

A Room in Italian Anthropology: female scholars in the Florentine Society of Paolo Mantegazza

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ABSTRACT

Gender relations play a decisive role in shaping our society and our cultural heritage. A general problem in the study of our heritage is the disappearance of women's stories, often invisible even in recent readings. This article tries to shed light on an untold story: the presence of women in the Società Italiana per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia during Paolo Mantegazza presidency (1871-1910). With this contribution we hope to highlight female figures and their contribution to the origins of anthropological disciplines in Italy.

Key words:

gender, best practices, MUSEINTEGRATI project.

RIASSUNTO

Uno spazio nell'antropologia italiana: donne scienziate nella Società fiorentina di Paolo Mantegazza

Le relazioni di genere giocano un ruolo decisivo nel dare forma alla nostra società e al nostro patrimonio culturale. Un problema generale nello studio del nostro patrimonio è la sparizione delle storie femminili, rese spesso invisibili anche da letture recenti. Questo articolo cerca di illuminare una storia ancora inedita: la presenza di donne nella Società Italiana di Antropologia e Etnologia durante la presidenza di Paolo Mantegazza (1871-1910). Con questo contributo speriamo di dare rilievo alle figure femminili e al loro contributo alle origini delle discipline antropologiche in Italia.

Parole chiave:

genere, buone pratiche, progetto MUSEINTEGRATI.

INTRODUCTION

The Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence is one of thirty Italian museums participating in MUSEINTEGRATI (see website 1), a national project researching and supporting museal best practices. This initiative states that museums can and should be active in developing and disseminating knowledge about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that form the core of the 2030 Agenda. Among many crucial topics, the 2030 Agenda underlines that women play a crucial role in sustainability. Indeed, goal 5 of the Agenda stresses the importance of achieving gender equality and empower all women. Gender equality is important because women can offer a vital contribution to a better, more sustainable and peaceful future. Gender relations play a decisive role in shaping our society and our cultural heritage. An essential perspective is to study our cultural heritage from an appreciation that our predecessors forged our current heritage. Cultural heritage is built over time and is the result of history, which reflects relationships established in society.

The above premises are well suited to institutions such as the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology

of Florence, which was born in 1869 as a National Museum. At that time Florence was the capital of the new-born state of Italy and the city was a crossroad for artists, scientists and politicians. Between 1869 and 1871, Paolo Mantegazza established the chair of Anthropology at the Institute of Higher Studies, and founded in close synergy, the Museum, the Italian Society for Anthropology and the Ethnology, and the "Archivio", its scientific journal. Mantegazza's anthropology was created as an ambitious scientific project aimed to study and represent humanity in all its biological and cultural variations. Contemporarily, the role of women in Italy was changing: "When in the nineteenth century the voices of 'normal' women began to be heard, even if rather faintly, demanding access to higher education, unlike other countries, in Italy laws forbidding them from entering the university were never introduced. Yet, it was only after the political unification of the country (1861) that female education began to be seriously thought about. This change coincided with the wave of sentiments created by the Risorgimento and the politics of unification" (Govoni, 2015: 70).

The Florentine institution is a very informative study case to reveal the role of women in new fields of re-

search: "The changing relationship between women and science in higher education over time is of great interest for historians of universities and science" (Govoni, 2015: 71). A general problem in the study of our heritage is the disappearance of women's stories, often invisible even by recent readings.

MEN EXPLAINING WOMEN

The history of Italian Anthropology is unfortunately focused on just a few male actors (Taylor, 1987). In particular, the history of the origins of Italian anthropology is often told to coincide with the activity of Paolo Mantegazza, who was trained as a medical doctor, hygienist, laboratory researcher. He is well known as founder of journals, traveler, collector, photographer and popular influencer of his time. His production ranges from scientific texts and articles to educational writings to popular almanacs, but it also includes fiction, diaries, letters, memoirs. Anthropology was defined by Mantegazza as the discipline studying the "Natural history of Man", but a good share of his attention was dedicated to define capabilities and fragilities of human females. Italian anthropologists of the time opened a debate on female body, brain and attitude, that pretended to be objective and scientific and that was intensively disseminated through classes, articles and books. Without doubt, Mantegazza, medical doctor, scientist and the author of many ground-breaking publications on sexuality (Sigusch, 2008), was considered an expert on female physiology and psychology. His book "Fisiologia della donna" (1893) became an international best seller of his time. The difference between men and women was an important theme discussed in his lessons ("L'uomo nel sesso - Differenze morali", Lezione IX, 14 febbraio 1870, Mantegazza, 1870). He also openly discussed feminism in his 1906 article "Il femminismo moderno dinanzi alla scienza". The definition of female role and the access to education claimed by women, was a hot topic also in the Victorian society.

As Govoni states (2015: 75), "Of course, many Victorian men of science, some for 'scientific' reasons, others for 'ethical' ones, were firmly opposed to women entering universities and professional scientific societies [...] In the United Kingdom the pressure from women to enter the university and professional societies coincided with the decisive stages in the evolution of natural philosophers into scientists, a self-aware group that recognized in the 'the new woman' a potentially dangerous competitor. [...] Institutions like universities of ancient and 'sacred' traditions, and other newer ones, like the professional societies, felt they had to remain places of excellence for [male] adepts [...]".

Mantegazza was not the only Italian anthropologist who discussed this subject. Giuseppe Sergi (the

"traitor" that while still a member of the Florentine Society, had founded a new association in Rome) wrote openly on the subject in "Se vi sono donne di genio" (1893). The question was: are there women of genius? The answer was of course negative. For Sergi, "infantility" was the most common aspect of the female gender: women could not be of genius like men, nor equal to men.

Mantegazza (1898) focused on the issue of women and science in the article "Le donne nella scienza" published by the most important Italian journal of the time, "Nuova Antologia".

"A woman can write as well as a man, she can be eloquent as men, but women rarely imagine anything new. The glance, the practical sense, the divination are eminently feminine qualities, and the woman must have acquired them, as tricks derived from the need to hurry up and shorten the intellectual work, which tires her more than it does men. It is a kind of stenography learned by instinct and by necessity. In my 'Physiology of the woman' I have long demonstrated the how and why our companion succeeds so well in the epistolary style, but I dealt only briefly with the very small part that she always had in the development of the sciences." (Mantegazza, 1898: 284).

Please note that the author (FB) in this case and all others translated the quote from the Italian to English.

Despite this discouraging premises the author summarized a little history of women active in science from ancient times, and ended his contribution writing about two of his contemporaries: Clémence Augustine Royer and Caterina Pigorini Beri.

The journal "Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia" provides a window on gender issues: articles with original research were always included. Also contents of the meetings, list of members of the Società, and reviews of the international scientific literature, were diligently and regularly reported. Thanks to the "Archivio", we can reconnect Royer, Pigorini Beri and other women to the history of the Società Italiana per l'Antropologia e l'Etnologia. Below I illustrate some examples of extraordinary women found in the pages of the "Archivio".

Ernestine Puritz-Manassè Paper

Dr. Ernestina Paper was elected as ordinary member of the Società in 1877. Born in Odessa in 1846 as Ernestine Puritz-Manassè, she later used her husband's last name until her death in Florence on February 14, 1926 (Govoni, 2016). She is recognized as the first woman to graduate from the university in Italy after the birth of the unified state, having obtained the title of doctor in medicine and surgery at the Florentine Institute of Higher Studies in 1877. Before she had studied in Switzerland and in Pisa:

"From 1859 hundreds of women had enrolled in Russian universities, but between 1863 and 1864, through

strong social pressures, the lecture halls of the universities were closed to them, and would remain closed until 1878. This was the reason why many female Russian students were driven to leave the country for Western Europe" (Govoni, 2015: 73). The following year Ernestine opened a medical office in Florence (Govoni, 2016). We have other information from letters sent to Paolo Mantegazza. They let us know that the relationship with the anthropologist and his family was very warm, and that she used to be invited at their home, included their vacation villa on the Liguria Sea. From a letter written by Ernestina (n. cat. 881, Mantegazza correspondence archive of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence) we know that he had assured help in finding a teaching job for Ernestina's girlfriend Giuseppina Stefani. In this letter, her preferences about the classes to teach were described (Italian literature and natural sciences), but also some options that could not be taken in consideration (as female chores and calligraphy).

Vittoria Altoviti Avila Toscanelli

Vittoria Toscanelli was elected ordinary member in 1880. Both in the summer residence and in the palaces of Pisa and Florence, the Marquise Vittoria animated a famous literary salon hosting poets, painters and intellectuals of the time. The assiduous friends were the writers and poets Giuseppe Giusti, Edmondo De Amicis, Renato Fucini, the painter Antonio Ciseri, the Macchiaioli painter Telemaco Signorini, and many others. From 1880 to 1889, she resided in Elba in search of a place where Giovan Battista, the eldest son, could recover from his illness. Vittoria Altoviti Avila Toscanelli had an elegant palace built there. Elba was still a wild island surrounded by the ocean and the scents of balsamic Mediterranean essences which were considered having a healing influence. During nine years of life on Elba she developed a passion for exploration of the flora both on Elba and other nearby island. She set sail together, with professors Giorgio Roster and Enrico Hayler Giglioli, on long cruises of the Tyrrhenian Sea. During these expeditions, she collected algae, preserved as dried samples or in glass jars with a special solution. She classified them, in collaboration with a famous specialist, Francesco Ardissoni. She also left many drawings using the camera lucida. Finally, the death of her son marked the end of her algae studies. In January 1889 she wrote to Ardissoni: "I was for three months as usual in Elba, but looking at the sea from the Villa, it is like the sacred flame burned out, as did the life of that son who gave savour to those activities!" (Micagli, 2016).

Clémence Augustine Royer

Clémence Augustine Royer (Nantes, 21 April 1830 - Neuilly-sur-Seine, 6 February 1902) was nominated honorary member of the Italian Society in 1874.

Mantegazza provided a fascinating portrait of her in his article in 1898:

"French anthropology has among its most illustrious representatives a woman, Clémence Royer, born in Nantes to a legitimist and religious family, but whose faith she repudiated, becoming one of the most courageous positivists. However, she does not want to be called either with this baptism or with another one, and with Gauloise wit she replies to those who would like to enlist her under a philosophical or political banner: 'Je ne me laisserai jamais mettre en bouteille, je ferais sauter le bouchon'. Her audacity in fighting the battles of thought reaches extreme limits, and in some discussions in a famous Congress she repelled many for the cynicism with which she repressed any sentiment in order to justify the cruelties of nature against the weak. It is useless: we want, and I rightly believe, the woman as a woman, and when she renounces the tenderness of the heart, we judge her as an apostate of nature, which is an even holier religion than that of the Church, because it is above and much higher than all Christian temples, all synagogues and all Olympians. Royer's works are all marked by a virility of concepts and a depth to make us admire her robust, bright and, methodical intelligence. It was thought of making her a member of the Institut, but he will certainly die without obtaining this palm, which is opposed by too many traditions and too many prejudices" (Mantegazza, 1898: 295). Mantegazza comments were ambivalent. He openly admired her, but he did not dissimulate his difficulty to accept her unconventional approach. We should also note that Royer had reached an important scientific goal that Mantegazza, despite some effort, had not achieved. In 1862 Clémence Augustine Royer had published the first French translation of "Origin of species" by Charles Darwin, signing the dissemination of Darwinism in France. We know from a letter that 10 years later Mantegazza proposed to translate "Emotions" for the Italian public, but Darwin kindly declined on the ground that he had already an agreement: "With respect to the translation of my book, if the possibility had ever occurred to me that you would have been willing to undertake it, I would assuredly have refused every other proposal, but as it is, two Gentlemen have applied to me, and I am pledged to one of them" (Charles Darwin to Paolo Mantegazza, 28 December 1872, see website 2). Royer was an adamant feminist, engaged in activities in favour of women education and well known for her public speaking, and participation to scientific meetings and congress. Capellini (1873) reported on Royer attending the International Congress of Anthropology and prehistoric Archeology of Bruxelles, in 1872, where she took the podium after the famous scientists Virchow e Quatrefages. In the "Archivio" there are numerous references to Royer's interventions in the scientific debate of the time. Mantegazza

himself reviewed her publications without any condescension, respectfully, sometimes finding himself in disagreement (Mantegazza, 1878), other times enthusiastically sharing her positions (Mantegazza, 1881).

When Royer died, Mantegazza himself prepared a Commemoration, not a simple necrology, later published on the "Archivio" (1902a). The speech was delivered at the meeting of the Society on February 23, 1902. Every criticism was forgotten and Mantegazza described the incredible achievements of this brave woman, mentioning the difficulties, the opposition and the prejudices that, as a woman, she had to overcome. He also let her speak through her own words quoting a number of citations from Royer. He concluded: "And today the great thinker, the hot writer died at the age of 72 in a small room of a charity asylum, she who had deserved the overly arrogantly masculine words of the Renan: She's almost a man of genius".

Caterina Pigorini Beri

In regards to Caterina Pigorini Beri, Mantegazza wrote in his article on women and science: "Also known to all is Pigorini Beri, my excellent and ancient friend, who with her works on folklores, history and literary criticism has been able to weave a double scientific and literary crown around her forehead. It represents common sense for me. become a woman and lined with all the grace of a style so lucid and harmonious as to recall the greatest prose writers of the golden century of our literature. Where the woman, studying the sciences, seems to me to reach all the height to which she can rightly aspire, is where she becomes the ally, the companion of the man, to whom she has given her heart and which she lovingly helps in his work, in his research. Here the woman of science does not rebel against sex, but uses her thoughts to honor it and accepting the most modest part of a handmaid in the most tiring travails of investigation and discoveries, she becomes a man in the hierarchy of work, remaining a woman in sentiment and self-denial" (1898: 281-296).

In 1890 Caterina Pigorini Beri was the first woman to publish an original research in the "Archivio". In the same year she won the first prize at the competition of the Società for the best research on the "superstition" in some Italian region. Caterina had researched for years the traditional culture of Marche (Central Italy) and already published the book "Costumi e superstizioni dell'Appennino Marchigiano" (1889). She reorganized her material and added new parts to answer the questions that the Commission had proposed to the candidates. The result was the article "Le superstizioni e i pregiudizi delle Marche Appenniniche. Per rispondere all'inchiesta della società italiana d'antropologia". Finally, a woman contributed with an original research article to the "Archivio",

after 19 years from its foundation. The first prize included also a monetary prize of 300 Lire, for the time a noteworthy sum.

She was also the only woman to have written in the journal "La Natura" (Pigorini Beri, 1884). This weekly scientific journal was founded by the editor Treves and by Mantegazza, following the footsteps of British "Nature" and French "La Nature". The project did not have success and the project was abandoned after little more than a year (Govoni, 2002).

Caterina Pigorini was indeed an "ancient friend", who started to exchange letters with Mantegazza as a young woman. She became known for her talent as a writer, but when she asked to the school counsel of Parma a licence to teach at the elementary school, the licence was not conferred on the charge that she was considered incompetent in arithmetic. She wrote about this humiliating verdict to Mantegazza, who encouraged her to write directly to Correnti, the Minister of the Public Education. Mantegazza in a letter to Caterina (5 November 1870) informed her about his reaction:

"You have conquered the Minister. Guess what he asked first: 'but tell me the truth: is the letter really all written by Her?' These men are all the same; they see something good and immediately believe impossible that a woman did it!" (Calza, 1928).

This consideration demonstrates how Mantegazza was perfectly aware of the unfair prejudices routinely pointed to female intelligence. The petition was successful and she was nominated not just elementary teacher, but the Director of the Normal School in Camerino.

Caterina wrote regularly on "Nuova Antologia" and became known also as a historian, but her interests focused on the "folkloristic" study of Italian traditional cultures: she was a pioneer of field research on this topic. The discussion on the Italian regional question was an important topic in the newly-born State. Since the foundation of his museum, Paolo Mantegazza would have liked to add, beside the ethnological exotic collections, a room dedicated to artifacts produced by traditional Italian cultures, a project that he had not been able to realize.

But later the creation of the controversial and innovative Museo Psicologico allowed him to fill this gap. Four letters written by Caterina to Mantegazza, from 8 August 1889 to 1 February 1890 (n. cat. 4298-4430, Mantegazza Archive, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence) develop different themes and allow us to better define her personality (Bigoni, 2022). One of the topics is the negotiation for the sale of an important collection of clichés, wooden models that were used to imprint the design of the religious tattoos of Loreto and the "pen" with which the dye was made to penetrate the skin. This bargaining was successful. In the catalog of the Psychological Museum (separate from that of the Eth-

nological Museum), the clichés appear from no. 14 to no. 108, with the note of the price paid to Caterina of 1002.80 lire, a considerable amount of money for the time, high in proportion to the economic availability to establish the Museum. In the letters, Caterina also revealed to his old friend all the difficulties in obtaining, as a woman, the right recognition for her work.

Zelia Maria Magdalena Nuttall

In the same year (1890) of the competition won by Caterina Pigorini Beri, the Society elected Zelia Maria Magdalena Nuttall from San Francisco, California, as a new member ("Socia corrispondente"). She was presented by Enrico Giglioli and Mantegazza himself as "a very distinctive Americanist, who now is studying in Europe Aztec pictography" (1891: 448). We know from the "Archivio" that on April 30, Nuttall and Pigorini participated at the same meeting. They thanked the Society, the first for being elected, the second for the first prize award. Nuttall was spending time in Florence researching ancient manuscripts and 1890 ended up as a very important year in her career. In the Biblioteca Nazionale she re-discovered the "Codex Magliabecchiano". She was also able to trace the Zapotecan manuscript from the monastery of San Marco in Florence to its owner of the time, Lord Zouche of Hayworth. This manuscript then became known as the "Codex Nuttall" and was published as such in 1902 (1975 facsimile) by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. She became the expert of Aztec manuscripts kept on her research in the archives of Mexico, New York, and England. The cultural background of Zelia Nuttall was international (Tozzer, 1933). She was born in San Francisco to an Irish father and a Mexican-American mother. She acquired her education in France, Germany, Italy, and England. For a few years was married to the French anthropologist Alphonse Louis Pinart, with whom she moved around to the West Indies, France, and Spain until 1882, before returning to San Francisco. She had a baby girl, but the marriage ended in 1884 and obtained a divorce in 1888. She kept on moving from Mexico to Baltimore, to different European destinations including Russia but always returning to California. Finally, she moved to Mexico. She was Honorary Assistant in Mexican Archaeology at the Peabody Museum from 1886 until her death in 1933. She had gained a fame of esteemed member of countless academic societies, and was honorary Professor of Anthropology at the National Museum of Mexico. She was an award-winning scholar, but her career was not easy: "Despite a few great successes, such as the publication of the Codex Nuttall, Nuttall was often frustrated by a lack of money for printing, competition from other scholars, and the process of working with the Peabody Museum to print facsimiles. Nuttall's position as a woman scholar and an amateur left her without institutional

support in an era when such associations became increasingly important" (Valiant, 2019). She chose a rigorous methodology of research and "encouraged her peers to set standards for anthropological practices and highlighted the lack of archival standards in Mexico and Europe in the early twentieth century" (Valiant, 2019). The courageous task of publicly claiming respect for Mexico's archaeological heritage and demanding high methodological standards in research, was made even more difficult by belonging to the female gender. One of the consequences was the diatribe with Leopoldo Batres (Museo Nacional de Antropología of Mexico) that wrote about her: "Thimeramente me propuse despreciar esos ataques desde el momento en que habían sido lanzados sin pruebas, en forma vaga, y sin más fundamento que una mala pasión inspirada en el histerismo femenino de una persona que gratuitamente me odia y que está beoda por la sed de venganza que la devora, sentimiento nacido del excesivo amor propio que tanto caracteriza á la Sra. Zelia Nuttall de Pinard y que ha resentido porque en su primera gestión no la atendió como deseaba una Secretaría de Estado" (Batres, 1910).

In short, the accusation of being affected by "female hysteria" was a convenient and rather widespread pseudoscientific stereotype of the time, easily used to defame a female scholar. Nuttall was insulted and ridiculed for her serious intentions in conducting research and laying serious foundations for the identification and care of the archaeological heritage. But the admiration of Mantegazza for Nuttall was adamant. Nuttall's publications were constantly reviewed on the "Archivio" by Paolo Mantegazza (1890, 1891, 1892, 1894, 1902b, 1902c, 1907). In fact, Mantegazza, an Americanist himself, used to enthusiastically present Nuttall publications in the section of the journal dedicated to the reviews. He referred to her as "The most learned author who is nowadays one of the highest authorities in terms of Aztec ethnology" (Mantegazza, 1891). Years later his esteem was still very high: "The author who is one of the highest authorities in the field of Aztec ethnology and philology, has recently made a very important discovery, which garnered the admiration of the scholars gathered in Chicago, Barcelona and recently in the 10th International Congress of Americanists in Stockholm. Today we can say that the mystery of the Aztec calendar is known to us in its marvelous organism [...]. The author continues her in-depth studies on this topic and an anonymous Aztec manuscript from the National Library of Florence has greatly benefited her research" (Mantegazza, 1907).

Maria Montessori

In 1904 the "Archivio" contains a report that "Professor Maria Montessori, teacher of Hygiene and Anthropology in the Female Magisterial School of

Rome" was elected as Ordinary Member of the Società, during the Meeting of April 20. The meeting was conducted by Mantegazza, and the proposal of the new associate presented by Enrico Morselli and by Mantegazza himself. In the same volume of the "Archivio", the original scientific article authored by Maria Montessori (1904) "Sui caratteri antropometrici in relazione alle gerarchie intellettuali", was published.

There is an additional mention of Maria Montessori in the same volume of the "Archivio". Ettore Regàlia, member of the Società and collaborator of Mantegazza, published a particularly long, detailed and enthusiastic review on another work published on the "Rivista di filosofia e scienze affini" in the same year (1904) by Montessori: "Influenza delle condizioni di famiglia sul livello intellettuale degli scolari. Ricerche d'igiene e antropologia pedagogiche in rapporto all'educazione" (Influence of family conditions on the intellectual level of pupils. Hygiene research and pedagogical anthropology in relation to education).

Regàlia supported the scientific value of the research and informed that: "[...] considerations are exposed, relating to hygiene, physiology, psychology and the educational method, which involve the 'sense of justice', used to judge the intellectual value of children in schools". He included a meaningful citation from Montessori's article: "While outside, in the breath of renewed life, every expression of brotherhood and human solidarity is called justice, inside, in the educational environment of children, the ancient form of justice still resounds, which dug deeper and deeper into the abyss between men by chance placed in different conditions of birth" (Mentre fuori, al soffio della vita rinnovata, si chiama giustizia ogni espressione di fratellanza e di solidarietà umana, là dentro, nell'ambiente educativo dei fanciulli, risuona ancora l'antica forma di giustizia, che scavava sempre più profondo l'abisso tra uomini al caso posti in differenti condizioni di nascita) (1904: 430-431).

For Montessori, the 1904 volume of the "Archivio" marked a moment of important recognition in the Italian anthropological academic establishment. This validation came at a critical point in the development of Montessori's professional life. Since 1902 Maria Montessori had applied to obtain her university teaching licence in Rome, but difficulties and obstacles materialized. It was even difficult to find professors to participate in the commission for the final exam. Incredible as it now seems, Sergi, head of the Roman anthropological school, refused to take part in the commission. It was thanks to Enrico Morselli, who accepted without difficulties to replace Sergi, that finally the commission was formed (Babini, 2011). Maria Montessori went successfully through her examination on 9 June 1904, discussing the subject "Craniologia e craniometria com-

parata dell'uomo e dei primati, con dimostrazioni" (Comparative craniology and craniometry of man and primates, with demonstrations). Two years later, Montessori dedicated a new publication to Enrico Morselli, expressing great gratitude for his support (Montessori, 1906).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article our analysis of gender in Italian anthropology was limited to the period coinciding with the activity of Paolo Mantegazza. In some other countries the role of women in developing anthropology was certainly more effective. "Archivio" mentions the foundation of The women's anthropological society of America, an institution very active especially in the ethnological field (1885: 217). In 1889 "Science" published a "General report of the recording secretary, Mrs. Anita Newcomb McGee, The women's anthropological society of America": "There are hundreds of societies in which knowledge is cultivated and fostered for its own sake in which many grand and useful conceptions find birth; there are in the United States several scientific societies devoted wholly to anthropology; but among all of these the first to be organized and maintained by women alone is the Women's Anthropological Society of America" (Newcomb McGee, 1889).

But as we have seen, it would be unfair to think that the Società Italiana during Mantegazza presidency did not allow the participation of women. However, unfortunately after his death the museum and the Society entered a very different phase. Mochi, student and successor of Mantegazza, just months after his death, emptied the Museo psicologico that included hundreds of artefacts documenting traditional Italian regional cultures. They were given to the Museum of Ethnology founded by Lamberto Loria, at the time already transferred to Rome. The justification was to obtain anthropological collections in exchange from Loria. The result was the loss of hundreds of artefacts, including the collection from Caterina Pigorini Beri. The parable of the museum then soon intersected and served fascism with its racist politics.

After the Second World War II, we could assume that the situation for women had drastically improved, but instead women in Italian anthropology were surprisingly highly under represented. After the war, Paolo Graziosi became the director of the museum in Florence (from 1954 to 1981). He is well remembered as an influential scholar in Prehistory. He conducted two scientific missions in Hindu Kush spending time with Kalash people, at the time called with the ethnonym Kafirs, and collecting artefacts. A documentary film on the expedition was produced in 1955, with a sound track reporting comments and explanations by the same Graziosi (Bigoni & Rossi, 2016).

The description of the women in the village explains: "Character? They are women! You see how this girl disdains the advice of her mother who wholeheartedly tries to convince her. See how she responds stubbornly, notice this gesture of impatience: don't you right feel at home? And when the tape recorder has faithfully repeated their dialogue, these women laughed listening to their own nonsense, a normal situation" (see website 3). These derogatory comments, evidently acceptable at the time, were referred to both Italian and Kalash women.

Women in the period of Mantegazza participated to the Società Italiana per l'Antropologia e l'Etnologia in small numbers, but from our short report and their impact they represent a vital group. They were from different countries and diverse social and scientific backgrounds. All of them were fighting to gain recognition and respect, confronting their academic and social environment. Often they were and are still described nowadays as "amateurs" and "self-taught" (Valliant 2019, Puccini 2011). Some of them fought openly for the advance of the feminist movement as Royer and Montessori, others cultivated their studies keeping more conservative approaches. It is interesting Mantegazza's ambivalent judgments, especially when writing about Clémence Royer: his admiration mixed with a sort of embarrassment for her determination and firm opinions. Mantegazza was not a supporter of feminist revolution, but we can assume that he tried to be a fair judge of female talents. Certainly, as we saw from the correspondence with Caterina Pigorini Bini and Ernestina Paper, he was considered a paladin of educated women. He was willing to use his connections with powerful political men to get an appropriate job to women that wanted to work and be financially independent.

In this study we did not take in consideration the representation of women from indigenous populations, a specific subject of anthropological and ethnological studies of the time and a critical topic in contemporary studies. This is a very urgent and sensitive issue that needs proper attention and is a focus of our current research. This contribution is only a first recognition of female figures that need more studies.

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