, that political and class sensibilities are undergoing an 'improvviso risveglio' [sudden reawakening], 'anche nei paesi, come il nostro, ancora tanto sonnacchiosi di fronte ai grandi interessi collettivi'. 183

The implication – that Italy, as things stood, was *not* a 'serious' country and *was* a drowsy one¹⁸⁴ – was not uncommon in the wider political discourse of the time.¹⁸⁵ However, although the branding of countries as 'serii' and 'sonnacchiosi' is rendered striking by the proximity of the two references, the presence of a discourse of what John Dickie calls 'inverted patriotism'¹⁸⁶ in Kuliscioff's text should not be overstated. Specifically, the 'paesi serii' reference appears here through the distancing medium of quotation, and it is made clear that its original audience was composed of government deputies. Rather than functioning as a comment upon the general Italian temperament, it operates rather as a slight upon Italian government representatives. This conclusion is supported by another slur cast at the government by Kuliscioff at an earlier point in the pamphlet. Discussing the move to extend universal male suffrage, and the apparently placid resignation of most deputies to this reform despite their earlier opposition, she states:

¹⁸¹ [a little less gallantry and a little more justice]. 'Petizione alla Camera' in De Bonis, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 231.

[[]one must do what is done in serious countries]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 20.

¹⁸³ [even in the countries like ours [which are] still so drowsy when faced with broad collective interests]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 22.

¹⁸⁴ The condition of being 'sonnacchioso' is not, of course, a terminal one; it implies the potential to 'awaken' or reform.

¹⁸⁵ See Patriarca, *Italian vices*, pp. 108-15, for fuller discussion of this. The precise phrases 'paesi serii' (used in contrast with Italy) and 'paese serio' (used to describe an aspiration for Italy) crop up relatively frequently in political texts of the period. Interestingly, James Joyce's 1907 lecture on James Clarence Mangan, written in Italian, includes a description of what happens in 'i paesi serii e logici' as a contrast with what happens in 'Irlanda, paese ch'è destinato da Dio ad essere la caricature eternal del mondo serio'. (See James Joyce, 'Giacomo Clarenzio Mangan' in *Occasional, critical and political writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 259-68 (p. 260)). A recent English translation by Conor Deane renders this as 'serious and rational countries' as opposed to 'Ireland, a country destined by God to be the eternal caricature of the serious world' (for Deane's translation, see the above volume, pp. 127-36 (p. 127)). While aspects of Joyce's lecture were based on a paper that Joyce had given in English in 1902, there was no reference to 'serious countries' in that original (for the 1902 paper, see the above volume, pp. 53-60).

¹⁸⁶ John Dickie, 'The notion of Italy' in Zygmunt G. Barański and Rebecca J. West (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to modern Italian culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 17-33 (p. 29).

I deputati italiani sono "accomodanti" e... passibilmente turchi, anche quando l'Italia fa la guerra alla Turchia – almeno nel senso di una certa fatalistica rassegnazione. 'Quel che dio vuole!' come dicono i nostri contadini.¹⁸⁷

Here, the habits of Italian politicians are portrayed as akin to those stereotypically associated with the Ottoman Empire. This form of orientalist insult is the more stinging because, as Kuliscioff points out, Italy and Turkey have recently been at war; the negative depiction evokes the extreme anti-Ottoman discourses present in the Italian media, 189 while simultaneously questioning the sharpness of the divide between the Italian government and the supposed enemy. This blurring of borders suggests that, rather than simply foreignising the government in order to demonise it, Kuliscioff is raising questions that tie in with her pacifist policy (the textual manifestation of which is discussed in detail in sub-section 7.3.2 below).

Explicitly critical comments relating to national character, then, occur only rarely in Kuliscioff's text, and seem to be directed at government officials more than to the population at large. In seeking to analyse the representation of *italianità* in *Donne proletarie*, *a voi!*, it is necessary to look beyond these overt references. I suggest that two dominant rhetorical trends are apparent: firstly, Kuliscioff's use of particular foreign countries as positive points of comparative reference, and, secondly, her articulation of Italian specificity by means of repeated references to the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-12. In subsections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2, I deal with these discursive strategies in turn, and argue that the first is used to harness suffragism to socialism, as well as to question the mainstream 'world map' of suffragism, while the second, perhaps more problematically, attempts to harness suffragism to pacifism. In concluding, I will consider how Kulisicoff integrates the three ideologies of suffragism, socialism and pacifism within this text, and how all three relate to *italianità*.

7.3.1 Foreign countries as points of comparison

Kuliscioff first mentions other countries when claiming a universal, 'natural' alliance between socialism and the suffrage cause. Socialist parties of every country, she argues, have always been the strongest

¹⁸⁷ [The Italian deputies are "accommodating" and... could pass for Turks, even when Italy is at war with Turkey – at least in the sense of a certain fatalistic resignation. 'Whatever god wills!', as our peasants say.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 12.

lass Also present, however, is an 'intranational' denigration of the deputies' intellectual credentials, via a comparison with 'i nostri contadini' [our peasants] (a patronising reference which indicates that Kuliscioff did not expect peasant women to be among her *donne proletarie* readership). Finally, by citing the politicians' attitude as "'Quel che *dio* vuole!'" ["Whatever *god* wills!"], the deputies are implicitly accused of ignorant adherence to clerical doctrine – something which most of them, in the Italy of 1913, would have furiously denied.

¹⁸⁹ For an intriguing look at nationalist and racist discourses in media organs directed specifically at women, see Annalucia Forti Messina, *La guerra spiegata alle donne. L'impresa di Libia nella stampa femminile* (Rome: Biblink, 2011).

advocates for universal, including female, suffrage, and where they have won this battle the experience has been a positive one for the working classes:

In varii Stati d'America come in Australia, in Finlandia come nei paesi Scandinavi – sebbene in questi ultimi la conquista finora si sia limitata al suffragio amministrativo – dovunque, col suffragio veramente universale, le donne sono diventate elettrici ed eleggibili, la difesa del lavoro ha fatto, com'era naturale, i più notevoli progressi. 190

Examples of resultant improvements, including laws protecting women's and children's working conditions, equal pay for equal work and minimum wage, are cited but not specifically linked to any of the countries listed. However, in the following subsection, entitled 'II voto alle donne e la civiltà d'un paese. – Un'inchiesta significante', ¹⁹¹ Kuliscioff returns to the case of Australia to bolster her case for the female vote as a force for social good:

L'entrata della donna nella politica è la società che comincia veramente a diventare la madre – e non più la matrigna – di tutti i cittadini che han bisogno delle sue cure.

Tant'è che, pubblicando i risultati di una inchiesta, condotta nel 1907 da Miss Goldstein per incarico della Associazione politica delle donne di Melbourne (Australia)¹⁹² – inchiesta a cui parteciparono uomini politici, magistrati, uomini di scienza ed ecclesiastici – il compilatore dichiara nel proemio: 'fra i tanti, uomini e donne, che più accanitamente combatterono il suffragio femminile nel periodo delle teoriche e delle profezie, non vi sarebbe oggi più alcuno che oserebbe contestarne i benefici risultati constatati nella pratica'. E persino un vescovo fu costretto ad esaltare i mutamenti, tutti di ordine superiore, verificatisi nella vita del paese, e dovuti al contributo politico del sesso femminile, e a confessare che 'le condizioni delle donne sono indiscutibilmente migliorate solo dal giorno che si dovette cominciare a contare sul serio con questa nuova forza politica'. ¹⁹³

The decision to make extended reference to Australia, in which (white) women had been enfranchised since 1902,¹⁹⁴ makes sense in the light of Kuliscioff's argument, which seeks to present

¹⁹⁰ [In various American states as in Australia, in Finland as in the Scandinavian countries – even if in these last the conquest has so far been limited to municipal suffrage – wherever women, with truly universal suffrage, have become electors and eligible, the defence of work has, as was natural, made the most notable progress.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 8.

[[]Women's suffrage and the civilisation of a country. – An important inquiry].

This organisation was generally known as the Women's Political Association of Victoria from 1904 (in the previous year, it had been founded as the Women's Federal Political Association). National Library of Australia, 'Women's Political Association of Victoria. (1903-1919)', accessed from <u>Trove</u> at http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/720063?c=people on 12 June 2013.

¹⁹³ [The entrance of woman into politics is the society that begins to truly be the mother – and no longer the stepmother – of all the citizens that need its care.

Such that, when publishing the results of a survey carried out in 1907 by Miss Goldstein on behalf of the Women's Political Assocation of Melbourne (Australia) – a survey in which political men, judges, scientific men and clerics took part – the editor states in the prologue: 'of the many, men and women, who most bitterly opposed women's suffrage in the era when women suffragists were only theorists making conjectures, there would not be one left today who would dare to challenge its resultant benefits as observed in practice'. And even a bishop was obliged to praise the changes, all of them positive, which appeared in the country's life owing to the political contribution of the female sex, and to confess that 'women's conditions have undeniably improved only since the day that there was a need to begin seriously to reckon with this new political force'.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁴ White women in South Australia had been enfranchised even earlier, in 1894. For details on early Australian suffragism, see Susan Magarey, 'Why didn't they want to be members of Parliament? Suffragists in South

evidence of the beneficial effects of votes for women. Moreover, the specific allusion to Vida Goldstein makes intuitive sense; Goldstein, who was president of the Australian Women's Federal Political Association, was in a similar situation to Kuliscioff in terms of balancing commitments to feminism and what could be considered socialism (although on the several occasions that Goldstein ran for election, she presented herself as an Independent candidate, having no love for party politics — an attitude diametrically opposed to that advocated by Kuliscioff in this pamphlet). In particular, Goldstein stressed the importance of Australian working-class men's support for the successful introduction of women's suffrage, thus combining 'both her early socialist sympathies and her marked lack of sex hostility'. This attitude parallels Kuliscioff's own, at least as articulated in this pamphlet: as I have shown, the 'significant Others' of the pamphlet are middle- and upper-class suffragist women rather than men of any kind, and socialist men are depicted positively as allies:

Se le donne proletarie non possiedono ancora in proprio l'arme del voto, non perciò è tolto loro di collaborare a che quest'arme sia brandita e manovrata con valore e saggezza dal proletariato maschile [...] Il suffragio universale maschile porta di necessità nelle sue viscere il suffragio universale vero e proprio – degli uomini e delle donne. 196

These (partial) affinities between Goldstein's politics and Kuliscioff's own provide motivation for citing her in the pamphlet. However, the level of focus on Australia also produces what may seem at first glance to constitute a re-shading of the established world map of feminism. References to Britain occur twice in the text, but are brief. Firstly, when Kuliscioff describes the years spent by working-class women in struggling for political rights, she cites the situation

in Germania, in Austria, in Finlandia, nei paesi Scandinavi e nella stessa Inghilterra, il paese classico del femminismo.' 197

Secondly, when addressing more broadly socialist aims, she declares that

Il proletariato [...] deve insorgere [...] contro la politica tributaria vigente oggi, in Italia, dove, a confessione dello stesso Giolitti, i tributi sono inversamente progressivi, ossia più gravi sulla miseria e meno gravi sulle fortune dei ricchi.

Deve reclamare le grandi bonifiche, le pensioni operaie e contadine per la vecchiaia, come le hanno oggimai, coll'assicurazione obbligatoria o col sistema delle pensioni per tutti i bisognosi, la Germania, la Francia, l'Inghilterra, ecc. 198

¹⁹⁵ Barbara Caine, 'Vida Goldstein and the English militant campaign' in Women's history review, 2: 3 (1993), pp. 363-76 (p. 368).

¹⁹⁷ [in Germany, in Austria, in Finland, in the Scandinavian countries and in England itself, the classical country of feminism]. Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 17.

Australia'; for details on the exclusion of Aboriginal women from electoral reform, see Ann Curthoys, 'Citizenship, race and gender: changing debates over the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of women', both in Daley and Nolan (eds.), Suffrage and beyond, pp. 67-88 and pp. 89-106 respectively.

¹⁹⁶ [If proletarian women do not yet possess the weapon of the vote for themselves, they are not debarred by this from collaborating to ensure that this weapon is wielded and handled with courage and wisdom by the male proletariat [...] Universal male suffrage necessarily carries within it the seeds of real universal suffrage – for men and for women.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 28.

For all the weighty connotations of the epithet 'il paese classico del femminismo', these allusions seems somewhat throwaway in comparison to Kuliscioff's lengthy extrapolation on the Australian situation. If an Antipodean emphasis is replacing that more traditionally placed on Britain and the US, how may this be interpreted?

The figure of Vida Goldstein suggests a complex discourse at play. In the first instance, Goldstein was president of the Australian Women's Federal Political Association (originally the Melbourne Women's Political Association), but she had also been elected Secretary of the IWSA in 1902, and, crucially, she had spent eight months in Britain in 1911 and been heavily influential to the British WSPU.¹⁹⁹ Among other things, she had helped to establish in London the Australian and New Zealand Women Voters' Committee, which sought to highlight the fact that if women from Australia and New Zealand moved to the imperial motherland of Britain, they were stripped of the enfranchisement they already possessed in the Commonwealth outposts.²⁰⁰ By 1912, then (when this part of Kuliscioff's pamphlet was first published), Goldstein had come to represent not only the distant, quasi-anomalous success story of Australian suffragism, but also the suffrage movement's internationalism; she could be invoked as a bridge between the 'heaven' of advanced Australia and the 'earth' of the ongoing suffragist struggle in Britain and most of Europe.

However, the decision to refer specifically to Goldstein's study showing positive responses to the reality of women's suffrage may have had a further significance. As Barbara Caine comments, Goldstein believed 'that Australia as a new country was sufficiently progressive and democratic to allow the development of a socially and sexually egalitarian and harmonious society [...] that the entrenched class system and sexual prejudices of Britain had not had a chance to develop in Australia'. This emphasis on Australia's newness as the source of its advancement could have resonated strongly in an Italy in which the fiftieth anniversary of unification was yet to occur. Moreover, the idea that a nation's newness might actually confer a head start, in terms of progressive legislation, over countries like Britain (that 'paese classico del femminismo'), would have been a strongly appealing one; it seems possible that Kuliscioff's reference to Goldstein and Australia constitutes an attempt to redraw the suffrage map so as to acknowledge the potential of countries

²⁰¹ Caine, 'Vida Goldstein and the English militant campaign', p. 367.

¹⁹⁸ [The proletariat must rise up [...] against the taxation policy in force today in Italy, where, as Giolitti himself has confessed, taxes are inversely graduated, i.e. heavier on poverty and less heavy on the fortunes of the rich. It must demand the major claims, workers' and peasants' old age pensions, as Germany, France, England etc. now have them, with obligatory insurance or with a system of pensions for all who need them.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 27.

¹⁹⁹ See Crawford, *The women's suffrage movement: a reference guide*, p. 248. For further information on Vida Goldstein, see Norman Mackenzie, 'Vida Goldstein: the Australian suffragette' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 6: 2 (Nov 1960), pp. 190-204; Caine, 'Vida Goldstein and the English militant campaign'.

²⁰⁰ Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific feminisms: Australian women's internationalist activism in the 1920s-30s' in *Gender and History*, 10: 3 (Nov 1998), pp. 425-48 (p. 427).

like Italy in which, it could be argued, traditional social structures and mores had not yet fully crystallised.

In summary, Kuliscioff's references to other countries serve at once to underline her own socialist-feminist agenda, and to mark out a place for Italy on the world suffrage stage. While the listing of countries deemed progressive seems to consign Italy to the traditional role of the 'paese sonnolente' in need of catching up (as also implied in Mozzoni's 1906 petition), the attention given to Australia, and in particular to Goldstein's study, may indicate an attempt to align Italy with 'new' countries, and with their purported advantages in introducing egalitarian legislative structures.

7.3.2 References to the Italo-Turkish war

Italian specificity emerges particularly through references to women's roles as mothers of soldiers being an argument for their right to, and need of, the vote. As has been shown, this discourse had had a strong presence in earlier suffragist texts as well, but in Kuliscioff's pamphlet it is voiced with considerably more urgency and intensity, and on several occasions is explicitly related to the 1911-1912 war between Italy and Turkey over the colonial rule of Libya. By analysing such references, I will aim to trace this aspect of the conjunction of suffragism and *italianità* in Kuliscioff's text.

In the first section of the pamphlet, Kuliscioff lists the aspects of governmental decision-making that affect women, but leaves military policy until last:

E poi [...] le spese militari. E, di necessaria conseguenza, la guerra e la pace; poichè i figli, che si mandano al macello per l'onore della bandiera, sono, se non ci inganniamo, *un tantino* anche cosa loro.²⁰²

The sarcastic tenor of this ('se non ci inganniamo, *un tantino* [...] cosa loro'), contrasts strongly with the articulation of a similar idea in Mozzoni's 1906 petition. There, writing for a would-be audience of government deputies, the relevance of women's 'amore dei figli'²⁰³ was explained in a serious, step-by-step fashion. Here, writing for an audience of working-class women, many of them mothers, Kuliscioff instead assumes and taps into a pre-existing communal rage at the loss of men's lives in war.

Several pages later, when listing common objections to women's suffrage, she cites the fact that only men serve as soldiers as 'l'ultimo argomento' [the final argument] of this kind, here directly referencing the Libyan situation:

²⁰² [And then [...] military expenses. And, by necessary consequence, war and peace; since the sons who are sent to the slaughter for the honour of the flag are also, if we do not deceive ourselves, slightly theirs.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 7.

²⁰³ 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 112.

E appunto, l'estensione del diritto di voto alla quasi totalità del sesso forte è prospettata oggidì dalla borghesia, anche come un 'premio di guerra', come una doverosa ricompensa al valore militare, così mirabilmente dimostrato dai nostri combattenti nella conquista della Libia.

È vero: confessiamolo con nostro rossore; se dipendeva dalla donne, probabilmente la 'gloriosa conquista' non si faceva... Quale sventura, non è vero?²⁰⁴

The suggestion that women are more peace-loving than men has been considered elsewhere, most notably in relation to the petition of 1906 (Chapter 5). Again, however, the petition had played this argument 'straight': it was motherly love which could 'proteggere l'umanità contro le ricorrenti ubbriacature di sangue e di distruzione'. Kuliscioff's mode of stating her case is more acerbic; she makes caustic use of quotation marks, parodies hyperfeminity in suggesting that women admit their pacifism with 'rossore', and ends with a scathing rhetorical question which constrains female readers either to align themselves with her pacifist stance, or to extract themselves from the group identity and accompanying solidarity offered by the text. She then goes on to make what has become a statement often quoted from her document:

Perocchè, se è vero che le donne non fanno il soldato, è anche vero che esse, pur troppo, fanno i soldati. E non solo li fanno; ma, quel ch'è meglio, li allevano, li nutrono, li «tirano su», inculcando in essi, coll'esempio, il sentimento di dovere, la virtù della disciplina, la capacità dell'abnegazione e del sacrificio; qualità, se non andiamo errate, che qualche cosa valgono, non meno in guerra che in pace.²⁰⁶

There are some indicators of ideological entanglement in this passage. To the argument that women cannot vote because they do not fight, Kuliscioff poses the traditional counter-argument based on the figure of the *madre cittadina*, who 'made' fighters by bearing sons and raising them appropriately.²⁰⁷ However, the striking first sentence is interrupted by the clause 'pur troppo'; and, having listed the various soldierly qualities with which women can imbue their sons, Kulisicioff points out that these 'qualche cosa valgono, non meno in guerra che in pace'. These insertions sit awkwardly within the standard argument that bearing soldiers can be considered patriotic work, and in the passage which follows, this ambivalence is distilled into an outright condemnation of war:

²⁰⁴ [And indeed, the extension of the right to vote to the strong sex in almost its entirety is advocated by the bourgeoisie nowadays partly as a 'prize of war', as a due recompense for the military valour so commendably demonstrated by our combatants in the conquest of Libya.

It is true: let us blush as we confess it; if it were up to women, the 'glorious conquest' would probably not have come about... Such a great loss, don't you think?] Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, pp. 10-11.

²⁰⁵ [protect humanity against the recurrent orgies of blood and destruction]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 112.
²⁰⁶ For if it is true that women *do not turn into soldiers*, it is also true that, unfortunately, *they turn out soldiers*. And not only do they turn them out; but, what's more, they raise them, nourish them, 'bring them up', instilling in them by example the feeling of duty, the virtue of discipline, the capacity for abnegation and sacrifice; qualities, if we are not mistaken, which are worth something, no less in war than in peace.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 11.

²⁰⁷ Indeed, she poses this argument so pithily that her statement has sometimes been quoted by historians as the paradigmatic instance of this reasoning in the Italian suffrage movement (see for instance Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*, pp. 123-24).

E dopo averli 'tirati su' a questo modo, se li vedono, per tutto compenso, anche portar via...

I dolori fisici e morali della maternità, le ansietà ed i pericoli cui la donna va incontro nel dar vita, sangue, carattere ai futuri valorosi soldati, valgono meno, per la patria, della prodezza militare? [...]

È vero: fra le due coscrizioni – quella delle madri e quella dei combattenti – se nei dolori e nei pericoli c'è equipollenza, una differenza profonda rimane pur sempre.

L'una è diretta a creare delle vite; l'altra a sopprimerle.

Il diritto di voto riservato ai maschi troverebbe dunque questo solo titolo vero: la violazione del comandamento del decalogo *'non ammazzerai!'* ²⁰⁸

In order for her original argument to hang together, Kuliscioff has to at least imply that the work of the 'valorosi soldati' themselves, as well as of their mothers, 'valgono [...] per la patria'. However, in the light of how this passage continues (moving towards an open admission that the function of soldiers is to 'sopprimere' life), and in the light of Kuliscioff's earlier, parodic allusions to the "grande conquista", even the elements of standards militaristic jargon here ('valorosi', 'la patria') retain the potential to suggest bitter satire.

Also of interest is the pairing of motherhood and military service not only as duties, but as 'coscrizioni'. Pointing out that soldiers are conscripted is unsurprising, and fits well both within the argument for women's political voices to be heard and within Kuliscioff's overall pacifist ideology. Dubbing motherhood a 'coscrizione' has differently radical associations. The ideal of the *madre cittadina* depended for its effect on the voluntary nature of women's sacrifice.²⁰⁹ One could read arguments for readily-available contraception and abortion into Kuliscioff's use of 'coscrizioni',²¹⁰ but

²⁰⁸ [And after having 'brought them up' in this way, as a reward for their trouble they see their sons taken away...

The physical and moral pangs of motherhood, the worries and dangers which woman confronts in imparting life, blood and character to the brave soldiers of the future, are these worth less to the homeland than military prowess? [...]

It is true: between the two forms of conscription – that of mothers and that of combatants – if the pains and the dangers are equivalent, there still remains one profound difference.

The former aims to create lives; the latter to destroy them.

The right to vote accorded solely to males could therefore claim only the following truthful basis: entitlement derives from breaking the Biblical commandment, 'thou shalt not kill!'] Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p. 11.

²⁰⁹ The Virgin Mary, epitome of the non-secular version of this ideal, would have been considerably less admirable had she embraced the role of 'handmaid of the Lord' without having being offered an alternative. The choice that this idealised figure makes, however, is one of passive submission: 'be it unto me according to thy word'. (Luke I: 38).

²¹⁰ Contraception was not outlawed in Italy until 1926, although, as Victoria De Grazia comments, the pre-Fascist state 'dallied with bans on information on birth control' (De Grazia, *How Fascism ruled women*, p. 55). Abortion was punishable under the 1889 Codice Criminale, but was rarely prosecuted (see Mary Gibson, 'Women and the Left in the shadow of Fascism in interwar Italy' in Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (eds.), *Women and socialism, socialism and women: Europe between the two world wars* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 381-412). However, in liberal Italy neither contraception nor abortion was readily accessible for poorer women.

it seems to me that its chief effect in context is to disrupt the official ideological argument being presented: that mothers are worthy citizens in so far as they create soldiers.

The final allusion to the Biblical commandment 'Non ammazzerai' [You shall not kill] — is sufficiently Old Testament-based and well-known to avoid specifically Catholic overtones (which would have been out of keeping both with Kuliscioff's own Jewish background and with the anticlericalism of the socialist movement). Rather, it situates the 'woman question' within a broader debate on the nature of good and evil, which in a purely Italian context, harks back to Mazzini (who, in *I doveri dell'uomo*, cites 'non ammazzerai' as part of a divine 'Legge' [Law] that is the only legitimate basis for 'le leggi umane' [human laws),²¹¹ yet which can also be applied to a wider international context.

In the final section of the document, Kuliscioff advocates that suffragist women also support the socialist party, and runs through each element of the latter's political agenda with a view to demonstrating its relevance to women. The first point on this agenda is 'una ferma e sistematica opposizione alla politica di avventure coloniali e ai bilanci militari'.²¹² Kuliscioff's explication is as follows:

È tutta la questione sanguinante della guerra, della Libia, degli armamenti, che è prospettata in quelle poche parole. Chi potrà, chi dovrà, più delle nostre donne, sentire l'importanza di cosiffatti problemi? Non sono esse le madri, le spose, le compagne, le sorelle dei nostri soldati, barbaramente sacrificati al nuovo imperialismo coloniale della borghesia? La borghesia militarista e guerrafondaia sostiene che il voto non si dovrebbe concedere alle donne, appunto perchè esse son «femmine», incapaci di sentire la bellezza e la nobiltà delle gloriose imprese della guerra e dei macelli umani. E pensiamo noi pure che, il giorno che spetterà alla donna dire la parola decisiva, sarà finita nel mondo la barbarie della guerra, e della pace armata, forse ancora più disastrosa.²¹³

Once again, the mention of Libya anchors Kuliscioff's ideological thesis to an urgent Italian context. Here, however, the *three* ideologies that dominate this text – feminism, socialism and pacifism – are held together. In particular, the proximity of '[il] nuovo imperialismo coloniale della *borghesia*' and 'la borghesia militarista e guerrafondaia' – with only a full stop separating the two instances of 'la borghesia' – paints attitudes to war as firmly allied to class identities. To the equation of femaleness

²¹¹ Mazzini, I doveri dell'uomo, p. 58; p. 63.

²¹² [a firm and systematic opposition to the policy of colonial exploits and to military budgets]. Kuliscioff, Per il suffragio femminile, p.25.

²¹³ [It is the whole bloodstained question of the war, of Libya, of armaments, which is set out in those few words. Who, more than our women, can and must feel the importance of such problems? Are they not the mothers, the wives, the partners, the sisters of our soldiers, barbarously sacrificed to the new colonial imperialism of the bourgeoisie? The bourgeoisie, militarist and warmongering, maintains that the vote should not be granted to women, precisely because they are 'females', incapable of feeling the beauty and nobility of the glorious exploits of war and human slaughter. Yet we go so far as to think that on the day when it is up to woman to speak the decisive word, there will be an end in the world to the barbarity of war, and of armed peace, perhaps even more disastrous.] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 25.

with inherent pacifism, then, is added an equation of bourgeois identity with militarism. The three binaries of sex, class and attitude to war are thus presented in the following alignment:

female male
proletarian bourgeois
pacifist interventionist.

To conclude, Kuliscioff's references to war in general and to the Libyan war specifically function to reiterate two existing suffragist arguments: firstly, that women's role as mothers of soldiers constitutes a patriotic contribution equivalent to that of military service, and secondly, that women are inherently more peace-loving than men, and would make less bellicose political decisions as a result. However, the co-existence of these arguments proves problematic for the text's ideological cohesion. The strength with which the pacifist argument is articulated disrupts, and challenges the authenticity of, the 'patriotic' one. The repeated allusions to the Libyan conflict serve to ground Kuliscioff's pacifism in immediate and painful realities. Finally, the emphasis on war as the pastime of the borghesia, along with the occasional use of a language style that blatantly parodies the language of colonial militarism (perhaps also parodying the evolving discourse of Futurism),214 creates an assumption within the text that Kuliscioff's readers, the donne proletarie, are already at one with her regarding the futility of war - an assumption not entirely reflected in reality. It is fair to say in general terms that the Italo-Turkish war exacerbated the already tense division between socialist and bourgeois suffragists, since by and large these fell into pacifist and interventionist camps respectively, and that this expedited the withdrawal of socialist suffragists from the Pro-Suffrage Committees.²¹⁵ However, the war also provoked a splintering within the socialist women's movement: a minority, but a vocal minority that included the influential Teresa Labriola, endorsed the war.²¹⁶ Kuliscioff's discourse of assumed shared abhorrence of the military campaign, then, signals that her target readership is narrower than donne proletarie: it is composed of donne proletarie (pacifiste).

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²¹⁴ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti had published his *Manifesto del futurismo* [Futurist manifesto] in 1909, in which he advocated glorifying 'la guerra — sola igiene del mondo —, il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna' [war – the world's only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the libertarians, the beautiful ideas for which one dies, and the scorning of women]. (See Filippo Tommasi Marinetti, 'Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo' in Marinetti et al., I manifesti del futurismo (Florence: Edizioni di 'Lacerba', 1914), pp. 3-10 (p. 6), accessed from Internet Archive at http://archive.org/stream/imanifestidelfut00mariuoft#page/n3/mode/2up on 23 September 2013. During the Italo-Turkish war, Marinetti had served as a war correspondent for the French newspaper *L'Intransigeant*, with the resultant articles being published in 1912 in an Italian volume (*La battaglia di Tripoli vissuta e cantata da F. T.*

Marinetti).

215 See Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, pp. 94-96. Migliucci notes that in 1913, the Lombard committee, which had, unusually, issued an open plea to its socialist members to remain, saw only 190 membership dues paid in 1913, of which only 5 came from working-class women.

²¹⁶ See Marina Tesoro, 'Teresa Labriola e il suffragio femminile. Fondamenti teorici e soluzioni operative' in *Il Politico*, 173: 2 (1995), pp. 189-225.

7.4 Conclusions

In *Per il suffragio femminile*, Kuliscioff performs complex and not always fully successful acrobatics in order to negotiate her own and her readers' positions in the newly configured Italian matrix of sex, class and foreign policy. I followed two main threads in analysing the discourses used in the pamphlet: firstly, I examined identities *among* Italian women, and, secondly, I examined the representation of *italianità*.

The first thread revealed that, while Kuliscioff's individual *io* is largely invisible in the text, the use of *noi* to delimit a common group identity for her and her readers fluctuates in intensity. Specifically, the the emphasised form of *noi* occurs when a focused opposition is being drawn between the in-group, composed of *donne proletarie*, and the ultimate *loro* of the *signore suffragiste*. The latter are also described using quasi-parodic literary register. Linguistic syntax and style thus combine to depict the bourgeois suffragists in terms circumlocutory enough to mimic the politics of which Kuliscioff accuses them; meanwhile, the *donne proletarie* are associated with plain speech, both by what is actually written about them and by dint of their textual positioning as the 'self' group to this vacillating middle-class 'Other'. The transition from *noi* to *voi* in the final passage of the pamphlet, along with the injunction to readers not to become *krumire*, underscores the divide established between class groups of suffragists.

The second thread of inquiry led to two key observations. Firstly, while several foreign countries are used as points of comparison, Australia has an especially strong textual presence, concentrated in the figure of Vida Goldstein – suggesting a strategy of aligning Italy, as a 'newborn' nation, with a country whose very newness had enabled the concession of suffrage. Secondly, the uneasy co-presence of patriotic and pacifist discourses is given grounded application by references to the recent Libyan invasion, and is eventually (partly) resolved by the dominance of pacifism. This is achieved especially through an acerbic rhetorical style sometimes caricaturing the language of nationalism, colonialism and Futurism, which assumes that readers are already in agreement – i.e. that *donne proletarie* are also *donne pacifiste*.

The identification of readers as *donne proletarie* is accomplished directly and emphatically (through the construction of the bourgeois suffragists as an intensely 'Other' entity), whereas the identification of them as *donne proletarie pacifiste* is achieved more insidiously (through ironic and parodic tones that assume reader complicity). That said, the text contains certain features that arc across both these forms of identity positioning. In particular, a hyperbolically high linguistic register is used both in reference to the bourgeois suffragists and in reference to militant patriotic ideology. This language simultaneously evokes and undermines tropes of chivalric discourse which dictate both polarised sex

roles and bellicose nationalism. Thus, the latter two problems are grouped as having a shared cause: the bourgeoisie. Conversely, the use of a simple, straightforward lexicon in relation to the socialist position – whether sex roles or foreign policy is at stake – creates an overarching oppositional identity founded in class, and summarised in part of Turati's speech quoted by Kuliscioff:

"La nostra rivendicazione non ha nulla di cavalleresco, nulla di galante, e riposa sopra una concezione assai materiale, l'identità dell'interesse della donna operaia con quello dell'uomo operaio, che si fondono nel comune denominatore «proletariato», per combattere le stesse battaglie politiche". 217

²¹⁷ ["Our claim has nothing chivalrous about it, nothing gallant, and it rests upon a very natural concept: the equivalence of the female worker's interest to the male worker's, both interests merging within the common denominator "proletariat" to fight the same political battles".] Kuliscioff, *Per il suffragio femminile*, p. 20.

Chapter 8 Gina Lombroso's anti-suffragist argument (1919)

Primary text analysed: Gina Lombroso, Il pro e il contro. Riflessioni sul voto alle Donne²¹⁸

Avevamo II e 12 anni, rispettivamente, mia sorella ed io quando la Signora Kuliscioff venne a Torino [...] Fu lei, "la nostra Signora", come La nomavamo, la prima che vide l'interno lavorio che in noi si andava facendo, che rispose alle nostre non fatte domande [...] Fu questa sua mirabile intuizione il suo fascino.

- Gina Lombroso, 1925.219

The First World War had contradictory effects on the Italian suffrage movement, as discussed in Chapter 2. On the one hand, it consolidated the divisions between Italian suffragists along interventionist and pacifist lines, while pushing suffrage down the list of priorities for affiliates of both ideologies. On the other, it paved the way for new political landscapes, both within Italy and internationally, that seemed far more conducive to a policy of women's enfranchisement than had their pre-war counterparts.

The text for analysis in this chapter is a pamphlet published by Gina Lombroso in 1919 – the year in which the suffrage cause in Italy seemed at last to be on the cusp of victory, with Gasparotto and Martini's suffrage bill being passed in the Chamber of Deputies. Lombroso's text, unlike the other documents studied in this section, is an anti-suffrage polemic tailored to this new, post-war, comparatively pro-suffragist context. Its choice of arguments and language respond to the changed configurations of sex roles, political alliances, and international relations in the wake of the war, as well as to the newly promising status of the suffrage question itself.

Gina Lombroso $(1872-1944)^{220}$ – who grew up with Anna Kuliscioff as a family friend and influential figure, as indicated in the epigraph chosen for this chapter – had studied first humanities and

²¹⁸ Gina Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro. Riflessioni sul voto alle Donne* (Florence: Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane, 1919). The Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane (ADDI) was an organisation established by Lombroso, Amelia Rosselli and Olga Monsani. Its publications were not numerous, but examples of other titles that it produced at around the same time include a work on psychology (Maria Baciocchi de Péon, Come educare. Saggio di psicologia applicata (Florence, Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane, 1919); a collection of Mazzini's writings (Giuseppe Mazzini, *La missione dell'Italia. Altri scritti.* (Florence: Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane, 1919); and a tract by republican Arcangelo Ghisleri (Che cos'è una nazione, come tracciarne i confini (Florence, Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane, 1919)).

²¹⁹ [We were II and I2 years old, my sister and I, when Signora Kuliscioff came to Turin [...] It was she, 'our Lady', as we called her, who was the first to see the intense activity happening inside us, to answer the questions we hadn't asked [...] This incredible intuition was her particular charm]. Gina Lombroso, 'Il suo fascino' in (no author listed) *Anna Kuliscioff. In memoria* (Milan: Tip. Lucchi, 1989; first publ. 1926), pp. 65-66.

subsequently medicine in the Univerisity of Turin, graduating with honours. Following her marriage to Guglielmo Ferrero in 1901, she had given up her own medical research to dedicate her energies to parenting her two children and collaborating with her husband on his work. Following the death of her father, the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, in 1909, she took responsibility also for editing and re-publishing some of his major works (including his highly influential study, written jointly with Ferrero, of 'deviant' women, which had heavily influenced positivist thinking on sex roles in Italy since its original publication in 1893).²²¹ Increasingly, and particularly during World War One, Gina Lombroso became interested herself in contributing to the developing Italian debate on women's roles.²²² As a journalist, she wrote on the question in women's publications, such as Vita femminile, as well as in more mainstream organs such as La Tribuna and Il Mondo; she also contributed occasional articles to newspapers as distant as the Argentinian La Prensa.²²³ In 1917, she was one of the founders of the Associazione divulgatrice donne italiane [ADDI; Italian women's dissemination association]. The goal of ADDI was to promote women's involvement in cultural, sociological, scientific and political questions; through its publications, of which the text analysed in this chapter is one, Gina Lombroso further expounded many of her views on women's rights and duties, and responded to the different opinions of other women in the organisation. In 1920, she published her most widely-read work, L'anima della donna. Riflessioni sulla vita,224 in which she synthesised her approach to sex roles. Translated into twelve languages, the book enjoyed particular success in France, but was also well-received in Italy and in English-speaking countries.²²⁵ A contemporary review from the Times Literary Supplement declared that 'This is the first time that there has been a

http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/memoriadonne/cartedidonne/cdd_45_biagioli.pdf on 15 May 2013; Marina Calloni, 'Gina Lombroso', accessed from Enciclopedia delle donne at

http://www.enciclopediadelledonne.it/index.php?azione=pagina&id=362 on 15 May 2013.

For detailed biographical information on Gina Lombroso, see Delfina Dolza, Essere figlie di Lombroso. Due donne intellettuali tra '800 e '900. (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1990); Marina Calloni, 'Gina Lombroso tra scienza, impegno civile e vita familiare. Alcuni appunti bio-bibliografici' in Lorella Cedroni (ed.), Nuovi studi su Guglielmo Ferrero (Rome: Aracne, 1998), pp. 273-94. For more succinct overviews of her life, see Beatrice Biagioli (ed.), 'Fondo Gina Lombroso: Censimento' (2011), accessed from Archivio di Stato, Firenze, at

²²¹ Cesare Lombroso, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1903, first publ. 1893), accessed from <u>Internet Archive</u> at

http://archive.org/stream/ladonnadelinque00lombgoog#page/n12/mode/2up on 15 May 2013. On the relevance of Cesare Lombroso's views to the perception of various aspects of the woman question in Italy, see Mary Gibson, 'Labelling women deviant: heterosexual women, prostitutes and lesbians in early criminological discourse' in Perry Willson (ed.), Gender, family and sexuality: the private sphere in Italy, 1860-1945 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 89-104; also 'The "female offender" and the Italian school of criminal anthropology' in Journal of European studies, 12: 47 (1982), pp. 155-65; 'On the insensitivity of women: science and the woman question in Liberal Italy, 1890-1910' in Journal of women's history, 2:2 (1990), pp. 11-41.

²²² This increased interest may be attributed in part to a new circle of female acquaintances, whom Lombroso encountered partly because of a move to Florence (where she became involved in the Lyceum Club, among other entities) and partly due to her interventionist campaigning throughout the war. See Dolza, Essere figlie di Lombroso, p. 207.

²²³ Dolza, Essere figlie di Lombroso, p. 208.

²²⁴ [The soul of woman. Reflections on life].

²²⁵ Dolza, Essere figlie di Lombroso, p. 226.

serious attempt by an Italian woman to portray the mind and heart of woman' (a statement with which Sibilla Aleramo, among others, might have taken issue). The review emphasises that, from an outside perspective, the book seems quintessentially Italian:

The title [...] leads us to expect a picture of Eve free of national characteristics or influences of environment, and this is evidently the writer's intention. Fortunately, a scheme so vast [...] is not adhered to, and she concentrates upon the psychology of her own race, giving us not only a scholarly book but a penetrating study, which is never dull, of 'l'anima della donna Italiana'. 226

Lombroso would continue to contribute to debates on women's rights, as well as other issues, until her death in Geneva in 1944.²²⁷ The pamphlet studied in this chapter is especially relevant to suffrage discourse for two reasons. Firstly, the document itself is effective in pointing to and engaging with aspects of post-war change that had had an impact on the suffrage question. The urgent tone of its anti-suffrage persuasions reflects the 'crisis' moment of 1919, in which, for the first time, the anti-suffrage campaigners looked like becoming the losing side. Secondly, Gina Lombroso's high national and international status as a cultural and scientific spokesperson on the woman question means that the document was a would-be influential one.²²⁸ That is to say, it did not simply reflect the 'crisis' in motion, but also attempted plausibly to intervene in the course of events.

The study of anti-suffrage discourse in Italy deserves a thesis (or several) of its own, and it may seem tokenistic to include a single example for analysis here, since my research deals predominantly with pro-suffrage rhetoric. However, it is difficult to find examples of novel or markedly altered aspects of purely pro-suffrage rhetoric in the post-war period, due largely to that movement's fragmentation and

Mrs Aubrey William Waterfield, 'The Italian woman. L'anima della donna by Lombroso, Gina Ferrero' in The TLS, Thurs 25 November 1920, issue 984, p. 773. Accessed from TLS Historical Archive 1902-2008, available through Trinity College Dublin Library website at

http://stella.catalogue.tcd.ie/iii/encore/record/C__Rb13367916~S9?lang=eng

on 18 May 2013. (Mrs Waterfield, born Caroline Lucie Duff Gordon and later a writer under the name of Lina Waterfield, had lived in Italy since 1902 and helped to found the British Institute in Florence in 1917. She corresponded with Gina Lombroso (accessed from SIUSA, <u>Archivi di personalità</u> at

http://siusa.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgibin/pagina.pl?TipoPag=comparc&Chiave=306645&RicProgetto=personalita on 6 June 2013). On Waterfield, see also Katie Campbell, *Paradise of exiles: the Anglo-American gardens of Florence* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2009), pp. 56-57).

²²⁷ Lombroso and her husband both opposed the Fascist regime, and, following increased surveillance and repression, they would leave Italy for Geneva in 1930. Their home there would become a cultural hub for antifascist intellectuals, and Gina Lombroso would take on a leading role in establishing the Capolago publishing house, which disseminated material by many of these figures.

²²⁸ Gina Lombroso's influence was profoundly intertwined with the legacy of her father; as Mary Gibson notes, Cesare Lombroso's theories of male and female criminology continued to dominate debates on the justice system 'during both the Liberal and Fascist periods'. (Gibson, 'Labelling women deviant', p. 98). Cesare Lombroso had also had a significant influence beyond Italian borders - on this, see especially Patrizia Guarnieri, 'Caesar or Cesare? American and Italian images of Lombroso' in Paul Knepper and P.J. Ystehede (eds.), *The Cesare Lombroso handbook* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 113-27.

distraction during the years of conflict.²²⁹ (In this sense, my findings concur with those of Migliucci, who argues that Italian suffragism never recovered from the stale tiredness to which it had sunk by 1913).²³⁰ While the absence of significantly reinvigorated suffragist discourse is in itself significant – and while the presence of new, proto-Fascist proposals for government from former suffragists such as Teresa Labriola forms an intriguing and salient tangent²³¹ – the scope of this thesis is focused on the question of suffrage within a system of liberal democracy, as it had been understood in the debate until this point, and as it was presented in the Martini-Gasparotto bill.

With this in mind, the project of interrogating an anti-suffrage text (specifically one which engages with the suffrage issue as it stood at national and international level in 1919, and which would have carried cultural weight) seems a useful one. If the suffragist side was wearying of argumentative innovation, the anti-suffrage side was facing an immediate threat for the first time, and Lombroso's text represents a position goaded to new discursive alacrity by the prospect of defeat.

I begin by summarising the structure and content of the text (8.1), before pursuing two lines of enquiry that resemble those applied to other texts analysed in this section. Firstly, I ask how the text represents the category of Italian women and how the author's own identity relates to the group identities posited (8.2). Subsequently, I ask how *italianità* is presented in international context, and how (or if) it is related to the question of suffrage (8.3). This approach allows me to compare the mode in which the anti-suffrage Lombroso positions women's citizenship on Italian and international canvases with the modes in which the pro-suffrage Mozzoni, I 908 speakers, and Kuliscioff did likewise in documents already considered. While Lombroso's text serves only as an individual example of anti-suffragist rhetoric at a particular moment, and cannot be touted as representative in a more general sense, my observations on the use of language within it do link to aspects of the broader historical debate, as shall be explored in the chapter's conclusion (8.4).

lt is true that new feminist publications such as *Voce nuova* did contain plentiful articles that incorporated the changes wrought by war into their suffragist arguments (on this, see Schiavon, 'The women's suffrage campaign in Italy in 1919'). However, *Voce nuova* became increasingly coloured by the corporativist, proto-Fascist views of Teresa Labriola and others of a similar mindset; the 'suffrage' being requested by this faction was often of a different form to that advocated thus far, and to that proposed in the Gasparotto bill (Ibid, pp. 59-62). Moreover, after the bill's passage, *Voce nuova* never again succeeded in covering the suffrage question in depth, and the originators of the publication found themselves politically isolated (Ibid, pp. 65-66).

²³⁰ Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne*, p. 113.
²³¹ See Chapter 2, pp. 37-38 of this thesis; see also Bigaran, 'll voto alle donne', p. 255; Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili*, p. 275.

8.1 Overview of the text

Il pro e il contro is a 36-page pamphlet, published by ADDI and divided into four sections. The first of these, 'A che cosa serve il voto',²³² states that the purpose of passive and active suffrage is that of imposing a 'vero programma politico' [real political programme], and that the interests of women – even the most 'ferventi feministe' [fervent feminists] – tend to lie outside this sphere. There are places where women already have the vote, Lombroso points out (Finland, some US states and Australia are mentioned), yet 'in quasi nessuno, con o senza il voto la donna ha inalberato un programma politico'.²³³

In the second section, 'Il pro e il contro',²³⁴ Lombroso sets out several arguments in favour of votes for women, before challenging them. The pro-suffrage arguments listed begin with the services rendered by women during the war; the ability they have shown in jobs formerly carried out by men; the potential of the vote, as a form of 'giustizia' [justice], to disperse the idea that women are intellectually inferior; the humiliation that would be felt by disenfranchised Italian women when the women of other nations wielded the vote; and the hope that women's particular gifts, particularly the 'solido buon senso dell'economa massaia', could benefit the political world's 'caos universale'.²³⁵ The privileged position of women's war work in these arguments is noteworthy, if unsurprising.²³⁶

Lombroso begins her rebuttal by contesting the link between women's war work and suffrage:

il voto non è una croce di guerra, non è una patente di benemerenza, è un mezzo per partecipare alla vita politica del proprio paese: ora l'aver fatto obici o l'aver condotto dei trams non è ancora una prova di saper far buon uso del voto.²³⁷

²³² [What is the vote for]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 3.

²³³ [in almost none, with or without the vote, has woman instigated a political agenda]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 3-5.

²³⁴ [The pros and the cons]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 7.

²³⁵ [straightforward common sense of the thrifty housewife]; [universal chaos]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 7-

²³⁶ In Britain, the long-time constitutional suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett, reflecting on the post-war concession of the vote to women (of 30 and over), declared that the war had 'found [women] serfs and left them free' in so far as it had 'ploughed up the hardened soil of ancient prejudice [...] Not even the most inveterate of antisuffragists could have ventured to say, after the experience gained by the war, [...] that, apart from breeding, women were of no national importance whatever.' Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *The women's victory – and after: personal reminiscences, 1911-1918* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1920), pp. 106-07. Accessed from Internet Archive at

http://archive.org/stream/womensvictoryaft00fawcuoft#page/n7/mode/2up on 24 May 2013. For an analysis of the impact of women's war work on suffrage discourse and developments in Britain, see Angela K. Smith, Suffrage discourse in Britain during the First World War (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), Chapter 8 ('Winning the peace').

peace.) 237 [the vote is not a war medal, it is not a certificate of merit, it is a means of participating in the political life of one's country: now having made howitzers or having driven trams is not yet proof of knowing how to make good use of the vote]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 8-9.

While the last phrase ('ancora [...] buon uso') suggests the pragmatic, supposedly temporary antisuffrage arguments so often advanced in the pre-war years, whereby Italian women were deemed not yet ready to vote due to specific sociocultural circumstances, Lombroso goes on to clarify that her opposition is based on a more far-reaching principle: that of inherent difference. Responding to the old conceptual knot of inferiority, superiority, difference, equality and equivalence, she asks:

La donna non è inferiore all'uomo; in questo siamo d'accordo: ma implica ciò che essa gli sia uguale in tutto?²³⁸

She argues that uguaglianza cannot be complete because women and children are universally given a 'rispetto speciale' [special respect].

As for the question of international competitiveness – the fear that 'le donne di altri paesi hanno il voto e che noi saremmo reputate inferiori se non l'avessimo'²³⁹ – Lombroso holds, again, that difference is acceptable and does not imply inferiority. In fact, she rejects several of the new, post-war arguments for suffrage on the basis of her adherence to a formula of difference that includes not only sex differences, but differences between 'specie, razze, nazioni'.²⁴⁰

Next, she challenges the suffragist idea that not voting constitutes an indignity to women. She contends that, while the voices of other non-voters, such as 'minorenni' [minors], 'idioti' [idiots] and 'interdetti' [the disqualified], are paid no heed in politics, those of women already are, since women exercise an entirely dignified political influence through indirect action – i.e. through convincing their male family members to vote in particular ways.²⁴¹ Further, she sees indirect action as beneficial to the system *because* it is selective: only those women with well-defined ideas and strong powers of eloquence will succeed in changing their male relatives' minds! With female suffrage, this bias, which she views as highly positive, would vanish.²⁴²

Finally, in response to the pro-suffrage claim that female difference, and especially the perceived female gift for domestic economy, would reform the political world, Lombroso reiterates her belief in

²³⁸ [Woman is not inferior to man; on that, we agree: but does this imply that she is equal to him in everything?] Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 9. The translation of 'uguale' as 'equal' misses a nuance of the Italian word, which can also signify 'the same'. The translation loss points to the possible importance of this dual meaning in the discourse of Lombroso and other Italian anti-suffragists: the lexical indistinctness of equality and sameness in the Italian language lays egalitarian suffragist argument open to the accusation that it is claiming a total lack of difference between the sexes. The 'different but equal' argument so common in Anglophone suffragism, then, was linguistically impossible to recreate in Italian. I will return to this point in the final Chapter 11.

²³⁹ [that the women of other countries have the vote and we would be deemed inferior if we did not have it]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ [species, races, nations]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 11.

²⁴¹ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 12-13.

²⁴² Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 15.

difference and a consequent belief in women's particular bent for administration. Just as women have proved to be excellent queens, she sees them as potentially excellent civil servants:

L'argomento [...] della buona prova fatta dalle Regine avrebbe importanza quando si trattasse di conquistare posti analoghi nei ministeri o nella alta burocrazia o nei consolati, alle quali cariche, ripeto, credo la donna assai adatta più che per far leggi in Parlamento.²⁴³

The third section of Lombroso's pamphlet deals with the question of 'Perchè la donna vuole il voto'.²⁴⁴ That is to say, it deals with pragmatic suffragist arguments that focus on the vote as a means to other ends perceived as feminist: legislative measures protecting women's working conditions, restricting the sale of alcohol, increasing women's access to the professions, permitting paternity searches, increasing women's financial autonomy, etc.²⁴⁵ Lombroso's counter-argument is brief: she holds that the evidence from other countries suggests that female suffrage does not prevent the passage of laws that hurt women,²⁴⁶ while its absence does not impede the passage of laws that benefit them.²⁴⁷ In fact, the misguided support offered by men to the cause of women's suffrage is evidence that 'qualunque programma le donne si mettano in mente di svolgere troverà sempre paladini pronti a sostenerlo'.²⁴⁸

The fourth and final section, 'I pericoli del voto alle donne'²⁴⁹ is perhaps the most illuminating as regards Lombroso's concept of normative femininity and its relation to feminism.²⁵⁰ Having dismissed the potential benefits of women's suffrage as 'irrisori' [derisory], Lombroso queries whether the considerable phalanx of suffragists could really be so 'infervorata' [roused] by the prospect of these meagre ends. She suggests, instead, that there are 'punti oscuri del programma'.²⁵¹ These hidden points centre, she holds, on the possibility of using the vote to transform male behaviour, creating ideal husbands through constraining legislation.²⁵² However, in Lombroso's view, the uneven power structures within marital relationships are determined not by 'leggi umane' [human laws] but by 'leggi

²⁴³ [The argument [...] of the positive evidence offered by Queens would be important if the discussion were about winning analogous positions in the ministries or in the higher civil service or in the consulates, roles for which, I repeat, I believe woman to be far more suitable than she is for making laws in Parliament.] Lombroso, *II* pro e *il* contro, p. 17.

²⁴⁴ [Why does woman want the vote].

Lombroso, Il pro e il contro, pp. 19-20.

²⁴⁶ 'Le donne russe, col loro voto non hanno potuto impedire che fossero votate leggi per la socializzazione delle donne e dei bambini' [Russian women, wielding their vote, were not able to prevent the passing of laws for the socialization of women and children]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 20.

²⁴⁷ 'Senza voto, le donne sono entrate in Italia in una quantità di carriere maschili che in altri paesi sono ancora rigorosamente riservate agli uomini' [Without the vote, women in Italy have entered various male careers that are still strictly reserved for men in other countries]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 20.

²⁴⁸ [no matter what project women get into their heads, it will always find knights ready to support it]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 21.

²⁴⁹ [The dangers of votes for women].

Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, pp. 23-34.
 [hidden points of the agenda]. Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 23.

²⁵² Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 24.

naturali' [natural laws] – most significantly, by women's duties as mothers. Laws that attempt to alter these power structures, she claims, foster distance between men and women and decrease marriage rates.²⁵³

A still greater disadvantage of women's suffrage, in Lombroso's terms, would be its passive component, i.e. women's eligibility. To be elected, she argues, a woman would have to expose her personal life in an aggressive, public domain: many of the best men already shrink from this prospect. 'Normal' women with families would never do this, she holds; therefore, only 'donne anormali'254 [abnormal women] would end up being elected. There is more antagonism between these *donne anormali* and the *donne normali*, Lombroso states, than between women and men. Worse still, she envisages that, with their election to high positions, 'queste donne anomale diventerebbero il modello'255 toward which other, weak-willed women would aspire.

Lastly, Lombroso addresses the words of 'il *leader* maschile [...] del femminismo'²⁵⁶ (probably Turati, although possibly Gasparotto or Martini), who has argued that, since many men vote for trite, selfish, and illogical reasons already, concerns about women's ability to carefully weigh up their own voting decisions are unnecessary. To Lombroso, the prospect of women joining men in political heedlessness is a dire one: rather than enriching the public domain with their domestic expertise, they would bring their new, political experience to the private domain with disastrous results.²⁵⁷ This account situates unenfranchised women as the last moral bastions of society; it also relies, at times quite explicitly, on the paradigm of sacrifice as the essence of femininity. While the public world of politics would teach women that their loyalty should be earned and maintained through merit, and forfeited through lack thereof, this lesson would be disastrous if applied to the private sphere: irritating (male) relatives cannot be so easily removed from office. The predicted result of women's suffrage is predicated on the spectre of divorce:²⁵⁸ it is envisaged as the wholesale destruction of the family, an institution which 'sparirebbe se sparisse la coscienziosità della donna'.²⁵⁹

In a concluding paragraph, Lombroso sums up her thinking by reiterating that from a female perspective, the vote holds no significant advantages, but does hold a number of grave perils:

²⁵³ Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 25.

²⁵⁴ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 27-28.

²⁵⁵ [these anomalous women would become the model]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 28.

²⁵⁶ [the male leader [...] of feminism]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 29-30.

²⁵⁷ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 30.

²⁵⁸ While the divorce question had always been an especially contentious one in Liberal Italy, it was not an issue on which there seemed likely to be any immediate movement in the post-war context. One proposal would be put to the Chamber in 1920, but it was to be 'understandably drowned out by much more immediate concerns in those dramatic years of political crisis'. Mark Seymour, 'Keystone of the patriarchal family? Indissoluble marriage, masculinity and divorce in Liberal Italy' in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10: 3 (2005), pp. 297-313 (p. 311).

²⁵⁹ [would vanish if women's conscientiousness vanished]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 32.

Allontanare l'uomo dalla donna, diminuire matrimoni e natalità. Diminuire la coscienziosità della donna, diminiuire il suo interesse famigliare, prevalere delle donne anomale sulle normali.²⁶⁰

8.2 Collective identities: normalità and anormalità

What kinds of donne does Lombroso speak of, speak to, and claim to speak for?

Of the numerous varieties of women referenced, the clearest contrast is drawn between *donne normali* and those whom she describes interchangeably as *anormali* or *anomale*.²⁶¹ As has been stated, Lombroso envisages suffrage as elevating the latter category to a position of privilege toward which other women would aspire; she also views this possibility as socially destructive. What, then, are the characteristics of the *normali* and the feared *anormali*, and what discourses are drawn upon and fostered by Lombroso's depiction of them?

A *donna normale* is characterised by familial devotion and sacrifice: she is the kind of woman 'che ha una famiglia, che ama i figli e la famiglia più che sè stessa'.²⁶² This definition loops back to several earlier arguments made by Lombroso: she has defended what she sees as the current system of women's political influence being exercised indirectly in terms that emphasise the importance of family ties:

Ma, io chiedo, come e perchè [...] è più dignitoso per la donna correr le piazze a persuadere gli estranei di quello che pensa, che non persuadere a quattro occhi nella sua casa i suoi conoscenti, il marito, i figli?²⁶³

²⁶⁰ [Distancing man from woman, decreasing marriage and birth rates. Decreasing woman's conscientiousness, decreasing her interest in the family, prioritising anomalous women over the normal ones.] Lombroso, II pro e il contro, p. 35. Italics in original.

p. 35. Italics in original.

261 Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 27-28. The distinction between the *normali* and the *anormali* seems closely linked to the thinking of Cesare Lombroso (and Guglielmo Ferrero) as set out in *La donna delinquente*, *la prostituta e la donna normale*. Lombroso and Ferrero insist on the importance of establishing data on the *donna normale* in order to gain an oppositional understanding of what we might now see as her 'Other', the *donna delinquente*: 'nessuno dei fenomeni della donna delinquente poteva spiegarsi se non se ne aveva nelle mani il profilo normale' [none of the characteristics of the criminal woman could be explained if we did not have the normal profile in our hands] (p. viii). While Gina Lombroso's *donna anormale* is not the *donna delinquentel prostituta* of Cesare Lombroso's analysis (as shall be seen), the lingering presence of the *donna normale* in her text harks back inevitably to the earlier work – in which 'carissima Gina' [dearest Gina] had been referenced as Cesare's 'collaboratrice' [collaborator) and 'l'ispiratrice più salda, più feconda' [the most steadfast, generative inspirer] of his study (p. xi). (The female gendering of 'collaboratrice' and 'ispiratrice' cannot easily be rendered in English).

²⁶² [who has a family, who loves her children and family more than herself]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 27-28.

²⁶³ [But I ask, how and why [...] is it more dignified for woman to run around the town squares persuading strangers of her way of thinking, than to persuade, face to face and in her own home, her acquaintances, her husband, her sons?] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 12.

She has also gone on to argue that indirect action is beneficial to the system *because* it is selective: only those women with clearly-thought-out ideas, persuasive ability and good arguments will succeed in convincing their male relatives and friends to vote in particular ways.²⁶⁴ If this group maps on to that of the *donne normali* of the later passage, then, it should be noted that good homemaking is teamed with erudition and eloquence (in suitably refined settings). This acts as a subtle marker of class: Lombroso never overtly confirms that her *donne normali* belong in middle- and upper-class environments, but the implication is present. (As shall be seen, the allusive links between the *donne anormali* and the working classes are still more evident).

The *donne normali*, then, are systrophically characterised through the text: they are married, family-oriented, self-abnegating, and, less explicitly, educated and cultivated in a manner befitting the middle and upper classes. What, then, of the *donne anormali* – are they described in diametrically opposite terms? Up to a point, the answer is yes: they are 'quelle che non si sono costituite una famiglia, quelle che non sono legate alla vita da nessun affetto'. However, Lombroso does not finish her definition there, but continues: 'le donne in una parola che non sono donne, quelle in cui l'ambizione soverchia l'amore'. Unmarried, ambitious female persons, then, 'non sono donne'? The statement seems an extraordinarily strong one, yet its sense is reiterated when Lombroso twice more describes such women as 'donne maschili'267 [masculine women]. The presence of Cesare Lombroso's *La donna delinquente* as intertext adds a strong implication of lesbianism to this epithet. 268

The triple repetition of 'quelle' in the definitions cited in the previous paragraph works linguistically both to avoid referring to this group as 'donne' more often than necessary, and to hold the members at arm's length from the author and her intended audience (its 'Othering' effect that does not work fully in English translation). This stylistic choice may be contrasted with Lombroso's method of listing attributes when she refers to the interests of the *donne normali*: 'delle donne in generale, delle donne

Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 15: 'Per agire [...] *indirettament*e sulle elezioni persuadendo gli elettori uno ad uno, bisogna avere una idea personale, un concetto, bisogna avere una certa capacità persuasiva e trovare gli argomenti adatti.' [To [...] *indirectly* influence the elections by persuading voters one by one, it is necessary to have one's own idea, a concept, it is necessary to have a certain persuasive ability and to come up with suitable arguments].

²⁶⁵ [those who have not formed a family for themselves, those who are not bound to life by any tie of affection]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 28.

²⁶⁶ [the women who are not women, those in whom ambition dominates love]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 28.

²⁶⁷ Lombroso, II pro e il contro, p. 28.

livestigating lesbian women (dubbed 'tribadi' [tribades]), Cesare Lombroso stated that 'Ve ne hanno diventato tribadi, tutto ad un tratto, ma confessano che fino da bambine avevano passione pei giuochi maschili, per vestirsi da uomo, per ballare con donne, per fumare sigari forti, ubriacarsi, cavalcare, battersi [...] assumono l'aria maschile [...] quando sanno di non essere sorvegliate' [Some of them became tribades all of a sudden, but confess that since they were children they loved boys' games, dressing as men, dancing with women, smoking strong cigars, getting drunk, riding, fighting [...] they assume a masculine air [...] when they know they are not being observed.] C. Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, p. 408.

chiocce, delle donne quali abbisognano alla società'.²⁶⁹ Here, the collective noun 'donne' is not avoided through the use of the distancing 'quelle', but is emphasised in an anaphoric tricolon.

Do the *donne anormali* surface elsewhere in this text? Recalling that earlier passage which treats of women's indirect electoral influence, I have noted that Lombroso has praised the exclusivity of this system for privileging the voices of the clever, articulate women who confine their persuasive powers to their own home – that is, of the implicitly bourgeois *donne normali*. Where are the *donne anormali* in this section? They seem present in Lombroso's fear of what female suffrage would bring:

la maggiore influenza resterebbe non alle donne che sanno pensare, ma a quelle che hanno maggiormente l'abitudine di gridare. 270

The pronominal use of 'quelle' strengthens the link with the later passage; this link, in turn, strengthens the presence of an unnamed classist discourse throughout the text, since the women who possess 'l'abitudine di gridare' are most likely to have developed it through workers' protests.²⁷¹ In further support of this argument, Lombroso makes repeated and pejorative references to the site of the piazza as she elaborates on the argument for the women's indirect electoral influence. Firstly, the method of gentle domestic persuasion is openly contrasted with that of 'correr le piazze',272 as has been seen. More abstrusely, political campaigning is considered through the metaphor of mothering when Lombroso condemns the mother who reprimands her son 'in piazza' rather than at home, yet also the one who simply forbids the son to 'andar vagando per le piazze' rather than indirectly charming him into staying at home through the (quintessentially bourgeois) delights of 'interessanti musiche o conversari'.273 Finally, illogical shouting is held to carry no weight within the sacred domestic sphere, but is deemed highly effective in the 'discorsi fatti in piazza'.²⁷⁴ Lombroso's discursive use of the piazza, then - especially in tandem with the verb gridare - is to construct a space antithetical to the private sphere in which she has proposed that her donna normale should reign. The piazza must stand not only for undignified exhibitionism, but for the inverse of the salon-style bourgeois home with its trappings of good music and good conversation. In other words, the piazza

²⁶⁹ [of women in general, of motherly women, of the women who are needed by society]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 28. I have translated 'donne chiocce' here as 'motherly women', but the term 'chioccie' is used with a different, disparaging tenor by Donna Paola in the 1910 text discussed in Chapter 10. There, I take inspiration from the term's more literal meaning and render it as 'broody hens' (see Chapter 10, p. 264). However, the fact that one Italian word could be harnessed to imply either positive or negative characteristics associated with motherhood is, in itself, worth bearing in mind.

²⁷⁰ [the greatest influence would not belong to the women who can think, but to those who have the strongest habit of shouting.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 15.

²⁷¹ This is an especially potent association since Lombroso's text was produced during the *biennio rosso* of 1919-20, during which women workers demanded, and attained, some significant improvements in conditions, including the right to vote for and serve on factory councils representing workers' interests. See Gibson, 'Women and the Left in the shadow of Fascism in interwar Italy', p. 389.

²⁷² [running through the town squares]. Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 12.

²⁷³ [go wandering around the squares]; [interesting music and conversation]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 13.

²⁷⁴ [speeches made in town squares]. Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 15.

may be taken to signify the wilderness outside the middle and upper classes: the *piazza* represents the working-class world, and the only women who inhabit it are those whose actions ('correr', 'gridare') suit its values: these seem to overlap at least partially with the 'donne che non sono donne'.²⁷⁵

If the most salient division between groups of women, in Lombroso's text, is between the domestically-enclosed *donne normali* who privilege *amore* and the piazza-running *donne anormali* who privilege *ambizione*, where do the 'femministe' – and, more particularly, the 'suffragiste' – fit within this binary? Both terms are utilised by Lombroso, 'femministe' very frequently, yet neither can be read as unproblematically synonymous with the *donne anormali*.

Lombroso initially seems to position the 'femministe' as dupes, taking a certain glee in highlighting their inconsistencies. In countries where women already enjoy the right to vote, she points out, the 'giornali femministi' [feminist newspapers] expend fruitless efforts on galvanising their own subscribers to use it – yet these latter 'resistono passivamente' [passively resist], ²⁷⁶ and even the most dedicated feminists are often ignorant of politics. ²⁷⁷ Moreover, the 'femministe stesse' [feminists themselves] entangle themselves in contradiction by claiming the vote as a means to gaining protection for women and children at work:

accomunandosi questa volta, esse stesse, ai fanciulli, dalla cui comunanza si ritraggono indignate in altre occasioni, e proclamando esse stesse la necessità di essere protette in modo particolare, di essere quindi [...] differenti dagli uomini.²⁷⁸

The general tenor of these references is of pitying quasi-mockery, and this is crystallised when Lombroso comments on the notion that male-made legislation damages women:

"Ma e' un male" dicono le femministe "un male che cesserà quando la donna avrà il voto [...]". Ahimè! credo che le feministe si illudano assai su questo argomento.²⁷⁹

Here, the incongruity evoked by attributing direct speech to an unqualified plural entity, 'le femministe', – rather than, for instance, using the impersonal 'si' construction favoured elsewhere in the text²⁸⁰ – has the effect of gently ridiculing the implied naivety of a herd-like group.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ ["But it is an evil" say the feminists, "an evil that will end when women have the vote [...]". Alas! I believe the feminists are deluding themselves considerably on this matter.] Lombroso, II pro e il contro, p. 26.

²⁷⁵ Michela De Giorgio argues that 'in Italy, it was unimaginable that streets and *piazze* should become open spaces in which the voices of suffragism could echo'. She links this impossibility with the persistent concern about physical spaces in the Italian suffrage debate, and specifically with the space of the polling station: 'In that closed but public space, promiscuous and interclassist, the honour of women voters would be put at risk'. De Giorgio, *Le italiane dall'unitá a oggi*, p. 507.

²⁷⁶ Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 4. ²⁷⁷ Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 5.

²⁷⁸ [this time grouping themselves with children, a categorisation from which they withdraw indignantly on other occasions, and themselves proclaiming the necessity of being protected in a specific way, of being, therefore [...], different from men.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 9-10.

However, when Lombroso discusses what she sees as the 'punti oscuri' [dark points] of the suffragist agenda, the discourse surrounding the *femministe* shifts from benign badinage to a more complex blend of condescension and condemnation. The popularity enjoyed by the suffrage cause, she holds, is not due to its potential to provide practical protections for women and children, as is the case of the other elements of the 'programma femministico che le suffragette agitano in buona fede'.²⁸² Instead, suffragism itself is motivated by the idea of

fare delle leggi contro l'uomo, o meglio leggi che costringano l'uomo a esser un uomo ideale, un uomo quale la donna lo desidera con tutte le virtù maschili che ne fanno l'attrattiva e molte virtù femminili che gli mancano.²⁸³

Lombroso's 'suffragette' (this is her sole use of the foreign, militancy-connotated term) here tread a perilous line between misguided *normalità* and horrifying *anormalità*. On the one hand, they seem motivated by an ideal of love and marriage — an ideal that Lombroso sees as misplaced, unrealistic and dangerous, yet which does admit the privileged place of heterosexual *amore*. On the other, the practical consequence of this idealism is 'ad allontar l'uomo dalla donna e a rarefare i matrimoni'.²⁸⁴ That is to say, the idealism produces an increase in those women 'non [...] legate alla vita da nessun affetto': an increase in *donne anormali*, by Lombroso's definition. Lombroso's prose is noticeably ambiguous on the extent to which suffragist women are to blame for their own (and others') potential tipping-over into *anormalità*: the ideas of altering male habits through legislation, she claims, are

non esposti quasi mai, non propagandati quasi mai, incoscienti forse nel cuore della maggior parte delle suffragiste, ma sottintesi da quasi tutte le donne infervorate per la causa del voto di cui fan la fortuna.²⁸⁵

How can ideas be simultaneously 'incoscienti' in suffragists and 'sottintesi' by them? I have translated 'sottintesi' here as 'tacitly assumed'; it also carries nuances of 'implied' and 'understood'. It can signify conscious and undeclared knowledge, then, but can also suggest knowledge at unconscious or

²⁸⁰ See especially the uses of 'si dice' on p. 12 and p. 34, when Lombroso is presenting suffragist arguments that she views as seeming somewhat more plausible, although she goes on to rebut them. (Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 12, p. 34).

²⁸¹ It is also worth mentioning that Lombroso uses the spellings 'femministe' and 'feministe' more interchangeably than most other writers considered by me: in the quotation referenced, she even slips between them within the space of a single paragraph.

²⁸² [feminist agenda for which the suffragettes campaign in good faith]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 23.

[[]making laws against man, or rather laws that force him to be an ideal man, a man such as woman desires, combining all the male virtues that constitute his attraction with many female virtues that he lacks.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 24.

²⁸⁴ [to distance man from woman and to cause a decline in marriages]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 25.

[[]hardly ever revealed, hardly ever advertised, perhaps unconscious in the hearts of most suffragists, yet tacitly assumed by almost all the women impassioned by the suffrage cause that they advance]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 23.

preconscious level.²⁸⁶ Here, the term's polysemous potential seems to soften the edges of a contradiction. The use of attenuating qualifiers 'quasi' (three times) and 'forse' also assist in this process, with the result that outright inconsistency is blurred into confusing ambiguity. Another possibility is that the 'suffragiste' (for most of whom the ideas in question are 'incoscienti') and the 'donne infervorate per la causa del voto' (for most of whom these ideas are 'sottintesi') represent different groups; the descriptor 'infervorate', with its etymological roots in the Latin *fervere*, (to boil or to be boiling), may signal the hard core of 'overheated' activists *not* included in the 'maggior parte delle suffragiste'. Whichever way the sentence is interpreted, however, it remains riven with ambivalence. This points towards a reluctance to fix the positions of suffragist women in relation to the *normalità-anormalità* binary.

If Lombroso evinces affinity for *donne normali*, revulsion toward *donne anormali*, and an oscillation between patronage and condemnation for *femministe*, to whom is she addressing herself? The text is primarily written impersonally. When Lombroso refers to women in a general sense, she tends to fluctuate between 'le donne' (i.e. *loro*) and the characteristic Italian alternative 'la donna', where a singular noun stands for women collectively. There, are, however, a couple of notable exceptions.

'Noi' [we] is used to refer to Italian women when these are presented in relation to their foreign counterparts: Lombroso refutes the argument that 'le donne di altri paesi hanno il voto e che *noi* saremmo reputate inferiori se *non l'avessimo*'²⁸⁷ [the women of other countries have the vote and we would be deemed inferior if we did not have it]. This appears to be an inclusive *noi*²⁸⁸ that encompasses Lombroso and her envisaged readership. By that token, this readership is evidently envisaged as female (and Italian). However, it is not yet clear whether the readership includes the *femministe* who stand by this argument and disagree with Lombroso.

Later, a shift to the *voi* [you plural] form of address coincides with an intensification of rhetoricity as Lombroso delves into what she deems the 'più grande pericolo'²⁸⁹ [greatest danger] of women's suffrage: shifts in the dynamics of heterosexual relationships. This occurs shortly after Lombroso quotes a male feminist leader, to whom she attributes speech that addresses women as *voi* while aiming to strip them of any idealistic illusions about politics. 'His' words, as cited by her, are as follows:

²⁸⁷ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 10. Italics added.

²⁸⁶ The distinction between conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind was heavily in vogue at the time of Gina Lombroso's writing, thanks to the increasingly popularity of Sigmund Freud's writings.

²⁸⁸ An inclusive 'we' includes the reader(s) as well as the writer and others, whereas an exclusive 'we' refers to the writer and others, but excludes the reader(s). Fairclough, *Language and power*, p. 106.
²⁸⁹ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 25.

"[...] Credete che il voto costituisca un atto importante della vita? [...] credete voi che il votare sia un sacramento simile a quello di scegliere un marito? Ma guardate nella realtà perchè e per chi votano gli elettori!" 290

Lombroso's response to the male leader's speech, which is presented as his haranguing of a *voi* group of which he is not part, is to embark on her own *voi* address — an address which derives its moral authority from her implicit solidarity with her female audience. If the public world of politics would teach women that their loyalty should be earned and maintained through merit, and forfeited through lack thereof, Lombroso explains that this lesson would be disastrous if applied to the private sphere:

Ma il fratello, ma il figlio, ma il padre, ma il marito non si possono cambiare così; essi hanno diritto alle *vostre* cure, al *vostro* aiuto, anche se non *vi piacciono*, anche se agiscono *con voi* in modo che non *vi piace*; essi devono a loro volta *subirvi* anche se non li *aiutat*e, anche se *siete* per loro un peso insopportabile.²⁹¹

This passage contains the text's most highly-charged use of the rhetoric of sacrifice. Interestingly, this sacrifice is presented as a two-way street (men, too, are required to tolerate their unbearable womenfolk!). However, following this statement, Lombroso repositions the cultural responsibility for maintaining the requisite sense of duty squarely on female shoulders, albeit in more impersonal terms:

Ma tutto ciò non può sussistere se non è saldo il senso del dovere, [...] se almeno nella famiglia non c'è qualcuno sincero e devoto [...] Questa funzione finora la donna l'ha compiuta con lealtà e con abnegazione; è per merito suo che la famiglia è rimasta salda nella maggior parte del mondo.²⁹²

Having used *voi* to address women – specifically, family women, who fit the bill for what Lombroso elsewhere dubs *donne normali* – before reverting to depersonalised explanations of how *la donna* has thus far held together the institution of the family, Lombroso shifts pronominal gears again, albeit briefly, as she asks a rhetorical question: 'Se la famiglia cade, che cosa *offrite voi*, *femministe*, in cambio?'²⁹³

This last piece of direct address may seem a mere declamatory flourish; most of the text certainly seems to be aimed not at the *femministe*, but at those women who already more or less agree with Lombroso's ideology. However, there is one subcategory of *femministe* which may, it seems, be ripe

²⁹⁰ ["[...] Do you believe that voting constitutes an important act in life? [...] do you believe that voting is a sacrament similar to choosing a husband? Just look in reality at why and for whom electors vote!"] Lombroso, Il pro e il contro, p. 29. Italics added.

²⁹¹ [But the brother, the son, the father, the husband cannot be swapped like this; they have the right to your care, to your help, even if you do not like them, even if they act toward you in a way that you do not like; they, in their turn, must put up with you even if you do not help them, even if you are an unbearable burden for them.] Lombroso, Il pro e il contro, p. 32. Italics added.

²⁹² [But all this cannot continue if the sense of duty is not steadfast, [...] if in the family there is not at least one sincere and devoted person [...] This role, until now, has been carried out with loyalty and sacrifice by woman; it is thanks to her that the family has remained steadfast throughout most of the world.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 32.

²⁹³ [If the family falls, what do you offer, feminists, in exchange?] Lombroso, II pro e il contro, p. 33. Italics added.

for conversion to her views. These are the 'feministe più elevate',²⁹⁴ whose scruples, according to Lombroso, the male suffragist leader is endeavouring to remove. Lombroso's comparative reticence in her references to femministe and suffragiste, as opposed to the forthright disgust she evinces when writing of donne anormali, suggests that persuading this swing group of hestitantly-would-be voters is on her agenda. The subtle classist discourse within the text, identified above as aligning anormalità with the working classes and normalità with the middle and upper classes, may be part of a strategy of forging solidarity with bourgeois women whose femminismo is tentative due to suspicion of the movement's socialist – and unladylike – elements.

As for Lombroso's *io*, it is fairly unobtrusive (although not to the degree of Kuliscioff's *io* in *Per il suffragio femminile*). Her use of the first person singular generally serves to underline strong opinion ('Credo di non essere temeraria ad esporre i miei dubbi'),²⁹⁵ or to point toward her earlier work and writings ('Ho detto in un mio studio sull'amore [...]').²⁹⁶ In other words, these instances establish her authority as in the field of women's development. Where, however, does she stand in relation to the binary of *normalità-anormalità*?

Her sympathies all lie with the former – and, to a degree, she fits its pattern, being married and a mother, and having given up her medical studies to those ends. However, her declarations that normal women are not interested in politics are belied, or at least problematised, by her own authorship of the pamphlet. She claims that most erudite women eschew political thought:

Le donne che studiano, che sono libere di leggere e scrivere quello che a loro piace, leggono e scrivono di arte, di poesia, di romanzi, di musica, di educazione, di morale, di religione assai più che non di storia, di geografia, di filosofia, di economia politica che sono scienze necessarie a farsi un concetto in politica.²⁹⁷

Yet Lombroso herself has sufficient political knowledge to offer instances of political events eschewed by women. On the next page, she renders her position still more precarious:

lo, persuasa dell'utilità che noi pure pigliassimo parte alle questioni politiche economiche e culturali del nostro paese, ho fondata un'Associazione per diffondere e discutere fra donne studi di cultura generale attenenti al momento attuale, anche e soprattutto di politica. Ho trovato che le donne, compresevi le più ferventi feministe, non solo sono in genere ignare, ma riluttanti addirittura ad approfondire le questioni politiche.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ [more nobly-minded feminists]. Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 30.

²⁹⁵ [I believe it is not reckless to express my doubts]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 1. Emphasised examples of first person usage include 'io chiedo' [I ask] (p. 12); 'io credo sinceramente' [I sincerely believe] (p. 16); 'io non lo credo' [I do not believe it] (p. 23) 'io temo' [I fear] (p. 33).

²⁹⁶ [I said in one of my studies of love [...]]. Lombroso, II pro e il contro, p. 24.

²⁹⁷ [Women who study, who are free to read and write what they wish, read and write of art, poetry, music, education, morality, and religion much more than of history, geography, philosophy, and political economics, which are sciences essential to forming a political opinion.] Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 4.

²⁹⁸ [I, convinced that it would be useful for us, too, to take part in the political, economic and cultural questions of our country, founded an Association for women to promote and discuss studies of general culture relevant

The Association in question is ADDI, under the auspices of which the pamphlet is printed, and which includes a description of its aims on the inside covers. In keeping with Lombroso's statement, it confirms that it seeks to 'indurre la donna Italiana a prender parte allo sviluppo scientifico, sociale, politico, filosofico del paese', and to encourage her to read, criticise and pass on 'studi di morale, di psicologia, di politica, di agronomia, di economia, di storia, di filantropia ecc.'299. Politics, then, is among the goals (although Lombroso's 'soprattutto' may seem exaggerated). If Anna Kuliscioff had difficulty articulating her individuality as leader of a working-class suffrage movement of which she was not typically representative, Gina Lombroso here seems to suffer from a similar (if ideologically opposite) problem: her leadership of an envisioned 'movement' of apolitical, domestically-inclined women is somewhat undermined by her own deliberate founding of an organisation in which women could discuss politics.

Like the texts already analysed in Section 3, Lombroso's pamphlet represents one interpretation of the fraught web of Italian women's collective identities; unlike the suffragist texts, however, hers seeks to deploy collective identities so as to persuade part of her audience to abandon the goal of the vote. Moreover, the problem of representing exceptional individual identity in a text predicated upon claiming solidarity across a broad group of women is not exclusive to suffragist texts like Kuliscioff's. Lombroso's anti-suffragist discourse, too, leaves her own politically-active *io* problematically suspended in a text which claims that the *donna normale*, even the deluded suffragist version,

si disinteressa assai di politica, ma si interessa assai di tali questioni della vita privata e sono sopra tutto tali questioni che essa vuole risolvere colla politica. 300

8.3 <u>Italianità and international context</u>

There are relatively few direct references to Italian national identity in Lombroso's text, but many allusions to other countries. These latter are used primarily to bolster Lombroso's assertions regarding women's innate political disinterest and the absent relationship between women's suffrage and women-friendly legislation. However, there is a tension between, on the one hand, Lombroso's effort to vaunt innate feminine difference as universal, and, on the other, her frequent recourse to discourses of intercultural variety.

to the present moment, including and with special emphasis on politics. I found that women, including the most fervent feminists, are not only generally ignorant of political questions, but are downright reluctant to learn more about them.] Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 5.

²⁹⁹ [persuade the Italian woman to take part in the scientific, social, political, and philosophical development of the country]; [studies of morality, psychology, politics, agriculture, economics, history, philanthropy, etc.]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, text printed on inside covers.

³⁰⁰ [is quite uninterested in politics, but very interested in those questions that concern private life, and it is those questions above all that she wishes to resolve through politics.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 25.

Lombroso's fundamental argument, as has been seen, rests on difference: women's lack of voting rights does not imply their inferiority, in her view, but simply their different social ethos.³⁰¹ In a corollary to her treatise on gender difference, she expounds upon intercultural differences also. Specifically, in response to the idea that Italian women would be 'reputate inferiori' [deemed inferior] if they were left unenfranchised while women of other nations voted, she insists that 'ognuno ha qualcosa che altri non ha – non per questo si reputa inferiore o superiore',³⁰² and offers a litany of examples involving international differences in women's positions.³⁰³ Here, cross-cultural differences are posited as natural in the same way that sex differences are: Lombroso goes on to declare that

Esistono nel mondo, specie, razze, nazioni, sessi differenti, gli uni dagli altri. Queste differenze implicano desideri, bisogni, doveri e diritti differenti, e quindi privilegi differenti. La differenza non costituisce in sè e per sè una inferiorità o una superiorità, e la non inferiorità come la non superiorità non costituiscono in sè e per sè delle uguaglianze.³⁰⁴

The emphasis on differences between 'razze' and 'nazioni' as well as 'sessi' – an emphasis which draws heavily on positivism³⁰⁵ – creates a tension in the argument. If races and nations differ innately, including on their positioning of women in society, where does that leave her central assumption of a universally feminine nature?

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³⁰¹ Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 9-10.

³⁰² [everyone has something that others have not – no-one is deemed inferior or superior on account of that]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, pp. 10-11.

^{303 &#}x27;Si crede la francese inferiore all'italiana perchè sposandosi perde non solo il cognome ma anche il nome? Si crede la nord Americana inferiore alla sud Americana perchè quest'ultima è ammessa in tutte le Università maschili, da cui la nord Americana è esclusa? Si crede l'Europea in genere inferiore alla Cinese perchè la cinese non è privata dal piacere della maternità da cui tante donne europee sono private?' [Is the French woman thought inferior to the Italian one because she loses not only her surname but also her first name when she marries? Is the North American woman thought inferior to the South American one because the latter is admitted to all the male Universities, from which the North American woman is debarred? Is the European woman in general thought inferior to the Chinese one because the Chinese woman is not deprived of the joy of maternity, of which many European women are deprived?] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 11. The facts here are somewhat dubious; for instance, while most French women did use their husbands' full names socially (in the sense of becoming 'Madame Louis Joachim Gaudibert', to borrow one of Claude Monet's subjects as an example), French law had in fact stated since 1794 that no person could bear any name but that on his/her birth certificate (see Marie-France Valetas, 'The surname of married women in the European Union' in *Population & Sociétés*, 367 (April 2001), p. I, accessed from <u>Institut national d'études démographiques</u> at http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_telechargement/15823/telechargement_fichier_en_pesa367.20.pdf on 26

³⁰⁴ [In the world there exist species, races, nations, and sexes that differ from one another. These differences imply different desires, needs, duties and rights, and therefore different privileges. *Difference* does not in and of itself constitute an inferiority or a superiority, and neither *non-inferiority* nor *non-superiority* in and of themselves constitute equalities.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 11.

Cesare Lombroso's work on criminology proposed that criminal men and women are physiological throwbacks to the 'primitive races'; in fact, along with his followers (including Gina Lombroso's husband, Guglielmo Ferrero), he 'formed the vanguard of scientific racism in Italy'. (Mary Gibson, Born to crime: Cesare Lombroso and the origins of biological criminality (Westport: Praeger, 2002), p. 120). There was of course a tension inherent in producing this kind of work while being part of a Jewish family. On how this was manifested in the work of Cesare Lombroso, see Nancy A. Harrowitz, Antisemitism, misogyny, and the logic of cultural difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), especially Chapter 3 ('Vilifying difference: Lombroso and the lews').

This latter assumption is most clearly voiced when Lombroso argues that a universal subject named as 'la donna in tutti i paesi del mondo' has traditionally submitted to her husband's authority because 'essa ha intuito questa umile realtà: alla donna convenire assai più rinunciare alle gioie dell'ambizione che non a quelle dell'amore'. Do sex differences override national (and racial) differences, then? This is never clarified, yet several of Lombroso's references to countries outside Italy suggest that an increase of female *anormalità* may already be occurring beyond her own nation's borders. In North America and Australia, 'questi paesi femministicamente più avanzati', marriage rates are declining, yet they continue to rise in Europe ('conservatrice' [conservative]) and South America ('più conservatrice ancora' [still more conservative]), 'dove la donna non "faceva paura". Russia and Germany, on the other hand, are singled out as examples of countries in which women not only vote but hold elected offices:

Le donne sono entrate come elettrici e come elette nella vita politica tedesca e anche come Ministre in quella russa, ma non si vede che vi abbiano esercitata una influenza moderatrice od elevata.³⁰⁹

If Lombroso's logic holds for Germany and Russia, it may be assumed that the female MPs and Ministers in these nations must be *donne anormali*. The Russian example is further belaboured, tapping into the then-prevalent trope of the 'nationalisation of women' as a form of forced prostitution:

Le donne Russe, col loro voto non hanno potuto impedire che fossero votate leggi per la socializzazione delle donne e dei bambini, che è quanto di più obbrobrioso e antifemminile sia stato concepito e votato, e le donne col voto russe si sono rivolte alle donne senza voto francesi... perchè le aiutassero a farle abrogare.³¹⁰

Later, this topic is revisted again, this time with a link to the US rather than France:

A Wilson infatti che è un uomo – invece che alle loro donne deputate o ministre si sono rivolte le donne russe per far cessar le leggi obbrobriose contro di loro votate anche dalle femmine del proprio paese.³¹¹

I will briefly clarify the context of these remarks before commenting on their significance. The Russian revolution of 1917 had resulted in the secularisation of marriage in Russia. The rise there of the

³⁰⁶ [woman in all the countries of world]; [she has intuited this humble reality: for woman, it is far more satisfying to renounce the joys of ambition than those of love]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 26.

³⁰⁷ [those more feministically advanced countries]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 27.

where women did not "inspire fear"]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 27. [Women have entered German political life as electors and elected, and in Russia even as Ministers, but it cannot be seen that they have exercised any moderating or noble influence.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 15.

[[]Russian women, wielding their vote, were not able to prevent the passing of laws for the nationalisation of women and children, which is the most oppressive and anti-female thing ever conceived of and voted into being, and the Russian women with their voting rights turned to the voteless women of France... so that these latter might help them to get the laws rescinded]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 20.

[[]Indeed, it was to Wilson who is a man – rather than to their women deputies or ministers – that Russian women turned to stop the ghastly laws that had been passed against them even by the women of their own country.] Lombroso, Il pro e il contro, p. 28.

registry office was probably largely responsible for the rumour that arose in the US and Western Europe of a Bolshevik policy termed 'the nationalisation of women'. According to this rumour, the Soviet system coerced women of eighteen and over to register at a state-run 'Bureau of free love', from which men could choose select wives and sexual partners without the women's consent. The American investigation into Bolshevism (led by the Overman committee, which began its hearings in February 1919) failed to produce conclusive evidence that such a policy was endorsed at national level by the Russian state, but succeeded in cultivating popular belief in its existence, along with concomitant outrage. As one historian puts it, the myth of Soviet nationalisation of women 'resonated with [many] Americans because it confirmed their conviction that radicalism sought to annihilate marriage, family, and religion'. In Italy, too, Lombroso alludes to 'socializzazione' as the paradigmatic example of what could be wrought through the disproportionate empowerment, via active and passive suffrage, of donne anormali.

Notably, she also uses the nationalisation rumour to promote two narratives of international cooperation and solidarity. The first of these is constructed as operating among *donne normali*: both the 'donne col voto russe' and the 'donne senza voto francesi', united in opposition to the supposed nationalisation system, are clearly intended to be of this ilk.³¹⁵ In this account, it is the voteless French women who have the agency to help their Russian counterparts – a concrete instance, in Lombroso's terms, of feminine power being derived from something other than suffrage. It seems likely that the story on which Lombroso draws here is that of the Russian countess Sophia Panina, who was the only female member of a delegation sent to Paris in 1919 by the Russian White movement, to plead for aid against the Bolsheviks.³¹⁶ (Ironically, Panina herself was a former suffragist).³¹⁷ Since similar campaigns

³¹² Kim Nielsen, *Un-American womanhood: antiradicalism, antifeminism, and the first Red Scare* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), p. 30.

³¹⁴ Kirsten Marie Delegard, Battling Miss Bolsheviki: the origins of female conservatism in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 30.

³¹³ The New York Times, for instance, in an editorial in which the lack of hard evidence had been acknowledged, called for further investigation and active disproving of the allegation, since 'the nationalization of women is just about what the Bolsheviki would be expected seriously to attempt'. Cited in Nielsen, *Un-American womanhood*, p. 31.

The twin stereotypes of Russian women that had crystallised in American public discourse by the end of 1919, according to Kim Nielsen, correspond with intriguing closeness to the polar extremes of Lombroso's normalità-anormalità dichotomy: 'Female Bolsheviks were thought to be feminists who used government to promote sexual libertinism and to take women and children away from men – manly, unattractive women, possibly lesbian, who chose power and cruelty over kindness and femininity. Russian women who rejected Bolshevism were feared to be the victims of brutal and indiscriminate attacks – feminine women who were forced to do hard physical labor and who were likely the victims of sexual assault.' (Nielsen, *Un-American womanhood*, p. 32).

Olga Shnyrova, 'After the vote was won. The fate of the women's suffrage movement in Russia after the October revolution: individuals, ideas and deeds' in Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe, Aftermaths of war: women's movements and female activists, 1918-1923 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 159-78 (p. 168).

were waged by Russian emigrant women in other countries, most notably Britain and the US, ³¹⁸ Lombroso's decision to cite and highlight the case of France (now one of a dwindling number of Western European nations without any female enfranchisement) suggests that she is cherry-picking her international allusions to suit and shape a tenuous narrative, whereby non-voting donne normali extended hands to their suffering sisters oppressed by the political rise of the anormali. The choice of the Russian example further entrenches the class lines along which normalità and anormalità are implicitly defined: the Russian Whites, including women like Panina, represented the bourgeois and aristocratic classes displaced by the revolution, while the women with power in the Bolshevik system represented the proletarian classes.

The second thread of solidarity indicated is that between the victimised Russian women and the American president Woodrow Wilson, 'che è un uomo'. This latter clarification seems superfluous or 'overworded' enough to suggest a discursive agenda beyond that of simply pointing out the inadequacy of the Russian 'donne deputate o ministre'. Lombroso's ostensible concern is to contrast the animosity between her two groups of women (*normali* and *anormali*) with what she claims is a lack of animosity between the sexes;³¹⁹ she does so partly through invoking a chivalric discourse that demands, and bolsters, the concept of sexual complementarity. Wilson is positioned as the male saviour of the Russian women, betrayed by their own less feminine countrywomen. This harks back to an anecdote offered earlier by Lombroso as proof of the general endorsement of a theory of differenza rather than one of strict uguaglianza:

Si sono visti ora durante la guerra i paesi d'Intesa coprir d'obbrobrio i Tedeschi, chiamarli 'assassini di donne e di bambini'. Perchè questo obbrobrio? [...] Perchè donne e bambini godono nel mondo di un rispetto speciale che reclama per loro una deferenza speciale anche davanti alla morte. 320

While, elsewhere, Lombroso evinces impatience with those naïve feminist dreamers who seek marriages of perfect respect and harmony,³²¹ she is content to invoke the ideal of a traditional

On Sophia Panina (1871-1956), see Shnyrova, 'After the vote was won', pp. 167-69; Adele Lindenmeyr, 'Panina, Countess Sofia Vladimirovna' in Norma Corigliano Noonan and Carol Nechemias (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Russian women's movements* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 49-51.

³¹⁸ See Shnyrova, 'After the vote was won', p. 166; p. 168.

³¹⁹ Just before introducing the example of the Russian women and Wilson, she has declared that there is far more 'antagonismo' [antagonism] between the *donne anormali* and the majority of women than 'fra uomini e donne, fra cui in verità adesso non c'è' [between men and women, between whom in truth there is now none]. Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 28.

³²⁰ [During the war, the Allied countries were seen to hold the Germans in disgrace, calling them 'murderers of women and children'. Why this disgrace? [...] Because women and children enjoy a special respect in the world, which demands that a certain consideration be shown them even in the face of death.] Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 9.

^{&#}x27;Ho detto in un mio studio sull'amore che c'è una differenza fondamentale nella concezione che uomo e donna si fanno di esso, che questa differenza è causa di tre quarti delle tragedie femminili' [I have said, in a study

chivalric relation whereby men protect and defend women when she discusses not individual relationships, but actions undertaken at the level of nation-state.

A final point on this text's treatment of *italianità* in international context concerns the extended simile with which Lombroso closes her argument. Here, the women of her generation are described as akin to Italian emigrants to America. Torn between 'politica' [politics] and 'cucina' [cookery], these women/emigrants:

hanno in America la nostalgia delle bellezze e del fascino della cultura nostra, e [...] hanno in Italia l'eterno rimpianto della facile vita che si trova in America.³²²

In the context of the whole text and the other allusions therein to America as one of the countries that are 'femministicamente [...] avanzate', there is little doubt that Italy, with its 'bellezze' and 'fascino', stands for the old way of life for women – the 'cucina', in Lombroso's metonymic system. Similarly, the New World of America stands for 'politica', including (perhaps) suffrage. There is an ambivalence which is rare for Lombroso in the deployment of this simile. Specifically, she acknowledges that something positive, here described in vague terms as a 'facile vita', is found in America, and evokes with surprisingly strong language the strength of loss felt by women who have tasted the freedoms of 'politica' and returned to the Italian tradition of 'cucina': it is 'l'eterno rimpianto', a phrase redolent of the religious ideology of damnation. This sudden intensity of emotion could perhaps suggest that Lombroso's problematic *io*, discussed in 8.2, may have a silent place among these limbo-bound women, despite her distancing strategy, in the subsequent passage, of a triple insistence on the third person plural ('esse') 'si trovano' 'queste donne'):

Esse si trovano, queste donne, inquiete e insoddisfatte, desiderose dei piaceri della famiglia quando esercitano la professione, e nostalgiche dei piaceri professionali quando ritornano alle umili cure famigliari.³²³

It is worth noting, too, that where 'nostalgia', a high-value word,³²⁴ was previously used in relation to the 'bellezze' of Italian culture/ traditional feminine roles, the related 'nostalgiche' is here used in relation to 'piaceri professionali', i.e. the benefits of American-style freedoms. This application of an evocative lexical element first to one 'land' and then to the other augments the sense of ambivalence and possible personal testimony.

of mine on love, that there is a fundamental difference between how man and woman conceive of it, [and] that this difference is the cause of three quarters of female tragedies]. Lombroso, *II pro e il contro*, p. 24.

in America, they feel nostalgia for the beauties and charm of our culture, and [...] in Italy they feel eternal regret for the easy life found in America.] Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 34.

[[]They find themselves, those women, restless and dissatisfied, longing for family pleasures when they are carrying out their profession, and nostalgic for professional pleasures when they return to the humble cares of the family.] Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 34.

³²⁴ Or 'mirandum', to use the terminology of Wodak et al. (*The discursive construction of national identity*, pp. 36-40).

Lombroso ends this section not with a decisive prediction, but with further open-ended reflections on her era as one of transition for women:

La società non ne risente alcun danno è vero, ma questa *malaise* non può durare; essa segna un'epoca di transizione dall quale uscirà o la nuova donna professionista, che non vorrà più saperne della famiglia, o l'antica donna della famiglia, che si occuperà poco della vita esterna.³²⁵

The sentiments here are strikingly close to those expressed by Donna Paola in the pre-war (and pro-suffrage) text *lo e il mio elettore*, which will be analysed in Section 4, Chapter 10.³²⁶ A discourse establishing women as caught in a temporary, historical period of no-(wo)man's-land, then, was one that could be shared across both pro- and anti-suffrage camps. However, Lombroso recovers her briskness and certainty in the final short section, 'Conclusioni', in which she sums up her arguments and states decisively that most women, if given the vote, will display supreme indifference to it: 'Le elezioni Inglesi insegnano'.³²⁷

In sum, Lombroso deploys *italianità*, and contrasting foreign reference points, in allusive ways that help to elucidate both the contexts and subtexts that inform her main arguments. The location of the suffrage question on a world stage, with references not only to the 'classic' hotbeds of suffragism, but to a wide range of other nations and continents, reflects the new impact of international trends on the suffrage debate in the aftermath of World War One. Specifically, it reflects the emerging tendency for women's enfranchisement to be viewed as a marker dividing states into traditional and modern camps.³²⁸ There is an unresolved tension between Lombroso's allegiance to an ideal of universal feminine nature and her willingness to present differences between races and nations as similarly

[True, society is not experiencing any damage from the current situation, but this *malaise* cannot last; it signals an epoch of transition, from which will emerge either the new, professional woman, who will not want to hear tell of the family, or else the ancient woman of the family, who will concern herself little with outside life.] Lombroso, *Il pro* e *il contro*, p. 34.

³²⁶ For Donna Paola, the key element of women's plight in their period of transition is that they have embraced new, more public modes of living without having let go of old approaches to love: 'Ma ora una femina inedita si leva sull'orizzonte degli avvenimenti umani: è una forma muliebre ingentilita dalla civiltà, anemizzata dal lavorio del pensiero, bella di una bellezza ammaliatrice [...] Questa è la cosa nuovissima, ancora rarissima, e perciò preziosissima: [...] la nuova donna. [...] È ancor troppo intinta dell'antica pece ed ancor troppo su lei possono quelli, che dovrebbero essere, e non sono, i più sfatati tranelli. [...] Auguratevi [...] che, accanto alla donna nuova, sorga l'uomo nuovo, capace di [...] rispettarla soprattutto.' [But now an unprecedented woman rises up at the horizon of human happenings: she has a womanly shape, refined by civilisation, made pale by work, by thinking, beautiful with a siren's beauty [...] This is the newest of beings, still very rare, and thus very precious: [...] the new woman. [...] She is still too stained with the tar of old, and those traps that should be blatantly obvious, and are not, still have too much power over her [...] You should hope [...] that, alongside the new woman, the new man may rise up, a man who is capable of [...] respecting her, above all.] (Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 184-87).

³²⁷ [The English elections are instructive]. Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 36.

Post-war IWSA congresses, particularly those in Geneva (1920) and Rome (1923), were increasingly characterised by allusions to this division, and on the question of what the purpose of the alliance should be in a world of ever-widening female enfranchisement. Following the Rome congress, the organisation's name would be changed to the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship [IAWSEC], to reflect the broadening scope of its aims and its turn towards peacekeeping endeavours. See Rupp, Worlds of women, pp. 22-24.

inherent. However, the general tendency in this text is to present Italy as a bastion of female *normalità* in a world in which the *donne anormali* are rising – although the final metaphor of post-war women as emigrants suggests that Lombroso does feel some ambivalence, perhaps of a personal nature, toward the ideals she proposes: the new land of 'politica', as well as the old one of 'cucina', provokes 'nostalgia'.

8.4 Conclusions

Lombroso's II pro e il contro cannot be taken as representative of Italian anti-suffragist discourse, or even of Italian anti-suffragist discourse at the (seemingly) pivotal period surrounding the 1919 Gasparotto-Martini bill. Nevertheless, its analysis was deemed useful due to the text's rich exploration of the new, post-war context, and to the potential influence wielded by it by virtue of its author's own cultural status and 'scientific' credibility within the positivist school. Investigating how II pro e il contro posits Italian women's collective identities, I found that the classification system was quite as complex in this anti-suffrage context as were the classification systems in the pro-suffrage texts analysed earlier. However, I also noted that the most salient dividing line used by Lombroso was that between donne normali and donne anormali. While the spectre of the terzo sesso was cited in one anti-suffragist response to the 1905 survey,329 and while this figure corresponds closely with Gina Lombroso's donna anormale (and with Cesare Lombroso's lesbian typology), the suffragist texts of chapters 5-7 contained no discussion of this figure – at least, no admission of her existence within an Italian context. In examining the 1908 congress report (Chapter 6), I noted that the CNDI president defines the Italian women's movement (albeit not necessarily suffragism) in direct opposition to such an identity;330 within the suffrage session of that congress, the ambivalent references made toward British suffragettes do seem to hint at aspects of what Lombroso would term anormalità, 331 By contrast, the normale-anormale contrast is perhaps the most pervasive discourse in Lombroso's antisuffrage argument. What functions here as a major aspect of anti-suffrage rhetoric, then, seems to have been rebutted only obliquely and ambivalently in the pro-suffrage texts examined.332

³²⁹ This was Domenico Zanichelli's response – see Chapter 4, pp. 78-80.

³³⁰ See Chapter 6, p. 127.

³³¹ The suffragettes are described as possessed of 'audacia' [audacity], embarking on paths of 'follia' [madness], and engaging in 'dimostrazioni clamorose' [noisy demonstrations] and 'scandalo' [scandal]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 605; p. 613. As I have noted in Chapter 6, however (pp. 136-44), these references are interwoven with more positive ones in a complex and ambivalent fashion.

positive ones in a complex and ambivalent fashion.

332 A preemptive defensive strategy used by sympathetic reporters of feminist meetings, however, was to emphasise the *bellezza* and *grazia* of these events and their participants. This has already been seen to some degree in relation to the 1908 congress (see Chapter 6, p. 127). At international women's congresses held in Italy, too, it was evident; at an ICW meeting held in Rome in 1914, Rossini observes that 'the elegance of the

Lombroso's alignment of the *normalità-anormalità* binary with both class distinctions and national identities helps to elucidate a strategy – conscious or otherwise – of constructing the ideal *donna italiana* as middle- or upper-class as well as 'normale' (family-oriented) through subtle oppositional references. The spatial contrast drawn between the noisy *piazze* and the cultured home interior inscribes this ideal *donna* within both a private sphere and a bourgeois milieu. I have already argued that Anna Kuliscioff, writing to working-class women in 1913, positioned bourgeois women as the most 'significant Other' for her target audience; Lombroso is far more subtle in her classism, but does effectively draw together anti-suffragist and bourgeois identities, as Kuliscioff did suffragist and proletarian ones. Next, Lombroso's references to other countries and their practices, especially to newly-Bolshevik Russia, situates Italy's women as guardians of tradition and *normalità*. The ambivalence with which suffragists spoke of their more militant counterparts in other countries (Chapter 6) indicates that this discursive construction of *italianità al femminile* had operated as a powerful one before the war as well.

congress delegates was frequently noted by the press, and was an aspect deliberately cultivated by the ladies of the ICW and the CNDI, who sought in this way to underline their moderateness and femininity [...] Their elegance, moreover, showed that for the most part they were women from the middle-to-upper classes' (Rossini, 'Nazionalismo, internazionalismo e pacifismo femminile', p. 62). In Section 4, the literary texts analysed will offer further angles from which to probe the meanings of *bellezza*, *grazia* and *femminilità* as sites of contention in Italian discourse on women's suffrage.

SECTION 4: LITERARY TEXTS

Section overview

This section comprises two chapters (9 and 10) that analyse literary texts. In Chapter 9, 1 present a comparative analysis of Anna Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! (1902) and Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna (1906), both loosely definable as autobiographical novels. In Chapter 10, 1 offer a reading of Donna Paola's lo e il mio elettore: propositi e spropositi di una future deputata (1910). The suffrage link seems clear from the title of the latter book; however, Franchi's and Aleramo's texts are not obviously suffragist works (Franchi does not mention the vote at all, while Aleramo cites it once in passing). What justification is there, then, for analysing them within the remit of this research project, the central question of which remains that of understanding how suffragist identity was constituted in Italian discourse?

I wished to include a sample of literary texts in order to examine the tangled female/ feminist identities observed in Sections 2 and 3 from a different angle. Specifically, while it was in the interest of political/ propagandist texts to elide fractures and tensions as much as possible, I expected that the norms of literary genres might allow for more overt meditations on these. However, there are no "votes for women" novels' written in Italian. This is not surprising: in Britain, it was the militant movement which provoked both proand anti-suffrage novels, presumably because of its inherent potential for dramatic narrative. In Italy, where the figure of the suffragetta was definitively foreign and that of the native suffragista fairly decorous, one must broaden the selection criteria when seeking literary representation of a suffragist mindset. I chose to analyse Avanti il divorzio! and Una donna on the basis that both are documents which were recognised as feminist in their time, while their authors, at least at the time of publication, were known to hold suffragist sympathies.²

The militant suffragette figures in a leading role both in suffragist works like Elizabeth Robins' *The convert* (1907) and Gertrude Colmore's *Suffragette Sally* (1911), in which she is sympathetically portrayed, and in antisuffragist works like Mary Augusta Ward's *Delia Blanchflower* (1915), in which she is harshly drawn. However, she also appears in supporting roles in literary works that have had stronger canonical endurance: for instance, in novels such as H.G. Wells' *Ann Veronica* (1909), D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) and Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919), and in plays such as George Bernard Shaw's *Fanny's First Play* (1911) and *Press Cuttings* (1913). For an overview of some of these literary representations of suffragettes, see Maroula Joannou, 'Suffragette fictions and the fictions of suffrage', pp. 101-16.

² Anna Franchi (1867-1954) allied herself with the Socialist party's demand for universal suffrage, and was especially active in the Milanese Comitato Pro-Suffragio from 1906. She remained a lifelong supporter of political feminism, bringing out a book entitled *Cose d'ieri dette alle donne d'oggi* [Facts of yesterday told to the women of today] (Milan: Hoepli, 1946) on the occasion of the eventual extension of the vote to women; here, she highlights the role of turn-of-the-century feminists in sowing the seed for this development almost fifty years later. (On Franchi, see Pierucci, 'Anna Franchi: il femminismo tra cultura del Risorgimento e interventismo'). Sibilla Aleramo (1876-1960) was a writer and activist on behalf of suffragist and other feminist movements especially between 1902 and 1912; however, she distanced herself from organised feminism in

By investigating the identities presented in literary form by women actively engaged in suffragist work, I seek to gain insights into some of the discursive knots already pinpointed in suffrage-related texts. In analysing the texts in this section, I have been spurred by their genre(s) to borrow various perspectives from literary criticism; I have sought to integrate these borrowings within a framework still recognisable as thematic discourse analysis.

subsequent years, declaring it a movement whose time had passed. She became concerned, instead, with celebrating female difference and finding a means of writing the female body. (On Aleramo, see for instance Conti, Sibilla Aleramo: coscienza e scrittura; Buttafuoco and Zancan (eds.), Svelamento; Scaramuzza, La santa e la spudorata; Fanning, 'Aleramo, Sibilla (1876-1960)' in Russell (ed.), The feminist encyclopedia of Italian literature, pp. 10-11; Wood, Italian women's writing, Chapter 5 (pp. 74-90)).

Chapter 9 La voce/ il voto: Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna

Primary texts analysed: Anna Franchi, Avanti il divorzio! (1902);³ Sibilla Aleramo, Una donna (1906).⁴

Il femminismo in Italia non esiste, non è esistito mai, e chi lo ha combattuto si è trovato alle prese con un fantasma estero. Quando una donna italiana si sente abbastanza forte o abbastanza leggera da romperla col codice e le convenienze, compie a tutto suo danno, o a tutto suo vantaggio, un atto di indipendenza e di audacia individuale.

- Gemma Ferruggia, 1907.5

Thus far, I have explored suffragist ideology and identity in journalistic and political documents arising directly from, and impacting directly on, the public discussion of the suffrage question in Italy. In Section 2, I analysed the complex negotations performed by survey respondents in locating their attitudes to suffrage along 'axes' of equality-difference and principle-pragmatism; I also noted a common reluctance to harness pro-suffrage positions to articulations of personal identity. Building on these observations, in Section 3 I approached key texts of Italian suffragism through the focusing lens of identity construction, paying particular attention to the relationship between suffragism and italianità in representations of identity. In the documents examined, individual identity remained largely unasserted.6 However, by locating traces of overstatement, irresoluteness, fluctuating register and/or contradiction in the rhetoric of the texts, I suggested some systemic patternings of problematic group identity. These involved, firstly, deep-rooted difficulties in speaking for all the women, or even all the feminist or suffragist women, of an Italy fraught by class and regional divisions; and, secondly, a profound ambivalence towards the relation of the Italian movement to foreign forms of suffragism, especially the militant British movement. Consequently, the language of the documents reveals a persistent uncertainty (albeit with shifting foci of particular contention) as to the place of Italian suffragism on the national and international stages.

⁴ Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011 [first publ. Rome and Turin: Soc. Tip. Ed. Naz., 1906]).

³ Anna Franchi, Avanti il divorzio! (Milan: Sandron, 1902).

⁵ [Feminism in Italy does not exist, it has never existed, and those who have fought it have found themselves grappling with a foreign phantom. When an Italian woman feels strong enough or light-footed enough to break with code and conventions, she undertakes at entirely her own risk, or for entirely her own benefit, an act of independence and individual audacity.] Gemma Ferruggia, 'Oro, neve, ombre. Alle amiche di "Donna".' In La Donna, 71, 5 December 1907, p. 14. Cited in Michela De Giorgio, Le italiane dall'unità a oggi, p. 505.

⁶ That said, in analysing the texts by Kuliscioff (Chapter 7) and Lombroso (Chapter 8), I suggested that the authors' personal identities caused significant ideological tensions when they did surface, hence their general submersion.

This chapter, along with the following one, seeks to investigate how such ambivalences can be illuminated when read 'against' texts from a more literary genre, in which such difficulties may represent a semantic hoard to be mined rather than a flaw to be elided. In 9.1, I introduce the plotlines of the first two books under consideration – Anna Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! (1902) and Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna! (1906) – and briefly treat of some considerations for a comparative reading of them. Next, I ask how female and feminist identities are constructed and integrated, or not, in Franchi's and Aleramo's texts, and take a threefold approach to answering this question. Initially, I examine the individual selves presented: in particular, I look at how the novels 'embody' ideological positions in the persons of the protagonists, and at how individual identity is situated in relation to sexuality and maternity (9.2). Subsequently, I consider the extent to which shared female identity and solidarity are advocated and/or problematised through the protatonists' relationships with other women (9.3). Finally, I draw these strands of analysis together by asking how *italianità* underlies their expression, and whether it has a decisive role in determining the kinds of female/ feminist identities articulated (9.4). I conclude by linking the points raised with those made in earlier sections (9.5).

9.1 Overview of the texts

Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! is an autobiographical novel tracing the journey towards autonomy of a woman in an abusive marriage. Aleramo's *Una donna*, published four years later, deals with similar thematic material (shared leitmotifs include sexual violence, the contraction of venereal disease within marriage and the discovery of writing as a means of self-expression). Avanti il divorzio! was written explicitly to support the Socialist party's campaign to legalise divorce in Italy; *Una donna* was presented without such an overt political agenda. While Franchi's novel sold several thousand copies when published, Aleramo's far outstripped this, being translated into seven languages between 1907 and 1909. Throughout the following century, *Una donna* continued to receive far more critical attention than Avanti il divorzio!, and retains a widely-accepted status as a revolutionary turning point, a 'first' feminist novel in Italian. Io

⁷ See Mark Seymour, 'Keystone of the patriarchal family?', pp. 305-06).

⁸ Fiorenza Taricone, Teresa Labriola. Biografia politica di un'intellettuale tra Ottocento e Novecento (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1994), p. 58.

⁹ Anna Folli, 'Prefazione' in Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. vii-xxi (p. x).

¹⁰ See for instance Anna Nozzoli, *Tabù* e *coscienza*, p. 36; Giuliana Morandini, *La voce che* è *in lei: antologia della narrativa femminile italiana tra '800* e '900 (Milan: Bompiani, 1980), p. 21. Lucienne Kroha offers a more cautious reading of *Una donna*, seeing it 'less as the profoundly revolutionary text it is usually thought to be, and more as a sort of Doll's House re-written for a Catholic society by a woman still full of conflict and ambivalence about her decision to "speak out" (*The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy*, p. 19); see

Although there is no substantial comparative analysis of the texts available, ¹¹ many critics have mentioned Franchi's novel in passing during a critique of Aleramo's; the broad consensus seems to be that, in Sharon Wood's terms, 'Franchi's work lacks Aleramo's biting analysis'. ¹² My reading does not set out to prove or disprove this view (although it does highlight aspects of the books which suggest that, from some angles, Franchi could be seen as the more radical author). Rather, I distribute roughly equal amounts of attention to both texts, valuing them not in terms of their canonical impact, but as documentation of emerging feminist consciousness.

Here, I summarise the narratives of the two books (9.1.1 and 9.1.2), before addressing some preliminary considerations for undertaking a comparative reading (9.1.3).

9.1.1 Franchi's Avanti il divorzio!: overview and plot summary

Avanti il divorzio! is billed on the cover as a 'romanzo con prefazione del professore Agostino Berenini, Deputato al Parlamento'. ¹³ The typeface used for Berenini's name is larger than that used for Franchi's own. Perhaps along with the publisher's self-description as the 'libraio della R. casa' [Royal bookseller], this suggests a strategy of legitimation: a book written by a woman and advertising its pro-divorce position in its very title required sanctioning from the male political establishment. This theory is supported by the wording of Berenini's preface. He is careful to refer to the 'gentile scrittrice' [kind authoress] using chivalric, heavily-gendered language. ¹⁴ Moreover, while he writes as a socialist MP and recent proponent of a divorce bill, he emphasises that the book is *not* a theoretical treatise but an experiential account, and thus a sample of a genre traditionally permissible to female authors: 'Anna, la protagonista del romanzo, parla il linguaggio del suo dolore, più persuasivo che dieci volumi di teologia'. ¹⁵ However, his preface also seeks to bridge

theology]. Berenini, 'Prefazione', p. ix.

also Kroha, 'The novel, 1870-1920' in Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (eds.), A history of women's writing in Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 164-76).

¹¹ For a concise comparison, see Sharon Wood, 'Feminist writing in the twentieth century', pp. 151-54.

¹² Sharon Wood, *Italian women's writing*, 1860-1994, p. 22. See also Rinaldina Russell (ed.), *The feminist encyclopedia of Italian literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), in which Franchi receives a one-sentence mention (p. 72).

¹³ [Novel with a preface by Professor Agostino Berenini, Member of Parliament]. Berenini (1858-1939) had a background as a lawyer, and had been an elected socialist MP since 1895. Along with Alberto Borciani, he had presented a divorce bill on 6 December 1901; although parliamentary support for this bill was unprecedentedly high, the legislature ended before it could be passed (Seymour, 'Keystone of the patriarchal family?', pp. 44-45). See Stefano Rodotà, 'Berenini, Agostino' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 9 (1967), accessed from <u>Treccani</u> at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/agostino-berenini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 10 August 2013.

¹⁴ He does not with to 'aggredire colla lode brutale nel santuario della sua concezione artistica' [attack the sanctuary of her artistic concept with rough praise], but to 'corrispondere alla cortesia del suo invito' [respond to the courtesy of her invitiation]. Agostino Berenini, 'Prefazione' in Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. vii. ¹⁵ [Anna, the novel's protagonist, speaks the language of her own pain, more persuasive than ten volumes of

the gap between the book's allotted domain of female experience and the political context of anticipated change: 'Oh, parla il romanzo pei mille documenti di dolori vissuti, narrate a chi scrive nell'ora presente di speranze rinate: sia il libro una lancia spezzata per un grande atto di giustizia, e avrà toccato la sua gloria!'¹⁶

The novel itself is divided into three parts. Part One opens in 1878, and introduces the child protagonist, Anna Mirello, as a lively and articulate 'birichina'¹⁷ [scamp]. Her ambitions of becoming a professional pianist are stymied by her uncles' refusal to finance her study; instead, she is expected to channel her energies into the marriage market, where she is 'un buon partito'¹⁸ [a good match]. She becomes smitten with her music teacher, Ettore Streno, yet demurs when he proposes. Ettore asks her father, Cesare, for permission anyway; thinking to indulge his daughter, Cesare agrees to the marriage, which takes place when Anna turns sixteen.

Her wedding night is a horrible experience; she is terrified, Ettore is rough, and she contracts a disease (on which her doctor later refuses to elaborate, although the omniscient narrator alludes to Ettore's considerable experience of 'piaceri comprati' [purchased pleasures]). A rapid sequence of pregnancies leaves her physically devastated and unable to ignore Ettore's continuous infidelities; although she expresses love for the sons born, they are swiftly sent away to be raised by her mother.

Following the death of Anna's father, which renders her financially powerless, the story-telling becomes highly cyclical, wringing out the themes of Ettore's promiscuity, his unfounded jealousy of Anna and her detestation of sex. Eventually, Anna becomes indifferent to his affairs, and negotiates a compromise: she will stay with him as long as he never touches her.

In Part Two, Anna gets to know and like the young musician Giorgio Minardi. Previously, she has shied away from would-be lovers, conscious of the threat they could pose to the remnants of her marriage, and hence to her guardianship of her children; however, she consummates her relationship with Giorgio, who is gentle and adoring. On returning from a sojourn in Sicily to hear that Anna is the mother of Giorgio's daughter, Ettore attempts to rape her, then threatens her with a gun, then threatens suicide; eventually, Anna decides to leave him.

¹⁶ [Oh, let the novel speak for the thousand testaments of lived pain, recounted to one who writes in the present moment of reborn hopes: let the book be a spear hurled for a great act of justice, and it will have achieved its glory!] Berenini, 'Prefazione', p. xi.

¹⁷ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 4.

¹⁸ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 23. Italics in original.

¹⁹ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 49.

The story turns to Anna's and Ettore's repetitive tussles for guardianship of the children. Ettore's trump card is the threat of charging his wife with adultery, ²⁰ and at first, feeling that even her own lawyer is against her, Anna avoids a public trial. In a private hearing, the refrain, 'Non basta... occorre la garanzia del padre'²¹ trumps all her arguments, and the children are legally assigned to Ettore's care. He removes the two older boys from the *collegio* [boarding school] where they are studying and brings them travelling with him. Although other aspects of Anna's life are improving (her writing is becoming successful, and her relationship with Giorgio is blissful), she returns incessantly to the question of how to retrieve her sons. When Ettore presses a second charge of adultery against her, she determines not to back down, and goes to trial. With a younger and more sympathetic lawyer this time, Anna is acquitted. However, 'quella vittoria non mutava la legge';²² she still has no right to custody.

In Part Three, the boys themselves, now in their late teens, run away to live with Anna and Giorgio. Although concerned by what they may have learned from Ettore's lifestyle, Anna comes close to believing that she may attain the 'pace' [peace] which has eluded her, but the idyll is shattered when a letter from Ettore, announcing his intention of emigrating to America, convinces the boys to return to him. Anna, to her grief, has no recourse to legal action.

The narrative ends in 1902; Anna's family schisms are unresolved, but she has just brought out a book in which she aims to tell the 'umile verità' [humble truth], in the hope that it can 'risvegliare qualche assopita coscienza per la lotta'.²³

9.1.2 Aleramo's *Una donna*: overview and plot summary

Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*, similarly tripartite, uses the first person where *Avanti il divorzio!* uses the third. The unnamed *io* starts out, much like Franchi's Anna, as a confident child. In her teens, she enters into an ambivalent flirtation with a co-worker, who rapes her and subsequently proposes marriage. Disoriented, and struggling to reconcile her experience of violation with a familiar narrative of romance and love, she accepts.

The protagonist's husband is perhaps a shade more sympathetically portrayed than Ettore in *Avanti* il divorzio! – but only a shade. From the early days of their marriage, he is unfaithful, jealous and

²⁰ For a fascinating discussion of the 'gender asymmetries' in Italian divorce law (with reference to the late nineteenth century, but with points still relevant to the law at both Franchi's and Aleramo's times of writing), see Domenico Rizzo, 'Marriage on trial: adultery in nineteenth-century Rome' in Willson (ed.), *Gender, family and sexuality*, pp. 20-36 (p. 33).

²¹ [It is not enough... the father's approval is required]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 250.

²² [that victory did not alter the law]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 300.

²³ [reawaken a few people's slumbering consciousness to the struggle]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 354.

sexually boorish. Although the birth of a son brings great joy to the protagonist, her husband's violent suspicion of her for an affair that she hasn't (quite) had spurs her to poison herself; Part One ends as she is brought back to life by a 'mano ferma e inflessibile'.²⁴

In Part Two, the protagonist recovers slowly, gaining mental sustenance through reading and writing – especially about 'la parola femminismo'²⁵ [the word feminism]. After publishing several short works, she is offered a job by a women's newspaper in Rome; her husband's own unemployment constrains him to let her take it, and they move to the city. Rome opens up new worlds to the protagonist: she explores feminist activism, 'social maternity', and philosophy. However, an illness of her son's recalls her to a sense that her primary bond is with him; for this reason, when her husband insists on returning to the south, she goes also.

Part Three sees her back in the shackles of an abusive marriage and an unsympathetic community. However, following her husband's contraction of venereal disease and her own discovery of an old letter written by her now-dead mother, the protagonist begins to reformulate her understanding of motherhood. She concludes that the institution as is stands is a 'mostruosa catena'²⁶ [monstrous chain] which needs to be broken; real maternal duty, she decides, lies in setting her child the example of an authentic, autonomous life, even if doing so makes it impossible to remain physically present to the child. She departs for Milan, knowing that she may never see her son, now seven years old, again. The book ends with her salving her grief through social work and writing, and with the assurance that she has written this book for her son, as an enactment of motherhood-by-example: 'le mie parole lo raggiungeranno'.²⁷

9.1.3 Towards a comparative analysis: genre and structure

My readings of these two novels inquire into their articulation of subjectivities;²⁸ in particular, I focus on aspects of the texts which negotiate between female and feminist identity positions.

²⁴ [steady and relentless hand]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 67.

²⁵ Aleramo, Una donna, p. 86.

²⁶ Aleramo, Una donna, p. 145.

²⁷ [my words will reach him]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 165.

²⁸ The distinction between subjectivity and identity is a subtle one, allowing for considerable overlap. Kathryn Woodward suggests that experiencing *subjectivity*, or sense of self, in a social context constrains subjects to take up *identities* in response to the discourse that surrounds them: 'the concept of subjectivity allows for an exploration of the feelings which are brought and the personal investment which is made in positions of identity and of the reasons why we are attached to particular identities' (Kathryn Woodward, 'Concepts of identity and difference' in Kathryn Woodward (ed.), *Identity and difference* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 8-61 (p. 39)). Literary scholarship often references subjectivity rather than (or as well) as identity within texts, since literary genres typically facilitate and even nourish polyvalence, contradiction, and ambivalence – all of which can be read as expressions of private subjectivity, rather than publically-vaunted identity. However, although I discuss strongly 'subjective' elements of the texts analysed in this chapter and the next, I refer predominantly,

However, this investigation is both confounded and enriched by the location of both texts in a generical borderland between autobiography and fiction: to what extent can shared identity/ subjectivity between author, narrator and protagonist be assumed?

There is compelling evidence that both Franchi and Aleramo felt committed to what Philippe Lejeune would later term the 'autobiographical pact', i.e. the understanding between writer and reader that author, narrator and protagonist represent the same person.²⁹ In Avanti il divorzio!, Franchi uses the distancing mechanism of the third person, but, as Cristina Gragnani argues, her retention of real first names for all the characters, combined with the strict chronological meticulousness of the narrative, means that within the book 'the identity of the character of Anna Mirello-Streno is constructed so as to refer back clearly to the identity of Anna Franchi-Martini'.30 Moreover, the character's artistic trajectory is conspicuously merged with the author's in the final, auto-referential publication of Anna-protagonist's book in 1902, the year of Avanti il divorzio!'s dissemination. Unlike Franchi, Aleramo tends to eschew names of any kind and deploys the first person. While the io voice means that narrator and protagonist are posited as identical throughout, the closing paragraphs, like Franchi's, underline that this io is also the author by identifying the book written by the protagonist with that which the reader is holding ('queste pagine'31 [these pages]). However, perhaps the strongest evidence of Aleramo's allegiance to the 'autobiographical pact' derives from her remorse at having 'broken' it. In her second novel, Il passaggio (1919), Aleramo rewrites the key plot point of Una donna, rectifying an omission: at the time of leaving her husband and son, she had had a lover. Such is the sense of expiation in this re-working of the story that she describes the omission as 'il solo forse concreto peccato della mia vita'.32

However, the points of disjunction between experience and narrative may be subtler and less easily 're-written' than the example of Aleramo's lover. Ursula Fanning asserts that where *Una donna* is concerned, much of the interest of the text lies in 'the interplay between autobiography and fiction [...], the tension between facts and fictional modes';³³ I hold that in the case of *Avanti il divorzio!*,

although not exclusively, to 'identities'; this is chiefly to bolster terminological coherence throughout the various thesis sections.

²⁹ See Philippe Lejeune, 'The autobiographical pact' in *On autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary, ed. Paul Eakin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

³⁰ Cristina Gragnani, 'Avanti il divorzio e La mia vita: Anna Franchi tra autobiografia e autofinzione' in Mnemosyne, o la costruzione del senso, I (2008), pp. 127-38 (p. 131).

³¹ Aleramo, Una donna, p. 164.

³² [perhaps the only real sin of my life]. Aleramo, *Il passaggio* [The passage], ed. Bruna Conti (Milan: Serra e Riva, 1985; first publ. 1919), p. 59. For more extensive discussion of the significance of this re-writing in Aleramo's work, see in particular Susan Jacobs: 'In search of the other subjectivity: autobiography in the works of Sibilla Aleramo', pp. 53-64; also *Constructing A Woman: gender, genre and subjectivity in the autobiographical works of Sibilla Aleramo*.

³³ Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', p. 165.

also, it is often in the complex interstices between author, narrator and character that the most intriguing expressions of gendered subjectivity emerge.

A related difficulty presented by these two novels stems from what the reader may perceive as their remorseless adherence to chronological accuracy. I have already mentioned that, in *Avanti il divorzio!*, this trait seems suggestive of Franchi's commitment to autobiography; it is slightly less prevalent in *Una donna*, in which dates are not used, but is nonetheless present in the endless iterations of marital infidelities and ultimately-thwarted love affairs. Narratively, both novels seem to suffer as a result of this precision; why, then, do the authors sacrifice potent story arcs for dissatisfying pedantry?³⁴

Their shared commitment to *la verità* aside, this quality may be read as a response to the challenge later described by Virginia Woolf as 'breaking the sequence':³⁵ the need to find a new mode of story-telling to express a subjugated form of experience. The frustration felt by the reader on being treated to the details of Ettore's umpteenth act of violence or Aleramo's protagonist's umpteenth drift towards suicidal ideation mirrors the frustration of the writer working among tired plots that resist alteration. Since my analysis is not based on literary merit, I have no reason to 'evaluate' the success or otherwise of this narrative device; however, I mention it here because it is such an initially obtrusive feature of both books.

Bearing these points in mind, I begin the analysis with an exploration of individual identities as portrayed in the two novels.

9.2 <u>Individual identity: embodied 'angels'?</u>

Regarding the texts studied in Sections 2 and 3, I have argued that individual identity was either absent or decidedly problematic. In Franchi's and Aleramo's novels, on the other hand, the protagonists are very much foregrounded as individuals. While this contrast is largely to be expected, considering the divergent generic norms of political texts and autobiographical fiction, it also offers a differently-angled window on Italian feminist discourse of the period: how did (then-) suffragist women represent their individuality when using a literary form that allowed for, even expected, intense preoccupation with self?

³⁴ Mark Seymour proposes that, in Franchi's case, the key dates are linked to attempted divorce bills in Italy; however, their correspondence to the dates in Franchi's life suggests that this pattern may be more fortuitous than designed. Seymour, 'Keystone of the patriarchal family?', p. 306.

³⁵ Woolf, A room of one's own, p. 81.

One striking feature of both Franchi's and Aleramo's protagonists is their depiction in consistently embodied terms. Although the books emerged some seventy-odd years before the concern with writing the female body had become a central preoccupation of feminism,³⁶ corporeal experience is paramount in these texts – although, perhaps surprisingly, it is Franchi's more overtly political, propagandist text which is frankest in relation to physicality.³⁷

A motif of physical vigour and freedom is a strong feature of both protagonists' childhoods. Franchi describes Anna's 'svelto corpicciuolo di fanciullina'38 bobbing, untiring, in a rough sea; using similar imagery, Aleramo's protagonist remembers how 'io correvo [...] lungo la spiaggia, affrontavo le onde sulla rena, e mi pareva [...] di essere per trasformarmi in uno dei grandi uccelli bianchi che radevano il mare e sparivano all'orizzonte'.³⁹

However, as the two protagonists enter adolescence and their bodies become sexualised and feminised in the eyes of those around them, the autonomy represented by these fluid seascapes disappears. Instead, the girls' physical experience clusters around two themes which concern the body's relation to others: sexuality and maternity.

Looking firstly at sexuality, the trajectories of Franchi's Anna and Aleramo's *io* initially show strong affinities: both experience traumatic sexual initiations (which are preludes to marriages characterised by rape, attempted rape and the risk of contracting venereal disease), and subsequently enter prolonged periods of sensual shutdown. An examination of the linguistic strategies with which the authors convey these stories, however, reveals differences as well as similarities in the construction of the characters' identities.

In recounting Anna Mirello's nightmarish wedding night, Franchi manipulates the distinction between narrator and protagonist with particular care:

La prese brutalmente, violando quella purezza che gli si abbandonava quasi con incoscienza, la prese spudoratamente, nulla attenuando con gentilezza amorevole, senza risparmiarla, mentre la poverina, angosciata, accettava quel maschio, che nella rovina del corpo verginale le rovinava l'anima non ancora schiusa alle forti, alle vere sensazioni d'amore, a quelle

³⁶ I refer not only to French feminist theorists such as Cixous, but also to Italian theorists such as Cavarero and Muraro. As noted earlier, Fanning explores affinities with Cixous, Kristeva, and Cavarero in 'Generation through generations' (pp. 257-59), viewing Aleramo as a 'foremother [...] for a generation of contemporary feminist theorists' (p. 248).

³⁷ For further discussion of corporeality in Aleramo and other Italian women writers, see Tristana Rorandelli, Female identity and the female body in Italian women's writings, 1900-1955 (Sibilla Aleramo, Enif Robert, Paola Masino and Alba de Cespedes) (New York: New York University, 2007).

³⁸ [slight little girl's body]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, pp. 14-15.

³⁹ [I ran along the beach [...], faced the waves on the sand, and felt that [...] I I was about to change into one of those big white birds that skimmed the sea and vanished at the horizon]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 9.

sensazioni che nell'amplesso danno il completamento, danno l'oblio dell'essere, che quasi si annienta per confondersi in un solo spasimo dolce con la creatura desiderata.⁴⁰

Within this single, lengthy sentence, both negative and positive extremes of female sexual experience are referenced: while Anna-protagonist undergoes the former (sex as *rovinare*) the more omniscient narrator leads the reader away from the scene by describing the possibility of the latter (sex as *annientare*). The descriptions are not explicit in today's terms, yet the prosody of Franchi's language imparts a graphic quality striking for its time. Ettore's roughness is aurally rendered by a rhythm of short, lurching clauses and the anaphoric repetition of an objectifying verb ('la prese [...] la prese'). Likewise, the fantasy of orgasm is developed through a subtler sequence of repetitions that includes the gratuitous verb dare ('[le] sensazioni [...] quelle sensazioni che [...] danno il completamento, danno l'oblio'); in the final clause, the unpunctuated verbal flow evokes the release described.

The narrative timing of this juxtaposition seems bizarre. However, by distinguishing so starkly between protagonist's and narrator's perspectives, Franchi reassures the reader that Anna is on course to find fulfillment at some later point. Indeed, the present tense of the imagined delight ('danno') contrasts effectively with the past tense of the wedding night ('prese') to imply that sexual pleasure has become a normative phenomenon for the narrator. Through this contrast, Franchi crafts a female vocabulary which very deliberately encompasses desire as well as revulsion, refuting the trope of the good woman as physically passionless. Nevertheless, she also indexes this desire firmly to courtliness and love ('gentilezza amorevole'; 'le vere sensazioni d'amore'), suggesting some affiliation to a traditional romance plot.⁴¹

While Franchi emphasises Anna's building terror about her wedding night, Aleramo's protagonist has no warning of, and no possibility of consenting to, her first sexual encounter:

Un mattino fui sorpresa da un abbraccio insolito, brutale: due mani tremanti frugavano le mie vesti, arrovesciavano il mio corpo fin quasi a coricarlo attraverso uno sgabello mentre istintivamente si divincolava. Soffocavo e diedi un gemito ch'era per finire in urlo, quando l'uomo, premendomi la bocca, mi respinse lontano. 42

⁴⁰ [He took her brutally, violating that purity which surrendered to him almost in ignorance, he took her shamelessly, with no loving courtesy to ease any of it, without sparing her, while the poor thing, distraught, submitted to that male who, in ruining her virgin body, was ruining her soul, which had not yet opened out to the powerful, true sensations of love, those sensations which, in intercourse, give completion, give the oblivion of the whole being, which almost undoes itself to blend in a single sweet spasming with the one who is desired.] Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 50.

⁴¹ This plot will be played out when Anna's years of sexual frigidity are resolved through her passionate relationship with the 'creatura desiderata' that is Giorgio, as discussed below.

⁴² [One morning I was surprised by an unusual, brutal embrace: two trembling hands scrabbled inside my clothes, flung my body back so that it was almost prostrate across a stool, while instinctively it tried to

If Franchi counterpoints the protagonist's anguish with subtle reassurance of the narrator's broader experience, Aleramo's narrator-protagonist is entirely immersed in her present. This may explain the comparative reticence of physical detail: the rape victim has no access to a language with which to describe her ordeal. Sex is not even 'amplesso' [intercourse], as it is for Franchi's narrator; it is 'un abbraccio insolito, brutale'. There is also a symbolic resonance in the fact that the protagonist's attempt at a voiced (if wordless) protest is stifled by her attacker 'premendomi la bocca'.

Notwithstanding this 'present absence' of adequate language, one notable linguistic strategy is the distinction drawn between Aleramo's *io* and her body.⁴³ The protagonist is 'sorpresa' by the initial embrace, but it is 'il mio corpo' which is pushed down by the aggressor and which 'istintivamente si divincolava'. The *io* re-emerges in the final sentence, in which the protagonist's *reaction* to rape is portrayed ('Soffocavo'), but the rape itself is an act done to her body alone. Aleramo's choice of *corpo* rather than *io* as object posits sexual violence as a reduction of woman to nothing but body.⁴⁴

This prefigures a series of attempts on the part of Aleramo's protagonist to reconcile her sense of self with this externally-imposed reduction. Attempting to come to terms with the attack, she begins by asking, 'Appartenevo dunque ad un uomo?',⁴⁵ but shifts her perspective to convince herself that she does love him:

Sua moglie... Non l'ero di già? Egli m'aveva voluta, egli m'era destinato, tutto s'era disposto mentre io credevo seguire una ben diversa via.... Quello sposo delle leggende [...] esisteva, era lui!⁴⁶

The hyperbole of this enthusiasm clarifies that this is the protagonist's desperate effort to shoehorn the violation of her body into a traditional romantic storyline. Ironically, however, while the passage highlights the discrepancy between these two narratives, it also insinuates their contiguity. The syntactic repetition in 'Egli m'aveva voluta, egli m'era destinato' suggests synonymity: male desire, even expressed through violence, somehow equates to female destiny. The 'sposo delle leggende' and the rapist are improbably collapsed into a single figure – yet the heroes of several Italian fairytales used rape to claim their ladies in the original versions, ⁴⁷ and the practice of marriage by

struggle free. I was suffocating and let out a cry that was about to become a scream, when the man, pressing a hand over my mouth, shoved me away.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 26.

⁴³ This distinction is striking enough for me to have replicated it in translation above, despite its amplified oddness in English. (See note 42, immediately above).

⁴⁴ In Fanning's words: 'Chillingly, the narrator sees her rape as that which signals a shift in identity and marks her entry into the feminine domain'. Fanning, 'Generation through generations', p. 254.

⁴⁵ [Did I belong, then, to a man?] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 27.

⁴⁶ [His wife... Was I not that already? He had desired me, he was destined for me, everything had been set in place while I believed I was following a very different route.... That bridegroom of legends [...] existed, it was he!] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Most notably, the Sleeping Beauty fairytale was derived from Giambattista Basile's story 'Sole, Luna e Talia' in the *Pentamerone* (1634). Talia, a noblewoman, is the enchanted sleeper in this tale, having been cursed by a

abduction was both widespread in southern Italy and effectively sanctioned under Italian law.⁴⁸ The protagonist's attempt to draw together the brutal and the romantic, the rapist and the prince charming, exposes how a discourse of bodily violence could make cultural sense only if transmuted to one of ethereal romance.

Both Franchi and Aleramo, in describing their painful sexual initations, employ textual markers of divided identity: Franchi pulls apart her narrator and protagonist, while Aleramo's protagonist distinguishes between her *io* and her body. Both characters go on to experience a protracted aversion to sex, figured for both in terms of an identity schism of sorts between mind and body; however, their responses, and the narrative solutions offered, are quite different.

In Avanti il divorzio!, Anna's primary reaction to the discovery that she has a sexually transmitted disease is relief at being temporarily exempt from sex: 'avrebbe fatto qualunque cosa per sfuggire a quella porcheria, pur essendo certa di amare lo sposo con tutta la forza del suo intelletto'.⁴⁹ However, she is troubled by her own lack of interest:

Aveva finita per credersi una creatura diversa da tutte, una femmina incompleta... Certo, se nell'amplesso desideroso del maschio la sua carne restava ghiaccia, nè vibrava nessuna scintilla di passione, se, pur amando quell'uomo, non aveva mai avuto, nè dopo riconcilazioni tenere, o nel desiderio di oblio, nè in quieti momenti di pace, nessun fremito, se mai il desiderio di voluttà era stato appagato, ella era certo una creatura non nata per l'amore. 50

Anna's sense of deficiency is such that when one of Ettore's dalliances seems more serious than usual, she blames herself and tries to feign sexual pleasure to win him back: 'fingendo il desiderio di lui, [...] nello sforzo supremo del cervello, che voleva dare alla carne la sensazione invano cercata, quel suo povero corpo ammalato ebbe una convulsione di spasimo, che egli non comprese....'.51

splinter when spinning flax. Instead of being awakened by a kiss, she is raped and impregnated by a king as she sleeps (she gives birth while still unconscious, and is awakened when her infant son sucks the splinter out of her finger). The story ends with the marriage of Talia and the king. (See Jack Zipes, *The enchanted screen: the unknown history of fairytale films* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 87).

⁴⁸ The concept of 'matrimonio reperatorio' [reparatory marriage], whereby a rapist's crime could be expunged following a marriage between rapist and victim, was enshrined in article 352 of the Codice Penale of 1889. (Indeed, it was also enshrined in article 544 of the subsequent Codice Penale of 1930, and this was not amended until 1981). See for instance Rachel A. Van Cleave, 'Rape and the *querela* in Italy: false protection of victim agency' in *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, 13 (2007), pp. 273-310 (see especially pp. 279-86).

⁴⁹ [she would have done anything to avoid that foulness, even while being certain that she loved her husband with all the strength of her mind]. Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, pp. 51-52.

⁵⁰ [She had come to believe herself a being different from all others, an incomplete female... Certainly, if during a man's eager intercourse her flesh remained ice, and no spark of passion trembled, if, even while loving the man in question, she had never, either after tender reunions, or in the desire for oblivion, or in quiet moments of peace, felt any tremor, then she really must not be a creature made for love.] Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, pp. 73-74.

⁵¹ [pretending desire for him, [...] through the supreme effort of her brain, which longed to provide her flesh with the vainly-sought sensation, her poor sickly body went into a paroxysm of spasming, which he did not understand....]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 141.

Whether or not this 'convulsione di spasimo' physiologically refers to orgasm, it is subjectively perceived very differently to the 'solo spasimo dolce' earlier described as a possibility by Annanarrator (Ettore makes sure of this by murmuring the name of his would-be mistress at the crucial moment). Following this, Anna's notion of cerebral love for Ettore vanishes permanently. Her subsequent breakdown can be read as a first step towards the reintegration of her mind and body; if these elements are at last united in revulsion for Ettore, they have the potential to be united in love and desire for someone else.

This comes to pass when Anna meets Giorgio and embarks on a physical relationship portrayed as transcendent. Their first kiss is described in sacramental terms ('un vero fidanzamento [...] una promessa santa di unione');⁵² their first sexual encounter is presented as an idealised wedding night, in a room which is 'bianca, bianca come se fosse stata preparata per una vergine'.⁵³ Anna is also represented as retaining a virginal naïveté: 'vi era andata senza ben sapere ciò che sarebbe accaduto'.⁵⁴ This use of tropes associated with female virginity overwrites Anna's fraught past with Ettore, treating her union with Giorgio as a fresh start – and her character as sexually innocent. The sex scene itself is the fulfillment of Anna-narrator's earlier allusion to pleasure:

Poi egli la strinse fra le braccia... la baciò in bocca a lungo, a lungo; i baci bruciavano le sue labbra, il fremito del sangue fu più intenso... Anna non seppe più nulla... si sentì trascinata, e si risvegliò come da un lungo delirio, distesa sul candido letto, tra le braccia di lui che la baciava dolcemente, pianamente, con dei baci riconoscenti. Ed un languore soave le dava come un bisogno d'inconsapevolezza, di annientamento, come il bisogno di un completo oblio.⁵⁵

The lexicon used harks back to that earlier, oddly-placed promise of pleasure ('annientamento', 'l'oblio'). So too does the prosodic style: a fluid tension is built up through brief clauses separated by points of ellipsis, before the rest of the first long sentence is unrolled in a barely-broken stream, marking the liquefaction of that tension. Notably, however, it is Giorgio who acts ('la strinse', 'la baciò'), while Anna's reactions are immanent ('non seppe', 'si sentì'). The scene marks Anna's rediscovery of her capacity for embodied *jouissance*. However, it also reinscribes her within – and redeems her through – what is in many ways an extremely traditional romance plot. 57

⁵³ [white, as white as if it had been readied for a virgin]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 187.

[she had gone there without really knowing what would happen]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 187.

⁵² [a true engagement [...] a sacred promise of union]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 185.

⁵⁵ Then he held her in his arms... he kissed her mouth, long, long kisses; they burned her lips, the tremor of her blood was more intense... Anna knew no more... she felt swept away, and she reawoke as if from a long delirium, stretched on the white bed, in the arms of the man who was kissing her gently, softly, with grateful kisses. And it gave her a sweet languor like a need for unconsciousness, for undoing, like a need for utter oblivion.] Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, pp. 187-88.

⁵⁶ By contrast, sexual enjoyment in a union with a less-than-ideal mate is pathologised and metaphorically presented as disease. When Anna hears Ettore cavorting next door with one of his mistresses, the sounds of the woman's pleasure are harshly condemned: 'Ella udiva troppo bene tutte le sconcezze che facevano; ella

That said, Anna is not the only woman in the novel to negotiate romantic relationships, and the story of one minor character, in particular, suggests that the moral binary of female sexuality presented by Franchi is more complex than that represented by the protagonist.⁵⁸ This character is Anna's mother, Virginia Mirello. At one point during their acrimonious marriage, Ettore produces a detailed story of how the young Virginia had worked in a brothel, had met her would-be husband, Cesare, when he visited as a client, and had subsequently given birth to Anna before she and Cesare were legally married. Anna is distraught: 'rovinava nel suo cuore la grande poesia della madre intemerata'.⁵⁹ She asks questions of both her mother and her grandmother in an attempt to get a satisfactory counter-story, but they each give her a different account, and the matter is left in doubt.

What is not in doubt, however, is that the marriage of Virginia and Cesare is presented as a happy one. At the novel's outset, we are told that Cesare is 'un uomo attempato, di 24 anni più vecchio della moglie, una creatura divinamente bella, che povera, lo aveva sposato un po' per interesse, ma molto anche per affetto'.60 These are the words of Anna-narrator – who, by implication, has already lived through Anna-protagonist's dark and inconclusive 'ossessione'61 [obsession] with Ettore's accusation of her mother. Thus, although the statement appears at the beginning of the book, it can be read retrospectively as Anna's possibly-euphemistic final pronouncement on Virginia and

sapeva che questa donna aveva le carni ed il sangue avvelenati da un male immondo' [She could hear all too well all the obscene things they did; she knew that that woman's flesh and blood were poisoned by filthy vice]. Avanti il divorzio!, p. 157.

⁵⁷ The literary critic Rachel Blau DuPlessis describes this kind of plot as one which 'incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success' and actively 'values sexual asymmetry'. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the ending, p. 5. In this reading of Franchi, I have taken inspiration from Ursula Fanning's reading of Aleramo through a lens influenced by Blau DuPlessis (Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*').

⁵⁸ The strategy of turning a spotlight on supporting characters has often been key to feminist readings of notovertly-feminist literary texts: rebellious doubles have tended to be interpreted as counterparts to docile heroines 'so that female authors can come to terms with their own [...] feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be.' (Gilbert and Gubar, The madwoman in the attic, pp. 76-78). Since Franchi's and Aleramo's protagonists are hardly docile, is there a need to seek out doubles and other signals of disruption in minor characters? I would argue that there is - because both authors go to considerable lengths to present their protagonists' central acts of transgression as the hard-pressed choices of individuals who are normatively feminine. (That is, despite their tomboyish childhoods and their representation as exceptional for their intellect and creativity, both protagonists are almost aggravatingly beautiful, desirable, and - within customised moral codes - virtuous. Neither lacks for admirers at any point during the novels, yet both resist casual romance: Anna, as has been seen, finds a love which is 'grande, infinito, sublime' [huge, infinite, sublime], and which leads to a marriage-like relationship; the protagonist of Una donna, as shall be seen, retains her 'candore' [purity] throughout the novel). While there is not the scope in this thesis to produce a full comparative analysis of the roles of minor characters in Franchi's and Aleramo's texts, the project could be an interesting one. Here, I limit myself to a few remarks on Virginia Mirello's function as a counterpoint to Anna.

⁵⁹ [he was ruining the great poetry of her unblemished mother in her heart]. Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 110. ⁶⁰ [a mature man, 24 years older than his wife, a divinely beautiful creature who, being poor, had married him in part for advantage, but also largely for affection.] Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 5.

Cesare's love story. The presence of this uncertain narrative, woven as it is into the background of Anna's own ostentatiously sure, pure love story with Giorgio, serves subtly to disrupt the moral binary of female identity. Between the devoted passion of Anna and the sordid lust of Ettore's mistresses, the figure of Virginia – who has definitely built a relationship on terms of both pragmatism and affection, but who may or may not have built it out of sordid circumstances – is a muted intermediary. Virginia is not the stuff of which a feminist heroine, in the Italy of 1902, could usefully be made. Instead, she appears as the heroine's ambivalently-drawn double, a repository for the doubts and compromises that the book's society requires of women and with which Anna – as the bold, emergent 'donna emancipata'62 [emancipated woman] – cannot openly be seen to grapple.

If the identity of the chief character in *Avanti il divorzio!* is contingent on romantic resolution, this is not the case in *Una donna*. Aleramo's narrator reiterates her distaste for sex several times, yet without the self-vilification seen in Franchi's treatment of this theme. 'Non cercavo di vincer la frigidezza per cui egli si stupiva e, talora, si doleva', ⁶³ she says on one occasion; on another, she lays the blame squarely at her husband's feet 'per non aver avuto un delicato rispetto verso il mio organismo immaturo, per non aver saputo amorosamente destare in me la donna'. ⁶⁴ In fact, Aleramo's *io* seems to view her rejection of sexuality in favour of cerebrality less as a flaw than as a mark of distinction. Following her suicide attempt, she embraces asceticism:

dotata di gioventù e di bellezza, io potevo, mercé la crisi attraversata, credermi esente per sempre da ogni desiderio dei sensi. I rapporti con mio marito, cui mi rassegnavo con malinconica docilità, non turbavano il lavorìo della mia coscienza. Allorché, nelle mie letture o nelle mie fantasticherie, mi trovavo dinanzi alle figure delle antiche e moderne ascete, splendenti nel loro candore di ghiaccio, non potevo non ritenermi per un istante loro sorella. 65

Where Franchi's Anna feels that sexual aversion renders her a *femmina incompleta* and hence a pariah of sorts, Aleramo's protagonist uses aversion as a tentative marker of her place in a historical line of exceptional women (although she is also careful to emphasise her 'gioventù e bellezza', emblems of safe femininity, at this juncture – and she does limit her imagined self-identification with the 'ascete' to 'un istante', which suggests that it may be transitory). These contrasting depictions are followed by contrasting narrative resolutions. While Franchi traces a

⁶²Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 244.

⁶³ [I did not try to conquer the frigidness that baffled him and sometimes caused him to complain]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 36.

⁶⁴ [for not having maintained a gentle respect towards my immature physique, for not having known how to lovingly awaken the woman in me]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁵ [favoured with youth and beauty, thanks to the crisis I had come through I could believe myself exempt forever from every desire of the senses. Relations with my husband, to which I resigned myself with melancholy docility, did not disturb the intense workings of my consciousness. When, in my readings or my imaginings, I found myself faced with the ascetic women of ancient and modern times, shining in their icy purity, I could not but consider myself, for a moment, their sister.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 89.

trajectory from aversion to enjoyment, the sexual 'ghiaccio' of Aleramo's protagonist remains unmelted and implicitly vaunted at the novel's end.⁶⁶

Franchi and Aleramo both engage, then, with an entrenched cultural paradox to which turn-of-thecentury Europe resorted in relation to female identity: 'the sexual nature of women was imagined to be naturally cool in contrast to the hot and animalistic drive of men. How was it possible for women, seen as naturally cool and only mildly sexual in the first place, to be pathologized as perversely frigid?'67 Both authors tread delicate lines in their performance of sexual femininity. They introduce their alter egos as children whose identity is strongly rooted in their bodies, and whose bodies delight in - and indeed command - the natural world around them. As they reach adolescence, both protagonists figure the demise of their bodily confidence as sharp, sudden and precipitated by sexual violations; their subsequent alienation from their physical selves recasts their childhood mastery of the waves as a Canute-like illusion. Both authors challenge a Cartesian paradox which reduces women to their bodies while offering them only a disembodied language of spirituality, emotion and romance; both, as I have argued, make efforts to expose the hypocrisies of this bind and to craft their own vocabulary of the body. However, Franchi's resolution is to re-root Anna in her body through a romance presented as marriage in all but name. Pathologised female frigidity is here redeemed not through the woman's own actions, but through those of a beloved man, and, significantly, the moment of redemption is a textual vanishing point, concealed by ellipsis and the protagonist's swoon into unconsciousness. The relationship, then, forms a safe narrative container for Anna's carnality, even if there may be some reason to argue that heteronormative

⁶⁶ However, it is important to remember that Aleramo's concern with writing and re-writing her life led, among other things, to the admission in the thoroughly sensual *II passaggio* that a lover had been omitted from *Una donna*. This point is discussed in further detail below. Moreover, just as *Avanti il divorzio!* foregrounds the romance of Anna's love for Giorgio while including Virginia's less clear-cut past as background detail, *Una donna* alludes to love stories other than those of its protagonist, and some of these may be read as problematising the clarity of her choices. In particular, the doomed Norwegian designer, in her egalitarian, extramarital relationship with an adoring man, has persuasively been represented as a reimagined version of Ibsen's Nora, whose path is admired but ultimately rejected by Aleramo (see Kroha, *The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy*, pp. 123-42. This point is further discussed in section 9.3 below). The role of the protagonist's mother, as a resigned and equally doomed wife, is considered by Polselli ('*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo') and Fanning ('Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*'). Meanwhile, the relationship of the younger sister whose boyfriend is a socialist campaigner inspires complex envy, joy and concern in the protagonist, and merits detailed analysis elsewhere.

⁶⁷Alison Moore, 'Pathologizing female sexual frigidity in fin-de-siècle France, or how absence was made into a thing' in David Evans and Kate Griffiths (eds.), *Pleasure and pain in nineteenth-century French literature and culture* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2008), pp. 187-200 (pp. 188-89). It should be noted that medical practitioners during this period did tend to recognise that women experienced sexual desire and pleasure, but generally persisted in viewing men's desire and pleasure as vastly stronger (Carol Groneman, 'Nymphomania: the historical construction of female sexuality' in *Signs*, 19: 2 (Winter, 1994), pp. 337-67 (p. 350)).

dynamics are undercut by the gentleness of Giorgio's character.⁶⁸ In contrast, Aleramo's protagonist is not sexually re-rooted in her body within the narrative of *Una donna*; her various potential love interests founder, so that the novel can be read, as Fanning points out, as 'a repeated trying-out and then rejecting of various romance plots'.⁶⁹

However, Aleramo does go some way towards re-embodying her protagonist through another channel: that of maternity. At first glance, it is Franchi who seems to treat motherhood in more physical terms: *Avanti il divorzio!* is as graphic about labour as it is about sex, with the birth of Anna's first child depicted in terms of blunt realism:

Poi lo schricciolare delle ossa fu più intenso [...] mentre sotto i lenzuoli, dal suo corpo, scendeva una cosa grossa e molle tra il rivolo caldo del sangue, ed ella ricadeva sfinita, quasi svenuta, con le braccia macolate che non avevano più la forza del movimento.⁷⁰

Anna dreads becoming pregnant again, and the physicality of pregnancy, as well as labour, informs her fear: 'quel continuo essere deformata le dava noia'.⁷¹ In a book in which the narrative voice insistently reiterates Anna's natural motherly instincts, the choice of 'deformata' to describe the

⁶⁸ The models of masculinity depicted by Franchi and Aleramo deserve an analysis of their own. Both protagonists' husbands are heinously bad; their flaws are their intemperate sexual appetites, hypocritical jealousy and desire to control their wives. However, the men whom the protagonists like are consistently depicted as highly sensitive. As such, their deviation from what might be required by normative or 'hegemonic' masculinity (see Connell, Gender and power, especially p. 183) is considerable. In Avanti il divorzio!, Anna's would-be lovers in Part One are Icilio, who is seen crying at the train station on Anna's wedding day, and cries with her at a later point; Gisleno Della Casa, who is introduced, in positive terms, as 'un giovanotto un po' femmineo' [a slightly feminine young man] (p. 74); and Alfredo, who brings Anna violets, nurses her when she is ill and only once asks her – at their final parting – for a kiss. All these characters prefigure the advent of Giorgio in Part Two: 'Giorgio Minardi aveva i lineamenti un poco infantili, biondo, i capelli cresputi un po' lunghi, ricadevano a onde leggermento scomposti, gli occhi chiari avevano talvolta l'interrogazione meravigliata del bambino curioso. La bontà era impressa nei suoi occhi, sulla sua fronte; il suo sorriso poteva essere invidiato dalla più bella donna, e diceva tutta la serenità dell'anima sua.' [Giorgio Minardi had features that were a little childlike; he was fair, his rather long curly hair falling in slightly tousled waves, [and] his lighthued eyes sometimes held the wondering inquiry of a curious child. Goodness was imprinted in his eyes, on his brow; his smile could have been envied by the most beautiful woman, and revealed all the serenity of his spirit. 1 (p. 173). Here, Giorgio is twice compared to a child and once to a woman. As such, he embodies an extremely non-threatening form of masculinity. This correlates with Anna's initial attitude to him; she reacts to his love-at-first-sight for her with amused superiority, and feels herself a 'vecchia donna' [old woman] beside him (p. 174), until she discovers that they are both 26 years old. Giorgio later develops a paternal tenderness towards her children. Ettore and Giorgio, then, represent opposing extremes of masculinity (a fact criticised by Franchi's contemporary, the poet Ada Negri, immediately after the book's publication - see Il fondo Anna Franchi della Biblioteca Labronica di Livorno, p. xix).

⁶⁹ Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna, p. 174.

⁷⁰ [Then the cracking of her bones intensified [...] while under the sheets, out of her body something large and limp emerged in the hot ooze of blood, and she fell back exhausted, almost fainting, her bruised arms having lost the power to move.] Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, pp. 53-54.

⁷¹ [she didn't like being constantly deformed]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 74.

condition of pregnancy is suggestive: it implies that Anna is pushed *out* of her natural form, not into it, by childbearing, although this is never spelled out at narrative level.⁷²

In fact, despite the narrator's assertions, Anna never fully convinces as an enthusiastic mother. The deaths of two children are glossed over (by contrast, that of Anna's father occupies seven pages); the remaining sons are raised at a distance by Anna's mother Virginia. This is not presented as unusual, but is communicated to the reader through matter-of-fact asides. Only after the two elder boys have been taken into Ettore's custody do we witness an interaction between all three generations, when Anna and Virginia visit the children. At this point, we learn that they boys call Virginia mamma and Anna mammina [little mamma] or Annina, while referring to them in the plural as *le mamme* [the mammas].⁷³ (In 9.3, I will discuss the implications of this arrangement, and of its occasional breakdowns, for the theme of female solidarity).

The presence of Virginia, portrayed as a willingly motherly figure, excuses Anna-protagonist from assuming many of the practical responsibilities of parenthood, while allowing Anna-narrator to reiterate her devotion to the children in terms that occasionally sound slightly forced.⁷⁴ This, in turn, suggests an ongoing struggle to relieve the tension between the ideological construction of motherhood as integral to 'good' femininity and the real detachment of the *mammina* role that Anna performs on a day-to-day basis, as facilitated by Virginia. There is only one scene which features Anna interacting with a child without another intermediary party present, and this scene is an intellectual idyll: her youngest son brings her a flower, a letter and the newspaper as she works in her study.⁷⁵

There may be a peculiarly Italian quality to this aversion to the pregnant body. Cesare Lombroso, in *La donna delinquente*, treats of the phenomenon of a woman loathing the physical changes that come with her own pregnancy: 'gravida, vuole sconciarsi per non perdere in bellezza onde egli non la fugga' [pregnant, she wishes to destroy herself so as not to lose her beauty, in which case he [her partner] would desert her]. (Cesare Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, *la prostituta* e *la donna normale*, *nuova edizione economica* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), p. 607). As has been noted, while Lombroso views this attitude as abnormal and deserving of censure, his text also 'indirectly establishes the incompatibility of desirability and the pregnant/ maternal shape' (Cristina Mazzoni, *Maternal impressions: pregnancy and childbirth in literature and theory* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 124).

⁷³ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, pp. 302-06.

⁷⁴ For instance: 'Tutta la grande passione per Giorgio non attenuava di un atomo l'affetto pei suoi bambini. Quei figli suoi, sempre lontani, che nemmeno la chiamavano mamma, erano per lei un pensiero costante. Che non fossero con lei, ma che fossero amati, educati, assistiti da una persona buona, che a loro dedicasse il tempo e gli affetti.' [All her great passion for Giorgio did not weaken by an atom her affection for her children. Those sons of hers, always far away, who didn't even call her *mamma*, were constantly in her thoughts. If they could not be with her, let them be loved, educated, guided by a good person who would devote time and affection to them.] Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 191-2.

⁷⁵ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 352.

Aleramo, on the other hand, presents a less physically gruelling picture of childbirth and a rosier, if far from simple, picture of maternity. Her discourse on motherhood begins with a lyrical evocation of the aftermath of her son's birth. Only after this introduction does she recall the agonies of labour, and although she mentions her 'sudore gelato [...] carni lacerate [...] viscere divorate', she relegates these memories to the irrelevant past by declaring them 'Prima, prima! Prima di sentirmi mamma'. Physicality is very much at stake, however, in her consuming desire to breastfeed her son herself. She does this for an initial, rapturous few days:

quando scorsi la piccola bocca succhiare avidamente, e ascoltai la gola ingoiare il liquido che sgorgava dal mio petto, [...] ebbi una nuova crisi di commozione ineffabile. Per una settimana vissi come in un sogno gaudioso [...]⁸⁰

This passage is perhaps the most sensual one in *Una donna*; if Franchi's Anna is re-embodied through a positive sexual relationship, Aleramo's protagonist seems to be re-embodied through maternal communion. However, following a quarrel with her sister-in-law, her milk dries up. This is a source of intense grief to her, and is portrayed as a second alienation from her body:

Non avevo più latte. [...] Piangevo, piangevo piano, come una bimba, guardando il mio seno che non s'inturgidiva [...] Era un dolore nuovo, fisico oltre che morale, qualcosa che mi struggeva, che recideva in me tutta la magnifica fioritura di sogni spuntata dinanzi alla culla bianca [...]⁸¹

The protagonist's complex relationships with the wet-nurses who subsequently feed her child are explored in 9.3 below; however, it is worth noting here the fear that the most detested wet-nurse

⁷⁹ [Before, before! Before I felt myself mother]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 47.
⁸⁰ [when I discovered his little mouth sucking avidly, and heard his throat swallowing the liquid that was flowing from my chest, [...] I was indescribably moved all over again. For a week I lived as if in a joyous dream [...]]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 48.

⁷⁶ That said, as Fanning rightly states, Aleramo was 'for the time, shockingly open in her descriptions of quickening and of childbirth' (Ursula Fanning, 'Maternal prescriptions and descriptions in post-unification Italy' in Mitchell and Sanson (eds.), Women and gender in post-unification Italy, pp. 13-37 (p. 33)). It is only when Aleramo's descriptions are contrasted with Franchi's that the former may seem reticent by comparison. Fanning's recent article includes an analysis of the treatment of childbirth in works by a number of women writers who preceded Aleramo (Serao, Neera, and Carolina Invernizio – ibid, especially pp. 18-24); this offers a very useful backdrop against which to read the corresponding sections of *Una donna* (and, indeed, *Avanti il divorzio!*).

⁷⁷ 'Quando, alla luce incerta di un alba piovosa d'aprile, posi per la prima volta le labbra sulla testina di mio figlio, mi parve che la vita per la prima volta assumesse a' miei occhi un aspetto celestiale [...] lo stringevo fra le braccia la mia creatura, viva, viva, viva! Era il mio sangue in essa, e il mio spirito [...] le donavo una seconda volta la vita colla promessa, coll'offerta della mia, in quel lungo bacio lieve, come un suggello ideale.' [When, in the faint light of a rainy April dawn, I put my lips for the first time to my son's little head, it seemed to me that life became celestial for the first time [...] I held my child in my arms, alive, alive, alive! It was my blood in him, and my spirit [...] I gave him life a second time with the promise, with the offer of my own, in that long, light kiss, like a perfect seal.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 47.

⁷⁸ [freezing sweat [...] torn flesh [...] engulfed innards]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 47.

⁸¹ [I had no more milk. [...] I cried, cried softly, like a little girl, staring at my breast which would not swell [...] It was a new pain, physical as well as mental, something which consumed me, which severed inside me all the wonderful blossoming of dreams that had sprung forth before the white cradle [...]] Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. 49-50.

inspires in her: 'che il bimbo potesse, col latte, succhiare i germi di quella natura goffa e biliosa'.⁸² Breastfeeding, then, is figured as an enactment of spiritual as well as physical maternity: influence and character, as well as bodily nourishment, are symbolically transmitted in the milk. Much later, the novel turns on the protagonist's re-envisioning of maternity so as to separate these functions; ultimately, she chooses motherhood by distant example over motherhood by physical presence.⁸³ Nevertheless, the pain of her choice remains unsalved at the book's end. It is a pain prefigured by her thwarted desire to feed her son herself and her superstitious anxiety that the physical and the spiritual may really be inextricable; her dry breasts embody her frustration that 'in me la madre non s'integrava nella donna'.⁸⁴

In charting peculiarly embodied aspects of the literary identities presented by Franchi and Aleramo, I have shown how both persistently represent the suffering of their protagonists as a form of 'disembodiment'. Their characters are dis-embodied by sexual violence, and deprived of a language in which to express this by cultural sanctions; in Aleramo's case, the protagonist is further disembodied by the legislative discrimination that refuses her access to her son. It is indicative of just how deeply the authors' quests for identity were bound up with the body that they obsessively attempt to craft languages with which to express these experiences (and, considering the apparent similarity of their stories, the differences I have noted between the languages created are suggestive of the absence of an established tradition on which they might draw). Equally significant is their preoccupation with narratively 're-embodying' the protagonists. I have argued that Franchi does this by writing Anna into a romance plot in which she recoups the role of ingénue with better success than before, but that Aleramo, while exploring an alternative if truncated form of embodied experience through the nurturing of a child, does not sexually re-embody her protagonist within the limits of Una donna.85 (However, because Franchi and Aleramo (especially the latter) went on to demonstrate a preoccupation with not only writing but re-writing the self, the 'endings' of these two books cannot be interpreted as definitive).86

[[]that the child might suck in the germs of that oafish, bilious nature along with the milk]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 51.

⁸³ Aleramo, Una donna, pp. 144-45.

⁸⁴ [in me the mother did not fit within the woman]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 51.

⁸⁵ In Rachel Blau DuPlessis' terms, this decision of Aleramo's might be read as a form of 'writing beyond the ending', i.e. 'the transgressive invention of [...] a narrative that denies or reconstructs seductive patterns of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed, hegemonically poised'. Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the ending, p. 5. See also Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*', and Polselli, '*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo'.

⁸⁶ Both Franchi and Aleramo attempt a shift of emphasis in later re-castings of the stories told. In Franchi's case, *La mia vita* sees her go on to parent her boys through the First World War and one of their deaths (Anna Franchi, *La mia vita* [My life] (Milan: Garzanti, 1940)): Gragnani reads this text as Franchi's reappropriation of motherhood, and of the role of the patriot *madre cittadina* in particular, following her acceptance of defeat as a *non-madre* at the close of *Avanti il divorzio!* (Gragnani, "Avanti il divorzio' e 'La mia vita", pp. 136-37). Aleramo's *Il passaggio* not only re-writes the story of the narrator's departure from her

The strength of the motifs of physical integrity, its loss, and its restoration in Franchi's and Aleramo's novels suggests a sharp disjunction between the language(s) evolving in these literary works and the dominant language of suffragism. The suffrage movement, as has been shown, relied on discourses of both principled equality and pragmatic, physiological difference, but the theoretical discourse of equality tended to dominate or at least 'book-end' arguments made. In pro-suffrage literary works in Britain, Katharine Cockin et al. note that 'the particular dynamics of sexuality (itself an increasing focus for some campaigners [...]) are rarely explored in physical or emotional terms but are addressed in the plot-based analysis of the sexual double standard'. They add that it is 'fairly representative of suffrage fiction' for works to depict 'sexual perils confronting women and their lack of interest in female sexual pleasure or in alternatives to a normative heterosexuality'.87 Franchi and Aleramo, on the other hand, both contemplate pleasure at some length (Franchi's protagonist achieves it in the course of Avanti il divorzio!, while Aleramo's meditates on the possibility of it), and both move towards endings that are not entirely heteronormative (Anna's relationship is traditional in many ways, but Giorgio's sensitivity renders it less so; the protagonist of *Una donna* rejects various possibilities of romance).

Simply put, the discourse of suffragism could itself seem to dis-embody women at times; it appealed to a cerebral, sometimes spiritual egalitarianism. For the protagonists of Franchi's and Aleramo's novels, dis-embodiment and strong Cartesian dualism are associated with violation; embodied identity is both the lost paradise and the confusing aspiration. Without suggesting that the language

husband and child by including a lover in the scenario, but belatedly assigns a pivotal role to romantic and sexual love in her own quest for identity. Although she denies that her lover was the cause of her departure (Aleramo, II passaggio, p. 24), subsequent passages hint at an ambivalence around this statement (see especially pp. 26-27). The Aleramo of Una donna strives for a motherhood in which 'una madre non sopprimesse in sé la donna'; the Aleramo of II passaggio indexes the developed identity of the donna to sexual and romantic fulfilment ('Ero mai stata donna, fino allora? No, neppure partorendo, neppure nutrendo con il mio latte mio figlio' [Had I ever been a woman, until then? No, not even when giving birth, not even when feeding my son with my milk] (Il passaggio, p. 26)). Considering the title of the earlier book, with its admittedly fraught implication of everywoman, this can hardly be read as a purely individual approach; rather, Aleramo's donna is the donna italiana. (This implication is fraught because Aleramo's strategy of not naming characters has been interpreted both as a 'universalizing and fixing of character' that allows Aleramo extreme authorial control (Ann Caesar, 'Italian feminism and the novel: Sibilla Aleramo's A Woman' in Feminist Review, 5 (1980), pp. 79-89 (p. 84)), and as an avoidance indicative of 'the woman writer's difficulty in writing about the self (Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', p. 171). There is validity in both readings; the anonymity of the characters, and especially of the titular 'donna', signifies a lingering ambivalence on Aleramo's part as to whether to present her alter-ego as exceptional or as an everywoman). If Una donna 'writes beyond the ending' by refusing romantic resolution, Il passaggio perhaps 'writes beyond the beyonds of the ending', encoding Aleramo's original story within a narrative of re-embodiment through sexual love not unlike that contained in Franchi's Avanti il divorzio!. However, Aleramo's romance narrative is neither foreclosed nor strictly heteronormative; Il passaggio includes an account of a lesbian relationship, and ends not with romantic definition but with the protagonist's emergence as a poet. Later works by Aleramo trace relationship after relationship, and she appears to forego any desire for a single 'happy ending'.

⁸⁷ Editors' 'General introduction', in Katharine Cockin, Glenda Norquay and Sowon S. Park (eds.), Women's suffrage literature, vol. I (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. xx. Italics added.

of suffragism might have been perceived as violating in itself, I propose that its vocabulary ran parallel to that sought by Franchi and Aleramo. It is significant that by the time Aleramo re-wrote her story to include re-embodiment through sex, her attitude to feminism had changed drastically.⁸⁸ She now deemed feminist and suffragist thinking incompatible with her increasing desire to celebrate incarnate feminine difference, a difference already celebrated in the romantic resolution of Franchi's *Avanti il divorzio!*. Despite the fact that both these authors were, at the time of publishing their first books, committed suffragists, they do not cite a vote as the most obvious form of the voice they crave; rather, they quest, urgently and insistently, for a 'language of the body'.

It is also clear that this investigation of the personal in Franchi's and Aleramo's books has led back repeatedly to the interpersonal. In particular, both authors are not simply concerned with, but consumed by the need to unsettle and rework the politics and the balance of power within heterosexual relationships. The intensity of this concern runs counter to a suffragist rhetoric within which marital discord tended to be a stumbling block. On the one hand, suffragists often sought to minimise emphasis on familial tension so as to lessen the perceived threat of wives using the vote in opposition to their husbands. On the other, anti-suffragists could counter with the argument that, given the harmony which characterised the state of matrimony, the votes of wives would simply double those of their husbands, leading to the same electoral result with twice the workload of vote-counting. While the 'private' certainly was not absent from women's articulations of suffragism, British pro-suffrage novels did tend to feature a 'system of values [...that] places love and the vote in a binary opposition'.89 Both Franchi and Aleramo carry out their gendered unpicking of marital roles with a compulsive thoroughness at odds with the carefully balanced, strategically restrained approach of mainstream suffragism.

⁸⁸ As mentioned in Chapter I (p. 16), in an essay of 1911 Aleramo rejected the feminist movement as 'una breve avventura, eroica all'inizio, grottesca sul finire, un'avventura da adolescenti, inevitabile e ormai superata' [a brief adventure, heroic at its start, grotesque in ending, an adolescent adventure, inevitable and now outgrown]. Aleramo, 'Apologia dello spirito femminile' in *Andando* e *stando*, p. 64.

Spring's study of male articulations of pro-suffrage positions in Britain: she observes that 'the pledging of commitment to women's enfranchisement was commonly a detached response to a demand which was manifestly personal. Although politics was increasingly being brought home to men, a public examination of the impact of feminism on their own lives was wanting. [...] It remained exceptional for men to discuss private roles in a political context, an omission which curbed articulation of the possibilities of manliness available within their cultural moment'. (Carolyn Spring, 'The political platform and the language of support for women's suffrage, 1890-1920' in Angela V. John and Claire Eustance (eds.) The men's share? Masculinities, male support and women's suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920 (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 158-81 (p. 172)). A lesser-noted feature of Franchi's and Aleramo's texts is a willingness to reinvent the relational meaning of uomo. Dominating men are abandoned; meanwhile, indulgent fathers and attractive musicians (Cesare and Giorgio respectively in Avanti il divorzio!), as well as respected doctors and brilliant philosophers (in Una donna) are inscribed within a system that privileges their gentleness, affection, sensitivity and tenderness. The associated reconfigurations of marital relationships, then, suggest a sea-change in masculinity, even more than femininity, and might consequently have been especially threatening in a political context.

9.3 Female solidarity: presences and absences

If the privileging of embodied, individual identity holds these novels apart from suffragist discourse, the stories' problematising of female solidarity illuminates tensions already identified in suffragist rhetoric. Polselli notes that Aleramo's Una donna deploys 'a mechanism of opposition regarding traditional models of femininity';90 Franchi's Avanti il divorzio!, too, depicts other women as 'Others' in order to stake out the parameters of Anna's attributes.91 In both books, distinctions of class, which proved so problematic for the writers of the suffrage texts discussed in Section 3, are deeply entrenched. While Franchi's text does not really move beyond the isolation of Anna as an exception among women, however, Aleramo's incorporates a complex encounter with feminist communities both within Italy and beyond.

Both Franchi's Anna and Aleramo's protagonist are represented as male-identified children, whose exceptionality gains emphasis through contrast with other girls. In the case of Anna - whose father jokes 'che era nata femmina per sbaglio'92 and dresses her as an 'ometto' [little man] until she is seven - the chief contrast is with her friend Amelia, 'una ragazzina pallida, smilza, molto quieta'.93 Although Amelia is a sympathetic character, who will reappear as a friend to the adult Anna, at this early point she represents typical girlhood; her passivity highlights the rareness of Anna's agency. Aleramo's io - who, at a slighter older age, follows her father's suggestion and cuts her hair to achieve 'un'aria di ragazzo'94 – is conscious that both her appearance and her demeanour perturb the local men, who are accustomed to watching 'le fanciulle passar timide, guardinghe e lusingate dai loro sguardi'.95

As adults, too, both protagonists have notable difficulty forming friendships with women. Franchi's Anna does retain Amelia's friendship, and later gains that of a peripheral character called Elvira, but as a general rule:

⁹⁰ Polselli, 'Una donna di Sibilla Aleramo', p. 101.

⁹¹ 'Instead of reading accounts of Others as transparent texts which more or less adequately reveal information about those Others, such texts can be inverted and read as being "about" their authors - that is, as reflecting and revealing the strategies by which those with the power of representation construct themselves'. Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger, 'Introduction' in Wilkinson and Kitzinger (eds.), Representing the Other: a feminism and psychology reader, p. 10.

⁹² [that she was born female by mistake]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 34

^{93 [}a pale, thin, very quiet little girl]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 34; p. 4.

^{94 [}the look of a boy]. Aleramo, Una donna, p. 11. Fanning observes the polyvalence of the father's 'suggestione'; the word can mean 'suggestion', but also 'seduction', hinting at the strength of the pull that male freedoms and male identification hold for the protagonist at this juncture. (See Fanning, 'Generation through generations', p. 252; 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', p. 169).

[[]the girls pass shyly, wary of and flattered by their gaze]. Aleramo, Una donna, p. 15.

Non aveva amiche, non aveva l'anima molto predisposta alle amicizie muliebri. Dopo di Amelia, nessuna donna aveva avuto la completa confidenza dell'anima sua. [...] Aborriva le chiacchiere mondane, i pettegolezzi, quelle ciarle inutili delle donne, e non faceva visite che assai raramente.⁹⁶

This underlining of Anna's aloofness from other women emphasises the character's uniqueness, but does so by belittling femininity itself: very generic categories ('le amicizie *muliebri*' and 'quelle ciarle inutili *delle donne*') suggest that the despised traits are innate in almost *all* women. Likewise, Aleramo's protagonist, as a newly-wed, despises 'le chiacchiere meschine e pettegole delle donne', and marks herself out as exceptional: 'l'inerzia che possedeva tutte le donne del paese cominciava a parermi, in certo senso, invidiabile'.⁹⁷ The fact that this latter quotation speaks of 'le donne *del paese*' suggests that Aleramo's condemnation is less essentialist and more situationally nuanced than Franchi's (and indeed, as shall be seen, Aleramo's novel moves beyond this initial position while Franchi's never quite does); however, this reference also hints at class division.

In both books, the question of class becomes most pertinent when the protagonists have particular reason to resent other women. In Franchi's case, Anna's view of Ettore's mistresses is understandably jaundiced; however, it is also fraught with classism (the author's strong affiliation with the Socialist party notwithstanding). Before marrying Ettore, Anna encounters him in the company of a professional singer with whom he is rumoured to be involved:

aveva provato dispetto ed aveva avuto un lampo di fierezza, che le aveva dato per un momento la superba certezza di essere assai più in alto di quella donna volgarissima. 98

It is not immediately clear whether the narrator is at one with Anna-protagonist here – the fact that the latter's conviction of superiority lasts only 'per un momento' suggests that it may be illusory. However, later descriptions of other mistresses are similarly harsh, even as narrator and protagonist coalesce more closely. When Ettore flirts with a servant, Anna-protagonist snaps, 'Risparmiarmi almeno l'umiliazione di preferirmi una domestica',99 and there is no indication that Anna-narrator deems her priorities disordered. Much later, it is Anna-narrator who describes how Ettore has left the boys in the care of 'una luridissima donna, volgare creatura, trovata tra la più putrida feccia della perdizione'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ [the petty and gossipy chatter of women]; [the inertia that possessed all the women of the town began to seem somewhat enviable to me]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 37.

⁹⁹ [Spare me at least the humiliation of preferring a maid to me]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, pp.105-06.

⁹⁶ [She did not have female friends, her spirit did not tend much to womanly friendships. After Amelia, no woman had had her complete confidence. [...] She loathed the social chit-chat, the gossip, that useless prattle of women, and she only rarely went visiting.] Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 117.

⁹⁸ [she had felt scorn and had a flash of pride, which had given her, for a moment, the haughty certainty of being far above that most vulgar woman]. Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ [a filthy woman, a vulgar creature, [whom he had] found in the most squalid scum of perdition]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 280.

There are rare exceptions to this pattern; these seem dependent both on the pre-existing chastity of the women in question and on their self-perceived love (as opposed to lust) for Ettore. Giuseppina, a young singer by whom Anna feels especially threatened, is the most striking example. On discovering that Giuseppina is planning an assignation with Ettore but has not yet lost her virginity, Anna speaks 'materne parole' [maternal words] to her, and reflects: 'Povera bimba! Sedicenne, come lei, come lei presa dalli stessi lacci'. ¹⁰¹ Class is *not* presented as relevant here (although the Jewish Giuseppina is introduced with a racist, if not classist, aside). ¹⁰² Later, shortly before Anna leaves Ettore for good, she discovers that he has recently 'guastata la pace di una giovane alla quale si era fatto credere libero'. ¹⁰³ As with Giuseppina, this 'innocent' is seen by Anna more as a ghost of her former self than as an enemy, and class is not mentioned.

In Aleramo's text, class divisions are less straightforwardly dealt with than in Franchi's: most notably, the three wet-nurses employed to feed the baby are all peasant women, yet the protagonist's relationships with them are diverse. Of the first, she says: 'credo di averla odiata, col suo viso stupidamente classico e i suoi movimenti pesanti, goffi'. This woman is quickly replaced, and the protagonist establishes a much more positive rapport (at least from her own perspective) with the successor:

La nuova nutrice, d'aspetto umile, dallo sguardo tranquillo e buono, mi calmò alfine l'ansia per la salute del bimbo. Intuendo la mia gelosia materna, la povera donnina si difendeva dalla tentazione di baciare la creatura cui ella dava il suo sangue [...] L'igiene del piccino m'era come un'ossessione [...]; dovevo mostrarmi d'un'esigenza quasi crudele colla balia, malgrado le fossi, in certi momenti di serenità, intensamente grata. Mio figlio cresceva come un fiore fra le due madri. ¹⁰⁵

However, it seems that a 'jettatura' [curse] hangs over the child's nutrition; this ideal nurse loses her own baby and her milk dries up. The third replacement arouses the protagonist's extreme antipathy (as well as her husband's interest):

[[]Poor child! Sixteen years old, as she had been, and caught by the same snares]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 136.

¹⁰² Giuseppina is presented as 'una giovanetta israelita, sedicenne, bionda, rosea, ideale, con gli occhi azzurri molto mobili, come tutti gli occhi della razza, senza profondità di pensiero, ma procaci' [a young Jewish girl, blonde, rosy-cheeked, perfect, with blue eyes that were very lively, like all the eyes of that race, lacking depth of thought, but seductive]. Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio*, p. 136.

¹⁰³ [shattered the peace of a young girl whom he had convinced that he was unattached]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ [I believe I hated her, with her stupidly regular features and her heavy, oafish movements]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 50.

The new wetnurse, with her humble appearance, with her placid, kind expression, at least calmed my anxiety about the child's health. Sensing my maternal jealousy, the poor little woman resisted the temptation to kiss the baby to whom she was giving her blood [...] The little one's health was like an obsession to me [...]; I must have seemed almost cruelly demanding with the nurse, even though I was intensely grateful to her in certain moments of calm. My son grew like a flower between his two mothers.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 50.

Entrò in casa una nuova donna, bruna, sanguigna, formosa, di carattere opposto a quella che se ne andava. Non ho mai incontrato un temperamento più bislacco, assurdo e imperturbabile. Per mesi e mesi [...] io sostenni una lotta continua contro i miei impulsi per sopportare quella contadina che aveva un riso che mi feriva sopra tutto quando lo vedevo scoppiare ad un palmo di distanza dalla faccina di mio figlio. 106

As mentioned in 9.2 above, the protagonist fears the transmission of this woman's character to her child via the milk: 'i difetti di quella donna m'irritavano in quanto deformavano la seconda madre ch'io volevo che lei fosse per mio figlio'. ¹⁰⁷ The rapport of mother and wet-nurse, then, is portrayed as a form of dual motherhood, but a precarious one: while the functional relationship between the protagonist and second wet-nurse causes the child to flourish between 'le due madri', the disastrous one between the protagonist and the third wet-nurse cause the latter to be viewed as a 'seconda madre' who is 'deformata'.

Moreover, the solidarity implicit in this construct of dual motherhood is undermined by the fact that all three wet-nurses are described in terms that highlight their class difference from the protagonist. The first and third are portrayed in purely negative terms (with movements that are 'pesanti, goffi', or a nature that is 'goffa e biliosa'). Although the second is more positively depicted, her first mitigating characteristic is her 'aspetto umile', and it is clear that her continued humility is crucial to the success of her relationship with the protagonist. Only the third wet-nurse is openly referred to as a 'contadina' [peasant], and the context leaves the reader in no doubt that the term is intended pejoratively; nonetheless, all three women are manifestations of the problematic encounter of the *contadina* and the *donna borghese*. The only means of resolving this encounter, Aleramo's text would suggest, is for the *contadina* to present as a *donnina* [little woman] who works hard to reinforce her own status as subordinate to the *donna borghese*.

Unlike most of the brief, frequently antipathetic inter-female encounters in the books, both protagonists' relationships with their mothers are complex, evolving, and, in the case of *Una donna*, pivotal. In *Avanti il divorzio!*, as has been stated (9.2), Anna's mother Virginia performs an ongoing feat of motherly and grandmotherly devotion in bringing up Anna's children, leaving Anna as the junior partner (*mammina*) in their team of *mamme*. However, if Aleramo's protagonist found dual motherhood precarious even with the meekest of the wetnurses as her son's *seconda madre*, Anna's parenting partnership with Virginia is also complex, and breaks down entirely on one occasion.

¹⁰⁶ [A new woman entered the house, dark, hot-blooded, shapely, opposite in character to the one who was leaving. I have never encountered a more strange, absurd, and unshakeable disposition. For months and months [...] I waged continuous war against my instincts in order to tolerate that peasant, who had a laugh that especially wounded me when I saw it burst out at a hand's breadth from my son's small face.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁷ [that woman's faults irritated me insofar as they deformed the second mother that I wanted her to be for my son]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 51.

When Anna is pregnant with Giorgio's illegitimate child, her mother, 'imbevuta di pregiudizi e di paure religiose, non intendeva a nessun costo di porgerle un aiuto'. Despite Anna's pleading, Virginia refuses to be present for the birth of the child, and she takes Anna's existing sons away with her – 'non volle lasciare indovinare ai figli legittimi, la nascita del bastardo'. 109

That decision contrasts with Anna's own thought process during the pregnancy: she is initially tempted to seek an abortion (not named as such, but referred to as a 'liberazione delittuosa' [criminal liberation]), but is quickly recalled by Giorgio's horror to a sense of what is described, in strong terms, as her 'dovere di donna'¹¹⁰ [woman's duty]. If this latter entails maternity even in unpropitious situations, Virginia's abandonment of her daughter at the time of labour seems a grave dereliction of duty.

Under normal circumstances, then, Virginia's humdrum, underplayed mothering allows Anna (and the narrative) to focus on other aspects of her identity; yet when mothering becomes a heroic and defiant activity, Virginia's fears are the foil against which Anna's courage is highlighted. Also interesting is the fact that the child born into this matrilineal clash is Anna's only *daughter*. The little girl is promptly sent to be raised in the country, and we hear of her death several years later in an astonishingly casual aside (and with reference to its impact on Giorgio rather than Anna).¹¹¹ This confirms the broader pattern indicated by the distribution of Anna's and Virginia's roles as *mamme*: giving birth, not raising the child, is the action to which textual weight is given.

As for *Una donna*, a considerable bulk of scholarship has already delineated how, in Sharon Wood's terms, 'Sibilla's discourse on motherhood [...] can be read as a dialogue with her own mother, and with a submerged female tradition of insanity'. This mother, represented as a gentle, melancholy figure, disappoints the protagonist in childhood: she is not 'una mamma "vera", una di quelle

¹⁰⁸ [imbued with prejudices and religious fears, did not intend to help her out at any cost]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 217.

^{109 [}she did not want the legitimate sons to guess at the birth of the bastard]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 217.
110 Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 202, p. 203.

[&]quot;[Giorgio] piangeva ancora la sua piccina morta senza che mai le si fosse sviluppato un barlume d'intelligenza' [[Giorgio] still mourned his little daughter, who had died before she could develop a glimmer of intellect]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 308.

Wood, *Italian women's writing*, p. 81. The mother of *Una donna* does appear to fit rather neatly within the tradition of the double as a 'madwoman' who 'emerges again and again from the mirrors women writers hold up both to their own natures and to their own visions of nature' (Gilbert and Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic*, p. 77). Like Virginia of *Avanti il divorzio!*, she has a back story of her own; hers is also a narrative of apparent rescue, although it is presented in less morally dubious terms. Having grown up as the 'Cenerentola della casa' [household Cinderella] (*Una donna*, p. 3), she met the protagonist's father at a dance at the age of twenty. Unlike Virginia, however, her marriage is not a happy one. Her unhappiness and her husband's infidelity become evident to her daughter on entering adolescence; this awareness is forced to maturation when the older woman attempts suicide by throwing herself from her bedroom window. This is the first time that the theme of madness surfaces in the novel.

mamme, dicevano i miei libri di lettura, che versano sulle figliuolette [...] la certezza della protezione costante'. She attempts suicide shortly before the protagonist's own 'bella adolescenza selvaggia'¹¹⁴ [beautiful wild adolescence] is brought to a close by the experience of rape. This marks the beginning of the protagonist's identification with her mother – an identification characterised by fear and, as Fanning notes, by 'the increasingly looming spectre of madness'. Her mother's decline involves night wanderings through the town, incarceration in a mental institution – portrayed as a quasi-Dantesque hell¹¹⁶ – and, eventually, death. Her story serves as a template for what the protagonist must avoid; on visiting her mother in the institution, she feels a 'desiderio sconfinato di evasione: evadere della vita, smarrire la strada che conduce al porto della pazzia...'. The remainder of the novel can be read as iterated efforts to escape: the first is the protagonist's own attempt at suicide, the second is her life of activism and writing in Rome, and the third, and most successful, is her decision to leave her family to seek fulfillment.

That final choice, however, is spurred by a voice 'from beyond the grave':¹¹⁸ a letter written long ago by her now-dead mother, and discovered by the protagonist in her own hour of deepest crisis. In this letter, punctuated by even more frequent points of ellipsis than are Aleramo's wont,¹¹⁹ the protagonist's mother declares that 'Debbo partire... qui impazzisco [...] ... Poveri figli miei, forse è meglio per loro!'¹²⁰ Through these words, servile maternity is exposed to the protagonist not as poetic, but as a 'mostruousa catena' [monstrous chain]. This narrative twist involves a radical reworking of character types. In life, the mother had seemed to combine attributes of the typical feminine extremes of submissive angel and horrifying madwoman. However, when she speaks after death, she forges a new, communicative 'catena' between herself and her daughter, which is more

^{[113] [}a "real" mother, one of those mothers, according to the reading books we had at school, who envelop their little daughters [...] in the security of unfailing protection]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Aleramo, Una donna, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', p. 170.

che un muro dividesse dal resto del mondo; [...] figure fuggevoli dai grandi occhi sbarrati e dalle bocche sorridenti, fantasmi d'una vita occulta; e infine la stanza bianca colle sue inferriate, alle quali mia madre si afferrava chiamando a nome la città che si stendeva lontana e bellissima nel sole, come un bimbo chiama a sé il lago e il bosco!' [a confused babble of laughter and sobs, like the echo of a savage crowd separated from the rest of the world by a wall; [...] fleeting figures with wide, blank eyes and grinning mouths, spectres of a hidden life; and at last the white room with its iron bars, which my mother gripped, calling out the name of the faraway, beautiful city unfurling in the sun, as a child calls the lake and the forest to himself!]

[[]wild desire for escape: to escape from life, to bypass the road that leads to the gate of madness...]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 44.

¹¹⁸ Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*', p. 172. Fanning pertinently emphasises the *written* nature of this matrilineal link, as does Paola Polselli ('*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo', pp. 119-20).

¹¹⁹ Barbara Spackman interprets the 'almost unbearable' frequency of ellipsis in *Una donna* as signifying a 'discourse that is cited through omission [...] a discourse of motherliness, understood to be so taken for granted that it need not be cited in entirety'. Spackman, 'Puntini, puntini, puntini: motherliness as masquerade in Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', pp. 210-23; p. 212.

¹²⁰ [I have to leave... I'm going mad here [...] ... My poor children, perhaps it's better for them!] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 144.

effective than any she possessed while alive;¹²¹ she also gains narrative agency, becoming the catalyst for the protagonist's most significant decision.

In both Franchi's and Aleramo's stories, then, the protagonists' mothers function as problematic allies. Bearing in mind the critical role of the mother - literal and figurative - in second-wave Italian feminist theory, particularly that of the Diotima group led by Luisa Muraro, it would be interesting (albeit verging on anachronistic) to consider Franchi's and Aleramo's novels as prototypical explorations of the rupturing of daughters' relationships with their mothers in childhood, due to the dominance of a patriarchal order, and the possibility or impossibility, in adulthood, of crafting relationships with those same mothers anew - relationships based on something akin to what Muraro would term affidamento [entrustment].¹²² In one sense, Una donna seems to affirm this possibility more clearly than Avanti il divorzio! - Aleramo's protagonist is guided out of domestic paralysis by her mother's words, in a moment suggestive of perfect identification between the two women, whereas Franchi's Anna negotiates shifts between convenience and unease in her role as mammina to Virginia's mamma, and neither of them ever seems to reach a full understanding of the other. In another sense, though, the redemptive moment of mother-daughter solidarity is illusory, or at least one-sided, because the mother is dead; it is Franchi's novel which more realistically portrays the ongoing, day-to-day tensions of a mother-daughter relationship in which a power differential remains.

If female solidarity is largely absent or problematic in *Avanti il divorzio!*, explicitly *feminist* solidarity is entirely invisible. In *Una donna*, by contrast, the protagonist goes on to probe and, to some degree, identify with the strongly-contoured form of female solidarity represented by the feminist movement. Her first contact with feminism is through reading, and in particular through reading of women's movements in England and Scandinavia; her allusion to these is laced with an ambivalence closely akin to the one already noted in Italian suffragist texts (Section 3):

The protagonist and her mother, even after they have established a bond of sympathy, demonstrate several spectacular lapses in communication earlier in the book. Most notably, the mother rejoices at the protagonist's apparently happy engagement ('La sventurata non poteva immaginare il dramma che aveva troncata la mia adolescenza; pensò, anch'ella!, ad un sentimento magicamente sbocciato nel mio cuore'. [The poor thing could not conceive of the trauma that had cut short my adolescence; she believed – she too! – in a sentiment which had blossomed magically in my heart]. (Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 29). Later, on the eve of the protagonist's wedding, her mother 'tentò parole di preparazione per quello che m'attendeva l'indomani' [searched for words to prepare me for what lay in store on the morrow], unaware that her daughter has already experienced sexual initiation (p. 33).

¹²² See Muraro, L'ordine simbolico della madre.

Avevo provato subito una simpatia irresistibile per quelle creature esasperate che protestavano in nome della dignità di tutte sino a recidere in sé i più profondi istinti, l'amore, la maternità, la grazia. 123

An instinctive 'simpatia' for the suffragette-style foreign feminists is undercut by the list of what they have given up. The protagonist has already given up on love, it is true (at least within the parameters of this book); she later turns her back on her existing motherly role, albeit with great reluctance and while channeling her energies into social maternity; but, crucially, she never rejects 'grazia', with its associations of beauty and charm. This last point is well illustrated when she develops her feminist interests by corresponding with other Italian women, of whom she declares:

le avrei desiderate tutte belle; talune mi mandarono i loro ritratti, e questi erano davvero tutti graziosi...

Sorelle?124

It is immediately after declaring her fellow Italian feminists' images 'graziosi' that Aleramo's narrator suggests the concept of sisterhood to describe her relation to them. By implication, it seems that the foreign feminists who have sacrificed 'grazia' may be admirable, but are not potential 'sorelle'. 125

When the protagonist arrives in Rome, she finds herself at last in the presence of a feminist community, personified especially by the buona vecchia mamma [good elderly mother]. 126 This 'mother-substitute' character introduces the protagonist to the practicalities of feminist activism, and makes the only open reference to suffragism in the book:

'Femminismo!' esclamava ella. 'Organizzazione di operaie, legislazione del lavoro, emancipazione legale, divorzio, voto amministrativo e politico... Tutto questo, sì, è un còmpito immenso, eppure non è che la superficie: bisogna riformare la coscienza dell'uomo, creare quella della donna!'127

all very lovely... Sisters?] Aleramo, Una donna, p. 90.

^{123 [}I had instantly felt an irresistable affinity for these incensed beings who were protesting in the name of the dignity of all [women], even to the point of cutting off their own deepest instincts - love, motherhood, grace.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 86.

124 [I would have liked them all to be beautiful; some of them sent me their portraits, and indeed these were

¹²⁵ The concept of sisterhood has recently been interrogated by Katharine Mitchell, who takes this quotation from Aleramo as her starting-point. While Mitchell suggests that Aleramo's protagonist goes on to decide the her Italian correspondents are not really 'sorelle' - a more decisive interpretation than my own - her article reaches the more uplifting conclusion that, following unification, 'the relatively small number of women entering the public sphere [...] in Italy were bound by a sense of sorellanza, of female solidarity, which cut across divisions of social class, differences of opinion on the "woman question", and regional boundaries'. (Mitchell, "Sorelle in arte (e politica)", pp. 197-98; pp. 221-22). In my final Chapter 11, I will return to this positive view of female solidarity in the Italy of the period to counterbalance the rather more hesistant perspective offered by the style of analysis used in this thesis.

¹²⁶ The buona vecchia mamma was based on Alessandrina Ravizza. For an account of Aleramo's friendship with Ravizza, see Scaramuzza, La santa e la spudorata.

¹²⁷ ['Feminism!' she would exclaim. 'Organising women workers, labour legislation, legal emancipation, divorce, the municipal and political vote... All this, yes, it's a huge undertaking, and yet it's only the surface: we need to reform man's consciousness and create woman's!'] Aleramo, Una donna, p. 116.

Suffrage rounds off a list in which it is preceded by several other concerns, including the contentious one of divorce; perhaps still more significantly, *all* these reforms are instantly dubbed 'superficie' and, as such, less critical than the deeper work of changing and constructing 'coscienza'.

Furthermore, even this glancing allusion to the issue of the vote is voiced by a campaigner who, as Lucienne Kroha observes, is presented with 'repeated insistence on [her] essentially maternal and nurturing vocation'. 128 Kroha's overall argument holds that Aleramo's Una donna constitutes an Italian re-working of plot elements of Ibsen's A doll's house, with the most crucial deviation marked by the killing off of another member of Aleramo's female circle in Rome: the Norwegian illustrator who functions as a nameless Nora. It is only after the death of this Ibsenian 'double' that the protagonist walks out of her own home, accomplishing the transition in her own way: by maintaining and indeed intensifying an emphasis on maternity as integral to her identity after the moment of departure. 129 The buona vecchia mamma, unlike the Norwegian illustrator, is not killed off; indeed, although she is not heard of after the departure from Rome, the protagonist seems to step into her shoes in the final chapter by embracing an activism inspired by the sight of Milan's starving children. 130 Significantly, however, this activism is more philanthropic than political in character. The buona vecchia mamma may speak of suffragism, but her role in the novel is to establish a principle of extended maternal altruism - and the latter discourse, as seen in Sections 2 and 3, existed in a somewhat volatile relation to suffragist rhetoric, being used sometimes to contain the latter and sometimes to counter it.

If Franchi and Aleramo refuse and problematise, respectively, a discourse of all-encompassing female solidarity, a brief comparison with two British 'suffrage novels' brings home the incompatibility of their approach with that movement's rhetoric of convergence. In Elizabeth Robins' *The convert* (1907),¹³¹ the protagonist, Vida Levering, is 'converted' to the suffrage cause by the magnetic speaker Ernestine Blunt (a thinly-disguised Christabel Pankhurst), and essentially becomes another Ernestine; at the end of the novel, she in turn 'converts' the young ingénue, Jean. In Gertrude Colmore's *Suffragette Sally* (1911),¹³² the three lead characters are from contrasting class backgrounds and make correspondingly contrasting contributions to the suffrage movement, but the underlying message is that their dedication to the cause allows them spiritually to transcend

¹²⁹ See Kroha, The woman writer, pp. 123-42.

¹²⁸ Kroha, The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy, p. 139.

Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 218: 'Fu da allora che ho ripreso risolutamente a vivere; dopo aver sentito di nuovo *gli altri* vivere e soffrire' [It was from that point that I resolutely began to live again; after having once again felt *others* live and suffer].

¹³¹ Elizabeth Robins, *The convert* (London: The Women's Press, 1980; first publ. 1907).

¹³² Gertrude Colmore, Suffragette Sally, ed. Alison Lee (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008; first publ, 1911).

class lines and exist as one.¹³³ Instead of presenting female characters who serve as foils to mark out the protagonist's exceptionality, virtue and nobility, then, both English novels feature women who may start out with different worldviews and lifestyles, but are ultimately aligned and, to some degree, homogenized by their commitment to suffragism.¹³⁴ Franchi and Aleramo, on the other hand, cannot or will not allow their impulses as spokeswomen to transcend the social fragmentation voiced by an unnamed woman writer in *Una donna*: "In realtà *la donna* è una cosa che esiste solo nella fantasia degli uomini: ci sono *delle donne*, ecco tutto".¹³⁵

9.4 <u>Italianità and the crafting of female voices</u>

How can the above lines of analysis be tied together, and what do they contribute to my overall project of understanding the language(s) of Italian suffragism?

In broad terms, the kind of voice offered to women writers by the British-based model of suffragism was, of necessity, a robustly collective one. However, Franchi and Aleramo demonstrate that, although they wrote as Italian supporters of the suffrage cause, they were on no account prepared to embrace that kind of collectivity. Both books, it is true, make some claims to speak for the problematic category of *le donne italiane*. In the preface to *Avanti il divorzio!*, Agostino Berenini prays that 'parla il romanzo pei mille documenti di dolori vissuti'; ¹³⁶ Aleramo's protagonist, in her everywoman-esque anonymity, dreams of writing 'un libro, *il libro* [...] che mostrasse al mondo intero l'anima femminile moderna, per la prima volta'. ¹³⁷ However, the distribution of narrative weight indicates that the need for an *individual* voice, and for shifts in the sphere of immediate interpersonal relations, takes precedence over collective representation.

I have highlighted this individual/ interpersonal discursive focus from two perspectives. Firstly, I examined Franchi's and Aleramo's insistent concern with 're-embodying' their alter egos as

[In reality woman is something that only exists in the imagination of men: there are women, that is all there is to it]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 95. Italics in original.

¹³⁶ [the novel may speak for a thousand records of sorrows lived]. Berenini, 'Prefazione' in Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. XI.

¹³⁷ [a book, the book [...] which would display the modern female spirit to the whole world, for the first time]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 92.

¹³³ This is symbolised especially by the decision of Lady Geraldine Hill (based on the real Lady Constance Lytton) to disguise herself as working-class so as to expose the preferential treatment meted out to upper-class suffragette prisoners; it is also notable that the final chapter describes two deaths, the first of middle-class Rachel Cullen, and the second of 'her comrade', working-class Sally. (Colmore, Suffragette Sally, pp. 288-89).

¹³⁴ In Kabi Hartman's terms, 'the conversion narrative serves as the overarching narrative which unites suffragettes, granting them the authority to tell their stories'. Kabi Hartman, "What made me a suffragette": the new woman and the new (?) conversion narrative', p. 45.

individuals in relation to sexuality and maternity, a discursive direction not conducive to the line of suffragism that sought to mute the female specificity of the body in favour of the common humanity of the mind (9.2). Secondly, looking at these determinedly corporeal protagonists in relation to other female characters, I pointed out that the theme of female solidarity, essential to the fiction of suffragism if not always to its reality, is largely avoided by Franchi, while Aleramo explores it but does not treat feminist community as a satisfactory solution to her protagonist's predicament (9.3). Here, I draw these observations together to propose that a central tension in both these autobiographical novels derives from the project of using the existing vocabularies of Italian literature to craft a language with which to express female experience. I explore a few key manifestations of this tension at lexical level, before suggesting that the impossibility of a strong Italian suffrage movement might also be encoded on this linguistic plane.

The theme of finding a voice is central to these novels, both of which at least partially fit the description of the *Künstlerroman*;¹³⁸ for their two protagonists, the process of becoming an author is both challenging and euphorically liberating. *Avanti il divorzio!* sees Anna attempt two forms of 'voice': the first is music, and the second, and more successful, is written language. Music is the first means through which the adolescent Anna achieves self-expression; however, Anna's and Ettore's first encounters see them playing duets together and, ominously, Anna first loses her knack and then voluntarily hushes her playing so as to allow his to shine.¹³⁹ (Meanwhile, Ettore's violin produces 'parole, gridi, sospiri, narrazioni' and indeed a 'canto umano';¹⁴⁰ Anna's self-effacement facilitates her husband's appropriation of a strong 'voce' [voice]). Once this pre-verbal vocabulary has effectively been ruined for Anna, the need for a means of asserting her identity through language becomes more apparent. I have argued in 9.2 that one of Franchi's major concerns is that of finding words to convey Anna's sexuality without deviating entirely from the established 'codes' of literary Italian (in which, for instance, female pleasure was expressed through passivity and ellipsis). However, the limits of existing language become clear when Anna stops playing music after the birth of her first child:

¹³⁸ The Künstlerroman is a subgenre of the Bildungsroman novel of coming-of-age; it deals with the youth and development of artists (writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, etc.). For discussions of *Una donna* as a Künstlerroman, see especially Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*' and Polselli '*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo'.

¹³⁹ Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, p. 27: 'La prima volta che sonarono insieme una melodia di Schubert, Anna non fu capace di seguire il ritmo; un tremore, una commozione invincibile le paralizzava la mano pur così agile. [...] Poi, vinta la prima timidezza, Ella si studiava di rendere più dolce, più vellutato il suo tocco, perchè il suono un po' legnoso del piano non rompesse la dolcezza, l'armonia stupenda.' [The first time that they played a Schubert melody together, Anna could not follow the rhythm; a trembling, an unconquerable agitation paralyzed her hand, for all its agility. [...] Then, once the first shyness was conquered, she concentrated on making her touch softer, more muffled, so that the slightly wooden sound of the piano would not ruin the sweetness, the magnificent harmony.] Notably, Ettore praises her for her precision and softness as an accompanist.

words, cries, sighs, stories]; [human song]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 27.

Ella sentiva attorno a se un vuoto che nemmeno spiegava; e si sorprendeva talvolta, anche nei momenti più calmi, a provare un desiderio acuto, folle, di cosa che non le si precisava nella mente.¹⁴¹

The language known to Anna at this point does not encompass female desire; she cannot define her longings because she has no means of articulating them. Similarly, Aleramo's protagonist has no vocabulary but that of romantic novels with which to translate her experience of rape, as has been seen in 9.2:

Non potevo concepirmi vittima d'un calcolo. L'amore doveva aver fatto tutto questo [...] Come molte fanciulle, alle quali le letture dei romanzi suscitano immaginazioni informi che nessuno illumina, io supponevo che la realtà non fosse tutt'intera in quella che mi aveva colpita disgustosamente: immaginavo un compenso avvenire di ebbrezze ineffabili che avrei goduto da sposa. 142

For the protagonists of both books, the wordless *vuoto* can only be healed when they find a way of using the Italian language to communicate their experiences.

However, the process of becoming authors, for both, is problematically intertwined with that of mothering. Although Franchi's novel sees Anna losing her teenaged children through their own choice, while Aleramo's sees the protagonist consciously leaving her young son, the final pages of the two books suggest strikingly similar almost-resolutions of the women's pain: namely, the salving of their maternal grief through writing. In both cases, the characters produce books that clearly refer to the actual books in which they feature. Moreover, writing seems to be posited for both women as an alternate form of (social?) maternity. For Franchi's Anna, a review in praise of her book brings her to tears: 'le prime, dal giorno in cui ha perduto i suoi figli. Sono lacrime dolci, sono la salvezza'. 143 She ends by resolving that if her 'verità dolorosa' [painful truth] can help raise others' consciousness, then 'non si nasconda, questa umile verità'. 144 For Aleramo's protagonist, the book is a direct act of motherly love within her newly-formed framework of maternity by example:

E l'ultimo spasimo di questa mia vita sarà stato quello di scrivere queste pagine.

Per lui. [...]

[[]She felt a void around her that she could not even explain; and she surprised herself sometimes, even in her calmest moments, by feeling a sharp, mad yearning, for something that she could not define in her mind.] Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 55.

¹⁴² [I could not conceive of myself as the victim of a calculated move. Love had to have done all this [...] Like many girls, for whom reading novels elicits formless imaginings that nobody clarifies, I assumed that the reality was not wholly contained in what had disgusted me: I imagined a redeeming future of inexpressible ecstasies that I would enjoy as a bride.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. 28-29. See also Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna*', p. 173.

p. 173. 143 [the first, since the day she lost her sons. They are sweet tears, they are salvation]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 354.

¹⁴⁴ [let it not be hidden, this humble truth]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio, p. 354.

Ed è per questo che scrissi. Le mie parole lo raggiungeranno. 145

If both novels conclude with the protagonists diverting maternal energies into artistic ones, the spheres of authorship and motherhood are nonetheless linked rather differently at earlier points throughout the narratives. In particular, the metaphorical language used in relation to (pro)creativity is of interest. As Susan Stanford Friedman elucidates, a childbirth metaphor for creativity recurs persistently in literature that spans time, culture, and authorial gender. Stanford Friedman argues, however, that while male authors who use this metaphor 'often covertly affirm the traditional separation of creativity and procreativity', female authors 'have subverted the regressive birth metaphor and transformed it into a sign representing their own delivery into speech through (pro)creativity'. Although this binary formulation seems somewhat unfairly sweeping, I suggest that both Franchi and Aleramo do 'subvert' the childbirth metaphor, but in different ways. I also argue that while they wrestle together the domains of the literary and the maternal, lexical details signal the magnitude of the task faced.

In Franchi's Avanti il divorzio!, the artistic process is consistently described using physical, but not specifically reproductive, metaphors. Anna begins to write after her love for Ettore has definitively ended, and, in the erotically-charged landscape near Lake Trasimeno:

un giorno il labbro si schiuse, seguì col suono della voce le parole della mente, ed Anna meravigliata, lieta, felice, scrisse la sua prima poesia. 147

Considering the graphic agony of Anna's experience of childbirth, this seems as distant as possible from the topos of labour as a metaphor for (female) creativity. The image is still rooted in the body, but suggests a reclaiming of the non-gender-specific mouth as a generative organ.¹⁴⁸ Further metaphors used in relation to Anna's writing avoid the staple imagery of childbirth still more definitively. At first, we are told, 'i canti sbocciarono dal suo cervello come una pioggia benefica', ¹⁴⁹ and later:

¹⁴⁵ [And my life's last agony will have been that of writing these pages. For him. [...] And it is for this that I have written. My words will reach him.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. 164-65. (Fanning reads this ending as one of a number of 'disclaimers' which appear with increasing frequency as the novel draws to a close, and signify ambivalence about its resolution: 'The self-denial paradoxically comes as the self is most asserted'. Fanning, '*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo', p. 175).

¹⁴⁶ Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the childbirth metaphor: gender difference in literary discourse' in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *Speaking of gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 73-100 (pp. 93-94).

¹⁴⁷ [one day her lips opened, followed the words of her mind with the sound of her voice, and Anna, amazed, glad, happy, wrote her first poem.] Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 147.

That said, the association of 'labbro' with the 'labbra' of the labia may lend a certain ambiguity to this

¹⁴⁹ [songs blossomed from her brain like a kindly rain]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 148.

drammi, romanzi, novelle, parevano che le dovessero uscire dal cervello come escono le sottili matasse di nastri dalla bocca dei saltimbanchi. 150

The presence of the *cervello* [brain] in both these latter descriptions, where *mente* [mind] might have seemed more in keeping with the fanciful imagery used, is noteworthy. Within the terms of Cartesian dualism, women had habitually been associated with the body and men with the evanescent mind;¹⁵¹ however, there was no doubt that the seat of the brain was *in* the body. Franchi's linguistic references to the *cervello* – the *embodied* mind – ensure that the blithely aerial depictions of Anna's literary output as rain and ribbons are grounded in the body.

Childbirth, as Stanford Friedman points out, tended to be thought of as 'a mindless, unconscious, uncontrolled act of the body' and applied in those terms to writing, especially women's writing. ¹⁵² Franchi's earlier metaphors seem to reiterate this uncontrolled aspect even while avoiding the lexicon of birthing – consider Anna's syntactic lack of agency in the phrases 'il labbro si schiuse' and 'i canti sbocciarono dal suo cervello' – but the metaphor of the *saltimbanco*, i.e. the conjurer or acrobat, alters this pattern. Admittedly, the syntax still suggests that Anna, along with her imagined acrobatic parallel, lacks agency: the written works and their correlative ribbons are the subjects of the sentence. Crucially, however, the reader knows that while a conjuror's trick or an acrobat's gyration may appear effortless, an 'uncontrolled act of the body', it is no such thing. Rather, the seeming naturalness of the act testifies to the actor's skill and prowess; it proves that the famously untranslatable quality of *sprezzatura*, as defined by Baldassare Castiglione in the sixteenth century, ¹⁵³ has been achieved. As a woman writer, then, Anna may seem to produce creative work less through her own toil than at nature's behest, but this notion is questioned and problematised by Franchi's choice of a metaphor which connotes a façade of graceful ease enabled by gruelling discipline.

For Aleramo's protagonist, the birth of her son coincides with – indeed, triggers – her own 'birth' as a writer; the notes that she makes on his early development are her 'esordio di scrittrice' [writer's debut], and when her first slim volume is published, her son's smile is 'il premio [...] del

¹⁵⁰ [plays, novels, novellas seemed as if they needed to emerge from her brain as thin skeins of ribbons emerge from the mouths of fairground conjurers]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 259.

On this point, see for instance Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), esp. pp. 13-15.

¹⁵² Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the childbirth metaphor', p. 85.

¹⁵³ In *II libro del cortegiano* [The book of the courtier], Castiglione describes sprezzatura as something which 'nasconda l'arte e dimostri ciò che si fa e dice venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi. Da questo credo io che derivi assai la grazia [...]' [conceals the art and presents what one does and says as being accomplished without effort and almost without thought. I believe that grace derives largely from this [...]]. Baldassare Castiglione, *II libro del cortegiano*, ed. Ettore Bonora (Milan: Mursia 1979; first publ. 1528), p. 62.

mio sforzo'.¹⁵⁵ Despite this yoking together of motherhood and creativity, Aleramo avoids the traditional childbirth metaphor in its overt form – although she sails quite close to the wind. For instance, when she begins to write while recovering from her attempt at suicide, she describes the experience as follows:

E scrissi, per un'ora, per due, non so. Le parole fluivano, gravi, quasi solenni; si delineava il mio momento psicologico; chiedevo al dolore se poteva diventare fecondo; affermavo di ascoltare strani fermenti nel mio intelletto, come un presagio di una lontana fioritura. Non mai, in verità, avevo sentito di possedere una forza d'espressione così risoluta e una così acuta facoltà d'analisi. Che cosa dovevo attendermi? 156

Is there a maternal metaphor here? Not explicitly; the only hint of a natal lexicon comes when the protagonist queries whether her 'dolore' can become 'fecondo' through writing. However, several elements of the passage suggest not birth itself, but pregnancy. Alongside the verb phrases of becoming and expectation ('si delineava', 'poteva divenire', 'dovevo attendermi'), there are the 'strani fermenti' that presage a 'lontana fioritura'. Notably, however, these stirrings are not in the character's body but in her 'intelletto' [intellect], and the verb with which she perceives them is not sentire, to feel, but ascoltare, to hear. If Franchi diverts the physiological imagery of women's creativity from the uterus to the cervello and the bocca, then, Aleramo does deploy some of the language of procreativity, but on the disembodied plane of the intelletto. This perhaps suggests a reluctance to stray too far from the prototypical donne angelicate of Italian literature, who might have boasted an intelletto d'amore, but not a named cervello. 157

The above passage also indicates that Aleramo's protagonist vacillates as to whether she perceives herself as vessel or agent of creativity. As noted already, the childbirth (and pregnancy) metaphor tends to carry with it an underlying notion of (women's) art as unwilled and unskilled. In the above passage, Aleramo veers back and forth between syntactically challenging this outlook and bolstering it. On the one hand, she opens with a highly authoritative 'E scrissi', and she feels her powers of expression and analysis to be 'risoluta' and 'acuta'. On the other, it is her words which 'fluivano' [flowed] (much as songs 'sbocciarono' [blossomed] for Franchi's Anna); it is her psychological state which 'si delineava'; and it is her pain which might 'divenire fecondo'. In these phrases, her own presence as subject and actor is subdued; her role seems to be that of questioner ('chiedevo'), listener ('affermavo di ascoltare'), and, above all, of expectant ('Che cosa dovevo attendermi?'). Is

^{155 [}the prize [...] for my effort]. Aleramo, Una donna, p. 89.

¹⁵⁶ [And I wrote, for an hour, for two hours, I don't know. The words flowed, serious, almost solemn; my psychological state took shape; I asked the pain if it could become fertile; I established that I could hear strange stirrings in my intellect, as if auguring a distant blooming. I had never, in truth, felt in possession of such a resolute strength of expression and such sharp analytical ability. What should I expect?] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 79.

¹⁵⁷ See Dante Alighieri, 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' in *Vita nuova*, ed. Jennifer Petrie and June Salmons (Dublin: Belfield Italian Library, 1994 [1292]), p. 81.

the author deliberately heightening her character's apparent passivity to help the latter achieve the *sprezzatura* of an accomplished literary acrobat? Rather, this description of literary creativity seems syntactically and metaphorically to encode what Fanning describes as Aleramo's 'particular kind of oscillation between masculine subject and feminine object'. ¹⁵⁸

Thus far, I have argued that Aleramo skirts, but ambivalently, the childbirth metaphor. Significantly, however, she also reverses that metaphor; rather than describing writing in terms of motherhood, she describes motherhood in terms of writing:

mio figlio [...] mi appartenevo, perché io sola me gli dava; suo padre, sua nonna, tutti gli altri godevano lo spettacolo; ma io ero l'autrice. 159

This reversal occurs very shortly after the description of the turmoil caused to the protagonist by the child's succession of *nutrici* [wetnurses]. As such, it can be read as setting up an opposition of sorts between the figures of *autrice* and *nutrice*. The former involves the application of a feminine suffix to a typically masculine noun (*autore*), while the latter involves a typically feminine noun where the feminine suffix is not only the norm, but the only option. This opposition can be read as prefiguring the ideological shift upon which the whole novel hinges: the protagonist's eventual reformulation of maternal duty to prioritise motherhood by example over motherhood by physical presence. In other words, this shift values the *autrice* above the *nutrice*. Ultimately, the protagonist fails both literally and metaphorically as her son's *nutrice*, but it is through literal 'authorship' of her book – written 'per lui' [for him] – that she affirms her position as his distant, exemplary *autrice*.

In their refusals, reworkings, sidesteppings and inversions of the childbirth metaphor for creativity, both Franchi and Aleramo become linguistic and ideological *saltimbanche* [acrobats] themselves. They seek to present their integrated identities as writers, mothers and women in seamless ribbons of prose – ribbons which can be knotted into a discursive tradition incorporating the limits and specificities of Italian language and literature, yet which can also be unravelled into a new kind of voice. However, the *saltimbanca* can signify a charlatan as well as an acrobat; this dual meaning seems evocative of the anxiety that undercuts both authors' efforts. In fact, it is the points at which their ribbons of syntax and imagery become knotted or strained that are of greatest interest. The difficulty of creating a subject's voice in a linguistic system in which the feminine is coded as object is manifested in both Franchi's and Aleramo's fluctuating metaphorics of creativity. ¹⁶⁰

[159 [my son [...] belonged to me, because I alone gave myself to him; his father, his grandmother, all the others enjoyed the show; but I was the authoress]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁸ Fanning, 'Sibilla Aleramo's Una donna', p. 176.

As Fanning states in relation to Aleramo's engagement with subject and object positions, 'the position adopted at the end of the novel [...] is anything but stable; indeed, it seems precarious in the extreme'. Fanning, 'Una donna di Sibilla Aleramo', p. 176.

Aside from the novels' direct reflections on the authorial process and its gendered aspects, how do Franchi and Aleramo shape the Italian language to changing ends? One recurring lexical motif involves the opposition and semantic adaptation of nouns signifying femininity. Most noticeably, Franchi plays with the ambiguously-distinguished terms *femmina* and *donna*, while Aleramo also touches on this opposition but focuses on the relationship between *donna* and *madre*. Both writers exploit the unfixed definition, connotations and boundaries of *donna* in order to use this term in original, potentially emancipatory ways.

The *femmina-donna* distinction is one whose subtlety is shown by the challenge of rendering it in English. In quoting Franchi and Aleramo, I have consistently translated these terms as 'female' and 'woman' respectively, although this is not entirely satisfactory; *femmina* is less demeaning than the noun *female* tends to be in English, while the complexity with which definitions of *donna* are unreeled throughout the novels make *woman* an inadequately malleable choice. In Italian, the hazy nature of the border between them is well illustrated by the historian Eligio Imarisio's effort to draw a general comparison between their uses in literary works between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He claims that *femmina*

mainly signifies the woman who possesses notable physical or psychical qualities of the sort that make her attractive to a man; who possesses the eternal feminine of Goethian fame, i.e. the intimate essence of femininity, and thus also the allure which this holds over a man, especially a cultivated man. ¹⁶²

By contrast, donna

predominantly signifies the person of the female sex with manifestly feminine attributes, to whom adjectives of the following kind are often added: mature, wise, virtuous, etc. The word expresses the very substance of femininity, but in a largely realistic fashion, so that it is suitable for characterizing socio-political processes of development. ¹⁶³

This explanation is notable for its lack of clarity. If the *femmina* expresses 'the intimate essence of femininity' while the *donna* expresses 'the very substance of femininity', the lines between them seem blurred in the extreme. Imarisio goes on to note that 'the mode of being *donna* and that of being *femmina* are interdependent, but man privileges one or the other (as he has power to do) according to the image of woman that he is creating'. When feminist women were creating the

¹⁶² Eligio Imarisio, Donna poi artista: identità e presenza tra Otto e Novecento (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1996), p. 99. (My translation does not capture the fact that Imarisio defines femmina as a variety of donna: this quote begins: 'indica piuttosto la donna che [...]').

164 Imarisio, Donna poi artista, p. 99.

¹⁶¹ An alternative would have been to translate 'femmina' as 'woman' and 'donna' as 'lady'. However, this would be to amplify inexcusably a notion of class which, in the Italian, is allusive and pliant rather than denotative. The problem would be confounded by the need to find a further differentiating translation for 'signora', usually rendered as 'lady'.

¹⁶³ Imarisio, Donna poi artista, p. 99. (Here, Imarisio avoids reversing his earlier usage and defining donna as a type of femmina, resorting instead to the markedly awkward 'persona di sesso femminile').

images in question, however, this language had to be deployed somewhat differently. The simultaneous constrictiveness and hermeneutic possibility of the existing range of terms is conveyed in the popular writer Jolanda's suggestion, in 1909, that

fra l'amazzone e la vestale che non si debba proprio trovare un mezzo termine? Fra la virago e la femmina che proprio non ci sia posto per la donna?¹⁶⁵

Within a context of emerging Italian feminism, then, what place do Franchi and Aleramo find for the porous but problematic concept of *donna*?

Franchi tends to use *femmina* when referencing women in sexual roles. As discussed in 9.2, Anna feels herself a 'femmina incompleta' ¹⁶⁶ when experiencing sexual frigidity. The noun is often used of other women when they are depicted as purely and negatively sexual; Ettore's last-mentioned mistress, for instance, is 'la sconcia femmina' [the indecent female] and subsequently simply 'la femmina'. ¹⁶⁷ However, when describing Giorgio as 'l'uomo dell'avvenire', ¹⁶⁸ Anna imagines the kind of woman who would suit him: she would have to

larvare con la seduzione dell'intellettualità, la sconcezza della passione brutale, che sapesse esser per lui la donna e la femmina, l'amante piena di ardori e la sorella previdente. 169

The carnal *femmina* retains a role in this ideal being; crucially, however, she is fused with the *donna*, and this *donna* of Franchi's is a rather more complicated creation. She may be a 'sorella previdente' here, but other textual uses of *donna* indicate that the noun's meaning is unstable, sometimes contradictory, and, most importantly, evolving. When Ettore shows the teenage Anna's love-letters to Cesare, she is too embarrassed to reprove him for a breach of confidence: 'Non sapeva ancora esser donna'.' Much later, following her disastrous marriage and separation, Anna's unsympathetic lawyer accuses her of speaking too much like a 'donna emancipata' [emancipated woman], and Anna responds: 'Parlo da donna... da quell'animale... [...] che avete creato... Falsa, menzognera, disonesta è la donna. Ormai è nel suo organismo'.' (This is an intriguing merging of socially constructed and essentialist views of femininity: woman's duplicity, for Anna, has been created artificially by men, but has now worked its way into female biology). Nevertheless, when the lawyer suggests that she

¹⁶⁵ [between the Amazon and the Vestal Virgin should we not look for a middle term? Between the virago and the female is there really no place for the woman?] Jolanda, *Donne che avete intelletto d'amore. Conversazioni femminili* (Rocca San Casciano: Liciano Cappelli, 1909), p. 444. Cited in Ombretta Frau, 'Fra la virago e la femmina: emancipazione e etica di lavoro nelle eroine di Jolanda' in *Quaderni italianistici*, 29: I (2008), pp. 125-44 (p. 125).

¹⁶⁶ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 73.

¹⁶⁷Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 327; p. 350.

^{168 [}the man of the future]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 174.

[[]mask the obscenity of brutal passion with the seduction of the intellect, know how to be the woman and the female for him, the ardent lover and the provident sister.] Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 174.

¹⁷⁰ [She did not yet know how to be a woman]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 31.

[[]I speak as a woman... as that animal [...] that you have created... Woman is false, a liar, dishonourable. By now it is intrinsic to her]. Franchi, Avanti il divorziol, p. 244.

return to her husband at least for one night, she reproves him as follows: 'Basta, basta, avvocato. Ella non può comprendermi, mi pensa troppo femmina... io sono un po' più donna.'172

Being *donna* in *Avanti il divorzio!*, then, can alternately signify ceding to and resisting the dominant narratives of gender that enable the prevalence of the sexual double standard. Anna is born *femmina* (albeit 'per sbaglio');¹⁷³ she is moulded into society's idea of the *donna*, becoming duplicitous for a time; yet it is in finally refusing that role of duplicity that she becomes – in and on her own terms – 'un po' più donna'.

In *Una donna*, by contrast, Aleramo uses the term *femmina* just once: significantly, however, this isolated instance occurs in a paraphrasing of the husband's views after the protagonist has demanded separation: 'Me ne andassi, me ne andassi, avrebbe ben trovato un'altra femmina al mio posto!'174 Here, the *femmina* signifies woman as viewed within the patriarchal system: replaceable, interchangeable, and subordinate. Aleramo's project, however, is to explore woman as viewed by herself, and to do this, as the title suggests, she ransacks the possibilities of the plastic term *donna*. The lexical opposition most foregrounded (and problematised) in this novel is not between *donna* and *femmina*, but between *donna* and *madre*.

Describing her protagonist's early adolescence, Aleramo writes, 'lo non mi consideravo più una bimba, né pensavo di esser già una donnina: ero un individuo affaccendato'. ¹⁷⁵ From the perspective of the male-gendered 'individuo', she applies a diminutive ending to *donna*, constructing the feminine as a linguistically-Othered 'donnina'. She never grows to identify with this figure, but rather presents her perspective as shifting to that of the full-grown *donna* through the experience of rape: 'Non mi ero mai raffigurato il mio avvenire di donna. E donna, ecco, ero divenuta subitamente'. ¹⁷⁶

She speaks of the 'destino di donna' [woman's destiny] as being an 'impotenza a camminar sola';¹⁷⁷ paradoxically, though, when she splits her identity into *donna* and *madre*, the *donna* seems to

¹⁷² [Enough, sir, enough. You cannot understand me, you think me too female... I am rather more woman]. Franchi, *Avanti il divorzio!*, pp. 244-45.

¹⁷³ [by mistake]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 34.

[[]Off with me, off with me, he would easily find another female to take my place!] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 156.

¹⁷⁵ [I did not consider myself a child any longer, nor did I think I was a little woman yet: I was a busy individual]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ [I had never imagined my future as a woman. And now I had become woman all of a sudden]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 28.

¹⁷⁷ [inability to make one's way alone]. Aleramo, Una donna, p. 61.

represent aspirations of personal fulfillment ('In me la madre non s'integrava nella donna'). ¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, her burgeoning interest in feminism leads her to reflect that

la buona madre non deve essere, come la mia, una semplice creatura di sacrificio: deve essere *una donna*, una persona umana. 179

It is this distinction which is eventually crystallised in a reformulation of maternal duty:

Se una buona volta la fatale catena si spezzasse, e una madre non sopprimesse in sé la donna, e un figlio apprendesse dalla vita di lei un esempio di dignità?¹⁸⁰

Aleramo's metaphorical language has shifted from suggesting that the *madre* fits (uneasily) within the *donna*, to suggesting the reverse; perhaps this uncertain imagery transliterates the ambivalence which underlies the book's ending. Long after she has left her son, Aleramo's protagonist yearns to integrate *donna* and *madre*; her thesis seems to be that it is the social order, not any inherent incompatibility, which forces women to choose between these aspects of themselves. (The *autrice-nutrice* contrast considered above may be a more specific variant of the *donna-madre* one).

Franchi sets up her discursive poles as femmina and donna; Aleramo sets up hers as madre and donna. They establish the femmina and madre respectively as one-dimensional aspects of female identity which become pathological if approached in isolation; however, in defining the ideal, integrated alternative as donna, both authors touch on that word's subaltern connotations while also reinventing its meaning to suit their own needs. The fact that the donna, along with her unsatisfactory surrogates (femmina, madre, donnina etc.), forms a site of such semantic contention and reconfiguration testifies to the central challenge facing the authors: that of working within a language and literary style which had evolved to allow for multiple modes of representing woman as object, and of using the means available to construct woman, instead, as speaking subject.

While both Franchi and Aleramo use the Italian language to explore the challenges of appropriating a voice as both author and woman, does either of them overtly reference *italianità* or its particular meaning for them? In Franchi's book, nationality seems rather irrelevant; while major events in

¹⁷⁸ [In me the mother did not fit within the woman]. Aleramo, *Una donna*, pp. 51-52. Since the focus of this section is on the *italianità*, or lack thereof, of the feminist discourses of these book, it is also worth noting that Aleramo points out what she views as a 'contraddizione tutta italiana' [peculiarly Italian contradiction] as one aspect of this *madrel donna* split: 'il sentimento quasi mistico che gli uomini hanno verso la propria madre, mentre così poco stimano tutte le altre donne' [the almost sacred reverence in which men hold their own mother, while they have so little respect for all other women]. *Una donna*, p. 118.

¹⁷⁹ [the good mother must not, like mine, be simply a creature of sacrifice: she must be *a woman*, a human being.] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 85. Italics in original.

¹⁸⁰ [What if just once the fatal chain should snap, and a mother should not suppress the woman in her, and a child should learn an example of dignity from her life?] Aleramo, *Una donna*, p. 145.

Italian history are alluded to,¹⁸¹ the country is never explicitly compared with other places. In Aleramo's, as has been seen, contrasts are drawn with the feminist movements of Britain and Scandinavia, and the figure of the Norwegian illustrator can be read as a simultaneous homage to and rejection of the Ibsenian model of female emancipation (which Ibsen's Italian translator, Luigi Capuana, had protested as 'troppo diversa da noi').¹⁸² However, these references are brief. Both authors display considerably more concern with exploiting the variety within the Italian landscape, often using a poetics of location to supplement the direct information being given about the protagonists' quests for an embodied sense of self and a mode of expressing it. In Avanti il divorziol, Anna's nomadic existence allows for a great range of such metaphorical uses of place.¹⁸³ In Una donna, the protagonist's transposition from her nameless southern town to Rome coincides with a sharpening of her sense of self-definition; by contrast, although we know she is escaping to Milan at the novel's end, her ambivalence about the decision is reflected in a reluctance to state her destination precisely.¹⁸⁴

The meaning of this multiplicity of Italian locations described, and, by implication, treated as extensions of self, may be illuminated if read alongside passages from Aleramo's journalistic output. In an essay from 1910, she argues that while Italian identity in general remains culturally fragmented, regional differences are borne out especially dramatically in women.¹⁸⁵ Setting aside some sweeping

¹⁸¹ For instance, Anna's father is introduced as having been an exiled nationalist prior to the Risorgimento, 'quando l'Italia non ospitava chi aveva idee di libertà' [when Italy had no place for those who held ideals of freedom]; in 1898, Anna is arrested in the riots, 'presa dalla bufera di reazione che sconvolse l'Italia' [caught in the storm of reaction that shook Italy]. Franchi, Avanti il divorzio!, p. 6; p. 315.

[[]too different from us]. Cited in Kroha, The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy, p. 135.

¹⁸³ Franchi, Avanti il divorzio! It is in Cortona, near Lake Trasimeno, that Anna first begins to think of falling in love again; in a landscape described in erotic terms as filled with the coupling of bees and butterflies, she experiences 'delle estasi nuove' [new ecstasies] and writes her first poem (p. 147). In Florence, she encounters Giorgio on the Ponte Vecchio over a full-flooding Arno, and later kisses him in a rainstorm in the park of Le Cascine; while the name means, 'The Farmsteads', it aurally evokes 'cascata' [waterfall/ cascade], which heightens the association of gushing water with Anna's resurgent sexuality (pp. 176-86). Much later, in the Florentine Duomo, referred to by its full title of Santa Maria del Fiore – a name doubly redolent of feminine virtue – Anna rests before her adultery trial, is propositioned by an acquaintance and has to hide her understanding of his suggestion to preserve what is left of her reputation (p. 284-5).

desidera con volontà [...] E forse non era tanto lontano il giorno in cui avrei compreso in un solo sguardo la città unica, l'avrei sentita tutta nel palpito del mio cuore...' [Rome belongs to the spirit that wilfully desires her [...] And perhaps the day was not far off when I would take in the whole city in a single glance, when I would feel her in the beating of my heart...] (p. 98). On arriving in Milan, she reports, 'Mi avviai triste ma ferma, tra il fumo e la folla, fuor della stazione, m'inoltrai, misera e sperduta, nelle strade rumorose ove il sole sgombrava la nebbia.' [I headed out, sad but steady, through the smoke and the crowds, out of the station, I set forth, wretched and lost, into the noisy streets where the sun was clearing away the fog] (p. 161).

¹⁸⁵ Aleramo, 'Appunti sulla psicologia femminile italiana', p. 154.

^{&#}x27;Laddove a Torino voi incontrate nella gran dama come nella sartina, nella borghesuccia come nella popolana un tipo affine alla donna parigina, di eleganza e di volontà, attiva, a Palermo in ogni classe riscontrate il carattere semi-orientale, languido e apatico. Fra questi due estremi, per tutta la penisola, fioriscono temperamenti femminili chiaramente determinati dalle singolarità del suolo che li espresse [...] Loquace e spensierata a Venezia, taciturna e passionale in Sardegna, fanatica di libertà in Romagna e schiva e

stereotyping, Aleramo's notion of identities as determined by the context and culture in which they are formed is intriguingly anticipatory. Equally significant is her readiness to embrace the resultant diversity as potentially enriching, rather than setting out to erase regional borders and *fare le italiane* after a single approved model:

Bisogna rinunciare all'utopia d'un'Italia uniforme, e cementare la sua saldezza politica precisamente rispettandone la straordinaria varietà. Da Dante a Mazzini, tutti i grandi profeti della nazione italica d'altronde l'immaginarono federata e l'amarono cosí, una e multipla nel suo lungo e stretto corpo bagnato da due mari. ¹⁸⁶

This image of Italy anthropomorphised as a beloved woman strongly recalls the self-concepts presented by Franchi and Aleramo: they, too, are 'una e multipla', ineluctably exceptional while striving to speak on behalf of others. It would be inane to suggest that the fragmentation of female identity at both individual and collective levels was a preoccupation exclusive to women writing in early-twentieth-century Italy, but Franchi's and Aleramo's persistent use of a metaphorics of place and displacement suggests that, for them, this fragmentation could be expressed especially effectively with reference to the established discourse of the fragmented Italian nation.

If Franchi's and Aleramo's languages were thematically predicated on embodied identity, interpersonal relations, and individual exceptionality, and, as such, veered far away from a suffragist discourse reliant on cerebrality, political allegiances, and solidarity, I have here suggested that *italianità* permeates the authors' treatments of these themes. Metaphorical systems insistently problematise the link between woman as author and woman as mother, thus lexically encoding an 'anxiety of authorship' even after this anxiety has been narratively dispensed with; there are complex negotiations of the range of nouns available to describe a female being, which hint that a certain fragmentation of women's identities is prescribed by linguistic tradition; and there are vivid and contrasting evocations of the Italian landscape, which figure and (to some degree) explain the impossibility of collective identity for Italian women.

superstiziosa in Calabria, la donna italiana ha mille volti, mille anime.' [Where in Turin you meet, in the great lady as in the seamstress, in the petit-bourgeois woman as in the commoner, a type akin to the Parisian woman, elegant and strong-willed, active, in Palermo in every class you find [a] semi-oriental character, languid and apathetic. Between these two extremes, throughout the peninsula, feminine temperaments flourish [that are] clearly determined by the unique aspects of the land that expresses them [...]

Talkative and carefree in Venice, taciturn and passionate in Sardinia, fanatical for freedom in Romagna and retiring and superstitious in Calabria, the Italian woman has a thousand faces, a thousand souls.]

¹⁸⁶ [One must renounce the utopia of a uniform Italy, and cement her political stability precisely by respecting her extraordinary variety. From Dante to Mazzini, indeed, all the great prophets of the Italian nation imagined her as federated and loved her thus, one and multiple within her long and taut body bathed by two seas]. Aleramo, 'Appunti sulla psicologia femminile italiana', p. 153. A note on the translation: faced with the choice of erasing the femininity of 'un'Italia', which is automatic in Italian, or rendering it explicit in English, I have opted for the latter. In doing so I am conscious that I have perhaps stretched an erotic nuance of 'suo lungo e stretto corpo' beyond equivalency; however, I wished to acknowledge the potential presence of such a nuance in the original.

¹⁸⁷ See Gilbert and Gubar, The madwoman in the attic, pp. 48-49.

9.5 Conclusions

Franchi and Aleramo can be seen as crafting a new discourse within Italian literature - a discourse thematically focused on embodied identity, individual fulfillment and the gender politics of families, while linguistically focused on the semantic renegotiation of terms, concepts, and imagery within the Italian language. I make no attempt to argue that this emerging literary style contributed causally to the failure of the Italian suffrage movement; rather, the purpose of this analysis has been to elucidate how problematic motifs found in Italian suffrage documents may be better understood by investigating the more complex treatment permitted them at literary level. Motifs which arose in earlier chapters included the difficulties faced by Italian suffrage campaigners in integrating the discourse of equality with that of difference, and that of principle with that of pragmatism (Section 2); they also included the impossibility of overcoming fissures of class, region and nationality when attempting to posit a collective identity (Section 3). Franchi's and Aleramo's novels offer insights into an emerging discourse of literary feminism in Italy which relentlessly probes the notion of difference by giving verbal form to the gendered body; which focuses both foreground and background narrative arcs on the pragmatic problems caused by patriarchy in women's interpersonal relationships; and which presents the concept of female and feminist solidarity only tentatively, with class and region (and, in Aleramo's case, nationality) forming strong if complex demarcation lines. If the official texts of the Italian suffrage movement had to strive to elide discursive paradoxes, ambivalent positions, and fragmented identities, the form of the autobiographical novel allows Franchi and Aleramo to pursue a delving, critical, at times narcissistic, yet richly illuminating exploration of these features.

Chapter 10 'Pensare variopintamente'? Donna Paola's lo e il mio elettore (1910)

Primary text analysed: Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore. Propositi e spropositi di una futura deputata. 188

lo, vedete, non sono una donna virtuosa. Non voglio con ciò escludere ch'io sia una donna onesta, ma certo non sono irreprensibile. [...] Mi sento un po' un maschio. Vi sono peripezie che accadono a tutte le donne, a tutte coloro, per dir meglio, che si contentano d'essere donne... e allora non resta loro che acconciarvisi tranquillamente [...] lo, invece, sembro non aver altra cura che di procurarmi quelle peripezie [...] Ma ci sono poi donne virtuose?... Chi lo sa!

- From the Italian translation of H.G Wells' Ann Veronica, published 1913. 189

This chapter focuses on a single (and singular) text, namely *lo e il mio elettore. Propositi e spropositi di una future deputata*. Published in 1910, the book was written by Paola Baronchelli Grosson (1866-1954),¹⁹⁰ who, under her pen name Donna Paola, was already an established journalist and author: she had contributed to the Florentine *Scena illustrata* since 1895 and been its editor between 1897 and 1908, while also gaining considerable recognition for an epistolary novel, *Le confessioni di una figlia del secolo. Epistolario di una morta*¹⁹¹ (1901). This latter work has decided affinities with Franchi's *Avanti il divorzio!* and Aleramo's *Una donna*; the female protagonist imagines that her letters, which detail her unhappiness in a world of patriarchal relationships, will be published following her planned suicide. *Io e il mio elettore*, however, is a text of a different timbre; critics have glossed it variously as an 'early feminist *cahier de doléances*' 192 and a 'collection of ten lively conversations'. 193

¹⁸⁸ Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore. *Propositi* e spropositi di una futura deputata [My voter and I. Intentions and inanities of a future deputy.] (Lanciano: B. Carabba, 1910).

¹⁸⁹ H.G. Wells, *Anna Veronica*, trans. Elio Jona (Milan: Treves, 1913), pp. 277-78. The passage translates the following from the original English (Ann Veronica has, at this point, been arrested for suffragette activity and is reflecting on her identity while in prison): 'I'm not a good woman. I don't mean I'm not a good woman – I mean that I'm not a GOOD woman. [...] I've got a streak of male. Things happen to women – proper women – and all they have to do is to take them well [...] But I'm always trying to make things happen [...] I wonder if there are any good women really'. H.G. Wells, *Ann Veronica: a modern love story* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2009; first publ. 1909), pp. 362-63, accessed from Google Books at http://tinyurl.com/payr9jt on 29 September 2013).

¹⁹⁰ For biographical information on Donna Paola, see Farina (ed), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 572-73; Carlo D'Alessio, 'Grosson (Grosson de Guentry), Paola' in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, retrieved from <u>Treccani</u> at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paola-grosson_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ on 24 September 2012.

Donna Paola, Le confessioni di una figlia del secolo. Epistolario di una morta [Confessions of a daughter of the century. Letters of a dead woman]. (Milan: Aliprandi, 1901).

¹⁹² Russell (ed.), The feminist encyclopedia of Italian literature, p.3.

¹⁹³ Farina (ed.), Dizionario biografico, p. 572.

10.1 Overview of the text

Written in dialogue, *lo e il mio elettore* spans ten days of discussions between 'lo' [I], whose name is Donna Paola and seems intended closely to represent the author, and 'Lui' [He], a man recently returned from exploring Africa. When they are introduced on the first day by a mutual friend ('Lei' [Her]), the explorer identifies Donna Paola as a feminist, although she is resistant to this descriptor. He declares that since 'voi donne siete alla vigilia del voto politico', ¹⁹⁴ she could become eligible to stand for election – she could end up a 'deputata' [deputy]! Despite her laughing protests ('Ab *insidiis diaboli!* [...] Burlone!'), ¹⁹⁵ he insists, as one of her hypothetical electorate, on the right to hear her expound her political vision and 'programma' ¹⁹⁶ [agenda]. He announces his intention of calling on her each day for this purpose, thus establishing the frame within which the text's further conversations unfold.

On days two through nine, the explorer duly arrives and, between interludes of flirtatious and quasi-courtly banter, elicits Donna Paola's stances on a wide range of issues. Feminism, women's suffrage and the tactics of suffragists dominate the discussion on the second and third days. Thereafter, the topics covered include marriage (day four); adultery and marital violence (day five); free love, parental responsibility and the place of religion in children's upbringing (day six); educational reform, especially as regards sexuality and civic awareness (day seven); women in the workplace (day eight); and the problems of excess, charity and militarism in society (day nine). On the tenth day, the explorer attempts to continue the debate, but Donna Paola closes it down with a sudden surge of pessimistic realism: since no actual candidate would be expected to provide such lengthy defences, she declares, there is no reason that she, a 'candidata per burla' [joke candidate], should expend any more time winning over a hypothetical elector who, even if the imagined scenario should come to pass, 'non avrà mai voglia [...] di darmi il suo voto'. 197

The views of the *futura deputata* are rife with ideological and rhetorical contradictions and inconsistencies. To cite just a few examples, she is ambivalent in the extreme in her approaches both to feminism and suffragism, as shall be discussed (10.3); her declarations on the subject of maternity range from the dismissal of 'madri di famiglia' [mothers of families] as unproductive women to the essentialist exaltation of the 'religione della maternità' [religion of maternity];¹⁹⁸ and

[[]you women are on the brink of parliamentary suffrage]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 4.

[[]From the snares of the Devil! [...] You joker!] Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 8. Italics in original.

¹⁹⁶ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 9.

[[]will never wish [...] to give me his vote]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 325.

¹⁹⁸ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 63; pp. 129-30.

her advocacy of divorce laws and trial marriages sits alongside her harsh condemnation of mothers who desert their children. 199

However, Donna Paola both underlines and defends the heterogeneity of her opinions. On the first day, she announces that she has no streamlined approach to politics; rather, she is 'padronissima di pensare variopintamente, di aver fedi diverse come i colori dell'arcobaleno'.²⁰⁰ On the second day, she elaborates on this premise, declaring herself an 'essere di contraddizione'²⁰¹ [being of contradiction], and establishing a template for the forthcoming discussions: rather than relying on logical sequiturs, when logic is the 'matematica del pensiero' [mathematics of thought] and 'l'umanità non è matematica: è poeta',²⁰² she and her *elettore* will follow spontaneous associations:

Da cosa nasce cosa, da chiacchiera nasce chiacchiera, da affermazione nasce affermazione.... Tutto, quaggiù, è concatenato... [...] La concatenazione può anche essere illogica. Anzi è sempre illogica. È per questo che la collana è preziosa di varietà [...]²⁰³

By actively pledging to *pensare variopintamente*, Donna Paola indicates a desire to flout the stylistic conventions of the political treatise, even while working within the framing device of the canvassing *candidata*. Significantly, her plural mode of thought and discussion is specifically traced to her

¹⁹⁹ This condemnation reads like a direct attack on Aleramo (and could also be applied to Franchi): 'lo sono partigiana non sola, ma fanatica, della libertà e dell'autonomia, sia maschile sia feminile. Ma v'è una libertà, che equivale un delitto: ed è quella che la madre si arroga a danno dei figli. [...] Ora: la donna, che è madre, e che antepone, alla maternità, la propria felicità, di qualunque genere essa sia, non tradisce soltanto il suo istinto di conservatrice della specie [...]; essa manca a qualcosa che non è neppur un dovere [...] sibbene a una della più sublimi idealità, che nobilitino l'uomo in confronto del bruto [...] Che cosa è una madre, che abbandona il suo figlio, se non un individuo che tira una coltellata nella schiena a un inerme? Una madre così è una vigliacca, è una codarda, come è codardo Giuda che bacia e vende, Maramaldo che uccide un uomo morto!' [l am not merely a supporter, but a fanatic, of freedom and autonomy, male or female. But there is one freedom that amounts to a crime: and it is that which the mother claims at her children's expense. [...] Now: the woman who is a mother, and who puts her own happiness, whatever that may be, ahead of motherhood, does not only betray her instinct as preserver of the species [...]; she fails in something that is not even a duty [...] but rather one of the highest ideals that ennoble mankind to be more than brutes [...] What is a mother who abandons her child but a person who stabs a helpless being in the back? A mother like that is craven, is a coward, as Judas is a coward when he kisses and betrays, Maramaldo when he slays a dead man!] (Io e il mio elettore, p. 198).

²⁰⁰ [a mistress of multicoloured thinking, of holding beliefs as varied as the shades of the rainbow]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 9.

²⁰¹ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 12.

²⁰² [humankind is not a mathematician, but a poet]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio elettor*e, p. 18.

²⁰³ [One thing gives rise to another, one conversation to another, one statement to another.... Everything, here, is linked... [...] The linking may well be illogical. In fact, it is always illogical. That's what renders the chain so rich in variety [...]]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 18.

The form and dialogic system of the text hint at intertexts that locate the political discussion within a more literary, and more ideologically heterogeneous, tradition. While the various allusions evoked by *lo e il mio elettore* will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter (10.4), it is worth observing here that the ten-day frame narrative inevitably recalls Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. The latter is itself notorious for its internal multiplicity of style, theme, tone and ideology: scholars pursuing diverse lines of enquiry tend to concur on the undecidability of the author/ narrator's final position on anything. This variousness is facilitated by the *Decamerone*'s ten narrators, while Donna Paola uses only two main speakers; nevertheless, the structural nod toward Boccaccio may hint at an attempt to legitimise the tactic of *pensare variopintamente*.

female identity. The newness of women to public life, she argues, endows them with a capacity for original, open-minded, multifarious approaches to problems. 'Io sono nuova, io sono vergine... in politica', she states, with impish use of ellipsis, 'e volete che abbia un programma? Noi, donne [...] siamo libere come gli uccelli dell'aria, non abbiamo zavorre di impegni partigiani, di idee calcificate, di preconcetti atavici'. (Ironically, this statement itself can be read as part of a broader unresolved tension within the text: in seeking to explain women's particularities, Donna Paola shuttles between what would now be thought of as constructivist arguments (like the above) and essentialist ones, without ever directly confronting this ambiguity).

If Donna Paola relishes contradiction and plurality as feminine, these also serve to counter what she sees as the stale, narrow, and hence unfeminine discourse of various 'ismi'²⁰⁶ [-isms] – suffragism among them. As shall be seen (10.3), it is not until the third day that Donna Paola declares herself pro-suffrage, and she does so with considerable trepidation. Despite this, there are a number of reasons for which her text merits detailed appraisal in an analysis of the language(s) of Italian suffragism.

Firstly, the very premise of *lo* e *il* mio elettore rests on a fantasy of passive as well as active suffrage having been attained for women. This allows for an unusual perspective; in a sense, the suffrage question is taken 'beyond the ending',²⁰⁷ with Donna Paola laying out not a programme for winning the vote, but a programme for female-inclusive government.

Secondly, and in partial consequence of this premise, the arguments leading up to the speaker's eventual and somewhat reluctant declaration of pro-suffragism constitute an especially rich exploration of the axes of principle-pragmatism and difference-equality (identified in Section 2). Because Donna Paola is not writing an overtly suffragist tract, and because she allows herself the freedom to speak *variopintamente*, she is not especially concerned with eliding the tensions between discourses of principle and pragmatism, difference and equality. This allows her, for instance, to concede and support the principle of suffrage on the basis of *giustizia*, while vociferously maintaining the inability of 98% of Italian women to use the vote responsibly. It also allows her, as I have said above, to steer between theories of essentialist feminine difference and theories of what would now be termed social constructivism without choosing between them. For the purposes of my analysis, this unrepressed complexity offers a provocative contrast to the elision strategies

²⁰⁵ [I am new, I am a virgin... politically]; [and you want me to have a programme? We, women [...] are free as birds of the air, we are not weighed down by partisan loyalties, calcified ideas, ancient preconceptions]. Donna Paola, *Io* e *il mio* elettore, p. 9.

²⁰⁶ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 19.

²⁰⁷ I use this term in the sense intended by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, as elaborated in Chapter 9 (p. 219, n. 85): 'writing beyond the ending means the transgressive invention of narrative strategies, strategies that express critical dissent from the dominant narrative'. Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the ending, p. 5.

commonly deployed by both survey respondents (Section 2) and the producers of suffragist propaganda (Section 3).

Thirdly, while the suffrage question pervades this text as the construct upon which the conversations are founded, it does not thematically dominate the discussions; rather, it is presented as part of a broad conglomerate of pressing issues, among which the 'quistione sessuale' [sexual question] is flagged as the most omnipresent.²⁰⁸ As such, the passages pertaining to suffrage can be considered within a broader scope of Italian women's concerns. The picture painted is sufficiently encompassing to decentralise the suffrage question, yet its parts are sufficiently fused to allow for a routing of suffrage-related themes through the discourses used around other issues.

Finally, *lo e il mio elettore* is generically quite unique: it represents, on the one hand, a pre-emptive female appropriation of a very political form of discourse (that of the canvassing parliamentary deputy), and, on the other, a re-working and 're-gendering' of the tenets within this form. I will argue that this is achieved in part through infusing the genre of political canvassing with elements of more literary and perhaps female-friendly genres, particularly that of Renaissance courtly dialogue.

In line with my analyses in earlier chapters, I focus this exploration of *Io e il mio elettore* on: the construction of the individual identity of the author/ protagonist (10.2); the construction of collective identities within the text (10.3); and the *italianità*, or lack thereof, of the language used to convey ideologies and identities (10.4). In drawing conclusions (10.5), I relate Donna Paola's discursive strategies to those identified in previous chapters. That is to say, I consider her suffragist stance(s) in light of the axes posited in Section 2; I contrast her proud self-representation as 'poliedrica'²⁰⁹ [multifaceted] with the struggles for a rhetoric of uniformity that emerged in the suffragist propaganda texts examined in Section 3; and I compare the languages of Italian female experience drawn on and crafted by her with those constructed in Franchi's and Aleramo's texts, as analysed in the preceding chapter of the present Section 4.

10.2 <u>Individual identity: donnal giullare</u>

I have observed that a discourse of individual exceptionality was effortfully elided in suffragist propaganda and ambivalently flaunted in Franchi's and Aleramo's autobiographical novels. Does this discourse have a role in *lo e il mio elettore*?

²⁰⁹ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 184.

²⁰⁸ The 'quistione sessuale' referred to the various arguments concerning the sexual double-standard whereby chastity was expected of women while promiscuity was facilitated for men.

Donna Paola certainly demonstrates an aversion to collective affiliations among women (as will be discussed more fully in 10.3), but the value she places on her own maverick position bears closer examination. When the explorer opines that her attitude is inimical to 'la colleganza, la confraternità, la collaborazione' [collegiality, fellowship, collaboration], she counters that 'si può mostrare ben più utilmente il desiderio di collaborare, standosene sulla riva a dar voci d'ammonimento ai nocchieri'.²¹⁰ On the fifth day, this observation is further developed with reference to a quotation attributed to the sixteenth-century French clown Triboulet (via Victor Hugo).²¹¹ Donna Paola positions herself – and, perhaps, the female condition more generally – in the same liminal periphery inhabited by the jester. (In so doing, she pre-empts the second-wave view, expounded by Luisa Muraro, that men recoil from working with women 'for fear of female irony [...] because the seriousness that they invest in governing things makes me laugh'.²¹² Donna Paola is considered so extraneous to patriarchal society that she can get away with outrageousness:

Nella mia qualità di donna, io sono [...] considerata nulla più di un giullare [...] ai quali era lecito metter fuori le più atroci, pungenti, mortali verità, soltanto perchè non erano presi sul serio da alcuno [...] Potrei dire, al pari di Triboulet che: "je n'ai sur mon cou, autre chose à risquer que la tête d'un fou" se ancora si facesse intervenire il boia nelle chiacchiere dei mentecatti.... Ma oggi, il boia non c'è più [...] Vedete, dunque, che io non faccio davvero un grande spreco di coraggio a fare il Triboulet di questa nostra "corte" contemporanea!²¹³

The quotation attributed to Triboulet is also used as the epigraph for *lo e il mio elettore*, suggesting its salience as a 'key' of sorts to the work. It is an allusively potent citation: specifically, its intertextual undercurrents suggest that Donna Paola's feigned nonchalance about how she is perceived may be deceptive. In Hugo's play, the character of Triboulet becomes a tragic figure, whose declaration of bravado is a front. The jester has considerably more to lose than his own head: he has a daughter, Blanche, and it is his life's mission to protect and conceal her from the libertine court world, and especially from the sexual predations of the king. The tragedy of *Le roi s'amuse* is that Triboulet's performance as marginalised, amoral buffoon is too diligent; he calls down the wrath of powerful courtiers, with the end result that Blanche is not only raped and deserted, but killed.

²¹⁰ [One can show a will to participate much more usefully by planting oneself the bank and shouting rebukes at the rowers]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 21.

The rhyming boutade, 'je n'ai sur mon cou, autre chose à risquer que la tête d'un fou' is spoken by the character of Triboulet in Victor Hugo's play *Le roi s'amuse* (1832). In Verdi's operatic version of the same story, Triboulet becomes the title character *Rigoletto* (1851), and the action is transposed to Mantua.

²¹² Muraro, 'Oltre l'uguaglianza', p. 111.

²¹³ [In my capacity as a woman, I am [...] considered nothing more than a jester [...] and jesters were allowed to utter the most appalling, stinging, fatal truths, purely because nobody took them seriously [...] I could say like Triboulet that "I have nothing on my neck to risk but a lunatic's head" if they still called the executioner to intervene in the chatter of the mad.... But today, the executioner is here no longer [...] You can see, then, that it really takes no great burst of courage for me to play the Triboulet to this contemporary "court" of ours!] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 160-61.

The fact that Donna Paola chooses to cite Hugo's version of Triboulet seems a possible indicator that her own bravado is also more affected than internalised. Does she, like Hugo's interpretation of the jester, strategically feign or exaggerate aspects of her textual persona in order to protect or conceal something? I contend that she does, and that these exaggerated aspects are those exemplary of traditional femininity (or what she herself will dub feminilismo, elaborated on in 10.3). By representing herself through a discourse of emphasised femininity, Donna Paola defuses and masks the elements of her argument that seem closer to typical feminismo. There are several strands to what I have here termed emphasised femininity: the most pervasive are flirtation, reference to heterosexual desire, and enthusiasm for typically feminine activities and accessories. I treat of these three strands in turn, before considering their interaction in creating a paradox: while they all function on some level to defuse the threat of feminismo, the third strand veers close to parodying femininity and, by association, to exposing the extent to which that very defusing process is artifice.

The relationship between Donna Paola and the explorer with whom she converses is flirtatious from the start; she is mainly portrayed as diffident but amused, while he is represented as eager. Her declaration, on the first day, that she lacks the 'pungiglione' [sting/ stimulus] to expound her political views is met by him with an offer loaded with *double entendre*: 'Il pungolatore potrei essere io...'.²¹⁴ By the end of the fifth day, she can archly tease him about his admiration: 'io non voglio affatto dominare: io domino anche senza volerlo [...] e mi pare che dobbiate essere sulla via di accorgervene anche voi...'.²¹⁵ On the sixth day, she is more direct, saying, when asked to talk about love at greater length:

Vi vedo arrivare [...] Mettete un uomo in faccia ad una donna, e ci sia fra i due la più grave quistione [...] e, dopo dieci minuti, l'uomo comincerà a pensare che quella donna potrebbe fors'anco essere desiderabile, che il bacio di quella donna potrebbe per avventura avere un sapore speciale... che forse [...] si potrebbe cominciare dal provarne il gusto... E messo sulle rotaie della sua prepotentissima sensualità, chi lo ferma è bravo... cioè la donna che lo ferma è brava. Egregio signor elettore, ho ragione o ho torto?²¹⁶

The admission that only a strong woman manages to halt her would-be lover's ardour seems suggestive of a reciprocal attraction on Donna Paola's part, especially since she adds that they are living in a period of 'piena erotomania' [total erotomania], and 'non c'è che dire e quasi vi dico che

²¹⁵ [I have no wish to dominate: in fact I dominate without wishing to [...] and it seems to me that even you must be well on the way to noticing that fact]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 162-63.

²¹⁴ [I could be the 'stinger'...]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 6.

²¹⁶ [I see where you are going [...] Put a man in front of a woman, and let the most solemn question arise between them [...] and, after ten minutes, the man will begin to think that this woman might actually be desirable, that this woman's kiss might happen to have a special flavor... that perhaps [...] he might embark on trying its taste... And once the wheels of his almighty carnality are in motion, it is an impressive feat to bring him to a halt... that is, the woman that manages to halt him is impressive. My dear elector, am I right or am I wrong?] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, p. 178.

bisogna chinare il capo, come sotto il giogo di una fatalità'.²¹⁷ That last declaration sounds tantalizingly promising for the explorer, except for that 'quasi'; the 'quasi', however, is crucial, and Donna Paola does not openly express desire for the explorer at any later point.

This unequal dynamic, along with a certain linguistic playfulness, makes their badinage reminiscent of a mildly bawdier version of the stylized flirtation associated with the Italian *corte* of the early modern period. Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano*, in particular, springs to mind.²¹⁸ This text, which traces the conversations between a number of courtiers and court ladies as to what constitutes courtly conduct, sees the *donne di palazzo* complimented and adored by their male companions; in the substance of the discussions, it is made clear that marriage is no bar to extramarital love, but that this love must be only of the 'mente' [mind], and that duty of keeping it so falls to the woman.

The unresolved flirtation between Donna Paola and her explorer, then, functions to associate her with the tradition of the alluring yet virtuous Renaissance *cortegiana*. As such, it highlights her desirability as a woman – and, more precisely, her desirability to a man who has declared his preferences for 'civilised', 'feminine' women (the explorer, on the very first day, declares in unrestrainedly racist terms that 'le donne negre mi hanno disgustato della feminilità', ²¹⁹ and names Donna Paola as the cure for this, later adding that 'non saprò rassegnarmi a veder la donna priva della sua aureola di feminilità'). ²²⁰

If Donna Paola never fully admits to lust for the explorer, she does make repeated reference to female desire more generally, and, cautiously, implicitly, locates herself as a connoisseur of pleasure. While this forms the second strand of the discourse of emphasised femininity (albeit not unproblematically, as shall be seen), it is a strategy which also feeds into a discourse of embodied experience akin to that noted in Franchi's and Aleramo's texts (Chapter 9).

During the discussion of adultery on the fifth day, the explorer explains men's defection to any passing 'bella donnina' [pretty little woman] as an innate predilection; Donna Paola appalls him by positing that women are just as easily tempted: 'Perchè volete che una donna, quando vede un bel giovanotto che le piace, non possa dirsi: "Guarda che bell'animale di piacere: lo prenderei

²¹⁹ [Negro women have left me disgusted by femaleness]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 10.

²¹⁷ [nothing can be said but what I almost say to you: one must bow one's head as under the yoke of destiny]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 179.

²¹⁸ Castiglione, Il libro del cortegiano.

²²⁰ [I will not be able to resign myself to seeing woman stripped of her aura of femininity]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 177.

volontieri"?'221 Subsequently, she criticises the vast age differences that the sexual double standard promotes in marriages, arguing that a man who is elderly and has been promiscuous for years does not consider 'se [...] le sue sazietà dei piaceri [...] saranno compatibili con la sanità esuberante di una diciottenne, la sua gioconda febbre di vivere'. 222 Significantly, the young bride in this imagining is healthily sexual even while still virginal - a challenge in itself to the reigning ideology of female sexuality, yet at the same time another link with a literary tradition preceding that ideology (the Decamerone, in particular, features several instances of young women sexually frustrated at being married off to older, quasi-impotent men).²²³

On the seventh day, when Donna Paola sets out the curriculum to be taught in her 'marriage school', she lays heavy emphasis on the need to teach young men to attend to their wives' 'tendenze sessuali' [sexual desires], and to avoid 'l'errore grossolano ed irremediabile, di credere che il senso sia cosa secondaria, nella donna'.224 The explorer is at his most intransigently incredulous ('Come?! Come?! [...] Questo, non lo crederò mai').225 In response, Donna Paola makes rare and acerbic acknowledgement of her own identity as a sexual being: 'l'affermazione contraria vi viene da qualcuno, che ne può sapere qualcosa più di voi'.226

Further references to Donna Paola's own sexual desires are more oblique. When the explorer dubs her a 'puritana' [puritan], she responds indignantly:

Ma io l'adoro, il peccato, e dichiaro che senza lo spasimo del suo dolcissimo fascino la vita non varrebbe un centesimo bucato. Il peccato!.. Ma sapete voi che l'inferno è fatto del rammarico di tutti i peccati, che non si sono commessi [...]²²⁷

The personal aspect of this declaration is clear (in fact, the grammatically unnecessary 'io' is included to emphasise it). However, the sexual aspect is more covert; the reader must draw conclusions as to what constitutes 'il peccato' from the sensory quality of the language used. (The apposition of 'spasimo' with the superlative of 'dolce' is particularly telling, and recalls the 'solo spasimo dolce' used by Franchi to figure female sexual pleasure, as discussed in Chapter 9). Donna

[whether his exhaustion of pleasures [...] will be compatible with the exuberant health of an eighteenyear-old girl, her blithe fever for life]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 145.

[What?! What?! [...] That I'll never believe.] Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 234.

1226 [the counter-statement comes to you from someone who might know a bit more about it than you do]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 234.

²²¹ [Why would you have it that a woman, when she sees a strapping young man who appeals to her, cannot say to herself: "Look at that fine beast of pleasure: I'd gladly take him on"?] Donna Paola, Io e il mio elettore, p. 137.

²²³ See in particular Boccaccio, *Il decamerone* (Florence: Salani, 1964), II, 10: the wife of Messer Ricciardo, who has deserted him for the pirate Paganino, justifies herself to her erstwhile husband on the grounds that he had been unable to satisfy her needs.

²²⁴ [the enormous error of believing that [sexual] feeling is secondary in women].

²²⁷ But I adore sin, and maintain that without the pang of its delicious charm life would not be worth a bent copper. Sin!... Are you aware that hell is made up of regret for all the sins that one has not committed [...]]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 286.

Paola adds a further line which combines flirtation and still-circumspect allusion to her own desire: 'Signor mio; se può piacervi, io posso anche dimostrarvi che sono disposta ad essere più immorale della società'.²²⁸ Again, the meaning of 'immorale' is left just vague enough to avoid a direct declaration of the speaker's erotic appetite.

Donna Paola's character repeatedly insists on women's experience as embodied and sexual, then, yet is coy about linking this to her own self-depiction. The explorer, meanwhile, functions to underline the extent to which the concept of female desire is inimical to many men; the tolerant interest that he displays in relation to most other topics gives way to an immovable disbelief ('in questa quistione non saremo mai d'accordo'). Despite Donna Paola's caution in referencing her own erotic experience, enough sidelong allusions are made to leave readers in no doubt about her heterosexual desire. However, her comparative reticence, along with the explorer's emphatic rejections of the concept of female desire, suggests that the wish to inflect the representation of the heteronormatively attractive speaker with active sexuality was restrained by a cautious awareness of the currency of a dominant discourse of women as sexually passive.

In addition to conveying Donna Paola's femininity through *cortegiana*-style charm and through imputed sexual feeling, the text is rich in a third strand of 'emphasised femininity'. This strand presents the speaker as *materialistically* feminine — that is, as attached to items and occupations that belong to the traditions of beautification and domesticity.

Notably, such passages tend to occur directly after Donna Paola has expounded a particular controversial viewpoint. For instance, on the fourth day, her defence of divorce — not in spite of the children, but for the sake of the children — is concluded by the claim that 'ho i polmoni asciutti e debbo finire una certa trina all'uncinetto della quale debbo orlare una tovaglietta'.²³⁰ The explorer voices the reader's presumed astonishment at this incongruity — 'non so immaginare donna Paola intenta a sferruzzare!..'.²³¹ She admonishes him that women have more multiple spheres of interest than men, using insistently musical imagery to further evoke the set of accomplishments traditionally deemed suitable for ladies:

Perchè voialtri uomini siete strumenti monocordi, e non vi sapete figurare le infinite armonie dello strumento feminile... quando sia uno strumento e non una padella. Preparare un lavoretto umile ma gentile, che adorni la mensa o comunque la casa è, invece, il più meraviglioso complemento sinfonico di una lunga ed ardente ora di pensiero e di passione. Ma, certo, per gustarne il piacere complesso e delicatissimo, occorre una tastiera

²²⁸ [My good sir, if it pleases you, I can show you that I am willing to be more immoral than society]. Donna Paola, *Io* e *il* mio elettore, p. 286.

²²⁹ [we will never agree about this question]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 235.

[[]my throat is dry and I have to finish a piece of crochet with which to decorate a tablemat]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 120.

[[]I can't imagine Donna Paola intent on clicking her needles!..] Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 120.

sentimentale e cerebrale ricchissima, una genialità d'artista ed una sensibilità affettiva, che... non sono di tutti. Degli uomini, assolutamente no.²³²

Here, the *amplificatio*²³³ with which domestic femininity is described offsets the transgressive potential of a preceding argument. Donna Paola has just advocated the breakup of the traditional domestic establishment by means of divorce (or, if possible, by means of trial marriages!). She neutralises this implicit threat by presenting herself as bent on adorning the very sphere she has threatened ('la casa') with crocheted lace.

In other cases, the about-turn is less blatant, but still perceptible. Having announced herself dissatisfied with free love as well as marriage, Donna Paola is asked by the exasperated explorer, 'Ma allora che cosa volete?',²³⁴ and takes refuge in feigning materialistic frivolity: 'V'ho detto e ripetuto che voglio una bella sortie de thêatre [sic] di velluto, foderata di ermellino'.²³⁵ Immediately after her quasi-admission of sexual attraction to the explorer (detailed above), she waxes lyrical about the joys of being a woman:

lo adoro le mie gonnelle... meglio quando sieno di seta e mi ondeggino attorno, dolcemente fruscianti. E non le lascerai neppure per barattarle contro le *culottes* del Re Sole. Figuratevi, dunque, se le vorrei barattare con un volgarissimo paio di calzoni [...] La sottana, signor mio, può tornare di pastoia alle inette; ma allorchè la donna se ne «sappia» servire... ah, per Ercole, non c'è forza nel cielo e nella terra [...] che valga la forza di quella piccola ruota di stoffa, attorno alla quale ruota l'universo [...]!²³⁶

²³² [Because you men are one-stringed instruments, and you don't know what to make of the infinite harmonics of the female instrument – when it is an instrument and not a mere utensil. Preparing some modest but fine little thing to decorate the table or the house in general is, in fact, the most wonderful, symphonic complement to a long and intense hour of thought and passion. But to enjoy that complex and most delicate pleasure, a very rich keyboard of sensibility and intellect is certainly needed, an artist's genius and an emotional attunement, which... do not belong to everyone. Certainly not to men.] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, p. 120. A literal translation of 'uno strumento e non una padella' would read 'an instrument and not a frying-pan'. The metaphorical intention seems to play on the double meaning of 'strumento' as (musical) instrument and mere tool, since elsewhere Donna Paola disparages the double standard that reduces a wife to her husband's 'strumento di cucina intima, che si adopera e che poi si riattacca all'arpione' [intimate kitchen instrument, which is used and then replaced on the hook].

²³³ Amplificatio, in the words of Sam Leith, is 'a generalised term for anything that tends to expansion in expression or effect: heightened or circumlocutory language, elaborate comparison and so forth. Anything that pushes "the cat sat on the mat" in the direction of "Princess Tiddleyboo, feline paragon, Queen of the Jellicle Armies and scourge of the vole, curled her Persian person on to the Persian rug of distant Araby" would come under *amplificatio*.' (Leith, *You talkin' to me?* p. 263).

²³⁴ [But then what do you want?] Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 167.

²³⁵ [l've told you over and over that I want a pretty velvet opera cloak lined with ermine]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, p. 167.

²³⁶ I adore my skirts... especially when they are made of silk and ripple around me, rustling softly. And I would not abandon them, not even if I could swap them for the Sun King's [own] *culottes*. Consider, then, whether I would swap them for some terribly vulgar pair of trousers [...] The petticoat, good sir, may be a hindrance to the inept; but as soon as [a] woman 'knows' how to make use of it... ah, by Hercules, there is no power in heaven or earth [...] to rival the power of that little circle of fabric, around which the universe turns [...]!] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, p. 180.

The increasing over-embellishment of the language used to evoke objects symbolic of feminine beauty and adornment ('le *culottes* del Re Sole'; 'non c'è forza nel cielo e nella terra') is notable. It culminates when Donna Paola responds to the explorer's alarmed definition of her political outlook as 'anarchismo più che eccellente':

Chiamatelo come vi pare [...] lo, lo sapete bene, sono fanatica per l'abito empire, anzi princesse... e quando m'avanza qualche mezz'ora di tempo, mi piace infinitamente preparare variopinti guanciali per poggiarvi sopra la testa, le gambe, i piedi, i gomiti e anche qualche altra cosa... felice come un papa di guardar il soffitto e di trarre l'oroscopo dai travicelli. Tutto il resto mi interessa uno zero.²³⁷

This time, both the abruptness of the swerve and the hyperbole of the rhetoric are extreme enough confirm the reader's growing suspicion: Donna Paola's excursions into the vocabulary of materialistic femininity are consciously and exaggeratedly performative.

I use this last term with intentional reference to Judith Butler's understanding of performativity (a 'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names'),238 whereby gender is inevitably performative, but can become transgressive when intentionally marked as such. Butler, developing this theory in a contemporary context, uses drag as an example of the marked performativity of gender: drag can be subversive, she holds, in so far as it not only reflects but exposes 'the mundane impersonations by which heterosexually ideal genders are performed and naturalized'.239 It is arguable that Donna Paola's sudden turns to hyper-femininity engage in a not dissimilar process. By donning the rhetorical garb of idealised femininity moments after threatening the hegemonic system (whether by advocating gender-neutral divorce laws, by calling for a sexual revolution that eludes existing terminology, by hinting at her own sexual desire for her interlocutor, or by proposing a politics of anarchy), the speaker deliberately defuses the threats she has posed, yet simultaneously exposes the artificiality of the approved model of womanhood. An affinity with Butlerian drag seems especially fitting since much of what I have termed 'rhetorical garb' relates literally to garb: Donna Paola's most excessively flamboyant linguistic flourishes relate to her 'sortie de thêatre', her 'gonnelle' and 'sottana', and 'l'abito empire, anzi princesse'. That is to say, they focus on matters of costume; as such, they draw attention to, and very circumspectly mock, the everyday staging of idealised femininity. If feminilità can be textually wielded or donned in

²³⁷ [Call it whatever you like [...] I, as you well know, am fanatical about an empire-line gown, or indeed princess-line ... and when I have half an hour of time to spare, I absolutely love to make colourful cushions on which to rest one's head, legs, feet, elbows or indeed something else... [I'm] happy as a pope to gaze at the ceiling and read my horoscope in the rafters. Nothing else interests me in the least.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 268-69.

²³⁸ Butler, Bodies that matter, p. 2.

²³⁹ Butler, Bodies that matter, p. 231.

the form of a crochet hook, a petticoat or an empire-line dress, does it have any essence beneath its theatrical props?²⁴⁰

It would be anachronistic and unhelpful to assess Donna Paola's approach to gender as Butler-esquely 'constructivist'. (In fact, when the text is taken as a whole, its irresoluteness where discourses of what would now be termed 'essentialism' and 'constructivism' are concerned becomes a defining feature). However, it is significant that, while Donna Paola deploys several strategies to create 'emphasised femininity' around her persona, the strategy of voicing 'materialistic femininity' ends by laying bare its own inherent artifice in a way that threatens to complicate and subvert the other, more cautiously-deployed strategies of *cortegiana*-style flirtation and expression of female heterosexual desire. That said, the materialistic passages never linger long enough on their exaggerations to bring this threat to full fruition; its textual presence amounts to a background flickering of resistance.

If Donna Paola plays Triboulet to the court of 1910 Italy, her Blanche – her hidden fear – is perhaps her need to be perceived as normatively feminine. As such, she performs at least two roles throughout the text: the role of devil-may-care jester, and that of charming, discreetly sexual, well-dressed *cortegiana*. In her oscillations between these roles, she reveals the precarity of her own textually-constructed identity. I have suggested that it is generally after her performance as 'jester' has been particularly serious, outrageous, or upsetting to her interlocutor that her performance as *cortegiana* is most exaggeratedly feminine. Paradoxically, though, it is also at these moments that the performative aspect of her femininity is foregrounded, through rapid changing of discursive gears, hyperbole, and/or emphasis on costume. Striking a balance between (unnamed) feminism and 'emphasised femininity', then, is a process of constant renegotiation. Donna Paola's discourse is produced within, and reproduces, a precarious space between two spectres of the female grotesque: the first, which is openly labeled 'grottesco', is the unsexed and sexually repulsive *feminista* (epitomised by the British 'suffragette [...] ridicole', as shall be discussed in 10.3), but the

Matilde Serao's anti-suffrage article of over two decades earlier offers some interesting points of comparison: Serao makes extensive and openly satirical reference to women's clothes and accessories, with the rather different aim of ridiculing the notion of women as voters. ('M'immagino il colpo d'occhio che formeranno le toilettes variegate, scure, chiare, a mezze tinte; [...] il cappellino *Empire* di una costituzionale che insulterà quello *Nobiling* di una socialista, la lotta dei gialli e dei verdi che cercano di sopraffarsi, la serietà del nero che guarda con disprezzo il bianco [...] ed i ventagli che si animano, le piume che svolazzano, i fiori che hanno le convulsioni!' [I imagine the sight that will be created by the varied toilettes, dark, light, mediumhued; [...] the little Empire hat of a constitutionalist which will insult the Nobiling one of a socialist, the battle of yellows and greens striving to out-do each other, the soberness of black looking disdainfully upon white [...] and the fans that flap into life, the feathers that flutter, the flowers that go into convulsions!] Serao, 'Votazione femminile' in *Dal vero*, p. 35). If Serao trains a hyperbolic lens on feminine accoutrements to underscore the incompatibility of women and suffrage, Donna Paola does likewise precisely to defend the compatibility of the same (albeit also to poke fun at the 'drag' of traditional womanhood).

second is the hyperfeminine, materialistic woman. Donna Paola invokes the latter trope to keep the former at bay, yet in so doing she veers toward parody, and calls into question the existence of that 'middle ground' for which she seems to strive.

10.3 Collective identities: donnal anarchica

The 'difficulty of saying *noi*'²⁴¹ within Italian suffragism has already been contemplated from several angles. In Section 2, it was found to be thematically significant across the broad range of survey responses examined; in Section 3, its presence in suffragist texts, along with the strategies deployed to elide it, formed the core of my analyses; and in the present Section 4 (Chapter 9), it was identified as an insistent feature of Franchi's and Aleramo's texts. The latter authors, unlike the writers of suffragist propaganda texts, are not motivated to conceal the fissured aspects of Italian female solidarity; however, neither are they particularly concerned with exploring the reasons for these fissures. In *lo e il mio elettore*, by contrast, the tension between the political setup and the determinedly individuated identity of the *futura deputata* forces a more direct confrontation of this problem.

That confrontation takes place within the context of permissible argumentative incoherence established by the precept of *pensare variopintamente*. For this reason, Donna Paola's text overtly presents and contemplates contradictions and ambivalences relating to female solidarity or lack thereof; it also supplements ostensibly rational discourses with unapologetically emotional, instinctual ones. While the resultant observations should certainly not be deployed incautiously to 'decode' references to problematic collective identities across other texts, they may – if taken with the generous helping of salt mandated by the speaker when she promises to contradict herself 'cento volte'²⁴² [a hundred times] – help to inform interpretations of these references.

Particular divisions teased out during the second and third days include the gulf between Italian women and British suffragettes; the perceived irrelevance of the Italian suffragists to women like Donna Paola; and the incompetence of multiple categories of Italian women to exercise the vote responsibly (in Donna Paola's estimation). Later, on the eighth day, the debaters return to the question of organised women's movements, and Donna Paola declares the impossibility of solidarity among women, before offering reasons for this.

²⁴¹ I draw this term from Christa Wolf, who described the 'difficulty of saying I', via Adrienne Rich, who asserts the need to 'go further'; 'isn't there a difficulty of saying "we"? You cannot speak for me. I cannot speak for us. Two thoughts: there is no liberation that only knows how to say "I". There is no collective movement that speaks for each of us all the way through.' Rich, 'Notes towards a politics of location', p. 37.

²⁴² Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 11.

The rifts explored during the second and third days arise in the context of a framing debate concerning the merits of feminism and suffragism, and Donna Paola's affiliation or lack thereof to both. This debate originates in an exchange on the first day, when the explorer assumes that Donna Paola is a feminist on the basis that she was present at the Congresso Femminile in 1908, and 'anche alla seduta straordinaria "Pro Voto". 243 She states that she would have been sorry to miss that session, yet maintains that she does not know whether she is a feminist. The stage is thus set for an interrogation of the relevance of the two movements, as well as of their intersections.

On the second day, immediately following Donna Paola's defence of a rhetoric that allows for ambiguities and contradictions, the explorer demands again whether she is a 'feminista' or not. In response, she begins by rejecting 'ismi' [-isms] of all kinds, with the sole exception of 'l'eclettismo' [eclecticism].²⁴⁴ Having hence established that 'come non sono affiliata al feminismo, non appartengo a nessun altro partito, setta, chiesuola, cricca, opinione',²⁴⁵ she goes on to consider the success, or otherwise, of the women's movement in Italy, praising its 'insperato cammino' [unhoped-for progress], but evincing a strong distaste for the *word* 'feminismo'.²⁴⁶ She has another word, she claims, that would suit the movement far better: 'È "feminilismo'"²⁴⁷ [It's "femininism"].²⁴⁸

Donna Paola explains her *feminilismo* as a direct response to her perception of English feminism, and particularly militant suffragism, as being both repugnant to her personally and alien to Italian culture. While the 'anglo-sassone' [Anglo-Saxon women] hold the honour of having initiated the campaign for emancipation, she maintains that

se anche ammiro questo aspro agitare e se anche sento di dovergli riconoscenza, io debbo confessare che qualcosa in esso mi ripugna e non mi sa trascinare...²⁴⁹

²⁴³ [even at the special "Pro Suffrage" session]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 3.

²⁴⁴ Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 18-19. Such explicit rejection of '-isms' is not unique to Donna Paola among Italian women writers of the period; in 1917, for instance, Rosa Rosà, a writer arguably working at the paradoxical nexus of Futurism and feminism, would declare herself 'un "ista" per cui la prima parte della parola ancora non è trovata' [an "-ist" for whom the first part of the word has not yet been found]. Cited in Ursula Fanning, 'Futurism and the abjection of the feminine' in Giuseppe Gazzola (ed.), *Futurismo: impact and legacy* (New York: Forum Italicum, 2011), pp. 53-64 (p. 61).

²⁴⁵ [just as I am not affiliated with feminism, I do not belong to any other party, sect, church, clique, position]. Donna Paola, *Io* e *il mio* elettore, p. 20.

Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 22. Donna Paola fairly consisently uses this spelling for 'feminismo' and associated words.

²⁴⁷ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 26.

²⁴⁸ In English, as Alice S. Rossi notes (Rossi (ed.), *The feminist papers: from Adams to de Beauvoir* (New England: Northeastern University Press, 1988; first publ. 1973), p. xiii), the term *femininism* had occasionally been used as an apparently synonymous variant of *feminism* near the end of the nineteenth century (although, in cases like this, it is difficult to distinguish typographical errors from intentional linguistic variance).

²⁴⁹ [even if I admire this bitter agitating and even if I feel that I owe it recognition, I must confess that something in it repels me and fails to carry me along with it...] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, p. 27.

The explorer clarifies the form of agitation under discussion by interrupting, bluntly: 'Le suffragette, veramente, sono ridicole'.²⁵⁰ Donna Paola responds with a degree of ambivalence:

Non so dirvi. Forse sono ridicole, forse sono ammirevoli, perchè sanno di essere ridicole e perseverano egualmente, convinte che è quella l'unica maniera di vincere in un paese dove tutti i modi più fracassosi di lottare, anche se sieno assurdi, hanno le migliori probabilità di vittoria. ²⁵¹

When the explorer points out the incompatibility of the suffragettes' approach with general *Italian* sensibilities, however ('In Italia quelle scene di operetta, quelle buffonate organizzate, getterebbero il discredito eterno sulla quistione [...]'),²⁵² Donna Paola is unequivocal in her agreement:

Appunto. A me è successo questo: io mi sono disgustata del feminismo, dopo che l'ho visto degenerare in farsa, dopo che l'ho visto, per sua colpa, diventar argomento di scherni e di malignità. Quelle inglesi l'hanno reso odioso, perchè l'hanno fatto traviare dalla linea che doveva mantenere.²⁵³

Thus far, this exposition is somewhat reminiscent of the hesitant and unresolved discourses used, for instance, by the speakers at the suffrage session of the 1908 Congress (Section 3, Chapter 6) and by Aleramo in *Una donna* (Section 4, Chapter 9). However, while all these texts demonstrate ambivalence with regard to the relation of militant suffragism to the Italian context, Donna Paola's ambivalence leans the most strongly towards outright negativity. Her reluctance to condemn the suffragettes within their own cultural sphere ('Non so dirvi') is sandwiched between strongly-worded declarations of personal distaste ('qualcosa in esso mi *ripugna*', 'io mi sono *disgustata*').

Illuminatingly, Donna Paola goes on to explain that *all* things English move her to an antipathy that is more instinctive and affective than logical:

Non so perchè [...] io ho una profonda, irriducibile avversione per tutto ciò che è anglosassone. [...] lo mi cavo il cappello con perfetta compunzione dinanzi alla magna razza che se ne va, bel bello, conquistando il mondo... ma non appena la vedo o la fiuto – sa di birra, di porco salato, di pipa, di Bibbia, di palanche – io scantono, più che in fretta, per il sentieruolo umile e verde e costellato di violette, anche se gracidante di ranocchi, che è la nostra modesta e frusta latinità...²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ [I couldn't say. Perhaps they are ridiculous, perhaps they are admirable, because they know that they are ridiculous and they persevere anyway, convinced that that is the only way to win in a country where all the rowdiest means of fighting, even if they are absurd, are most likely to achieve victory.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 27.

²⁵² [In Italy those operetta scenes, those organised farces, would discredit the question forever]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 27-28.

²⁵³ [Precisely. This is what happened to me: I became disgusted by feminism after I saw it degenerate to a farce, after I saw it, through its own fault, become the subject of jeers and malice. Those English women have made it hateful, because they have forced it to deviate from the line it should have followed.] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio elettore*, p. 28.

²⁵⁴ [I don't know why [...] I have a deep, unconquerable aversion to everything Anglo-Saxon. [...] I doff my hat with proper compunction before the master race with its step-by-step conquering of the world... but as soon as I see it or smell it – it reeks of beer, of salt pork, of pipes, of the Bible, of coins – I slip away quicker

²⁵⁰ [The suffragettes are truly ridiculous]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 27.

The revulsion inspired by the customs of the English functions as a foil against which the speaker constructs Italian identity ('la nostra [...] latinità'). I have already discussed this discursive trick in relation to other texts; however, Donna Paola's deployment of a connotative, sensory vocabulary, whereby the foreign people and culture trigger not cool-headed objections but olfactory/ gustatory disgust, signals a more primal cultural disconnect than has been evident elsewhere.²⁵⁵

Pertinently, the imagery dubbed 'anglo-sassone' – with the exception of the Bible, here connoting puritanism – belongs predominantly to a masculine, working- to middle-class, industrial, public world: 'birra', 'porco salato' and the 'pipa' would all typically have been enjoyed by men in public houses, places in which 'palanche' signify power. Repelled by this prospect, Donna Paola seeks solace in an Italian idyll that is pastoral, timeless and classless. Is it a stretch to suggest that this idyll is also feminine? The eventual glossing of 'latinità' as 'modesta e frusta' is prefigured pictorially in the description of the 'umile' path as strewn with violets, traditional symbols of humility and, within Christian iconography, of the Virgin Mary and of the thirteenth-century Italian Saint Fina in particular. Moreover, the lexicon chosen is peculiarly reminiscent of a passage from Petrarch's Canzone 127, 'In quella parte dove Amor mi sprona', where the poet mourns the aging of his beloved Laura and is recalled by nature's metamorphoses to her loveliness in youth (emphasis mine):

In ramo fronde o ver viole in terra mirando a la stagion che 'I freddo perde et le stelle miglior acquistan forza, ne gli occhi ò pur le violette e l'verde di ch'era nel principio de mia guerra Amor armato sì ch'ancor mi sforza [...]²⁵⁷

than quick to the humble, green path starred with violets, albeit full of the croaking of frogs, that is our modest and frugal Latinity...] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 34-35.

²⁵⁷ [In leafy bough or earthbound violets, While I watch the season shed its coldness And the better stars expand in brightness, O still my eyes see the violets and the greenness With which, when first my war began

This passage may usefully be compared with a more measured one from Teresa Labriola's post-war tract *l* problemi sociali della donna. Labriola, writing on what she now views as 'il femminismo-problema', writes that 'L'opinione pubblica se ne occupò poco in Italia [...] Non potè giovare di molto la propaganda inglese, che, per il contenuto di una morale ultra-puritana, per la tinta spiritualistico-religiosa, per il richiamo alle energie di battaglia, dissonava con la cauta accettazione di alcune esigenze immediate che a gli Italiani sembrarono negli ultimi decenni colonne d'Ercole della emancipazione femminile'. [Public opinion paid it little heed in Italy [...] English propaganda could not be of much use, since, due to the ultra-puritan moralism of its content, its tinge of spirituality-religiosity, its appeal to battle strengths, it clashed with that cautious acceptance of a few urgent necessities which seemed, to Italians throughout recent decades, to be the pillars of Hercules of women's emancipation]. Labriola, *l problemi sociali della donna*, p. 22. What is for Donna Paola a personal 'avversione' is conceived of by Labriola as a more general cultural incompatibility; the latter's choice of the aural verb 'dissonare' is suggestive of the extent to which this incompatibility might have been manifested in language.

²⁵⁶ George Ferguson, Signs and symbols in Christian art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 40.

In Petrarch's poetics, the greenery and the violets (as well as the stars, which find an echo in Donna Paola's 'costellato di violette') evoke, above all other qualities, the beloved's 'portamento umile'²⁵⁸ [humble bearing]. Tying together the various potential associations of Donna Paola's description of *latinità*, then, there seems to be a persuasive argument for interpreting her imagined Italian landscape as a traditionally feminine domain – rural, romantic, and characterised by modesty. Thus, despite the croaking 'ranocchi', which decidedly undermine the solemnity of the image (a feature typical of Donna Paola's text, but one which could also be read here within the broader trend of national self-deprecation analysed by Silvana Patriarca),²⁵⁹ the overall impression is of two national characters whose opposition is conceived of in strongly gendered terms: the English, steeped in a fug of beer and smoke, are coded masculine, while the Italians, amid verdant, violet-studded natural beauty, are – less ostentatiously – feminine.

What framework does this offer for a reading of Donna Paola's dislike of the English suffragettes and their methods? Is it their actions which have 'unsexed' them, or had their nationality already pre-emptively 'unsexed' whatever actions they might choose to take? The answers are suggested when Donna Paola elaborates further on her concept of *feminilismo*, which, she states outright, is 'un vocabolo di reazione latina, contro il feminismo anglo-sassone'. ²⁶⁰ Speaking of English 'feminilità' [femininity], she admits that

io sono lietissima che essa femminilità abbia finito a cadere nel grottesco di una mascherata, per potermela ridere allegramente nel mio cantuccio, alle spalle di tutta questa sacrosantità. Ah, non per nulla, noi, donne latine, siamo plasmate di questa terra viva dei più bei succhi del paganesimo, intrisa del più bel sangue della poesia e dell'estetica!²⁶¹

It is no wonder, she continues, that, for Italian women – who have 'germinate, sbocciate, espanse' [germinated, budded, blossomed] within a 'culto della bellezza' [cult of beauty] – feminism according to the English model should be repellent:

Love was armed, so that he still commands me [...]].

For the Italian text, see Petrarca, 127, Canzoniere, pp. 198-202 (p. 198). (The translation in this note is my own, and italics are added).

²⁵⁸ Petrarca, 127, Canzoniere, p. 200.

²⁵⁹ Patriarca, *Italian vices*. On the period at which Donna Paola was writing, see especially pp. 108-15.

²⁶⁰ [a word of Latin origin, as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon feminism]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 35. In fact the word 'feminismo' and the English 'feminism' are both thought to originate in the French 'féminisme', which was used in relation to women's emancipation from the 1880s on and which 'crossed the Channel', as well as the borders into countries including Italy, in the 1890s (see Karen Offen, 'Defining feminism: a comparative historical approach' in *Signs*, 14: I (Autumn 1988), pp. 119-57 (pp. 126-27)). Moreover, all these words stem from the Latin root *femina*, so Donna Paola's attempt to gloss 'feminismo' as English is more indicative of the perceived Anglophone hegemony within the movement than of etymological research.

²⁶¹ [I rejoice that that femininity has ended up tumbling into the grotesqueness of a masquerade, so that from my little nook I can laugh merrily at all that sanctimoniousness behind its back. Ah, it is not in vain that we, Latin women, have been moulded out of this land which is alive with the loveliest juices of paganism, drenched with the loveliest blood of poetry and beauty!] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 36.

noi sentiamo che il feminismo, come lo hanno ideato le anglo-sassoni, angoloso, disadorno, meschino, quacquero non trova rispondenza nella nostra anima aperta a tutti i peccati, sì, ma anche a tutte le bellezze [...]. 262

If English culture was already coded masculine in Donna Paola's rhetoric, English feminism is here personified in stereotypically unfeminine terms (as a male noun, 'feminismo' felicitously enables a string of male-gendered adjectives): 'angoloso, disadorno, meschino, quacquero'. More revealing, however, is Donna Paola's depiction of herself as being delighted ('lietissima')²⁶³ at this grotesqueness. This suggests that behind her discourse of increasingly less ambivalent condemnation lies a construction of gendered national identity that requires English women to be repellent so that Italian women can be attractive. In other words, Donna Paola's motivation for perceiving the suffragettes' acts as crimes against the aesthetics of femininity derives from a more diffuse system whereby the feminine qualities of the 'donne latine' are defined and consolidated through and against the masculine oddness of their foreign (here, English) counterparts. More broadly still, Italy's identity as a land of 'poesia' and 'estetica' is defined through and against the puritanism and ugliness of the more politically and colonially powerful United Kingdom. Condemnation of the suffragettes, in this text, becomes the natural corollary to an established discourse of international position whereby Italy, incapable of besting Britain in colonial or political terms, had had its identity invested in a 'culto della bellezza' that drew strength from all perceived uglinesses of the stronger imperial power.

Throughout her scathing treatment of English feminists, Donna Paola constructs and adopts a collective voice, as can be seen in the quotations above ('noi, donne latine [...] noi sentiamo [...] nella nostra anima'). Does this mean, then, that the 'Othering' of foreign women has enabled her to produce a cohesive group identity for Italian women?

Considering Donna Paola's previous declarations of individualism, this seems unlikely. When the explorer, who has already listened at length to these declarations, alerts her to the fact that she is now speaking 'al plurale' [in the plural], she defends herself: 'Parlo al plurale perchè, nel momento,

²⁶³ 'Lieto' is an adjective especially associated with female grace in Italian (as opposed to a near-synonym such as 'contento'). For instance, in Dante's *Commedia*, Fortune is personified as a female figure who 'con l'altre prime creature *lietal* volve sua spera e beata si gode' [glad among the other primal beings, she turns her sphere and, blessed, she rejoices]. (My translation; italics added).

²⁶² [we feel that feminism, as the Anglo-Saxons have conceived of it – angular, plain, shabby, Quakerish – finds no answering resonance in our spirit, which is open to all sins, yes, but also to all forms of beauty [...].] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 36. The choice to describe the feminism of the 'anglo-sassoni' as 'angolosi' indicates a decided linguistic playfulness. I have translated it here as 'angular' rather than 'bony', since the former, aurally, is still somewhat reminiscent of 'Anglo-Saxons'. 'Quacquero' can be used either to denote the Quaker religion or, more broadly, moralistic puritanism in general.

mi piace credere che la maggioranza delle donne italiane la pensi come me'.²⁶⁴ Paradoxically, however, this vaunted unity manifests itself in *distance* from organised feminism, and not only from the alien British variety. Apart from 'poche ferventi ortodosse',²⁶⁵ Italy's women

non si imbrancano nel feminismo, per la ragione che ormai anche questo, come il socialismo, è diventato un partito di governo. E ai ribelli, ai veri ribelli dei due sessi non bastano più, nè l'uno nè l'altro. 266

Italian suffragists, as 'ortodosse', come under Donna Paola's fire here as much as do British suffragettes. 'Le leggi non si ottengono con petizioni: si strappano con ribellioni',²⁶⁷ she proclaims, in what sounds like an endorsement of militant tactics but is in fact the reverse:

Le donne debbono mettere la rivoluzione nelle famiglie, nei costumi morali e sociali, debbono ricorrere allo sciopero del sesso [...] e tutto questo senza punto scendere in piazza, nè alzar clamori comiziali, nè petire udienze dai Ministri. [...] Perciò niente clamori inutili, nè piazzate, i quali, oltre tutto, venendo da donne, prestano al riso e conducono le migliori aspirazioni al naufragio nel mare del grottesco.²⁶⁸

By scorning petitions, committees and pleas for Ministerial audiences along with public protests, Donna Paola attacks the Italian Pro-Suffrage societies along with their international counterparts. Moreover, the public protests mentioned here are expressed with distinctly Italian phraseology: 'scendere in piazza' and 'piazzate'. This lexical decision suggests that the Italian suffragists are viewed as being on the perilous brink of the 'mare del grottesco' into which the English suffragettes have already fallen.²⁶⁹

What, then, is Donna Paola's alternative to 'piazzate'? She proposes that Italian women unite by embracing *feminilismo*, here defined as 'l'ultimissimo modello dell'arma molteplice, onde si servì Eva' [the latest model of the multiple weapon deployed by Eve]. She contends that laws cannot be changed until customs are changed, and women, in their private and relational roles, are the guardians of custom and thus the wielders of real power. As such, they should use their plurality of

²⁶⁶ [do not join the feminist herd, because at this point feminism, like socialism, has become a political party. And for the rebels, for the true rebels of both sexes, neither of these – feminism or socialism – is sufficient any more.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 36-37.

²⁶⁴ [I am speaking in the plural because, at the moment, I like to believe that the majority of Italian women think about it as I dol. Donna Paola, *Io* e *il mio* elettore, p. 36.

²⁶⁵ [a few fervent adherents]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 36.

²⁶⁷ [Laws are not obtained through petitions: they are seized through rebellions]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 45.

²⁶⁸ [Women must start the revolution in their families, in moral and social customs, they must resort to a sex strike [...] and all this without holding public demonstrations, or raising uproar in public speeches, or petitioning for audiences with Ministers. [...] So, no useless uproar, or public protests, which in any case, if organised by women, lend themselves to laughter and wreck the finest hopes in the sea of grotesqueness.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 45-46.

²⁶⁹ In analysing Gina Lombroso's anti-suffragist text of 1919, I have already noted the use of the *piazza* as a shorthand of sorts for all the public spaces deemed to corrupt 'femininity'. (See Chapter 8, pp. 180-81). The pro-suffrage Donna Paola's recourse to a similar discursive strategy is indicative of the power of this trope across apparently opposing ideological perspectives on the vote.

attributes – rendered as feminine Italian nouns including 'bellezza, poesia, lascivia, volontà, intelligenza, tirannia'²⁷⁰ – to *dominate* men; the rhetoric used amounts to a glorification of the *femme fatale* typology.²⁷¹ More specifically, Donna Paola holds that this weaponry should be used in a women's 'strike' of sorts, i.e. a strategy of withholding – or actively sabotaging – the various forms of unpaid labour that women normally perform. Perhaps recalling the plot of *Lysistrata*,²⁷² the explorer asks anxiously whether 'amore' [love] would be included in this labour; Donna Paola responds with a resounding affirmative. With increasing concern, the explorer demands, 'E ricorressero al sabotaggio... degli istrumenti relativi?!';²⁷³ again, Donna Paola replies that they would, but reassures him that on this particular point, women could never maintain unity: 'Placate i palpiti. Ci saranno sempre più crumire, che non scioperanti, a questo capoverso del programma!'²⁷⁴

If suffragist methods are condemned in favour of this 'strike', the suffragist aim is not portrayed as a priority either – or as a useful means to further ends. While the precise goals to be achieved by the 'strike' are not spelled out, an aside suggests that suffrage would not be high on the list:

Non sarà certo la conquista del voto [...] a offrire alla donna i mezzi di poter avere sull'uomo d'oggi una maggiore dominazione di quella, con la quale già soggiogò l'uomo di ieri. 275

Donna Paola's apparent lack of interest in the goal of gaining voting rights is bolstered by her views on Italian women's ability to use such rights wisely – and, here, the veiling *noi* with which she previously claimed to speak for the majority of the *donne latine* breaks down entirely. The speaker maintains that if the vote is won, it will be added to the numerous petty distractions that *prevent* women from devoting themselves to *feminilismo* and thus changing customs for the better: at present, these distractions include romantic intrigue, fashion and gossip:

E, se avranno il voto, si contenteranno di darlo a colui che loro venne suggerito dal confessore o all'avversario del candidato del loro proprio marito.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ [beauty, poetry, wantonness, determination, intelligence, tyranny]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 37.

²⁷¹ See also p. 38: 'Essa è, della vita, il fulcro e lo stimolo: per lei l'uomo si perde, da lei egli ha la sua salvezza [...] La donna [...] sa di possedere tutta la gamma delle tentazioni, tutto l'arsenale delle armi, tutti i mezzi palesi ed occulti, leciti ed illeciti, della suprema dominazione.' [She is, in life, the fulcrum and the spur: for her man loses himself, from her he has his salvation [...] Woman [...] knows that she possesses the full range of temptations, the full arsenal of weapons, all the hidden and secret means, lawful or illicit, of supreme domination.]

²⁷² The female characters in Aristophanes' comedy, led by the eponymous Lysistrata, band together to withhold sex from their husbands and lovers in a successful attempt to force the men to end the Peloponnesian war. See Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003).

²⁷³ [And would they resort to sabotaging... the relevant instruments?!] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 46. ²⁷⁴ [Calm your trembling. There will always be more blacklegs than strikers in that part of the agenda!] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 46.

²⁷⁵ [It will certainly not be the conquest of the vote [...] that will offer woman the means through which to exert stronger domination over the man of today than that with which she previously subjugated the man of yesterday.] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 40.

This contention, reminiscent of a particularly savage variant of pragmatic- and difference-based antisuffrage argument, is fleshed out further: Donna Paola holds that woman is generally an 'essere di reazione' [reactionary being], and notes that the women of Norway²⁷⁷ have shown themselves 'più che ostriche attaccate allo scoglio del passato'.²⁷⁸ In Italy, she foresees disaster:

Il suffragio femminile minaccia la maggior gloria del nostro tempo: la liberazione delle funzioni dello Stato dalle influenze del dogma religioso. Per un esiguo numero di donne veramente intelligenti, colte, conscienti [...] quale valanga di donnette e donnucce e donnàccole, creature dei preti o creature della moda, reazionarie o scervellate, capaci di vendere la scheda per una giaculatoria o capaci di barattarla contro il saldo di una fattura! 279

Where Italian women were firstly split into a sane 'maggioranza', for whom Donna Paola spoke, and a few misguided suffragist 'ortodosse', they are now divided into a handful of 'donne [coscienti]', which may be assumed to include Donna Paola, and great hordes of 'donnette e donnucce e donnaccole'. The latter phrase has suffered considerably in my English translation because its meaning is constituted by the Italian system of suffixes. While '-ette' and 'ucce' signify diminutives, with '-ucce' also carrying a connotation of endearment, 'donnaccole' is expressly pejorative. The presence of this term at the end of the list undermines the neutral and/ or positive associations of 'donnette' and 'donnucce'; it also imbues all three categories with a classist bias, since it carries a strong connotation of vulgarity.²⁸⁰

Given what appears to be an impassioned stance of pragmatic anti-suffragism, it is something of a surprise – to the explorer as well as the reader – when Donna Paola eventually declares herself in favour of suffrage. She estimates that two women in every hundred will use it well, but adheres to the principle of justice: 'Se la legge del suffragio feminile non dovesse rendere giustizia che a questa

²⁷⁶ [And, if they have the vote, they will be content to give it to the man who has been suggested to them by the priest, or to the opponent of their husbands' favourite candidate.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 41.

²⁷⁷ In 1907, limited categories of Norwegian women were admitted both to vote and to stand for election (full female suffrage would not be introduced there until 1913). On the Norwegian case, see Ida Blom, 'The struggle for women's suffrage in Norway, 1885-1913' in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 5: 1-4 (1980), pp. 3-22.

²⁷⁸ [to cling more tightly than oysters to the rock of the past]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 53; p. 57. The speaker also notes that this oyster-like tendency occurs despite the fact that Norwegian women have reached a 'grado di civiltà e di cultura' [level of civilisation and culture] significantly *higher* than that of 'la donna latina'! In terms of the location of Italian (female) identity on an international map, this is an interesting reference point to consider; it contrasts strongly with the cultural superiority already claimed for the *donna latina* in relation to English women.

²⁷⁹ [Female suffrage threatens the greatest glory of our age: the independence of State operations from the influence of religious dogma. Alongside a meagre number of truly intelligent, cultured, conscious women [...] what an avalanche [there will be] of sugar-women and spice-women and all-things-not-so-nice-women, creatures of the priests or of fashion, reactionary or scatterbrained, capable of selling their ballot for a litany or of bartering it against the payment of a bill!] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il* mio elettore, pp. 57-58.

²⁸⁰ In a contemporaneous reference book, Palmiro Premoli's *Vocabolario nomenclatore* (Milan: Società Editrice Aldo Manuzio, 1909-12), 'donnàcola' is defined as 'spregiativo di donna del volgo, pettegola, bracona; donna di bassa condizione e di animo volgare'. (Cited in Federico Ronconi, *Manuale di scrittura non creativa* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2010), p. 413). 'Donnàcola' may also serve as a euphemised equivalent of 'donnaccia', generally signifying a lascivious woman of low class.

[...] minoranza, io la troverei già abbastanza giustificata'.²⁸¹ However, this declaration is almost immediately qualified: Donna Paola would like to see women's suffrage introduced gradually. Her gradualist approach would begin with 'tutte le donne [...] che "producono"²⁸² – women who work in industry, in the professions, in business or in the arts. By contrast, she would exclude all the 'parassite' [parasites]: 'dame e signore, cicisbee e madri di famiglia, chioccie e bambole, tutte quelle che consumano, insomma'.²⁸³

It is evident from this that Donna Paola's endorsement of female suffrage is far from being a defence of female solidarity. Rather, it is a stance which emerges as rationally principled, yet straining against the grain of the preceding emotive insistence on tense differences among women both internationally and intranationally. Moreover, support for suffrage immediately devolves into a further meditation on the fractures dividing Italian women. In fact, it becomes the signal textually to fracture this latter group along new lines; for while the 'donnette e donnucce e donnaccole' suggested that lower-class women were unfit to vote, the second blacklist, which begins with the aristocracy ('dame e signore'), suggests the same of higher-class women. Donna Paola's own position in relation to the multiplying categories of unsatisfactory Italian women seems to be a socially-mobile one – perhaps untenably so.

The absence of female solidarity resurfaces tangentially at several further points in the text.²⁸⁴ It is not until the eighth day, however, that it is directly addressed as a problem in itself. The subject emerges from a discussion of women in the workplace, and in particular from the explorer's disgust

²⁸¹ [If the law granting female suffrage gave justice only to that [...] minority, I would deem it already sufficiently justified]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 61.

[[]all the women who 'produce']. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 63.

²⁸³ [great dames and ladies, coquettes and mothers of families, broody hens and dollies – in short, all the women who consume]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 63. The translation of 'cicisbee' as 'coquettes' is an imprecise one. 'Cicisbeismo' referred to the practice, common in eighteenth-century Italy, whereby a noble woman, regardless of marital status, would 'appoint' a young man as her companion (and chaperone, and often, unofficially, lover); he became a 'cicisbeo', and she a 'cicisbea'. The custom was often considered to be a 'banalization or [...] perversion of the medieval ideal of courtly love' (Paul Albert Ferrara, 'Cicisbeismo' in Russell (ed.), *The feminist encyclopedia of Italian literature*, pp. 49-50 (p. 50)). Additionally, given the value placed on maternity elsewhere in this text, and in particular the deployment of the mothers-as-producers-of-soldiers argument, it is not clear what the 'madri di famiglia' (or the more disparagingly-termed 'chioccie') are doing in this list. Maternity, however, is one of the subjects around which Donna Paola displays an especially strong lack of consistency.

²⁸⁴ Most notably, when Donna Paola is advocating the legalisation of divorce, she observes that anti-divorce petitions in Italy had been signed predominantly by 'vecchie dame superstiti dall'antico cicisbeismo' [old dames left over from the the ancient system of flirtatious gallantry] and by 'giovani fanciulle ancor pallide delle recenti anemie scolastiche' [young girls still pale from the recent anemia of their schooldays] — in other words, by women unable to empathise with other (unhappily married) women. When the explorer remarks that even the 1908 Congress 'tacque' [kept silent] on the question of divorce, Donna Paola adds heatedly that this silence was the Congress' 'vergogna incancellabile' [ineradicable shame], demonstrating that women could be just as 'pigre, scettiche, furbe e vili' [lazy, skeptical, sly and cowardly] as men. *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 111-12.

at women's apparent lack of *class* solidarity: they profit, he argues, from the State system that pays them lower wages, by taking jobs that would otherwise, but at greater cost to the employer, go to men. Donna Paola responds, in the first instance, by stating that 'le donne non son tenute ad alcuna solidarietà, di alcuna specie'.²⁸⁵ Using phrasing that seems at once to take inspiration from Engels and to presage aspects of second-wave feminism,²⁸⁶ she argues that women constitute, 'oltre che un sesso, una classe a parte',²⁸⁷ yet is quick to add that this class 'non ha doveri di fratellanza professionale nè sessuale'.²⁸⁸ However, she also points out that, while she is now supporting women's 'crumiraggio di classe' [class blacklegging], she has already endorsed the idea of their uniting to enact a 'sciopero di sesso'²⁸⁹ [sex strike].

The contiguity of these statements suggests profound ambivalence about the possibility and desirability of any form of organised solidarity among women. As the conversation proceeds, this ambivalence is borne out further: Donna Paola builds on her earlier description of the strike required by *feminilismo*, and envisions woman as an independent anarchist, yet seems to hint that this anarchism will have to be coordinated, if not actually organised, in order to have the desired impact:

Bisogna che la donna, per ora, faccia da sè. [...] Ella deve sovvertire l'ordine delle cose, essere l'anarchica intelligente [...] In questo modo soltanto sarà temibile, perchè subdolamente minerà le situazioni e si insinuerà come flessibile miccia entro i più compatti meandri sociali.²⁹⁰

The tension between individualism and collectivism runs high in this passage, although it is not remarked on. In particular, the problematic synechdochal use of the singular subject 'la donna' to suggest at once individual and definably collective identities is underlined when 'la donna' is equated with 'l'anarchica', a subject in relation to which this paradox is necessarily amplified: how can the anarchist, who battles for a society without any form of ruling hierarchies, signify an ordered group identity? Simultaneously, however, this proposed equivalence may contain a seed of potential resolution: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who had first claimed the political position of anarchism in the

²⁸⁵ [women are not obliged to sign up to any particular solidarity, of any kind]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 264.

²⁸⁶ Friedrich Engels, in *The origin of the family, private property and the state* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010; first publ. 1884), discusses gender relations as analogous to, and intertwined with, relations of class; in the 1960s and 70s, the concept of women as a class of their own would be made the explicit basis of feminist theory by groups such as the Redstockings (see 'Redstockings Manifesto' in Robin Morgan (ed.), *Sisterhood is powerful* (New York: Random House, 1970)).

²⁸⁷ [not just a sex, but a class apart]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, pp. 264.

²⁸⁸ [has no obligations of either professional or sexual fraternity]. *Io e il mio elettore*, p. 264.

²⁸⁹ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, pp. 264-65.

²⁹⁰ [For now, woman needs to manage for herself. [...] She must subvert the order of things, must be the intelligent anarchist [...] Only thus will she arouse fear, because she will craftily undermine the status quo and will weave her way, like a flexible fuse, between the most densely-packed social intricacies.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 268.

nineteenth century, had summed up his views with the ostensibly contradictory motto: 'Anarchism is Order'.²⁹¹ Donna Paola puts forward no convincing translation of this substantially theorized position to the women's situation; however, its intertextual presence may help least rhetorically to hold together Italian women's irreducible individuality and necessary cooperation.

Notably, the named anarchist position is one which Donna Paola seems unwilling or unable to sustain at length: as has been seen in 10.2, when the explorer points out that his interlocutor's policy is 'anarchismo più che eccellente!' [most perfect anarchism!], she immediately backtracks, deploying an exaggerated performance of femininity. She also retracts her own concern for 'la donna', declaring the latter to be 'l'essere più stupido che il Padreterno faccia circolare sulla faccia della terra'.²⁹² That this declaration may be intentionally facetious and hyperbolic is hinted at in the reference to the exaggeratedly patriarchal 'Padreterno' by a convinced non-believer and anticlerical; nevertheless, Donna Paola proceeds to offer the following evidence as proof of woman's unworthiness:

Si è visto che cosa ha saputo combinare, quando si è trattato di organizzare alcunchè di esclusivamente feminile, nella quale gli uomini non erano che spettatori. Che bella figura ha $fatto!...^{293}$

The reference to men as spectators may indicate that this is a direct hit at the 1908 Congress. This possibility aside, it is significant that the criticism levelled at female organising is not spelled out; rather, it resides in the scornful 'che cosa ha saputo *combinare*', where the verb *combinare* connotes mess and chaos, and in the quintessentially Italian sarcasm of 'Che bella figura [...]!' This emphasis on impression and 'face' is heightened when Donna Paola reprises the vocabulary that earlier characterised her dismissal of the English suffragettes, declaring that 'i sistemi di organizzazione feminile sono stati sinora addirittura grotteschi'.²⁹⁴

The problem, in her view, lies not with proletarian women, but with 'le donne borghesi, cosiddette intellettuali'.²⁹⁵ What their attempts at organising have proved, she contends, is the absolute impossibility of female solidarity under present circumstances:

è inutile illudersi circa la possibilità di riunire le donne in fascio, per ottenere una confraternità qualsiasi [...] Vedete: finchè dominerà [...] il criterio che l'onorabilità della

Peter Marshall, Demanding the impossible: a history of anarchism (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010; first publ. 1992), p. x.

²⁹² [the most stupid being ever permitted by the Eternal Father to roam the face of the earth]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 269.

²⁹³ [We have seen just what she manages to cook up, whenever the organization of any exclusively female event, in which men were only spectators, was at stake. What a fine impression she made!...] Donna Paola, *Io* e *il mio elettore*, p. 269.

²⁹⁴ [the systems of female organization have thus far been utterly grotesque]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 269.

²⁹⁵ [the bourgeois, so-called intellectual women]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 270.

donna sia fatta soltanto di «onore» sessuale [...], nulla sarà possibile in ordine a solidarietà e ad organizzazione feminile.²⁹⁶

This passage is significant in that it roots the absence of female solidarity not in class, regional, religious or political divisions, but in sexual protocol and, specifically, in the sexual double standard. Donna Paola goes on to explain that women whose own reputations are undamaged are afraid of men finding them guilty by assocation: 'tremano come foglie alla sola idea che gli uomini [...] le possano imputare di farsi patrocinatrici di persone non perfettamente in regola con tutti i canoni'.²⁹⁷ The problematic nature of women's solidarity is thus amalgamated within what Donna Paola has already defined as being the 'quistione appassionante'²⁹⁸ [burning question] of their times: sexual mores.²⁹⁹

lo e il mio elettore provides examples of many of the discourses of fragmented group identity that have been noted across other texts I have analysed; fairly uniquely, however, Donna Paola's book offers prolonged and focused discussion of aspects of fragmentation, along with a discursive style that fuses rational and emotional perspectives. More overtly than any other author I have considered, Donna Paola situates the schism between Italian women and British suffragettes within a broader framework of sociocultural relations in which the Italian concept of 'Italy' relied on the 'mis-gendering' of the concept of 'Britain'. Only thus could the former nation's association with binary heteronormativity, implicit in the notion of 'bellezza', be reinforced, and only in the arena of 'bellezza' could Italy surpass powerful Britain on the world stage; the suffragettes, in this account, become convenient fodder for a pre-existing nationalist discourse of cultural superiority. On an intranational plane, Italian suffragists are foreignised by association, since their less militant tactics are described in terms carried over from the references to suffragettes: the discourse of the 'grottesco', in particular, is employed to remove their actions from the province of difference-centred feminilismo. Furthermore, the pragmatic qualms expressed by anti-suffragists in Italy are

²⁹⁶ [it is useless to delude ourselves about the possibility of uniting women in a group, so as to obtain some kind of fellowship [...] Look here: as long as [...] the principle that woman's dignity is composed solely of sexual "honour" continues to prevail [...], nothing will be possible in terms of solidarity and female organising.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 271.

²⁹⁷ [they tremble like leaves at the mere idea that men [...] could accuse them of protecting persons who do not conform perfectly to all the rulebooks]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 272-73.

²⁹⁸ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 172.

²⁹⁹ Interestingly, the norm forbidding women seen as virtuous to contaminate themselves through any proximity with those seen as corrupt had been used as a pragmatic argument against extending the (municipal) vote to women: in 1888, opponents of this course evinced, in Bigaran's terms, 'the fear that once it was granted, the "least deserving" element of the female sex would hasten to the ballot boxes, and conversely the element that was in fact most respectable and admirable would abstain' (Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari', p. 63). In 1919, the salience of this discourse to the suffrage question was still clear; when the first successful bill to extend the vote to women was debated in parliament in that year, a pressing consideration was the embarrassment likely to be felt by 'virtuous' women if they had to share the space of polling stations with prostitutes. The latter were eventually excluded from the terms of the bill. (See Bigaran, 'Il voto alle donne', pp. 258-59).

voiced in relation to multiple (and unpredictable) groups of women, often characterised through especially derogatory terminology. An anxiety that is classist, yet hazily so, characterises the presence of this discourse in the text; the use of the 'Other' to define the self becomes confused and ineffective when so many 'Others', of so many varieties, are implicated. Finally, Donna Paola's direct declaration of the impossibility of female solidarity leads to her interrogation of the reasons for this, and specifically to the location of the problem within the broader sexual question. I have previously examined the need for a language accounting for embodied female experience and the problem of fractured collective identity as separate issues (Chapter 9); here, Donna Paola's view raises the possibility that these two aspects of Italian feminist discourse were at least sometimes perceived as intimately interconnected.

The problematic metaphor of 'la donna' as 'l'anarchica' can be read as condensing much of Donna Paola's ambivalence around the question of female solidarity: the identities of the individual and the group, the ideals of anarchy and order, are tentatively held together, but the merging is rhetorical rather than concrete and quickly collapses.

10.4 Italianità and language

The gulf between the languages of suffragism and of emergent Italian female/feminist consciousness is presented with unusual directness in *lo e il mio elettore*. Unlike either Franchi or Aleramo, Donna Paola, who presents herself as highly aware of the import of linguistic nuance, confronts the divergence head-on. This is most evident when, as has been seen, she notes the insufficiency of the word 'feminismo' for her purposes – 'il vocabolo non risponde al mio pensiero' ³⁰⁰ – and coins the replacement term 'feminilismo' [femininism]. When the explorer comments on her linguistic 'predilezione inventiva' [predilection for inventiveness], her defence of it attests to a sharp cognisance of what would today be termed the constructivist power of language. The changing world of the twentieth century sparks metamorphoses in human consciousness, she holds, and these changes must be given verbal flesh by writers:

L'anima umana [...] subisce variazioni nella peculiarità dei suoi atteggiamenti, a seconda sorgono variazioni nell'ambiente nel quale deve vivere, manifestarsi ed evolvere. Lo scrittore deve creare la forma sensoriale di questi spostamenti spirituali...³⁰²

^{300 [}the word does not correspond to my thinking]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 22.

Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 22.

³⁰² [The human spirit [...] varies in its peculiar attitudes, depending on the variations in the environment in which it must live, have its being, and evolve. The writer must create sensory form for these spiritual shifts...]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 23.

She goes on to specify that the role of the 'imbrattatori di carta' [paper-scribblers] is not merely to reflect, but actively to create, societal change:

Se è vero che la letteratura è il riflesso diretto dell'epoca in cui fiorisce, è anco più vero ch'essa è il chiarore aurorale di una giornata ventura dell'esistenza umana. Ecco perchè anche un vocabolo può diventare un grido di adunata, una fede, una meta, un ideale. 303

This view of the Italian writer's roles in relation to language offers a critical key to understanding Donna Paola's discursive practice in this text: specifically, linguistic innovations, combinations and deviations from the norm can be interpreted as possibly deliberate interventions by a subject very conscious of the productive power of her medium.

Moreover, Donna Paola acknowledges that her philosophy of language use is an overtly patriotic one.³⁰⁴ That which is perceived as linguistic invention, she remarks, is sometimes actually the resurrection of dormant vocabulary:

lo ritengo che sia dovere dello scrittore – il quale ama la propria lingua ed inorridisce, come bisogna inorridire nel nostro dolce paese, in vederla ridotta dall'antica magnifica ricchezza ad una specie di scheletro spolpato e sbrindellato – cercare di ridonarla al pristino splendore, alla dovizia per cui parve, e fu, maestra d'ogni bel parlare e diffonditrice di sapienza fra i popoli. Bene spesso, quel che il pubblico prende per vocabolo inventato non è altro che un bello, nitido, prestante vocabolo, che la pigrizia intellettuale e la sciatteria verbale avevano posto in oblio. 305

Here, Donna Paola presents the Italian linguistic tradition as both ancient and monolithic. Further, even when technologies demand neologisms, she holds that it is imperative to coin these within the national tradition: the likes of 'dirigibili e [...] aereoplani' [dirigibles and [...] aeroplanes] call for corresponding Italian terms that can 'salvino la nostra lingua dall'orribile imbastardimento esotico'.³⁰⁶

In the light of these declarations, the opposition created between feminismo and feminilismo bears further examination – although it should be noted that Donna Paola's feminilismo is far from being

³⁰⁶ [save our language from foul exotic bastardisation]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 23.

³⁰³ [If it is true that literature is a direct reflection of the period in which it flourishes, it is even truer that [literature] is the dawn light of a future day of human existence. This is why even a word can become a rallying cry, a creed, a goal, an ideal.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 23-24.

On the particular role of women as guardians and reproducers of the (aspired-to) national language in the wake of unification, see Helena Sanson, "La madre educatrice" in the family and in society in post-unification Italy: the question of language in Mitchell and Sanson (eds.), Women and gender in post-unification Italy, pp. 39-63: 'women found themselves thrust to the fore of the ideological battlefield to make Italian a de facto "mother tongue" (p. 62).

³⁰⁵ [I believe it is the duty of the writer – who loves his own language and recoils, as one must recoil in our dear country, to see it reduced from its wonderful ancient richness to a sort of skeleton, picked to the bones and ragged – to try to return it to its pristine splendour, to the abundance whereby it seemed, and was, the mistress of all fair speech and the provider of the peoples' wisdom. Quite often, what the public takes for an invented word is none other than a lovely, clear, robust word sent into oblivion by intellectual sloth and verbal sloppiness.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 22-23.

an isolated instance of her attention to the detailed import of language. (Elsewhere, she notes the sarcastic, pejorative power of the Italian feminine suffix '-essa';³⁰⁷ she also reproves the explorer when he argues that militarism is an 'istituzione' [institution], not a 'sètta' [cult], telling him that only the connotative value of the two nouns, not their denotative significance, varies: 'è tutta quistione di ipocrisia vocabolare').³⁰⁸ Feminilismo, however, is something of a special case, thanks to its privileged ideological position in the text. As has been seen, the word is specifically and simultaneously marked as Italian and as anti-English.³⁰⁹ It is also invested with all the qualities that Donna Paola perceives as lacking in, or suffocated by, feminismo:

Quella piccola sillaba, che pare uno svarione tipografico, rappresenta il pizzico di nitroglicerina che, posto in cuore al feminismo, lo rimuta in una torpedine; rappresenta l'estratto triplo della sessualità che, gettato nel pentolone delle rivendicazioni muliebri, cambierà il sapore alla broda, da anodino in pepatissimo... rappresenta l'ultimissimo modello dell'arma molteplice, onde si servì Eva – bellezza, poesia, lascivia, volontà, intelligenza, tirannia [...]³¹⁰

'II' (ironically, the masculine definite article when it stands alone!) is the 'piccola sillaba' which, as Donna Paola would have it, etymologically reroutes the women's emancipation movement through the Italic language family rather than the Germanic one which spawned English. Metaphorically, then, its insertion into the word *feminismo* stands for an ideological rerouting of the movement that would place Italian women's qualities – specifically, their 'estratto triplo della sessualità' – at the centre. By brushing through the connotative webs already established around *feminismo* and spinning a fresh, alternative web around *feminilismo*, studded with what Wodak et al. term *miranda*, or high-value words³¹¹ ('bellezza', 'poesia' etc.), Donna Paola uses linguistic play to inscribe *italianità* al *femminile* as transformative in a world context: as Eve's true daughters, they have the potential to spice up the sexless 'broda' of international feminism as led by Britain.³¹² The persuasive potential of

³⁰⁷ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 275.

³⁰⁸ [it is entirely a question of lexical hypocrisy]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 303.

³⁰⁹ As cited in 10.3, it is dubbed 'un vocabolo di reazione latina, contro il feminismo anglo-sassone' [a word of Latin origin, as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon feminism]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 35.

That small syllable, which looks like a typographical error, represents the pinch of nitroglycerin which, if sprinkled into the heart of feminism, transforms the latter into a torpedo; it represents the triple-strength essence of sexuality which, if flung into the cauldron of women's demands, will change the taste of the broth from bland to bursting with spice... it represents the latest model of the multiple weapon deployed by Eve – beauty, poetry, wantonness, determination, intelligence, tyranny [...]]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 37.

See Wodak et al., *The discursive construction of national identity*, p. 36. A 'mirandum' is understood as being a word which, within a particular socio-linguistic context, carries a strong, positive charge; conversely, an 'antimirandum' is a word which, again within a specific context, is of low value and carries a negative charge.

while Donna Paola rejects the word *feminismo* as contaminated, the writer Neera had argued in 1904 that the term had been improperly hijacked: in the type of feminism developing, she said that 'non ravviso affatto il mio ideale di progredita femminilità. È troppo maschile per essere del femminismo sincero'. [I do not recognise my ideal of improved femininity at all. It is too masculine to be true feminism]. On the other hand, she supported those women who 'accettano con semplicità e nobilmente la loro grande missione, facendo cioè del femminismo vero' [accept their great mission nobly and with simplicity, creating, then, true feminism]. Neera, *Le idee di una donna*, pp. 6-7.

this argument for the as-yet-non-feminist public should not be ignored: even if feminists in general were negatively perceived, the idea that Italy could produce better ones than Britain could might still have carried patriotic weight.

In the wider spheres of structure and style, how does Donna Paola fuse the 'antica magnifica ricchezza' of the Italian language with the need for future-oriented inventiveness and transformation? As mentioned in 10.1, the ten-day framework points definitively toward Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, while the 'courtliness' of the dialogic style more loosely recalls the formally flirtatious conversations of Renaissance texts such as Castiglione's *II libro del cortegiano*. Both the *Decamerone* and the *Cortegiano*, with their multiple narrators/ speakers, are characterised by an internal heterogeneity that chimes with that of Donna Paola's approach of *pensare variopintamente*; the *Decamerone*, in particular, refuses to resolve its multiplicity of attitudes and registers. Interestingly, both these texts also devote considerable attention to the question of the relationship between the sexes and to what constitutes ideally feminine behaviour. While there is no scope here to summarise the scholarship on gender in Boccaccio and Castiglione, a few points may usefully be made.

Firstly, Boccaccio's women, within the stories recounted, run the gamut from lust-driven girls (e.g. Alibech, III, 10), through intelligent, witty and sexually confident ladies (Madonna Filippa, VI, 7), to disturbingly self-abnegating paragons of submissiveness (Griselda, X, 10). However, the women within the frame narrative, that is to say the storytelling women, are virtually indistinguishable and are all apparently virtuous (albeit very interested in the themes of love and sex). A less clearly-posited distinction exists in Donna Paola's text within her own persona; as has been seen (10.2), her references to the sexual appetites of other women are plentiful, yet those to her own are rare. The Boccaccian framework of ten days provides a sort of literary legitimation of this system, and, perhaps more importantly, of its implied truth: that women generally are sexual beings.

Secondly, Castiglione's own engagement with Boccaccio's women is ambivalent. The participants in his conversations discuss the *Decamerone* in some detail, pausing especially on what Kolsky notes are 'troubling tales for someone who is seeking confirmation of women as asexualised beings whose honour and chastity must be safeguarded by the institutions in which they are required to operate'.³¹³ The women in *Il libro del cortegiano*, with the exception of Emilia Pia, do not participate at length in the discussion, although Elisabetta Gonzaga technically holds sway; they do challenge the misogyny of Gaspare Pallavicino, but, as Finucci observes, they do so with laughter and gesture

³¹³ Stephen Kolsky, 'The Decameron and II libro del cortegiano: story of a conversation' in *Heliotropia*, 5: I (2008) p. 12. Accessed from http://scholarworks.umass.edu/heliotropia/vol5/iss1/2/ on 13 November 2012.

rather than words. Thus, although women are glossed as innately loquacious in this text, they 'lack words when they most need them'314 – or possess alternate means of expression?

If *Il libro del cortegiano* engages in complex 'conversation' with Boccaccio's *Decamerone* concerning questions of both gender and language, Donna Paola, through her incorporation of stylistic aspects of both texts into her own work, can be seen as entering into this conversation and 'speaking back'. In *lo e il mio elettore*, the problematisation of woman as subject, and especially as sexual subject, continues – in fact, the same tension that exists between Boccaccian and Castiglionian models of femininity is effectively played out on a twentieth-century stage – but woman's right to enter into polemical literary discourse is validated through the evocation of texts so deeply embedded in the canon of Italian language, literature and culture.

If Boccaccio and Castiglione are allusively foregrounded as forming a literary tradition on which to draw, what other staples of the Italian canon are shifted to the background, and what is the effect of this? In 10.3, I suggested that Donna Paola's metaphor of Italy as a violet-strewn path might constitute a Petrarchan association. As for Dantean echoes, their pervasiveness in the Italian language in general can make it difficult to see the (dark) wood from the trees in terms of intertextuality. Donna Paola does make several allusions which take the form of almost precise quotations from the *Commedia*, and which draw particularly on the earthly plight of Dante pilgrim, rather than on his experiences in the various domains of the afterlife, which suggests deliberately selective referencing. Describing life as a 'triste dono' [sad gift], Donna Paola declares that 'l'umanità è uscita dalle vie diritte della divina verità'³¹⁵ – an obvious borrowing from the opening of *Inferno* ('mi ritrovai per una selva oscura/ ché la diritta via era smarrita').³¹⁶ The mention of divine truth may seem a strange one, but Donna Paola later references the same Dantean passage and predicament with a decided lack of religiosity when she describes the crisis of the modern age, and berates the explorer for suggesting that religious young people might deal with it more successfully than their atheist peers:

Credete a me: tutti, tutti, egualmente, oggi soffriamo di questa mancanza di orientazione o, se volete, mancanza di ideale [...] noi ci sentiamo smarriti in una selva, sospesi nel vuoto [...] Le antiche fedi dogmatiche non bastano più al nostro cuore e sono incompatibili con la nostra intelligenza; le nuove fedi positive e sociali non bastano ancora alla nostra intelligenza e sono incompatibili col nostro cuore... Ci sentiamo troppo nuovi per quelle, troppo vecchi

³¹⁴ Valeria Finucci, *The lady vanishes: subjectivity and representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 54.

³¹⁵ [humankind has departed from the *straight paths* of divine truth]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 195. Italics added.

³¹⁶ [I found myself in a dark wood/ where the straight path was lost to sight]. Dante, Inferno I: 2-3.

per queste: le une e le altre non sanno acquietare l'enorme ansia indefinibile che ci opprime e ci tortura.³¹⁷

Here, Dantean imagery, originally associated closely with the Christian cosmos, is appropriated to express the existential angst of a godless world. The salience of Dante's pre-quest tribulations receives further confirmation when Donna Paola complains of the Italian education system that 'non occorre esser leali ed onesti, in *questa selva selvaggia*'.³¹⁸ The Italy of 1910, then, can be neither hell nor heaven, but is 'esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte':³¹⁹ its people, in the middle of their nation-building journey, are in crisis.

The comparative paucity of Dantean references, as well as the earthly emphasis of those that are present, marks Donna Paola's positioning of herself within a humanist tradition far more akin to the warm vivacity of Boccaccio's stories and the neo-Platonic ideals of Castiglione's text than to the theological sweep of Dante's Christian vision. In fact, the most integrated, non-contradictory excerpt in *lo e il mio elettore* comes at the end of the sixth day, when Donna Paola explains her own 'fede' [faith] as humanist:

Il nostro ideale dovrebb'essere nella vita, nella bellezza, nella gloria della vita [...] limitando il proprio compito dal giorno della nascita a quello della morte [...] Credere, credere, soprattutto, con tutto il vivo sangue del cuore, che la vita è santa, è alta, è nobile, è pura, che noi fummo creati [...] perchè la santificassimo, la nobilitassimo, la purificassimo... questo, nessuno potrà non chiamare idealismo, anzi, misticismo! 320

Unusually, this impassioned speech ends the day's conversations without winding down into light-hearted repartee, as is the norm – perhaps a sign that it marks a resolution of some of the fractures in Donna Paola's worldview. By articulating this committed humanism within a text richly tapestried with literary allusiveness – select Dantean quotations find their way into Castiglione-esque dialogue, all within a quasi-Boccaccian frame – Donna Paola chooses her own canon and moulds it to suit her purpose.³²¹

³¹⁷ [Believe me: all of us, all of us equally, suffer today from this lack of direction or, if you will, lack of an ideal [...] we feel ourselves *astray in a wood*, suspended in the void [...] The old dogmatic faiths satisfy our hearts no longer and are incompatible with our intelligence; the new positivist and social faiths do not yet satisfy our intelligence and are incompatible with our hearts... We feel too new for the former, too old for the latter: neither one kind nor the other can ease the huge, indefinable anxiety which oppresses and torments us.] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 214. Italics added.

³¹⁸ [there is no need to be loyal and honest, in this wild wood]. Donna Paola. Io e il mio elettore, p. 222. Italics added.

³¹⁹ [this wild wood, harsh and strong]. Dante, Inferno I: 5.

³²⁰ [We should idealise life, beauty, the glory of life [...] restricting our purpose to the time between the day of our birth and that of our death [...] To believe, to believe, above all, with all the living blood of the heart, that life is sacred, is high, is noble, is pure, that we were created [...] that we might sanctify it, ennoble it, purify it... nobody can say that this is not idealism, or indeed mysticism!] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 216-17.

³²¹ It is of course possible – and probable – that Donna Paola alludes to other texts, authors and genres than the ones I have mentioned here. The discourse analyst, like the literary critic, is partially blinkered by the

However, despite both her stated love for the 'antica [...] ricchezza' of the Italian language and the archaism of her intertextual strategies, Donna Paola insists that she is an advocate and user of unadorned language: the duty of the writer, she holds, is to 'chiamar pane il pane' [call bread bread]. Intriguingly, however, she herself then soaks this very bread in Dantesque metaphor: in general, 'l'umanità si è andata fabbricando *frusto a frusto*',³²² rather than instilling, 'con parole piane, semplici, monde d'ogni rettorica verbale e ideale, il modesto coraggio della schiettezza'.³²³

The fact that a plea for plain speech is couched in such literarily resonant terms (Dante speaks of Romeo as 'mendicando sua vita a frusto a frusto')³²⁴ encapsulates Donna Paola's rhetorical dilemma. She relies on literary echoes from the medieval and Renaissance periods to pitch her text within a canonical system, yet is sharply conscious of the inadequacy of existing linguistic forms for women facing into a rapidly-changing future world. Much collective protest, she fears, risks devolving into 'un riflusso di rettorica vacua e gelida';³²⁵ women, given the present state of their educational opportunities, have access only to 'un miserrimo fascio di tropi sgangherati'.³²⁶

The insufficiency of the language of the past for the problems of the future is linked into a broader discourse: that of the crisis period. As I noted above, Donna Paola glosses the Italy of her time as Dante's 'selva selvaggia'; the nation, it seems, has gone astray in the middle of its life. Where the explorer draws on markedly hyperbolic rhetoric to reference the Risorgimento and Italy's resultant 'democracy' as 'le glorie più fulgide del nostro tempo, la fede che scaldò il cuore dei nostri precursori, martiri ed apostoli!',³²⁷ Donna Paola, speaking in her own character, offers a different perspective:

L'esperimento democratico, poco dopo il centennio, si avvia alla più violenta, ma alla più logica delle reazioni: la tirannide. Il popolo ha perduto ogni fiducia in sè e, per conseguenza, nelle proprie istituzioni. [...] Ed in quest'ora di delusione [...] egli pensa il passato e rimpiange l'antica beata passività di incosciente [...]³²⁸

limits of his/her own knowledge and expertise; I read Donna Paola with the eyes of one whose schooling in Italian literature focused particularly on the 'great' canonical texts of the medieval and Renaissance periods.

³²² [humankind has gone on inventing, *crust by crust*]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 160. Italics added. ³²³ [with plain, simple words, free of all verbal and ideological rhetoric, the modest courage of blunt speaking]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 160.

³²⁴ [begging his life from crust to crust]. Dante, Par. VI: 141.

[[]an ebb-tide of empty, frozen rhetoric]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 149.

³²⁶ [a wretched bundle of ragged tropes]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 149.

³²⁷ [the brightest glories of our time, the faith which warmed the hearts of our forebears, martyrs and apostles!] Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 67.

The democratic experiment, shortly after its centenary, heads towards the most violent, but also the most logical, of reactions: tyranny. The populace has lost all faith in itself and, as a result, in its own institutions. [...] And at this time of disappointment [...] it thinks of the past and laments the old, blessed passivity of unconsciousness [...]].Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 66.

She adds, with how much flippancy it is difficult to say, that 'Mi piacerebbe avere un tiranno',³²⁹ and decries the incompetence of elected government in terms that suggest a presentiment of the conditions that would permit the rise of Fascism after World War One:

Crollano le città e la Nazione in un impeto di esaltato patriottismo, si svena, si munge [...] e i milioni raccolti [...] non si sa dove vadano a finire. Nessun uomo, nessuno, ha il coraggio civico di gridare al Paese: «Date a me quei milioni e datemi ogni potere e non chiedete conti» [...]³³⁰

This ambivalent welcoming of totalitarianism is significant for an understanding of the place of suffrage in *lo e il mio elettore*. Using language resonant with that of W.B. Yeats' poem 'September 1913' – in which the Ireland of a few years later is indicted because 'The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity' – Donna Paola positions the voting process within a rhetoric of pre-emptive disillusionment:

Ormai, molti uomini – i migliori – si astengono dal partecipar alla vita pubblica. Le elezioni politiche ed amministrative, che parvero, ai bei tempi del fervore liberale, la espressione ultima del civile potere e della civile educazione, sono cadute in tale discredito da costituire una periodico farsa da teatro di burattini, indegna dell'assistenza delle persone serie e per bene. Se gli uomini – i migliori – hanno perduto ogni affetto ed ogni illusione per le istituzioni che ci governano, perchè volete che le ami e le rispetti una donna [...]?³³¹

The discourse of the crisis period is enmeshed with that of suffrage; the low levels of passion provoked by the latter (in comparison with those provoked by, for instance, 'crimes of passion', the sexual double standard, and the need to secularise education) are indexed to Donna Paola's low regard for the outcome of the democratic process in Liberal Italy.

The linguistic aspect of the crisis period re-emerges on the ninth day, when, pre-empting the explorer's d'Azeglio-style comment that 'È mezzo secolo che l'Italia è fatta; ma gli italiani sono ancora da fare',³³² Donna Paola critiques Italy's version of patriotism:

L'Italia è una cosa, la Patria è un'altra – per me. Quella è la poesia, questa è la prosa [...] Perchè gli italiani mancano, assolutamente, della poesia della patria. L'ameranno, anche; ma

³³⁰ [The cities and the Nation are crumbling in a burst of fanatical patriotism, it bleeds itself, milks itself dry [...] and the millions of lire collected [...] no-one knows where that money ends up. No man, not one, has the civic courage to cry to the Country: "Give me those millions and give me total power and do not ask for accounts" [...]]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 69-70.

³³² [It is half a century since Italy was made; but Italians have yet to be made]. Donna Paola, *Io* e *il mio* elettore, p. 301.

³²⁹ [I would like to have a tyrant]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 66.

Today, many men – the best ones – abstain from participating in public life. Political and municipal elections, which, in the golden days of liberal fervour, seemed like the ultimate expression of civic power and civic education, have fallen into such discredit as to constitute a periodic puppet-theatre farce, beneath the notice of serious, decent people. If men – the best ones – have lost all their affection for and illusions about the institutions which govern us, why would you expect a woman to love and respect those institutions?] Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 70.

l'amano in prosa, in coniugio [...] Non l'amano da innamorati, da idealisti, da devoti frementi e gelosi'. 333

In this account, not only are disjunctions of ideology and emotion expressed via a linguistic metaphor – the 'poesia' of Donna Paola's vision of Italy is opposed to the 'prosa' of what she sees as the general state of Italian nationalism³³⁴ – but this linguistic metaphor is mired in a further, gendered metaphor. To love the country in 'poesia' is to love as an 'innamorato'; to love the country in prose is to love 'in coniugio'. The analogy is a glib and fleeting one, yet it hints at the power of the normative romance narrative within Donna Paola's discourse. While she has previously remarked upon the dangers of jealousy (instructing a hypothetical husband seeking a happy marriage, 'Non siate geloso, per principio'),³³⁵ passion is here portrayed as the province of the 'frementi e gelosi'. Further, (prosaic) marriage and (poetic) passion are mutually exclusive.³³⁶

For Donna Paola, this prosaic patriotism is 'scusabile' [excusable]: 'il senso della nazionalità non si impronta, nè in trenta nè in cinquanta anni'.³³⁷ Her generation, she maintains, is disillusioned because the nation-state did not turn out quite as patriots had envisaged it – but 'i nostri figli [...] potranno, e dovranno, amarlo più di noi'.³³⁸ The overwhelming impression given is of dissatisfaction with an age of rapid transition and perennial disappointment – a dissatisfaction embedded in language and permeated by gender, since traditional tropes of male-female relations, reminiscent of the increasingly irrelevant past, pop up as the obvious imagery through which to express present frustration.

The multiplicity of 'languages' in Donna Paola's highly linguistically-conscious writing amounts to a textual substantiation of the temporal crisis to which she repeatedly alludes: the Italy in which she lives is uneasily caught between past and future. By drawing on structural and stylistic features reminiscent of Boccaccio and Castiglione, she appeals to the canon of medieval and early modern

³³³ [Italy is one thing, my homeland is another – for me. The former is poetry, the latter prose [...] Because Italians are utterly lacking in the poetry of the homeland. They may love her, it is true; but they love her in prose, in marriage [...] They do not love her as lovers, as idealists, as quivering, jealous devotees.] Donna Paola, *Io e il mio elettore*, pp. 298-300.

As a point of interest, it is worth observing the use of a very similar metaphor in the political maxim attributed to New York governor Mario Cuomo: 'You campaign in poetry, you govern in prose'. (Cited in Michelle C. Bligh and Jeffrey C. Kohles, 'The enduring allure of charisma: how Barack Obama won the historic 2008 presidential election' in *The leadership quarterly*, 20: 3 (2009), pp. 483-92 (p. 483).

³³⁵ [Do not be jealous, on principle]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 236.

This is not the only instance in which Donna Paola's language makes use of gendered tropes that reflect realities criticised by her. I have already cited her mischievous description of herself as 'vergine... in politica' (lo e il mio elettore, p. 9), but the topos of virginity-as-purity occurs elsewhere in a less tongue-in-cheek manner: commenting that marriage has become 'un vecchio avanzo d'ogni battaglia' [an old veteran of every battle] Donna Paola seeks to 'ridargli una verginità' [restore to it a virginity] (p. 105).

³³⁷ [a sense of nationality cannot be imbued in either thirty or fifty years]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio* elettore, p. 301.

³³⁸ [our children [...] will be able to, and must, love it more than we do]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, pp. 301-02.

Italy, while also whittling that canon to a humanist-compatible form; by demanding both plain speaking and linguistic inventiveness, she underlines the need for not only a new canon, but a new language or languages; yet by incorporating stale gendered metaphors and images into her arguments, she demonstrates the impossibility of this aspiration. Significantly, she ends the final conversation, on the tenth day, with a quotation from Rivarol which encapsulates the text's central tension: '[...] gli uomini passano la vita a ragionare sul passato, a lamentarsi del presente ed a tremare per l'avvenire'.³³⁹ This, she says, represents 'lo spirito condensato di questi nostri molti discorsi'.³⁴⁰

10.5 Conclusions

An analysis of *lo* e *il mio* elettore yields a rich and convoluted set of discursive strategies; some of these relate directly to suffragism, while others offer tangential clues as to how suffragism and other issues were ideologically and rhetorically entangled.

In broad terms, I found that the individual persona presented as 'Donna Paola' performed a complex, layered identity: the role of the outspoken-because-marginalised giullare topples into that of the exaggeratedly feminine and heteronormatively attractive woman, which in turn collapses occasionally under the weight of its own hyperbole. The construction of this persona is an irresolute process of constant negotiation. I found that collective identities for women are explicitly problematised, with the British suffragettes providing a marked 'Other' against which to define Italian femininity, yet with the category of Italian women being textually fractured repeatedly and along a wide variety of lines. Finally, I found that the language used suggests a strong tension between past and future aspects of Italian identity, while striving, not entirely successfully, to resolve at least the linguistic side of Italy's 'crisis' by deploying strategies that include drawing on literature of the medieval and Renaissance past as well as coining and advocating neologisms.

How does this analysis compare to or illuminate those carried out in other sections of my thesis? In Section 2, I observed that the survey responses studied often involved complex and shifting positions along the discursive axes of principle-pragmatism and equality-difference. Donna Paola's text does likewise; however, being lengthier, more self-directed, and less solely focused on the question of suffrage, it also suggests possible links between these slippages of approach and points in a wider web of gendered discourse. For instance, principle and pragmatism are reconciled, in

³⁴⁰ [the condensed spirit of these many discussions of ours]. Donna Paola, *lo e il mio elettore*, p. 326.

³³⁹ [men spend their lives talking about the past, complaining about the present and trembling at the future]. Donna Paola, *lo* e *il mio elettore*, p. 326.

terms of suffrage, by the simple victory of principle ('giustizia'), but this concession is given considerably less textual space than the pragmatic estimate that 98% of Italian women would use their vote irresponsibly; the makeup of this 98%, however, is not clear, as Donna Paola fractures the category of 'italiane' along diverse fault lines. This dissatisfaction ties into a broader discourse of dissatisfaction with the fifty-year-old Italian nation, whose crisis of identity is both stated outright and represented in the text's range of intersecting linguistic and literary approaches. As for equality and difference, Donna Paola incorporates strong declarations of both the social constructivism associated with equality and the biological essentialism associated with difference, and sanctions her own inconsistencies through the defence of *pensare variopintamente* — a quality which itself encapsulates this ambivalence, since it is marked as feminine, thus 'different', yet the implication of its innateness is laced with allusions to its historical and cultural formation.

In Section 3, my analysis of a selection of overtly suffragist documents found that the challenge of articulating enduring and stable collective identities (suffragist, feminist, and female, on both intranational and international planes) created a pervasive precarity in the discourses of suffragism. *Io e il mio elettore* offers a useful supplement to these readings; the problems of solidarity among women are addressed directly on several occasions, yet there is little motivation to treat these problems with the strategies of elision and/or trivialisation that tended to be used in the documents analysed in Section 3. In particular, Donna Paola's use of the rhetoric of the grotesque in referencing the English suffragettes is illuminating because it occurs in the context of a more general Anglophobia expressed in affective, sensory terms that fall outside normative political discourse. The threatened tarring of Italian suffragists with the similar brush of the 'grottesco' thus gains an emotive element of exclusion: suffragism, in this account, is incompatible with Italian identity, not (only) for logical reasons, but on the less challengeable plane of instinct. Within the category of Italian women, Donna Paola cross-chops along lines of class, education, religiosity and intelligence, and does so with such vigour that the possibility of any remnant of solidarity seems shredded; she later articulates this very thought, and, intriguingly, harnesses it to the 'quistione sessuale'.

In Section 4, Chapter 9, I explored the ways in which subjectivity was expressed in Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna, finding that the languages emerging were characterised by an emphasis on the embodied, particularly sexual, aspects of female identity; a problematic rhetoric of individual exceptionality shot through with aspirations of solidarity; a focus on interpersonal relations rather than political affiliations as sites of conflict and potential change; and a consciousness of the near-impossibility of inscribing feminist women's experience within existing linguistic and literary structures. My reading of Donna Paola's lo e il mio elettore both complements and complicates this analysis. Embodied, sexual identity is woven through the text as a central

concern, yet is held at careful arm's length from the author/speaker herself (with a few momentary exceptions). Paradoxically, her exceptionality is vaunted both in her role as outspoken giullare and in that of heteronormatively attractive woman: she presents herself as the epitomic example of both these tropes, despite the ideological discomfort of their collisions. The text rests on a premise of engagement with the political sphere, yet the bulk of Donna Paola's disquisitions deal with matters of interpersonal relations: marital discord and infidelity, sexual standards, recognition of paternity, etc. Finally, the problem of existing language and literature as a medium of communication is thoroughly worked over by Donna Paola: rather than constructing metaphors such as that of Franchi's saltimbanca to convey the disconnect between experience and language, she directly interrogates particularly problematic nodes (such as the feminismol feminilismo distinction), while playing within a plethora of Italian literary traditions and innovations, the fusion of which highlights a sense of crisis in both Italy and its language at the time of writing.

I suggested in Chapter 9 that a central feature of my analyses concerns the rift between the 'language' of suffragism – translated, etymologically Anglophonic, often disembodied, dependent on collective identity, and predominantly political in focus – and the emergent 'languages' of Italian female/ feminist experience – rooted in the Italian linguistic and literary tradition, obsessively embodied, sceptical of the possibility of group solidarity, and predominantly interpersonal in focus. Donna Paola's text casts a prescient light on this tenet: her declaration that the word *feminismo* 'non risponde al mio pensiero' sums up a linguistic and ideological disjunction fleshed out in relation to complex international and intranational dynamics throughout the rest of the text. Because *lo e il mio elettore* is located at an odd nexus between genres – at once a political tract and a quasi-Boccaccian literary excursion – it offers fresh insights into the disjunctions between the languages of suffragism and of Italian feminist literature: in particular, it provides a magnifying lens on the precarity of constructing and maintaining a 'feminine' identity within a semi-political genre.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS

Section overview

In this final section, which comprises a single chapter, I summarise the main findings of earlier sections, suggest interpreting them according to three strong patterns, and reflect on the relevance of this research for future study.

Chapter II Conclusions

I begin the final chapter by synopsising the research done and the key findings from each section (II.I). Following this, I consider how best these findings might be interwoven. In particular, I offer three tightly-plaited strands of interpretation.

The first of these (11.2) concerns the ideologies used to articulate suffragism. I suggest that, for specific ideological positions (most notably those relating to equality and principle), the rhetoric deployed often betrays signs of translation from English into Italian, with attendant limitations of range and shifts of meaning. For other ideological positions (most notably those relating to difference and pragmatism), the lexical and stylistic resources deployed are far more diverse, and richer in images and colloquialisms; I argue that they represent a more creative use of the Italian language.

The second interpretative strand (11.3), relates to the construction of identities, individual and collective, in the Italian suffrage movement. I show that the construction of suffragist identity took place within an existing, highly complex, and rapidly mutating matrix of oppositional identities articulated by and on behalf of Italian women. In particular, I examine the difficulty of integrating exceptional individual identity into collective identity; the suppression and figuration of intra-Italian fissures based on class, region, and interventionism/pacifism; and the ambivalence surrounding the notion of an international suffragist identity based on affinity between the Italian suffragists and their foreign counterparts. In examining these several aspects of identity construction, I compare evidence from the journalistic and propaganda documents studied in Sections 2 and 3 (where I found strong evidence of efforts to elide tensions relating to collective identity) and from the literary texts studied in Section 4 (where female solidarity was openly problematised, and individual identity dwelt on and celebrated). I propose that tactics employed to conceal the difficulty of forming a coherent identity for donne italiane in political suffragist tracts ran against the discursive grain of the brand of feminist consciousness being developed in Italian literature.

This links strongly to the third strand of interpretation (11.4). Here, I expand upon the contrasting discourses of propaganda texts and literary texts, suggesting that feminist women writing in the latter genre were moulding the Italian language and its literary traditions to articulate a kind of female experience that privileged individual, embodied difference and interpersonal relationships. The claim to the vote, by contrast, was theoretical, largely equality-based, and, by 1910, heavily associated with the immersion of individual desires in collective sacrifice, thanks to the British suffragette movement; as such, it demanded a very different kind of discourse. I argue that those Italian suffragist

sympathisers with the greatest facility for language – specifically, the ones who published creative writing, such as Franchi, Aleramo, and Donna Paola – were so profoundly invested in the project of crafting expressions of physical and familial female experience through the medium of the Italian language that they had little rhetorical invention to spare for an aspect of feminism so apparently anodyne, to borrow Donna Paola's term, as the suffrage campaign.

Finally, in 11.5, I reflect upon some implications of the thesis for future research.

11.1 Summary of research done and results found

Following the first section of the thesis, which established the premises for the research, Section 2 focused on surveys as initial, unexpectedly rich sources of data, presenting an in-depth analysis of the 1905 UFN survey in Chapter 4. While responses ranged from entirely pro-suffrage, through conditionally pro-suffrage (with varying conditions), to wholly anti-suffrage, I identified two thematic 'axes' which captured the content of most positions. These axes were constructed around the binaries of equality-difference and principle-pragmatism, and tended to be deployed according to notable patterns. For instance, respondents tended to use formulaic declarations of principle and equality to frame or 'book-end' their answers, with lengthier, lexically richer discussions of difference and pragmatic questions forming the middle bulk of responses; additionally, a notable proportion (40%) of respondents, including a higher proportion of women than men, supported suffrage in principle but opined that Italian women were ill-prepared to use it in practice. In the case of female respondents, this latter implied a dissonance between their personal identities (as literate, articulate, and politically competent) and their collective identities (as belonging to the category of donne italiane deemed unfit to vote). Observing that this tension was rarely referenced openly (an absence facilitated by a dearth of first person narratives, as well as a use of highly erudite prose styles to mark out respondents' voices, indirectly, as those of exceptional donne elette), I formulated a narrowed approach for the analyses in the following section: I would focus on the articulation of identities in suffragist and anti-suffragist texts.

Section 3, comprising four chapters, used two related questions as lenses on the process of identity construction. Firstly, I asked how identities, individual and collective, were presented within the category of Italian women; secondly, I asked how Italian women's identities were related to those of foreign suffragism, i.e. how *italianità* was harnessed to suffragism in a world context. The four texts considered offered multiple and varied perspectives on these questions.

Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 37.

In Chapter 5, Mozzoni's 1906 petition gave an initial insight into class fissures and efforts to bridge them. It also demonstrated the reluctance of the petition's signatories openly to identify with the subgroup that most objectively fitted them (the *privilegiate*), while a desire to identify especially with the *operaie* was suggested by lexical and anecdotal elements. In terms of national and international identities, the petition both vindicated and challenged Italy's vaunted position as part of a group of progressive nations; Italian women were posited as having the transformative potential to make good the hopes of the Risorgimento, if only they could be empowered to do so by the 'arma' [weapon] of the vote. An opposition between the lexicon of science and modernity (textually linked with women's rights) and that of religion (linked with their oppression) further aligned the concept of female enfranchisement with the post-Risorgimental consolidation of a national (anti-clerical) character.

In Chapter 6, the report of the suffrage-related 'Adunanza' from the 1908 CNDI congress showed some strategies employed by suffragists attempting to stake out an identity within the not-entirely-welcoming terrain of established, bourgeois Italian feminism. Speakers and listeners were rhetorically homogenised through the 'Othering' of groups of Italian women not deemed present at the congress: most notably, women from the working-classes and those from the rural south. References to international suffragism worked to further homogenise listeners, this time in opposition – albeit a very ambivalent opposition – to their British and American counterparts.

In Chapter 7, Anna Kuliscioff's 1913 pamphlet *Per il suffragio alle donne. Donne proletarie, a voi!* offered a different angle: this time, it was the bourgeois feminists, or *signore suffragiste*, who were forcefully 'Othered' through discourse, with the aim of constructing a robust oppositional identity for the *donne proletarie*. As for international context, Kuliscioff's text, while drawing on various points of reference including the Australian suffrage movement (in the person of Vida Goldstein) and the *guerra di Libia* of 1911-12, made use of two almost hyperbolically contrasting linguistic registers to suggest an international ideological alliance of suffragism, socialism, and pacifism, defined against an alliance of patriarchy, bourgeois values, and military interventionism.

In Chapter 8, an anti-suffrage text was analysed: Gina Lombroso's *II pro e il contro. Riflessioni sul voto alle Donne* (1919). I found, predictably, that Lombroso's discursive tactics in sub-categorising Italian women were quite different from those used in the texts of Chapters 5-7: the strongest distinction in *II pro e il contro* was between *donne normali* and *donne anormali*. I showed that these categories were subtly inflected with class biases, and that Lombroso was ambivalent about placing *femministe* and *suffragiste* squarely in one category or the other; I suggested that this was due in part to the crossclass base of these latter groups, and to the possibility of converting higher-class feminist women to anti-suffragism. Pejorative references to the treatment of women in Soviet Russia added to the anti-

socialist nuance of Lombroso's anti-suffragism. Indeed, *italianità* was placed in a very broad international context in Lombroso's tract. In a world in which some countries, such as the US, were dubbed *femministicamente avanzati*,² Italian women were located as cultural guardians of female *normalità*.

Together, the analyses in Section 3 spotlighted aspects of the extraordinarily complex and constantly shifting network of allegiances and schisms, both intranational and international, within which Italian suffragists sought to construct a coherent group identity. Further, these analyses suggested that negotiating *italianità* formed an ineradicable part of negotiating suffragist identity in Italy – even if ideas of national character were used by both suffragists and anti-suffragists in polymorphous ways.

Section 4, dealing with literary texts, began with Chapter 9, in which Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna were analysed. Among the most salient points arising were: a discourse of individual identity as rooted in the (female) body and in interpersonal connections; collective solidarity as problematised by both writers (particularly Aleramo, whose protagonist engaged with the evolving feminist movement both in Italy and internationally); and italianità as embedded in the language of the two books. These points illuminated aspects of suffragist discourse observed previously in Sections 2 and 3. In particular, the novels' insistence on embodied and relational experience helped contextualise the extent to which difference was present in suffragist rhetoric, while the hesitance with which female and feminist solidarity was mooted by Franchi and Aleramo seemed to confirm that the strategies used in suffragist propaganda either to elide or exploit tensions in group identities emerged from an established fragility in Italian women's sense of collective affinity.

Chapter 10 considered Donna Paola's *lo e il mio elettore*. Here, I found that the author-protagonist's own unstable identity was constituted through constant renegotiation of the discourses of feminism, femininity, and parodic femininity. Collective identities among women were presented as deeply problematic; in addition to the category of Italian women being divided along multiple and contradictory fault lines, the British suffragettes marked an 'Other' against which Italian femininity was defined. Again, these discursive threads, which could be explored in rich detail thanks to the (semi-) literary genre, cast new light on observations made in Sections 2 and 3. Moreover, Donna Paola represented a writer who was acutely aware of the relevance of language to the feminist movement. Her proposal to replace the word 'feminismo' with that of 'feminilismo', along with her explanations for this, captured much of the sense of linguistic and cultural *crisi* that permeated Italian suffragist texts.

² Lombroso, *Il pro e il contro*, p. 27.

11.2 <u>Suffragist ideologies: translation/ creation</u>

The observation that the ideologies invoked in Italian pro-suffrage arguments were markedly diverse as well as sometimes conflictual has been made, and made brilliantly, by historians such as Galeotti³ and Migliucci.⁴ If I point to the co-presence in suffragist texts of discourses positioned along axes of equality and difference, principle and pragmatism, then, it might be assumed that I am merely reiterating conclusions reached by existing scholarship, albeit in a slightly new form. However, my work diverges from what has already been done by examining the distribution of these ideological discursive strands as manifested in close linguistic detail.⁵ That is to say, I have sought to highlight patterns in text structure, style, lexical and grammatical usage, intertexts, and imagery, where such patterns constitute the means by which suffragist (or anti-suffragist) ideologies are conveyed.

The arguments for and against suffrage within the 1905 survey, analysed in Section 2, yielded several discursive features that may help to inform our understanding of broader suffragist ideologies in Italy when re-considered in the light of the whole thesis. In particular, I observed that, even though respondents represented a highly-educated group with over 50% female membership and a strong feminist and suffragist bias, the discourses of equality and principle tended serve merely as 'bookends' for arguments, and to be articulated using a limited and monotonous lexicon ('giustizia', 'uguaglianza', 'principio', 'diritti'). By contrast, the discourses of difference and pragmatism made up the bulk of the answers, and were expressed through widely varying prose styles and vocabulary, frequently involving colourful metaphor, along with other creative, idiosyncratic, often lyrical forms of language use. While the consistent reiteration of 'top and tail' discourses of equality and principle is evidence of the indispensable place that these held in the suffrage debate, the brevity and stiltedness with which they were conveyed suggests that respondents preferred to couch their views on the woman question in the more creatively-deployed language of difference and pragmatism.

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³ Galeotti (Storia del voto alle donne in Italia) does so by providing an overview of pro-suffrage arguments. She acknowledges that the argument based on equality and justice was 'spread throughout the western world', while that based on feminine difference was also shared among western suffrage movements, but observes that 'the Italians applied in literal terms the idea of women having votes because of potentially being mothers' (pp. 84-85). Tracing the plethora of pragmatic arguments for women's suffrage in Italy, she notes that pro-suffrage pragmatism promised a variety of ways in which women's enfranchisement would both 'manage specifically female fields of interest' and 'benefit political life' (pp. 86-88). See also ibid, pp. 116-28 for Galeotti's synthesis of the main ideologies used by men both against and for women's suffrage; these, too, are highly variegated.

⁴ Migliucci (*Per il voto alle donne*) also emphasises the strength of discourses founded on difference in Italy, noting their power within anti-suffragist arguments also (pp. 35-47): 'the virile quality associated with the practice of politics was a common and recurring worry among women participating in this debate' (p. 45)

politics was a common and recurring worry among women participating in this debate' (p. 45). ⁵ While Migliucci's study also incorporates the analysis of a set of primary texts, her commitment to surveying the full breadth of the 'women's current affairs press of the period' (*Per il voto alle donne*, p. 2) gives her research a broader focus that does not usually attend to individual lexical items.

The implication of that preference for the suffragist propaganda texts studied in Section 3 is considerable. In Mozzoni's 1906 petition, the suffrage report from the 1908 congress, and Kuliscioff's 1913 pamphlet, efforts were made to incorporate difference and pragmatism as well as equality and principle, but the latter discourses, with their restricted, already-political language, did have a stronger presence here than in survey responses. This is to be expected, since propaganda texts had the specific aim of influencing policy and opinion to a degree to which none of the individual UFN respondents could have aspired; it makes intuitive sense that such texts would speak the language of the system to which they sought entry. However, the potential alienation, or at least disengagement, of would-be supporters who thought about suffrage largely through ideological lenses of difference and pragmatism – and through rich, concomitant languages that resonated with those of cultured Italian society more generally – seems substantial.

If suffragist propaganda documents were couched predominantly, if problematically, in the language of equality and principle, the anti-suffragist text studied - Gina Lombroso's II pro e il contro (1919) relied chiefly on arguments of difference. However, Lombroso did engage with the equality argument in order to dismiss it: the special deference accorded to woman in times of crisis means that she cannot be 'uguale'. This reasoning points to a difficulty both with my translation of 'uguale' as 'equal' throughout the thesis (and, elsewhere, of 'uguaglianza' as 'equality'); in Italian, 'uguale' can also mean 'the same' (and 'uguaglianza', 'sameness').6 While Anglophone suffragism could attempt to marry rhetorics of equality and difference through a 'different but equal' formulation (although such a solution was rarely stable or uncontentious)7, a literal translation of 'diversi ma uguali' in Italian would have been far more problematic, since the concepts of both equality and sameness are collapsed within the word 'uguali'. It could be argued, then, that Italian suffragists were linguistically constrained to keep their discourses of equality and difference running on parallel tracks if they did not wish to contradict themselves. Meanwhile, anti-suffragists such as Lombroso could exploit the dual meaning of 'uguaglianza' to accuse the suffragist camp of ideological incoherence. One solution that surfaces in some texts – particularly in the survey responses – is the replacement of 'uguaglianza' with 'equivalenza' [equivalence] and related terms.8 However, the use of this terminology serves to

⁶ See for instance Zingarelli 2013: vocabolario della lingua italiana, accessed from http://dizionarionline.zanichelli.it/dizionariOnline/#ragazzini on 23 May 2013.

Writing on the American case, one historian notes that 'Eventually activists employed the two strategies simultaneously, [...] but the fundamental division over how to view women in society, as either different but equal or equal without qualification was subsumed to what was perceived as the greater cause, the vote. There it lurked as an ever-present threat to the movement.' Carolyn Summers Vacca, A reform against nature: woman suffrage and the rethinking of American citizenship, 1840-1920 (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 53.

⁸ Among the 1905 survey responses, for instance (UFN, *Inchiesta*), Rina Faccio (Sibilla Aleramo) declared that 'Di fronte alla vita uomo e donna si equivalgono' [In facing life, man and woman are of equivalent worth] (p. 16); Osvaldo Gnocchi Viani, also pro-suffrage, observed that women are 'diverse, sì; inferiori, no: le facoltà dell'uomo e quelle della donna sono equivalenti' [different, yes; inferior, no: man's faculties and woman's are

reinforce the discourse of difference, and does not quite add up to an argument for equal political rights (for might not women have other, 'equivalent' rights already – their persuasive powers over their voting male relatives, for instance?)

Another linguistic amplifier of difference is the Italian system of gendered nouns. While the suffragists of Anglophone countries could stake their claim within the (nominally) unisex category of 'citizens', and aspire to infiltrating a similar unisex category of 'voters' or 'electors', the Italian language, as has been seen, foregrounded sex differences in these and other relevant scenarios. This did not prevent Italian suffragists from using the terms available, and sometimes from exploiting their peculiarly gendered connotations. As early as 1877, Mozzoni had petitioned Parliament for women's suffrage on the grounds that 'siamo cittadine, contribuenti e capaci', a statement closely echoed in the 1906 petition: 'vi abbiamo diritto perché siamo cittadine'. 10 This latter assertion is bolstered with a list of the means through which women contribute to the State: in this list, the femininity of 'cittadine' is reiterated through another feminised noun ('produttrici di ricchezza'),11 and is linked to a quasisacramental iconography of motherhood. It seems that Mozzoni's 'cittadine' emerge from and draw on the Risorgimental discourse of the madre cittadina, i.e. the exemplary mother who raised her sons as patriots and 'sacrificed' them to battle for the sake of the nation.12 The specifically feminine qualities of the (relative) neologisms 'elettrice' and 'elettrici', meanwhile, 13 are sometimes positively flaunted by suffragist supporters (consider Guglielmo Gambarotta's deliberately provoking indexing of the noun to the characteristics of beauty and desirability in his response to the UFN survey).14 However, the differentiation between 'elettori' and 'elettrici' could also be used to scathing effect by

equivalent] (pp. 45-46); and Luigi di Andreis, who favoured women's suffrage but with a gradualist approach, highlighted the non-'sameness' of equivalence when he stated that men and women have 'uffici diversi' [different offices] within the family, but 'il lavoro dell'uomo nello studio e nell'officina equivale a quello della donna nella casa e nell'allevamento dei bambini' [man's work in the study and office is equivalent to that woman in the home and in the bringing up of children] (p. 50, italics in original).

[producers of wealth]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110. Italics added.

⁹ [women citizens, contributing and able]. Mozzoni, *La liberazione della donna*, p. 129. ¹⁰ [We have this right because we are women citizens]. 'Petizione al Parlamento', p. 110.

¹² On the madre cittadina, see especially Liviana Gazzetta, 'Madre e cittadina. Una concezione dell'emancipazione alle origini del primo movimento politico delle donne in Italia' in Venetica, 11: 3 (1994), pp. 133-61; "'Sposa, madre, cittadina impareggiabile". Il mazzinianesimo femminile tra maternità e cittadinanza' in Bertolotti (ed.), La repubblica la scienza l'uguaglianza, pp. 45-64.

¹³ A Google Ngram search for the collocations 'donna elettrice' and 'donne elettrici' indicates that the former had no presence in Italian texts published before 1860, appearing in .000006% of books by 1900 and spiking to appear in .000002% of them in 1907. The latter also made no appearance before 1860, but spiked to appear in .0000025% of books in 1888 and .000003% in 1908. Google Books Ngram Viewer, accessed from

http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=donne+elettrici&year_start=1700&year_end=2000&corpus=22 &smoothing=3&share= on 12 June 2013. Searched between 1700 and 2000 in the corpus Italian with smoothing of 3.

¹⁴ 'C'è da scommettere difatti che le elettrici dell'avvenire non saranno meno carine delle loro madri'. [We may bet, in fact, that the women electors of the future will not be less pretty than their mothers]. UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 39.

opponents of women's suffrage.¹⁵ Donna Paola reflects on an analogous problem in her consideration of the term 'avvocatessa' (still corresponding, like 'elettrice', to a non-existent entity in the Italy of 1910, as women would not be permitted to practise law until 1919): 'Molte celie si son ricamate attorno alla donna «avvocatessa», come è chiamata in suo dispregio diretto e in dispregio indiretto della grammatica'.¹⁶ In depicting herself as a would-be 'deputata', admittedly, Donna Paola inscribes this noun within a framework of courtly flirtation, but does the same for the 'elettore' who is her interlocutor (demanding whether he finds her attractive, she addresses him as 'egregio signor elettore'; in the title of the book, he is 'il mio elettore', suggesting possession, while she is more independently 'una futura deputata'). While suffragists resorted to very diverse strategies to deal with and sometimes to exploit the gendered nouns inherent in Italian, there seems little doubt that this linguistic system helped foster discourses based around difference at the expense of those based around an (in any case ambiguous) 'uguaglianza'.

What is the broader significance of these linguistic manifestations of ideological clashes and divergences? I suggest that they hint at a core dilemma for Italian suffragists: the need to choose between framing their cause in terms of equality/ principle – and using a restricted, cerebral, and, above all, translated language to do this – or framing it in terms of difference/ pragmatism – in which case they could creatively use language that ranged across a wide lexicon, referenced corporeal experience, and drew on specifically Italian linguistic structure and literary traditions. There was also, of course, the theoretical 'middle way' of combining these discourses and their constitutive languages – and, as has been seen, this was a strategy for which most survey respondents opted, as did the authors of several suffragist propaganda texts considered in Section 3. However, this strategy rarely succeeded fully in overcoming the disjunctions between discourses of equality and difference, principle and pragmatism – disjunctions that were augmented, and perhaps sometimes constructed, by the contrasting modes of Italian language usage at play. It is worth noting that the problem of

¹⁵ Matilde Serao, satirising the prospect of votes for women in 1877, had envisaged a scenario in which 'll candidato non si occupa più dei suoi elettori; è invece tutto intento ad accaparrarsi le elettrici: fa grandi scappellate a dritta ed a sinistra, sfoggia abiti eleganti, diventa virtuoso e morigerato come uno sposo novello. La signorina nel 1° piano è elettrice: egli nelle scale le cede il passo con galanteria; la maestra elementare dove va la sua figlietta, è elettrice, egli con un grande affetto filiale va sempre a riprendere la bambina'. [The candidate no longer pays any attention to the male voters; instead he is wholly intent on seizing on the female voters: he makes swooping bows to right and left, he preens in elegant suits, he becomes as virtuous and temperate as a new bridegroom. The young lady on the first floor is a woman voter: on the stairs he lets her pass with chivalry; the elementary teacher in his little daughter's school is a woman voter, he goes to collect his child with regularity and great parental devotion]. The initial distinction between 'elettori' and 'elettrici' is followed by repetitions of the term 'elettrice' in contexts that parody traditional, heteronormative courtship, featuring an active man and a passive woman. (Interestingly, in Serao's mind the 'candidato' is unquestionably male – there is no 'candidata' on her radar as yet). Serao, 'Votazione femminile', p. 35.

¹⁶ [Many jokes have been embroidered around the woman "lawyeress", as she is called in direct disrespect to herself and in indirect disrespect to grammar [...] Is the woman lawyer somehow forced to take on [...] grotesque qualities [...] incompatible with her sex?] Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 275.

uguaglianza has characterized second-wave (and later) feminist movements in Italy, too: Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp have commented that 'for Italian feminism, in the equality-versus-difference debate, the conceptual opposite of difference is not equality, but equality as it has been inscribed in the paradigms of western philosophical and political thought'.¹⁷ Interestingly, though, while increased use of parità and related terms in recent years might suggest a way around the implication of sameness associated with uguaglianza, this has not been the case. Luisa Muraro, for instance, sharply criticizes egaliatarian feminism as an 'accanimento paritario' [frenzy for equality], which 'does not manage to safeguard the value of difference'.¹⁸ The unsatisfactoriness of equality-based discourse, then, may constitute a link between first- and second-wave feminisms in an Italian context – even while the first-wave claim to suffrage was sometimes dismissed or ignored by later activists as a goal alien to what they would term pensiero della differenza sessuale.

11.3 Suffragist identities within and beyond Italy

While the manifestation of suffragist and anti-suffragist *ideologies* in discourse formed an important initial point of investigation in this thesis, the most enduring theme analysed has been that of *identities*. The borderland between these fields can, of course, be hazy, and there is much cross-fertilisation at play. However, in the context of suffragist and similar movements, it is crucial specifically to probe identities as well as ideologies. For one thing, the very citizenship demanded by suffragists was based on aspects of identity (male? non-criminal? sane? educated?). For another, as Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor contend:

A concentration solely on ideas ignores the fact that feminists are social movement actors situated in an organizational and movement context. Feminism is more than gender ideology: it is a collective identity. A collective identity approach shifts attention to the complex and ever-changing process of drawing the circles that separate "us" (i.e., feminists) and "them". ¹⁹

In the documents that I have examined, the process of defining and articulating a *noi* and concomitant *loros* has indeed proved to be both 'complex and ever-changing'. There is enormous variation not only among the in-group 'circles' drawn across different sources, but also among those drawn and redrawn within individual texts. Before reviewing what I have found about the shifting 'difficulties of saying *noi*' for Italian suffragists on both intranational and international planes, however, I will consider

¹⁷ Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, 'Introduction: coming from the south' in Bono and Kemp (eds.), *Italian feminist thought: a reader*, pp. 1-29 (p. 15).

¹⁸ Muraro, 'Oltre l'uguaglianza', p. 121. Italics in original.

¹⁹ Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, 'Forging feminist identity in an international movement: a collective identity approach to twentieth-century feminism' in *Signs*, 24: 2 (1999), pp. 363-86 (p. 364).

another identity-related tension running through the analyses conducted: the tension between individual and collective identity, or the difficulty of saying io.

11.3.1 Individual identities: absences and anxieties

A tension between individuality and collectivity was already evident in the 1905 survey responses (Section 2), although it was chiefly manifested in the *absence* of first-person modes and of personal narratives. This absence was especially notable in responses from women which opposed the immediate extension of women's suffrage in Italy. Such respondents, using their privileges of literacy and cultural access to argue against the idea that a wider category to which they belonged – namely, Italian women – should be able to vote, were in a paradoxical position: through their very ability to speak 'for others', they risked marking themselves out as exceptional and thus undermining their own representative credibility.

I suggested that they often made use of the impersonal structures so readily available in Italian to avoid directly confronting this untenable position. These structures include the impersonal 'si' (and occasionally 'chi').²⁰ They also include not only the third-person plural, but also the pervasive use of the third-person singular ('La donna italiana...') to stand for a plural entity.

In several of the suffragist and anti-suffragist texts studied in Section 3, such strategic circumventions of the first person resurface.²¹ However, the lengthier and more politically ambitious nature of these documents also allows the discursive strain between individual identity and collective representation to emerge in more complex detail. The texts by Anna Kuliscioff (Chapter 7) and Gina Lombroso (Chapter 8) are of especial interest in this regard. Ideologically speaking, these texts are at opposing poles: Kuliscioff's tract is a pro-suffrage manifesto addressed to working-class women and produced in the dispiriting context of 1913 (after Giolitti's electoral reform and before the outbreak of World War One); Lombroso's is an anti-suffrage argument addressed predominantly to bourgeois women and produced in a 1919 post-war context in which the extension of votes to women seemed imminent. However, their authors faced strikingly similar challenges in integrating their own 'exceptional' identities within their proposed categorisation systems for women more generally.

²⁰ See for instance UFN, *II voto alla donna*, p. 80.

²¹ At the 1908 CNDI congress, Elena Lucifero's use of a repeated 'bisogna' construction allowed her to avoid specifying an *io* or a *noi* in relation to the entity with agency in the following statement: 'Bisogna esercitare una influenza continua di esempio e di propaganda [...] mediante le maestre e le mogli [...] Bisogna servirsi dei giornali di moda per svegliare nelle donne ancora incolte ed inevolute, l'interesse per i problemi sociali [...]' [There is a need to exercise a constant influence by example and by propaganda in the provinces and the countryside, especially those of the south, through the schoolteachers and the wives [...] There is a need to use fashion journals to awaken an interest in social problems in the still uncultured and undeveloped women]. CNDI, 'Adunanza', p. 611.

Kuliscioff's outsider status (as non-Italian, Jewish, and a highly-educated and comparatively privileged representative of working-class women) was elided, as far as possible, in her 1913 text: the first person singular was never used; the 'avanguardie' of the suffrage movement were mentioned as *loro*, with no reference to the author's presence among them; and an emphasised *noi* was used to enclose author, as well as readers, in a group defined by its opposition to the middle-class *signore suffragiste*. Lombroso's status (as another highly-educated woman, also of Jewish heritage, respected within the male-dominated scientific community and possessed of the political interest and expertise to draw examples from across the international stage while making her contribution to the suffrage debate) was equally problematic to the theory she espoused, namely that *donne normali* (maternal, heterosexual, contentedly monogamous) were uninterested in politics. Lombroso's *io* was textually present to a greater degree than Kuliscioff's – the first person singular was used to assert emphatic opinion and/or authority on a subject – but, in citing her own foundation of the ADDI to encourage women's interest in questions 'anche e soprattutto di politica', she slightly unmoored her own identity within a text seeking to prove that the *donna normale* found little appeal in politics.

What light, if any, can the literary texts studied in Section 4 cast upon the fraught intersections of individual and collective identities in survey responses and suffragist and anti-suffragist texts? Both Franchi's Avanti il divorzio! and Aleramo's Una donna navigated a difficult line in this regard (Chapter 9): they presented narratives which at once centred on exceptional women and sought to represent a nebulous Italian everywoman. (Indeed, the very title of Aleramo's novel sums up this dissonance: is the donna of the title one unique woman, or is this an instance of the characteristically Italian use of a singular noun to stand for the impossibly plural category of women?) In their capacity as literary authors, Franchi and Aleramo worked within genre constraints very different from those present in suffragist propaganda texts. If anything, the form of the autobiographical novel encourages extensive probing of tensions between individual exceptionality and solidary collectivity. I have argued that both authors went to some lengths to place their protagonists outside certain aspects of normative femininity, by describing their tomboyish childhoods and antipathy towards the kind of conversation deemed typically female. However, both also drew on established literary tropes to restore other features of typical femininity, such as beauty and heteronormative desirability, to these exceptional characters. An anxiety around the construction of individual female identity in these two novels is manifested in the sheer bulk of the texts that is dedicated to teasing out the femininity, or lack thereof, of the main characters (one technique used for this involves the semantically-shifting interplay of nouns such as 'donna', 'femmina', 'madre', 'donnina'). That anxiety may signal a divergence between the arenas of greatest preoccupation for Italian feminist writers of the period, and the suffrage debate; that divergence in turn may help to explain the absence of strongly individualised voices in suffragist documents.

As for Donna Paola's Io e il mio elettore (Chapter 10), the hybridity of that text (which fuses political manifesto with courtly dialogue, all within a semi-autobiographical framework) forces a direct confrontation of how collective agendas can - or cannot - accommodate strongly individuated identity. I suggested that the character of Donna Paola oscillated between several roles in constructing her own identity. As a woman, she was an outsider with the freedom of speech accorded to a giullare, but she tempered her most controversial jester-style declarations by emphasising aspects of her heteronormativity: cortegiana-style flirtation, cautiously-implied heterosexual desire, and hyper-feminine materialism. However, this last, which usually concerns costume and decoration, was expressed using hyperbolic rhetoric that very nearly tipped the performance into parody. As with Franchi's and Aleramo's texts, then, lo e il mio elettore expends considerable discursive energy on the process of negotiating the unique identity of its authorprotagonist. For all three authors, the balance between feminism (named or unnamed) and femininity is one that must be constantly recalibrated; and for all three, but most overtly for Donna Paola, the precarity of individual feminist/feminine identity takes its toll upon the possibility of crafting coherent, collective identities for women (she is sceptical about female solidarity, as shall be discussed in 11.3.2).

It seems fitting that in Aleramo's *Una donna*, it is another woman writer (unnamed) who problematises both the collective potential of the novel's own title and that of the unifying discourses present in many suffragist texts with the observation that 'la donna' is a false construct: 'ci sono *delle donne*, ecco tutto'.²² The contrast could not be sharper between this awareness and the spirit promoted overseas in the British suffragette movement — an organisation for which Christabel Pankhurst's famous statement that 'to lose the personal in a great impersonal is to live!' has been convincingly branded by one historian as an 'unofficial motto'.²³ I suggest, then, that tensions between individual and collective identities in Italy could prove fertile terrain for future research, which would ideally explore a greater breadth of source texts.

11.3.2 Collective identities: intra-national fragmentation

²² [there are women, that is all there is to it]. Aleramo, Una donna, p. 95.

²³ See Mary Jean Corbett, Representing femininity: middle-class subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian women's autobiographies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 158. (That said, Christabel Pankhurst herself had a forceful character, and perhaps lived out her own motto more as an embodiment of the 'great impersonal' to which other suffragettes could sacrifice themselves than as someone losing her own 'personal'. To be fair, her autobiography, Unshackled: the story of how we won the vote (London: Hutchinson, 1959) does retain an emphasis on the titular 'we' throughout; and, while she also foregrounds her own leadership of the movement, it is argued by Purvis and Wright that 'Christabel understates her own importance and emphasises the valiant role of her mother' (June Purvis and Maureen Wright, 'Writing suffragette history: the contending autobiographical narratives of the Pankhursts' in Women's History Review, 14: 3-4 (2005), pp. 405-33 (p. 423)).

Suffragists were faced with an unpalatable prospect when it came to forging collective identities across existing lines of Italian fragmentation: in particular, lines of class and region. Since such fissures were generally compounded by differences in education and wealth, and since the women of the worst-off groups were even poorer and less educated than their male counterparts, there was a perception that national divisions were further exacerbated for women, and that the project of 'fare le italiane' remained more challenging than that of 'fare gli italiani'. Writing in 1899, Sibilla Aleramo had stated that 'Esiste, insomma, una femminile anima italiana [...] ma non esiste il filo d'oro che di questa anima dispersa ed ignara formi il serto luminoso della patria'. How, in the texts I have considered, did suffragist women engage with this 'anima dispersa'? Did their discursive strategies ever come close to creating the 'filo d'oro' of Aleramo's imagination?

Schisms-in-waiting were perceptible in the gradualist and pragmatic responses to the 1905 survey (Section 2), many of which approved of suffrage in principle but feared the effect on Italian women's voting patterns of the 'triplice giogo' of ignorance, religious superstition, and male domination.²⁵ The regional specificity of this yoke was highlighted by a number of respondents. In the texts examined in Section 3, the depth and complexity of class and regional divisions became more evident, yet each texts mapped those divisions in slightly different ways. For instance, in the 1906 petition (Chapter 5), three groups of Italian women were identified: the operaie, the borghesi, and the privilegiate - and the text fluctuated between a creed-like noi voice that demanded the vote for all, and a pragmatic gradualism that anticipated the enfranchisement of bourgeois women first. The report of the suffrage session from the 1908 congress (Chapter 6) was more overt in its efforts to homogenise congress delegates through contrast with other groups of Italian women, especially those from proletarian and rural backgrounds. In contrast, Kuliscioff's 1913 text (Chapter 7) constructed a collective identity for the donne proletarie of the title by establishing the most 'significant Other' as neither men nor antisuffragist women, but the signore suffragiste. Divergent linguistic registers helped not only to emphasise this opposition, but to pull the broader tangle of allegiances and oppositions proposed by Kuliscioff into a kind of alignment: a hyperbolically high style was used in relation not only to bourgeois suffragists, but to bourgeois society more generally and to bellicose interventionism, while a blunter one linked working-class suffragists with the socialist movement and with pacifism. Lastly, in Gina Lombroso's antisuffragist text of 1919 (Chapter 8), the main categorisation concerned the binary of donne normali and donne anormali. The chief characteristics mentioned for the former were prioritisation of the family, maternal feeling, and monogamous heterosexuality, while those imputed to the latter were spinsterhood, vaunting ambition, and possible lesbianism; however, lexical links

²⁵ UFN, Il voto alla donna, pp. 61-62.

²⁴ [There is, then, a female Italian soul [...] but there is not the golden thread that could make of this scattered and oblivious soul the shining garland of the nation]. Aleramo, 'Il femminismo in Italia', p. 57.

throughout the text suggested that this binary was discreetly tinged with classism, while a certain ambivalence was evinced as to where feminists (and their subset, suffragists) fitted within it.

While these texts vary dramatically in the concerns and categorisations that they privilege, they have one feature in common: all must inscribe Italian suffragist identity within an existing, and increasingly complex, matrix of discourses. These discourses comprise ever-shifting classification schemes based on class, region, and lifestyle, as well as ideological positions relating to religion and foreign policy. The rapid flux with which discursive emphases shift – both between and within texts – reflects the broader negotiation of Italian national identity during the period in question. I found the investigation of pronominal and transitivity choices a good starting point for analyses in this area. The use of emphatic pronouns in Italian opened a particularly useful window on patterns of collective identity construction in the texts. More broadly, however, rhetorical registers (e.g. Kuliscioff's flowery versus earthy forms of prose) and particular lexical sets (e.g. Mozzoni's repetition of the word massa and reference to the 1898 riots; Lombroso's reference to the piazza in collocations with gridare and correre) are used by the various authors to render networks of affiliations and oppositions intelligible at sub-articulatory level.

As for the literary texts, collective female identity was almost wholly absent in Franchi's Avanti il divorzio!. It was explored in Aleramo's Una donna with reference to the buona vecchia mamma's activism and to the international feminist movement, but ultimately failed to provide the protagonist with a resolution to her crisis - except, significantly, in the form of mother-daughter solidarity, since it was her dead mother's letter that finally convinced her to leave her child and husband. This was solidarity on an interpersonal rather than a collective scale - although it might assume a more universal implication if read through the lens of a later theorist such as Luisa Muraro, for whom maternal and quasi-maternal relationships among women becomes the main practice in a feminist 'politics of relations'.26 Nevertheless, the comparative silence - at least on the surface - of these two novels on the subject of collective feminist identity throws into relief the extent to which suffragist texts were struggling against prevailing norms in seeking to present a united front of donne italiane. Donna Paola, in contrast, directly confronted the notion of organised female collectivity and appeared to reject it. However, metaphorical descriptions of that singular-but-collective donna as 'l'anarchica' [the anarchist/ the unruly one], 27 as well as Donna Paola's occasional self-conscious penchant for speaking in the first person plural, indicated persistent ambivalence around this theme. In fact, Aleramo's and Donna Paola's engagements with collective identity and its (near-)impossibility for Italian women enrich my readings of suffragist propaganda texts precisely because ambivalence and

²⁶ Muraro, 'The passion of feminine difference beyond equality', p. 80.

²⁷ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 268.

fluctuation were welcomed and explored as fodder for literary musings. In the suffragist documents of Section 3, by contrast, an open acknowledgement of thinking *variopintamente* about the issue (in Donna Paola's terms) would have undermined the texts' sought status as political.

Within Italy, then, the possibility of coherent collective identity for women was elusive. While a fractured national self-concept is widely held to have been present for Italians in general during the period under consideration, the discursive evidence of the texts studied here suggest that this was exacerbated for Italian women, whose opportunities for crossing class and regional boundaries were less prevalent. Italian suffragists were a special case within this group: their cause mandated them to speak for others, yet by virtue of literacy, education, influence, and often class and wealth, they remained ineluctably exceptional. Additional research exploring a wider base of suffragist texts might elucidate further aspects of the movement's tension between individuality and collectivity. That said, this viewpoint should be taken in tandem with, rather than as an alternative to, the perspective offered by Katharine Mitchell's recent study of sorellanza in post-unification Italy: Mitchell finds evidence, across a wide range of text types, of solidarity among 'public' women which traversed not only barriers of class and region, but also differences of opinion on feminist questions.²⁸ In particular, she traces sisterhood 'in arte' among women; she finds rather less evidence of sisterhood 'in politica'. If signs of Italian women's solidarity are traceable in unexpected places (as Mitchell suggests), yet also seem absent or compromised within groups in which they might have been expected to be strong (as I have argued), the complexity of the theme seems to merit significant further research.

11.3.3 Collective identities: italianità in international context

If the process of articulating a collective identity for suffragists within Italy demanded delicate navigation of a multi-layered map of national identity which was itself in rapid flux, the added necessity of locating Italian suffragist identity upon an international plane further complicated the situation. Most particularly, Italian suffragists faced the challenge of integrating what was widely perceived as an Anglo-Saxon ideal into the fragmented Italian context discussed above.

The concept of suffragism as an international as well as national campaign had gained a practical footing only with the establishment of the IWSA in 1904, and it was not until 1906 that an Italian organisation eligible to join this body emerged in the form of the CNPSF. Moreover, British suffragette militancy, which would command notoriety in press organs throughout Europe (including in Italy), did not begin until October 1905. With these facts in mind, it makes sense that few

²⁸ Mitchell, "'Sorelle in arte (e politica)", especially pp. 221-22. The friendship and mutual regard of Anna Kuliscioff and Gina Lombroso (highlighted in the epigraph to Chapter 8 of this thesis, p. 172) is one case in point of solidarity overcoming opposing views on the woman question.

references to overseas suffragism were, with a few exceptions, absent in the 1905 UFN survey responses (Section 2). What was present, however, was the assumption that the case of Italian women merited treatment in its own right, rather than simply as part of international developments. This assumption was embedded in the question structure itself; it also emerged in the 40% of responses giving different answers to parts (A) and (B). The peculiar character of the donna italianal donne italiane thus became a site of contestation. Pro-suffrage respondents who emphasised Italian specificity argued that national qualities made their women especially fit to vote (and perhaps to vote in line with particular ideologies). On the other hand, respondents who opposed the introduction of women's suffrage in Italy cited national qualities that would impede Italian women from using the vote 'well'. The lexicons used suggested that these assertions about women's nature may have tied into broader projects of asserting forms of national identity. Specifically, those pragmatically pro-suffrage respondents who praised the characteristics of the donna italiana posited her as emblematic of a narrative of national progress. Conversely, pragmatically anti-suffrage respondents who doubted the ability of the donna italiana to use her vote wisely often contained their concerns within particular class or regional subsets of Italian society (see 11.3.2 above), rather than criticising at national level. Both pro- and anti-suffrage respondents, then, saw it as important that their arguments bolstered, or at least did not threaten, the project of constructing italianità.

The suffragist and anti-suffragist texts analysed in Section 3 provided further evidence of the extent to which the language of suffragism in Italy was enmeshed in that of a still-rapidly-evolving national identity. In the 1906 petition (Chapter 6), overt reference to the suffrage movement in its international form was present, if perfunctory; however, the focus remained very much upon the specifically Italian context. This context was textually constructed so as simultaneously to privilege and problematise the narrative of national unification and its aftermath. On the one hand, the timeframe of events referenced was the period between unification and the time of writing, and the endpoints of that timeframe were joined together by a story of Italian women's rapid progress as workers and thinkers. On the other, disillusionment with the speed (or lack thereof) of Italian development after unification was invoked, with specific reference to the still debilitating condition of women. Furthermore, this frustration with Italian stagnation was placed in a comparative international context when the text pointed out that the vote was the only weapon worth having in countries with (partly) democratic political regimes. Italy's place among these modern, progressive nations, then, was subtly challenged, and women's suffrage was inserted as an index of a country's civilisation. The alignment of the suffragist cause with positive national development - and of anti-suffragist views with the nation's stagnation and regression - was further consolidated by the contrasting lexical banks on which the text drew. Language associated with scientific progress was used in connection with the suffragist cause and women's advancement in Italian society in general; language associated with

religion, albeit twisted into quasi-sacrilegious shapes, was used in connection with the plight of unenfranchised women at the time of writing. The petition illustrated how the strategy of harnessing suffragism and italianità together, hinted at by some pro-suffrage survey respondents, could be fleshed out.

The ambivalence provoked by overseas suffragism, and specifically by the British suffragette movement, was particularly evident in the 1908 'Adunanza' report and in Donna Paola's lo e il mio elettore. The 1908 report, which featured speeches from CNPSF suffragists attempting to win other Italian women interested in feminism to their cause, showcased complex rhetorical strategies in relation to the British movement: three of the speeches oscillated between distancing themselves from that movement and praising it. Moreover, it was when the content of the speeches was most condemnatory of the foreign suffragettes that the language used in relation to Italian suffragism became most redolent of militarism. While this ambivalent 'Othering' of the British suffragettes was a discourse carefully hemmed in by the norms of the congress situation, Donna Paola's text 'Othered' the suffragettes, and Britain more generally, in far more incautious terms. Although her character evinced uncertainty as to whether the suffragettes were ridiculous or admirable, she went on to express her personal antipathy towards the movement in terms of subjective revulsion. She was also revolted, however, by British culture more generally, and articulated this through masculine-coded images evoking olfactory and gustatory disgust rather than rational disapproval. In opposition to British culture, she posited an identity of feminine-coded 'latinità' [Latinity].²⁹ Comparing the 1908 congress report and Donna Paola's 1910 text, it seems that the British suffragettes provoked a significant crisis in Italian suffragist identities, but that this crisis could be quite differently approached in the 'contained' discourse of official suffragist campaigning and the freer one of literary writing. This analysis would be usefully augmented by a study of the depiction of suffragettes in Italian newspapers: my initial investigations indicate very diverse portrayals,30 as well as the interchangeable use of the

²⁹ Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 35.

³⁰ For instance, one report refers to suffragettes who had chained themselves to railings in the House of Commons as 'le due energumene' [the two (women) savages] ('Dimostrazioni di suffragiste' in La vita, undated (but 1909), accessed in Fondo Unione Femminile, cart. 54. UF cartella VII; 189); another refers to those attempting to approach the King with their request as 'queste forsennate' [those madwomen] ('La scenata di una suffragista alla presenza dei Sovrani' in Corriere della Sera, 26 giugno 1912, accessed in Fondo Unione Femminile, cart. 54. UF cartella VII; 189). Nevertheless, Emily Wilding Davison's death on Derby Day in 1913 elicited a profoundly sympathetic report from British-based reporter Mario Borsa: 'Noi abbiamo infatti dell'ammirazione per le donne che presero parte, pagando anche di persona, a tutte le grandi lotte storiche per le rivendicazioni del diritto e della libertà. [...] Solamente le suffragette ci sembrano indegne e detestabili quando incendiano, distruggono, oppongono la violenza alla violenza, si lasciano morir di fame in prigione o si fanno ammazzare sotto le zampe di un cavallo. Perché? Perché le donne quando fanno le rivoluzioni per gli uomini sono delle eroine, e quando le fanno per sé sono delle pazze, delle isteriche, delle senza sesso?' [However, we do have admiration for the women who took part, suffering the consequences, in all the great historical fights for claims of rights and freedom. [...] Only the suffragettes seem to us to be shameful and hateful when they set fires, engage in destruction, oppose violence with violence, let themselves die of hunger in prison or kill

terms 'suffragiste' and 'suffragette' to describe the British militants.³¹ The latter confusion is likely to have contributed to Italian women's wariness of identifying even with (or as) 'suffragiste', let alone 'suffragette'.

11.4 Suffragism and feminist literature: divergent languages?

I have shown that the ideological language of suffragism in Italy incorporated both the axis of equality/principle and that of difference/pragmatism (often within a single brief text, e.g. a survey response). While suffragists deployed various strategies in order to integrate these arguments, however, I have also discussed how contrasting lexical and stylistic features clung to the two groups: as discussed in 11.2, discourses of equality and principle were generally voiced through a restricted, often stilted, and sometimes problematically translated, vocabulary, while discourses of difference and pragmatism were crafted through widely-ranging, metaphorical, and sometimes colloquial prose. Significantly, the literary texts studied provided examples of similar discourses of difference, elaborated upon at greater length and with greater complexity than is allowed for in survey, journalistic, or propaganda documents, but articulated with comparable linguistic panache. Both Franchi and Aleramo presented graphically embodied accounts of experiences peculiar to their female condition (sexual assault,32 childbirth, and, in Aleramo's case, breastfeeding). Subsequently, in discussing their emergence as writers, both drew upon striking imagery to situate literary creation as both liberatingly cerebral and linked to the physicality of procreation. Donna Paola emphasised female difference as the root of her ability to be pensare variopintamente. Her colourful use of imagery in relation to this recalls some of the celebrations of female difference set forth in survey responses and in suffragist texts. However, Donna Paola also elaborated on the role of language in expressing female difference; most memorably, she rejected the word feminismo on the grounds it did not correspond to her way of thinking. Indeed, even the unstable orthography of feminismol femminismo and related

themselves under a horse's hooves. Why? Why are women heroines when they undertake revolutions for men, and when they undertake them for themselves they are lunatics, hysterics, sexless?] Mario Borsa, 'Isterismo o rivoluzione? La suffragetta morta', unpublished typescript of article, undated (but 1913), accessed in Fondo Unione Femminile, cart. 53 fasc. 2.

³¹ For example, while the 1913 trial of the militant Annie Kenney and others is described in *Il Secolo* as 'il processo delle *suffragette*' [the trial of the *suffragettes*] (*Il Secolo*, 18 June 1913, accessed in Fondo Unione Femminile, cart. 54 (UF cartella VII; 189)), the actions of other WSPU militants a month later are referenced in *Corriere d'Italia* as 'Imprese *suffragiste*. Pistolettate e trappole da topi nell'aula dei Comuni' [Suffragist exploits. Pistol shots and mousetraps in the House of Commons] (*Corriere d'Italia*, 12 July 1913, accessed in Fondo Unione Femminile, cart. 54 (UF cartella VII; 189)). Italics added.

³² Sexual assault is not, of course, an experience that affects only women. However, within the worldviews presented in these texts, there is never any question of a man not consenting to sex.

terms throughout the texts studied may tell us something about the difficulty of integrating the concept and its existing lexicon into the Italian language.³³

Donna Paola's proposed replacement, *feminilismo*, signified the insertion of Italianate female difference into arguments on the woman question. Describing its effect, Donna Paola used a sequence of vivid images, finally explaining that it would change the flavour of Italian feminism from 'anodino' to 'pepatissimo'.³⁴ Indeed, one could go so far as to say that the language and preoccupations made evident by Donna Paola's text seem to foreshadow the turn away from organised politics and liberal egalitarianism that has characterised much second-wave Italian feminist theory. For instance, Adriana Cavarero argues that the entire system of western thought is masculine, disguised as neutral or universal, but that for women, the 'passione' [passion] of their difference 'provokes a wish to escape the alienating word [...] to break the universalising codes, to evade uniformity'.³⁵ Perhaps still more reminiscent of Donna Paola, Luisa Muraro decries the fact that 'the language of love and dependence' is typically excluded from public and political debate, and celebrates a 'feminine excellence' vis-à-vis a Dantean *intelletto d'amore*.³⁶

If writers such as Franchi, Aleramo, and Donna Paola were engaged in crafting a feminist literary broth that would be 'pepatissimo', however, the language that was left to the mainstream suffrage movement must indeed have seemed somewhat 'anodino'. Italian suffragism was the province of a tiny minority of Italian women; was often couched in terms more translated than organically Italian; struggled to conceal rifts in identities among its members, despite those rifts being embedded in everyday Italian discourse; and was suspended in a precariously ambivalent position in relation to the international suffrage movement. In other words, its routes to accessing new domains of discourse and rhetoric were, to a degree, foreclosed.

11.5 Closing reflections

'The notion of "sisterhood" versus conflict has come to seem far too simplistic,' observes Leila Rupp in her insightful study of international aspects of the first-wave women's movement. Instead, Rupp comes to view 'conflict and community [...] not as opposites but as part of the same process by

³⁴ [bursting with spice]. Donna Paola, lo e il mio elettore, p. 37.

35 Cavarero, 'L'elaborazione filosofica della differenza sessuale', pp. 177-78.

³³ See Section 2, p. 58, n. 3; also Chapter 8, p. 182, n. 281, where I observe that the most dramatically inconsistent use of the spellings is made by the anti-feminist Gina Lombroso.

³⁶ Muraro, 'The passion of feminine difference beyond equality', pp. 81-82. For a further elaboration of Muraro's interpretation of *intelletto d'amore*, see Luisa Muraro, 'La maestra di Socrate' in Annarosa Buttarelli, Luisa Muraro, and Liliana Rampello (eds.), *Duemilauna: donne che cambiano l'Italia* (Milan: Saggiatore, 2000), pp. 145-56.

which women came together across national borders to create a sense of belonging'.³⁷ My research has illustrated how, for Italian suffragists, conflict and community operated as persistently paired forces not only on an international plane, but also within the confines of the nation state. Approaching the movement by analysing discourse in a selection of texts, I hope that I have captured at least a partial impression of Italy's tangled relationship with suffragism from a fresh, language-centred angle.

I hope, too, that my account can complement the rich corpus of existing historiographical research in the field. Without the probing and often painstaking chronicling of Italian suffragism undertaken by scholars such as Buttafuoco, Bigaran, Rossi-Doria and Galeotti,³⁸ I could neither have contextualised the texts for analysis, nor justified focusing on such a restricted set. Methodologically speaking, my approach engages especially with that of Migliucci,³⁹ As I scrutinised survey responses, propaganda documents and literary texts, the dialogical presence of her readings of media reports was thought-provoking, and I would like to think that my work might be read as a sort of counterpoint to hers. While the researchers named above have all written (predominantly) in Italian, I would also envisage a place for my research on the trail blazed recently by historians such as Willson,⁴⁰ who have produced studies of first-wave Italian feminism in English – a trail running closely alongside the longer-established one marked out by literary scholars such as Wood, Kroha, Fanning, and Mitchell,⁴¹ who have brought Italian women writers of the same period to the attention of a wide English-language readership.

Some advantages of the method I used were yoked to inherent drawbacks. Most notably, my focus not only on the broad shapes of thematic scaffolding, but also on the filigree of syntactic and lexical detail, imposed a severe limit on the number of texts that could be analysed. There is no doubt that the research would be enriched by the inclusion of further source texts. In Section 2, an in-depth discussion of the 1899 and 1911 survey responses, along with those of 1905, could have exposed some intriguing cross-temporal patterns — especially in the cases of individuals who responded to more than one survey.⁴² The documents studied in Section 3, in particular, may seem to represent

³⁷ Rupp, Worlds of women, p. 6.

³⁸ I refer especially to Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili* and 'Apolidi'; Bigaran, 'Progetti e dibattiti parlamentari' and 'Il voto alle donne'; Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*; and Galeotti, *Storia del voto alle donne*.

³⁹ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne.

⁴⁰ I refer especially to Willson, Women in twentieth-century Italy.

See for instance Wood, *Italian women's writing*; Kroha, *The woman writer in late-nineteenth-century Italy*; Fanning, *Gender meets genre*; Mitchell, 'Narrativizing women's experiences'.

⁴² Examples of those who responded to all three include Achille Loria and Neera. Loria maintains a pro-feminist position throughout, but moves from his 1899 belief that new rights would only be of interest to unmarriageable women, not to 'l'essere amabile' [the lovable being] (Gambarotta, *Inchiesta sulla donna*, pp. 95-96 (p. 96)), through support for the vote for all women, with regional gradualism (UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 15) to an impassioned defence of feminism as a possibility for humankind to cease standing on 'una gamba sola' [one leg only] ('Un'inchiesta sul femminismo' (in *Nuova Antologia*), pp. 125-26 (p. 126). Neera explains her avowed opposition to feminism in some detail in the 1899 survey, only to have Gambarotta, as editor, append a note of

only a few solo voices emerging from the coralità⁴³ of Italian suffragist and anti-suffragist discussion. Other voices, such as those of Teresa Labriola, Irene de Bonis, Irma Melany Scodnik, Emilia Mariani, Linda Malnati, and Margherita Ancona (to list just some of the prominent names, and to focus only on the pro-suffrage side), amply deserve inclusion for their contributions to the debate and campaign. However, the criterion of selecting texts from pivotal 'crisis moments' has provided striking initial examples of how discourse analysis might work with these types of texts. A more ambitious future study could encompass a greater diversity of sources, perhaps with an especial concentration on adequately representing the immense regional variety of the suffrage question in Italy. Further, the analysis of literary works in Section 4 could, theoretically, have been vastly expanded to include works of varied genres by women writers with varied relationships to organised feminism: novels by Matilde Serao, Neera, Grazia Deledda and Annie Vivanti could usefully have been considered, alongside poetry by Aleramo, Ada Negri and Amalia Guglielminetti, and plays by Amelia Pincherle Rosselli. Works by Futurist women such as Rosa Rosa might have revealed still further aspects of the complex, evolving relationship between women writers, feminist ideas, and the Italian language during the period in question.44 Comparisons with male-authored works could also have offered a welcome broadening of perspective.45

Despite the limitations of the present study, however, the application of principles and tools derived from discourse analysis to early-twentieth-century texts of widely-ranging genres has yielded a number of important insights. I began by asking how language was used around the suffrage question, and, more specifically, how language worked to construct identities in relation to suffragism. In the present chapter, I have outlined a few major strands of response. In particular, I have argued that I) an ideology of suffragism based largely on Anglo-American notions of egalitarianism made a rather awkward transition into Italian, stumbling over the polyvalence of words such as *uguaglianza* and retaining a foreign phonic flavour; 2) that divisive tensions — between individual and collective identities, between groups split by class and region, and between Italian and international interpretations of suffragism — were manifested throughout the texts considered, in language that both reflected and contributed to the movement's fragmentation and instability, despite some brilliant

his own, demanding – as if to foreshadow today's literary scholars – whether Neera could really be called an 'antifemminista' in light of some of her other writings (Gambarotta, *Inchiesta sulla donna*, pp. 54-57); in 1905 and 1911, Neera's responses grow increasingly terse and indifferent (UFN, *Il voto alla donna*, p. 2; 'Un'inchiesta sul femminismo', p. 127).

⁴³ Migliucci, Per il voto alle donne, p. 2.

⁴⁴ See Fanning, 'Futurism and the abjection of the feminine'; Clara Orban, 'Women, Futurism and Fascism' in Pickering-lazzi, *Mothers of invention*, pp. 52-75.

⁴⁵ Ann Hallamore Caesar has recently commented that only through 'bringing together female- and male-authored texts' can changing patterns of genre in post-unification Italian women's writing be understood in context. Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'Writing by women in post-unification literary culture: the case for desegregation' in Mitchell and Sanson (eds.), Women and gender in post-unification Italy, pp. 225-45.

discursive counter-strategies deployed by suffragists; and 3) that the linguistic focus of feminist women engaged in literary work tended to be on goals at odds with the requirements of suffragist rhetoric: specifically, on moulding language to communicate individual, embodied experience and interpersonal dynamics. However, in reality, the lines of enquiry suggested by the research process are quite as incorrigibly plural as are the variants of 'Italian suffragist discourse'.

The place of Italian suffragism on the international suffrage map was one lacuna identified at the outset, and this aspect of the movement's discourse held a particular fascination for me throughout; a future investigation could explore relationships between Italian and international suffragist representatives at both organisational and interpersonal levels.46 Another lacuna noted concerned connections between political and literary developments; since the three literary writers whose works I analysed were all 'crossover' figures in their own right, who produced journalism as well as novelistic texts, it would be interesting further to explore this shifting between terrains within their work.⁴⁷ The regional specificities of Italian suffragism proved another area of great interest; if I conclude that the possibility of one overarching, unifying 'Italian suffragist discourse' was continually disrupted by the politics of cultural nation-building in the context of Italy's ongoing internal fragmentation, then an obvious direction for future research is to ask how the 'margins' spoke back to the 'centre' (to adapt Nolan and Daley's phrase).48 To what extent did suffragist and anti-suffragist texts emerging from southern Italy, in particular, engage with the 'Othered' position of southern and rural women in discourse emerging from the northern cities? A further, unexpected question that arose as I meandered through the names of leading contributors to the suffrage debate in Italy concerned Jewish identity: alongside Anna Kuliscioff and Gina Lombroso, whose texts I analysed in detail, voices of Jewish extraction included those of Paolina Schiff, Margherita Sarfatti, and Bice

⁴⁶ One model of such an approach is found in Rupp, *Worlds of women*: following an analysis of the institutional development of the ICW, the IWSA and the WILPF, she offers a compelling account of individual friendships, partnerships and animosities between activists from various countries, in a section aptly entitled 'Personalized politics' (pp. 157-204).

⁴⁷ Aleramo's journalism has received critical attention, thanks especially to the collection edited and introduced by Bruna Conti (*La donna* e *il femminismo*). In particular, an article by Piera Forni considers her journalistic production with some discussion also of her literary output ('ll giornalismo di "Una donna": Sibilla Aleramo tra il 1898 e il 1952' in Bertini (ed.), *L'emancipazione: diritti* e *doveri*, pp. 129-43). Another essay in the same volume, this one by Michela Pierucci and already cited, deals with Franchi's journalism, with passing reference to *Avanti il divorzio!* ('Anna Franchi: il femminismo'). The cases of less overtly feminist 'crossover' writers have also been examined from a perspective encompassing both their literary and journalistic work (for instance, on Serao, see Fanning, *Gender meets genre*). However, building on this research, a comparative exploration of how multiple women writers negotiated the passage between literary and journalistic genres remains to be carried out.

Cammeo, to name but a few.⁴⁹ Might Jewish culture and its shifting place in Italian discourse have intersected significantly with the trajectory of the suffrage movement?

All these lines of enquiry could serve as spurs to future research; so, too, could the question of how my findings relate to gendered discourse in Italy in more recent times. I have touched briefly and sporadically on how some of the discourses identified here – especially the 'counter-discourses' of celebrated feminine difference and foregrounded mother-daughter relationships – can suggest echoes in the strands of second-wave Italian feminism dedicated to the *pensiero della differenza sessuale*, but a more thorough investigation of such links would be intriguing. More broadly, the relationship of Italian women to the political sphere remains deeply fraught, with those in the roles of *elette* often being attacked in sexist terms. The themes around which such attacks are organised can sometimes seem decidedly reminiscent of the discourse within which the suffragists of the early twentieth century moved. In particular, we might enquire into the persistence of *grazia* and *bellezza* as idealised feminine attributes, and the perceived incompatibility of these with political activism; ⁵⁰ we might also investigate modern invocations of a 'madonna-whore' binary of female sexuality akin to that which caused registered prostitutes to be excluded from the 1919 (and 1945) proposals for suffrage. ⁵¹

⁴⁹ The high proportion of Jewish women affiliated with the UFN and other women's organisations, such as the Asilo Mariuccia and the Lyceum in Florence, is noted in Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico* (see 'Tabet Sisa in Lopez', p. 1053. Two such women, Berta Bernstein Cammeo and her daughter Marta, would establish the Associazione Donne Ebree Italiane (ADEI) in 1927 (see Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile*, p. 179; 'Bernstein Marta in Navarra' in Farina (ed.), *Dizionario biografico*, pp. 145-46).

⁵⁰ During a televised debate in 2009, the words of the then prime minister Silvio Berlusconi to political opponent and former minister Rosy Bindi offered one example of this form of sexism in Italian political discourse: 'Lei è sempre più bella che intelligente. Non mi interessa nulla di quello che Lei eccepisce' [You are more beautiful than you are intelligent. I am not remotely interested in your objection]. The insult was clearly aimed at Bindi's appearance as well as her intellect. Famously, she shot back with the words, 'Presidente, io sono una donna che non è a sua disposizione' [Prime Minister, I am a woman who is not at your disposal], a retort highlighting the attempted use of supposed feminine norms to control threateningly political women and keep them 'a disposizione'. (See for instance 'Berlusconi insulta la Bindi, lei risponde' in *Corriere della Sera*, 8 October 2009, accessed from Corriere it at

http://www.corriere.it/politica/09_ottobre_08/berlusconi-bindi-battibecco-porta-a-porta_828e7274-b3ec-11de-afa2-00144f02aabc.shtml on 22 September 2013).

widely-reported appearances in recent months. In June 2013, the Lega Nord politician Mario Borghezio criticised the then junior minister Josefa Idem with the words: 'forse le vere puttane non sono quelle che esercitano la professione [...] forse le vere puttane sono certi personaggi, donne ma anche uomini, che prostituiscono la funzione di servizio che chi ha uno stipendio pubblico dovrebbe sentire di avere nei confronti dell'azienda che li paga'. [Perhaps the real whores are not those who pursue that profession [...] perhaps the real whores are certain characters, women but also men, who prostitute the role of service that whoever has a public salary ought to feel towards the organisation that pays them]. Despite the disclaimer that men could also be 'puttane' of this variety, the direction of this imagery towards a female politician foregrounds sexuality, and in particular the moral binary applied to female sexuality, as a mode of discussing women in public life. (See for instance Rachele Nenzi, 'Borghezio choc su Idem "Le vere puttane stanno nelle istituzioni" in *Il giornale*, 21 June 2013, accessed from Ilgiornale.it at http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/borghezio-choc-su-idem-vere-puttane-stanno-nelle-istituzioni-929257.html on 22 September 2013). The appointment of Cécile Kyenge to the position of Minister for Integration has elicited mutations in traditional forms of sexist discourse to allow for the intersection of sexism and racism (Kyenge is Italy's first black minister); in particular, both poles of the

Meanwhile, feminist activism in Italy in very recent years has been vibrant but often divided⁵² – and, although the lines of dissonance may be different to those that fragmented the suffragists, the linguistic strategies used to define in-groups and challenge out-groups do sometimes carry echoes of that earlier campaign.⁵³ Moreover, the complex relationship between gender inequality in Italy and Italian national identity on a world stage still forms a significant component of feminist discourse in the country.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, as has been demonstrated, even a single text, emerging from a defined

'madonna-whore' binary have been invoked in concentrated forms against her. In April 2013, Mario Borghezio (again!) decried her appointment on the grounds that 'a me è parso avesse l'aria di una casalinga' [to me she had the look of a housewife about her]. ('Borghezio contro Kyenge. La replica PD: Svegliatelo' in *Corriere della Sera*, 30 April 2013, accessed from <u>Corriere.it</u> at

http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2013/aprile/30/Borghezio contro Kyenge replica Svegliatelo co 0 20130430 90957ac4-b155-11e2-8ee2-5be9de513930.shtml on 22 September 2013). In August 2013, Cristiano Za Garibaldi, the deputy mayor of a Ligurian town, referred to Kyenge with the comment that 'il fatto è che io non frequento il rettilineo di Ceriale' [the fact is that I don't visit the Ceriale road]; the place named supposedly has a high proportion of black women working as prostitutes. (Maurizio Tagliano, 'Il vicesindaco di Diano Marina insulta la Kyenge', La Stampa, 25 August 2013, accessed from LaStampa.it at

http://www.lastampa.it/2013/08/25/edizioni/imperia/il-vicesindaco-di-diano-marina-insulta-la-kyenge-

<u>SsuSPPwvBoQsdAFeF8IvPP/pagina.html</u> on 22 <u>September 2013</u>). The insinuations against Kyenge's fitness to practise politics, then, range from positing her as a 'casalinga' - too much of an 'angel of the house' - to associating her with commodified sexuality. If the search for a 'middle ground' between the extremes of female typologies proved problematic for the suffragists I have studied, that 'middle ground' seems to remain all too elusive in the discourse surrounding women in politics in today's Italy, most especially in the case of the doubly-'Othered' Kyenge.

For instance, the 'Se Non Ora Quando' [SNOQ] movement, established in 2011 in response to sexism in Italian society in general and to the sex scandals surrounding Silvio Berlusconi and several women, most notably an underage girl, in particular, has been criticised by self-defined 'veterofemministe' [old-school feminists] as engaging in protests that are both too singular in focus and too moralistic about sex and prostitution. In the words of one set of critics (writing in a right-wing newspaper): 'I cortei hanno riproposto vecchi stereotipi femministi e antiche divisioni; ieri donne contro uomini, oggi donne contro donne con la presunzione di delineare un discrimine impossibile tra buone e cattive.' [The demonstrations have brought back up old feminist stereotypes and long-standing divisions; yesterday women versus men, today women versus women with the presumptuous claim of defining an impossible distinction between good women and bad women]. (See Barbara Saltamartini, Isabella Rauti and Paola Frassinetti, 'Basta coi cortei e il femminismo. Per le donne Pdl parlano i fatti' in *Il Giornale*, accessed from <u>IlGiornale.it</u> at http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/basta-coi-cortei-e-femminismo-donne-pdl-parlano-i-fatti.html on 22 September 2013).

For instance, a report of the new Cinque Stelle political movement's introduction of some of its female candidates in 2013 cites leader Beppe Grillo as declaring: 'Eccole le nostre donne. Non sono donne con bocche di polistirolo e culi di gomma, sono donne che lavorano, donne con due cogl.. così'. [Here they are, our women. They are not women with polystyrene lips and rubber rears, they are women who work, women with balls of brass... this big.] If the Cinque Stelle movement prides itself on putting forward 'ballsy' working women – the heirs of the *donne proletarie* studied in this thesis? – the opposing, 'Othered' group is exemplified by surgically-altered *veline* (women on Italian television whose roles are limited to the 'decorative'); the *veline* seem a repository for scorn similar to that showed by socialist factions to *donne borghesi* in earlier times. (Gabriele Villa, 'Il comizio a Piazza Duomo a Milano' in *Il Giornale*, 20 February 2013, accessed from <u>IlGiornale.it</u> at http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/comizio-piazza-duomo-milano-887988.html on 22 September 2013).

⁵⁴ The motif of the 'paese serio', in particular, remains prevalent; for example, in a 2011 blog post responding to a joke made by then minister Maurizio Sacconi about rape, an SNOQ representative stated that 'non potrebbe accadere in nessun paese serio che un Ministro per difendere un provvedimento indifendibile contro i lavoratori [...] non trovi di meglio che raccontare una triste barzelletta contro le suore, banalizzando una tragedia come la violenza sulle donne' [it could not happen in any serious country that a Minister, in order to defend an indefensible measure against workers [...] should not find any better way to go about it than by telling a sad joke against nuns, trivialising a tragedy like violence against women]. ('Il Ministro Sacconi ha passato il limite della decenza...', 15 September 2011, accessed from Se Non Ora Quando? at

moment and with an ostensibly defined position, is likely to yield signs of ambivalence and contradiction. How, then, one might wonder, could clear connections possibly be drawn between the textual patterns observed throughout this thesis (characterised as they often are by internal heterogeneity and unresolved incoherencies) and the gendered language not only of later philosophical approaches, but of the everyday media discourse of present-day Italy?

There would be little point in seeking lines of direct continuity when attempting to relate the discourse of then to that of now. The past is another country, certainly; however, it is a country that we can view from the aerial vantage point of posterity, and, in this case, its language is a close ancestor of the language used in contemporary Italy. The two eras may be less distant than one might at first assume. By observing the patternings of discourse around the suffrage issue a century ago — the thematic channels that carved their way swiftly and easily into the bedrock of the language, and those that met resistance; the ideological dams that stymied the progression of particular kinds of argument; the confluences — calm or clashing — of identity positions; and the impossibly myriad play of linguistic ripples within rhetorical streams — we may glean insights, albeit rarely completely-fitting ones, into how to comprehend and navigate the discursive landscape in which we are immersed today.

APPENDIX I

List of acronyms used

ADEI = Associazione Donne Ebree Italiane, founded in 1927.

CNDI = Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane, founded in 1903.

CNPSF = Comitato Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile, founded in 1906. (Later became the FNPSF).

FNPSF= Federazione Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile. The CNPSF adopted this name in 1913.

IAWSEC = International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship. The IWSA adopted this name circa 1926.

IWSA = International Woman Suffrage Alliance, founded in 1904. (Later became the IAWSEC).

LPF = Lega Patriottica Femminile, founded in 1917.

LTIF = Leghe per la Tutela degli Interessi Femminili. Several founded in 1880s.

NUWSS = National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, consolidated in Britain in 1897.

PPI = Partito Popolare Italiano, founded in 1919.

PSI = Partito Socialista Italiano, founded in 1892.

SNOQ = Se Non Ora Quando, founded in 2011.

UDCI = Unione fra Donne Cattoliche in Italia, founded in 1909.

UFN = Unione Femminile Nazionale, founded in 1899.

WILPF = Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, founded in 1915.

WSPU = Women's Social and Political Alliance, founded in Britain in 1903. (Militant suffragette organisation).

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¹ Note: no author is usually given for Mozzoni's 1906 petition, analysed in Chapter 5. For this reason, it is cited in the bibliography under 'No author listed' ('Petizione al Parlamento [...] 1906').

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