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Italy's Primary Teachers: The Feminization of the Italian Teaching Profession, 1859-1911

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Julie Kazdan Pak

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Italy's Primary Teachers: The Feminization of the Italian Teaching Profession, 1859-1911

by

Julie Kazdan Pak

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Geoffrey Symcox, Chair

This dissertation concerns the feminization of the Italian teaching profession between the introduction of pre-Unification schooling in 1859 and the nationalization of that system in 1911. By feminization, this dissertation refers both to the gradual assumption of the majority of elementary teaching positions by women and to a transformation in the nature of the position itself. Through an examination of educational periodicals, school records, government inquests, and accounts by teachers and pedagogical theorists, it argues that rather than the unintended consequence of economic constraints or shifting labor patterns, feminization was fundamentally connected to larger processes of centralization and modernization in the Italian school system. Following an introductory chapter outlining the major national, religious, and gender debates of

the Unification era, the second chapter of the dissertation argues that the figure of the female elementary teacher became embroiled in the contest between local and national interests, furthering the drive toward centralization. The third chapter examines a subject generally ignored in most studies of Italian women's education: the impact of international and domestic pedagogy. The chapter shows that the development of an Italian pedagogy combining positivism and progressivism with a maternalist, child-centered methodology was both a result and a cause of the feminization of the teaching profession. The fourth chapter focuses on the divide between the secularizing nation and the entrenched Catholic Church, arguing that carefully trained female teachers were employed as agents of the encroaching State and examining the connection between religious education debates and women's rights movements. The fifth chapter is an institutional history of the teacher-training normal schools; an analysis of institutional and government records reveals that normal school feminization reflected the centralization, secularization, and pedagogical reformation of the school system in general.

The dissertation of Julie Kazdan Pak is approved.

Ellen DuBois

Sol Cohen

Kathryn Norberg

Geoffrey Symcox, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

For Arthur Kazdan Pak

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Abbreviations

ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato
FSS	Fonti per la storia della scuola
BNCF	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze
BCMS	Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea
MPI	Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione

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Introduction

Never forget that the glory of the nation comes from the virtue of its citizens and that virtuous citizens are formed at the knees of mothers and elementary schools, where young children are initiated into knowledge and virtue no longer by male teachers but by female teachers.¹

This dissertation concerns the feminization of the Italian teaching profession between 1859 and 1911. In addition to analyzing the various causes of feminization, the dissertation further claims that feminization was intrinsically linked to the modernization and centralization of the Italian school system. In the half century between the 1859 Casati law, establishing the Piedmontese precursor to the Italian school system, and the 1911 Daneo-Credaro law, bringing that system under State control, the Italian public school system was profoundly transformed in its theoretical underpinnings, the size and scope of its mission, and the composition of its instructors, resulting in an elementary system feminized in both its teaching corps and its character. By 1911, the mission of the school would be transformed from an elite training ground to a free, obligatory, and expanded school for the popular classes. All schools, including private institutions, would be brought under State financial and administrative control, women admitted to all secondary schools and University faculties, and teaching conditions significantly improved through unionization and standardization of pay and benefits. In 1863, women constituted 46% of instructors in both private and public schools, in 1881, around 55%, in 1901, 68%, and 1911, 72%.²

¹ *Educatrice italiana*, year II, no. 2, 33, quoted in Enrichetta Laurenti Parodi, *Lezioni di pedagogia in conformità del programma ministeriale: Parte III, per la terza classe normale e per le maestre elementari*, vol. III (Florence: R. Bemporad e Figlio Edit., 1901), 418.

² Giovanni Vigo, "Appendice statistica nel secolo XIX," in *Istruzione e sviluppo economico in Italia*, Archivio economico dell'unificazione italiana, series II, vol. XVIII (Turin: ILTE, 1971), 46, 66, 87.

Table 1.1: Percentages of Male and Female Elementary Teachers in Italy³

Year	Teachers (male)	Teachers (female)	Total Teachers
1863-64	18,443 (54%)	15,820 (46%)	34,263
1875-76	23,267 (49%)	23,818 (51%)	47,085
1901	21,178 (32%)	44,561 (68%)	65,739
1907-08	18,178 (30%)	42,107 (70%)	60,323
1910-11	19,044 (28%)	49,230 (72%)	67,274

By feminization, this dissertation refers both to the gradual assumption of the majority of elementary teaching positions by women and to a transformation in the nature of the position itself, from a moralistic and strict disciplinarian of a limited, hierarchical institution to a nurturing and trained educator within a popular and comprehensive system. The feminization of the Italian school teacher, particularly at the elementary level, stands in contrast to the intended goals of many writers of the immediate post-Risorgimento period who claimed that the “effeminacy” of the Italian character, a product of centuries of foreign, absolutist rule, indolent nobility, and clerical education, was among the greatest obstacles facing the new nation. The Ministry of Public Instruction (MPI), politicians, and pedagogical theorists made concerted efforts to curtail such supposedly effeminate and foreign influences by encouraging patriotism, bourgeois values, military discipline, and physical education. Historian Silvana Patriarca argues that this obsession with Italian “effeminacy” gave way to concern over the Italian “excessive

³ Susanne Wilking, *Mutter, Missionarin, Meisterin: Der Beruf der Lehren in Italien von 1860 bis 1914* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 48.

individualism” by the 1880s, resulting in an increased emphasis on encouraging Italian identity and patriotism.⁴ This dissertation argues while theorists and politicians of the immediate post-Unification period may have argued for a policy of “masculinization” in Italian schools, the pedagogical and political developments of the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to the feminization of elementary school teaching.

In a country attempting to formulate a national identity and character out of not just disparate regions, but often discordant and isolated communes, the figure of the teacher became an apologue of the debate between the national and the local. The status of the elementary teacher was a divisive subject; as an agent of the newly imposed State and a representative of modernity, the teacher was considered a purveyor of alien culture and values by local families and authorities. The success of the new Italian pedagogy, an amalgam of positivist and progressive theory applied through a maternal, child-centered methodology, was dependent on the formation of a corps of female elementary teachers, trained in a secular curriculum but maintaining the modesty and austerity of the religious orders they replaced.

This dissertation addresses three historiographical goals: first, it counters the dominance of budgetary concern as the primary driver of the feminization of the teaching profession; second, it presents this transformation as a signal of public education’s increased relevance and centrality to a modernizing State, repudiating truisms about rising levels of feminization as a signifier of waning social consequence; third, it addresses the lack of English-language analysis on Italian educational history. Historian Ilaria Porciani noted in 1987 that amidst the new research being done in the 1980s on the subject of education, including the education of women,

⁴ Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25. Patriarca notes that advocates of the Risorgimento saw Unification as providing needed re-virilization, following centuries of “degeneration” that had led to effeminacy and indolence.

the subject of female teachers in Italy was a singular area of deficiency.⁵ In the last twenty years, some of these lacunae have been narrowed: in the field of Italian women's history, there have been successful forays into studies of morality control and investigations into women's roles in the formation of national identity⁶; and in Italian educational history, there has been research into the ways in which education was both a rhetorical and functional tool in debates over Church/State relations and in attempts to forge national cohesion.⁷ While such cultural and literary studies provide insight into popular perception versus lived reality, the voices of Italian teachers themselves have not been sufficiently examined.⁸ Even among the recent Italian-language scholarship, feminization does not receive the attention it is accorded in other national educational contexts.⁹

⁵ Ilaria Porciani, "Sparsa di tanti triboli: la carriera della maestra," in *Le donne a scuola: L'educazione femminile nell'Italia dell'Ottocento. Mostra documentaria e iconografica* (Florence: Il Sedicesimo, 1987), 170.

⁶ Lucia Re, "Passion and Sexual Difference: The Risorgimento and the Gendering of Writing in Nineteenth-Century Italian Culture," in *Making and Remaking Italy*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna Von Henneberg (New York: Berg, 2001), 170. Recent works benefit from the historiography begun by Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, *Alle origini del movimento femminile in Italia, 1848-1892* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1963), 32-33. See also Gigliola De Donato, *La parabola della donna: nella letteratura italiana dell'Ottocento* (Bari: Adriatica, 1983); Michela De Giorgio, *Le italiane dall'Unità a oggi: modelli culturali e comportamenti sociali* (Rome: Laterza, 1992).

⁷ Maria Cristina Morandini, *Scuola e nazione: maestri e istruzione popolare nella costruzione dello Stato italiano* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2003). See also the excellent institutional histories in Sira Serenella Macchietti and Luciana Bellatalla, *Questioni e esperienze di educazione femminile in Toscana: Dalla Controriforma all'ultimo Ottocento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998). A good introductory text on women's education can be found in Mimma De Leo and Fiorenza Taricone, *Le donne in Italia: Educazione/istruzione* (Naples: Liguori, 1995).

⁸ Carmela Covato, "Educata a non istruirsi: un'introduzione al problema," in *E l'uomo educò la donna* (Rome: Riuniti, 1989). The strongest recent work is that by Simonetta Soldani, Simonetta Ulivieri, Carmela Covato, and Silvia Franchini.

⁹ Briefly, James Albisetti on Germany, Jo Burr Margadant and Rebecca Rogers on France, Jurgen Herbst on United States.

Another restriction of Italian analyses is the relative parochialism of Italian educational history; likely due to the absence of non-Italian language monographs on Liberal-era Italy, most Italian bibliographies on the topic of women's education focus nearly exclusively on Italian sources, isolated from new work in other national histories.¹⁰ Due in large part to a lack of extended English-language work on Italian education, Italy has either been ignored¹¹ or employed as a comparative case in English-language histories of women's education, usually as a brief and uncritically referenced negative tangent to a narrative of progress.¹² Other studies use Italy as a convenient example to argue for a connection between low school enrollment and a lack of Church and State alliance, without considering the two unique and central features of the Italian case: dramatic regional disparity and the gulf between primary and secondary educational priority.¹³

Historian Silvia Mantini noted in 2000 that while Italian historiography of 1500-1700 is well covered, that of the 1800s is sparse, with gender history "virtually nonexistent." Mantini quotes historian Simonetta Soldani: "the question of the influence of nationality and the national State in the redefinition of identity and female roles remained obscured, almost as if it were a

¹⁰ A non-comparative work that serves as a successful approach to the study of teachers is Jo Burr Margadant's prosopography of the first graduates of the *Ecole Normale of Sèvres*. Jo Burr Margadant, *Madame le Professeur: Women Educators in the Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹¹ Regina Cortina and Sonsoles San Román, *Women and Teaching: Global Perspectives on the Feminization of a Profession* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

¹² Phyllis Stock, *Better than Rubies* (New York: Capricorn, 1978).

¹³ Yasmine Soysal and David Strang, "Construction of the First Mass Education Systems in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Sociology of Education*, vol. 62, no. 4 (October 1989), 277-288.

marginal aspect of the ‘bourgeois mode’.”¹⁴ In examining the relationship between female educators and the transformation of the Italian school, this dissertation directly addresses Soldani’s argument, connecting the goals of the bourgeois State with the definition of national identity.

There continues to be a need to revise the place of the Liberal era in Italian history. As historian Lucy Riall noted in 1995, the six decades between 1861 and 1922 are often dissected for evidence of the failed goals of the Risorgimento or signs of weakness leading to overtaking by Fascism. Until the late 1980s, historical analysis of the Liberal Era generally fell into two concurrent schools. The first is the anti-liberal position that built upon Antonio Gramsci’s condemnation of the Liberal governments’ repressive, corrupt, and uneven policies as the direct cause of Fascism; this school of thought argues that these failed policies and the incomplete Risorgimental project had produced a deviant State compared to the models of England and France.¹⁵ The second school, with its foundation in Benedetto Croce’s writings, defended the policies of the Liberal era, praising its dramatic achievements and gradual democratization, arguing that Fascism was not the inevitable outgrowth of Liberal policies but rather “a bewilderment, a civic depression and a state of inebriation caused by the war.”¹⁶ Historian Nick Carter argues that during the 1980s, the Liberal era began to be viewed on its own terms, rather

¹⁴Simonetta Soldani, “Politique,” presented paper, “Identità e apparatenze” conference, Rimini, June 8-10, 1995 quoted in Silvia Mantini, “Women’s History in Italy: Cultural Itineraries and New Proposals in Current Historiographical Trends,” *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 188.

¹⁵ Nick Carter, “Rethinking the Italian Liberal State,” *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2011) 227. Carter mentions that in addition to Antonio Gramsci, non-Marxist members of the anti-liberal school include Gaetano Salvemini, “Introductory Essay,” *Italy in the Giolittian Era: Italian Democracy in the Making, 1900-1914*, ed. A. W. Salomone (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press., 1960); Denis Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959).

¹⁶ Benedetto Croce, *A History of Italy, 1871-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929) quoted in Carter, “Rethinking the Italian Liberal State,” 227. Carter also mentions Federico Chabod, *Italian Foreign Policy: The Statecraft of the Founders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1996); Rosario Romeo, *Risorgimento e capitalismo*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1959 and 1963).

than in relation to the Fascism that followed. This revisionist school of thought argues that the Italian State's struggle to develop a civil society was the result of threats from competitors like the Socialists and Catholics, which the Liberal State mollified through *trasformismo*, the policy of political compromise and alliance that dominated Italian politics from at least the 1880s. While the anti-liberal historical view blamed this tendency toward compromise as undermining the creation of civil society, the revisionist historians note that such a strategy was common throughout Europe.¹⁷ Rather than 'deviant', Riall argues, Italian Liberalism was 'different', a reflection on its late entrance into state formation and the major underlying conflicts between the State and civil society.¹⁸

While Riall and Carter advocate the historical revision led by social and economic historians beginning in the late 1980s, the pioneer of Italian women's history, Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, called for such analysis at least a decade earlier. Bortolotti criticized historians Denis Mack Smith and Enzo Santarelli for ignoring the developments of the women's movement before Fascism. She quotes a lecture by Mack Smith in 1976: "This is not to say that beforehand, in Giolitti's Liberal state, women were any more conscious of their rights [than under Fascism]." Bortolotti denies this assertion, arguing that Liberal-era women were more conscious of their rights, made evident by the impact of Anna Maria Mozzoni in the Italian Socialist Party or by the Fascist dissolution of the Women's Association in 1925. Bortolotti makes clear that by ignoring the history of women during the Liberal era, historians miss crucial developments in Italian history:

¹⁷ Carter, "Rethinking the Italian Liberal State," 229.

¹⁸ Lucy Riall, "Progress and Compromise in Liberal Italy," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1 (March 1995), 205-213.

I would like to remark that ignorance of the battles conducted to win full civil and political rights for women in the pre-Fascist period distorts our judgment of subsequent developments, for even historians who sense that Fascism represented an obstacle to further progress toward women's emancipation are then misled by their unduly polemical approach to the Giolitti period. It is obviously true that during this period developments were taking place that laid the groundwork for Fascism, but there were also forces at work that stood in opposition to the development of Fascism, and unless account is taken of these, it is not possible to bring out the reactionary character of Fascism in comparison with the preceding political order.¹⁹

Without a full accounting of the roles, actions, and conditions of women, there can be no real revision of Liberal-era history.

The history of Italian education and the various strategies employed by the State to direct the formation of national identity through such institutions must be reevaluated in such a light. Victoria De Grazia has asserted that women were largely excluded from the nineteenth-century process of using "schooling, military training, and public rituals" to nationalize and socialize the masses.²⁰ However, this dissertation concurs with Gabriella Romani's critique of De Grazia's position: "On the contrary, it is through the policies and discussions related to female education that women are integrated in what De Grazia refers to as 'the civic obligations, collective virtues, and personal values required for citizenship in nation-states.'" Romani argues that the Risorgimento model of the *mater salvifica* made mothers and educators central in the new State's goal of reforming moral vice and corruption, casting women as the "primary custodians of national morality" and providing them with a political mission.²¹

¹⁹ Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, "A Survey of Recent Italian Research on the History of Feminism," *The Journal of Italian History*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Winter 1978), 525-26.

²⁰ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 6.

²¹ Gabriella Romani, "Interpreting the Risorgimento: Blasetti's "1860" and the Legacy of Motherly Love," *Italica*, vol. 79, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), 402, 394.

Schema and Historical Background

This introduction aims to examine the context into which the Italian public school system emerged, focusing on the major debates between nationalism and regionalism, the interests of the Church and State, and nineteenth-century morality and maternalism, highlighting the themes that will impact the study. Following this first chapter, the dissertation contains four chapters that examine various issues connecting the feminization of teaching with the transformation of the Italian school. The second chapter outlines the centralization of the Italian system, connecting the increased prominence of women in teaching with the nationalizing goals of the State and the continual contest between local and national interests. The third chapter presents a history of pedagogical development in Italy, connecting the growth of positivist, progressive, and maternalist educational theory to the feminization of teaching. The fourth chapter focuses on the divide between the secularizing nation and the powerfully entrenched Catholic Church, arguing that carefully trained female teachers were employed as mollifying agents of the encroaching State and examining the ways in which debates over religious education impacted teachers and various movements for women's rights. The fifth chapter is an institutional history of the normal and magisterial schools (teacher-training institutes), which connects several of the transformational processes of the previous chapters, arguing that the feminization of the normal school reflected the centralization, secularization, and pedagogical reformation of the school system in general.

Regional Versus National

Chapter Two examines the centralization efforts of the Italian State and their impact on the history of the Italian school. It argues that the feminization of teaching became a pivotal

strategy in the State's goal of bringing all Italian schools under the control of the centralized Ministry of Public Instruction. The tenuous and occasionally tragic condition of the increasingly female teacher corps attracted national press attention and the figure of the schoolteacher became embroiled in larger debates over local versus national interests and the creation of an Italian national identity.

The regional divisions that hampered efforts to create national identity and civil society had deep roots in the history of the various pre-Unification states. The new state was ideologically, culturally, and linguistically fragmented. Although only about 2.5% of the population spoke Italian, mainly in Tuscany and Rome, Italian was recognized as the language of Italian literature and the educated elite. From the 1840s and 1850s, historian Martin Clark notes, the Piedmontese, who had heretofore spoken French and Piedmontese, reluctantly began to adopt Tuscan Italian; the University of Turin, for example, began to conduct lectures in Italian rather than Latin in 1852. Like much of the nationalist movement during the pre-Unification period, however, this resurgence of Italian culture remained confined to a small class of educated elites; among the vast majority of the population, regional dialect and languages continued to dominate daily life.²² The success of the new nation in spreading Tuscan Italian was hard-fought and slow. Despite the gains made through institutional conversion to Italian and the effects of military service and the media, the school was the primary site of this linguistic campaign, with teachers expected to not only adopt standardized Italian themselves, but spread it to children and their communities. Even with the school as the locus of linguistic uniformity, standardized Italian was not the first language learned by the majority of Italians until after World War II.

Despite the seeming rapidity of Unification, the process of forming the Italian nation was confused, even accidental, with little popular involvement or support. While the 1848-49

²² Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), 43-44.

Revolutions had sparked hopes of significant reform, only in the Kingdom of Sardinia did constitutional reform survive. The remainder of the regions returned either to the pre-revolution status or under increasingly repressive authority. While Austrian control in Lombardy and the Veneto had been efficient before the revolutions, including supporting the spread of education, it became increasingly restrictive in the 1850s. In Tuscany, rule by the Grand Duke continued its policies of moderate reform. In the Papal States, Pope Pius IX returned to power antagonistic to the forces of reform. By the late 1850s, it became clear to Piedmontese elites and astute aristocrats in other regions that the nationalist drive would be a contest between Piedmontese monarchists and Mazzinian Republicans.

The Piedmontese, with French assistance in exchange for the transfer of Nice and Savoy to French control, successfully defeated the Austrians in 1859 and annexed Lombardy; the Veneto remained under Austrian rule until 1866. In 1860, Tuscany and Emilia joined the new nation through plebiscite; following Giuseppe Garibaldi's conquest of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples and Piedmontese takeover of Umbria, le Marche, and the Papal States, these regions were similarly joined through plebiscite by November, 1860. The new kingdom of Italy, with Victor Emanuel II as its king, was proclaimed in 1861. Despite the proclamation of a united Italy, the deep divides created by centuries of foreign or regional control, linguistic diversity, and uneven economic development meant that there was a limited sense of national unity and significant resentment, even resistance, to Piedmontese dominance.

Among the first national acts of the kingdom was the conducting of a census of the new nation, providing a synchronized view of the new Italian population's demographics,

geographical distribution, economic differences, and legal conditions.²³ Further, the census provided information vital to the implementation of social and economic policies in the new kingdom, such as data on the mobility of the population, industrialization levels, and illiteracy. Historian Silvana Patriarca argues that not only did statistical data collection serve to ideologically and politically legitimize the new country, but also “contributed to the creation, the ‘production’ as it were, of the Italian nation, that is of the very entity they were supposed to describe...[contributing to] the very imagining and shaping of a national space.”²⁴

The data provided by the national census and other statistical reports revealed extreme disparities in education levels in different Italian regions. The application of the Sardinian Casati Law of 1859 to all of unified Italy improved access and quality of education; while the law, which mandated two years of education for boys and girls, was not strictly enforced, it did lead to an increase in the building of schools, training of teachers, and a lowering of illiteracy rates. However, while a compulsory primary education was promoted as a leveling and unifying institution, the varied degrees of support and compliance in some ways exacerbated the intra-regional literacy divide. In 1871, illiteracy was 72 percent in the North and 90 percent in the South; by 1901, Piedmont had 17.7 percent illiteracy and Calabria 78.7 percent.²⁵ Patriarca notes that there was an interesting and unintended consequence of quantitative analysis: the statistical studies related the complex differences between the different regions, presenting comparisons

²³ Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Dal censimento dell'unità ai censimenti del centenario: Un secolo di vita della statistica italiana, 1861-1961*, ed. Roberto Fracassi (Rome: Istituto centrale di statistica, 1961), 24-32.

²⁴ Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4-5.

²⁵ Edward Tannenbaum, “Education,” in *Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861*, ed. Edward Tannenbaum and Emiliana Noether (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 234.

and reinforcing the idea that certain areas were inherently more developed, prosperous, or modern than others, ignoring the great diversity within regions and the complex historical contexts of such disparities: “It continues to be easy to forget that what we see is the result of aggregate procedures.... That the regions and macro-regions, like the nation, are not natural entities, but historical artifacts.”²⁶ In identifying the characteristics of the new nation, statistics helped to provide a definition of the North against the “other”, the South.

Within the averages rates revealed by the census, there were inconsistencies in each region. Rural rates of illiteracy tended to be much higher than urban rates, as shown by comparing the charts below. Even in the region with the lowest illiteracy, Piedmont, rates differed significantly between the large cities and the countryside; in 1871 Piedmont, the average rate of illiteracy was 42.3 percent while the regional capital, Turin, had a rate of 35.8 percent. In addition, female illiteracy rates were often much higher than male. In Calabria, for example, the average rate of illiteracy in 1871 was 81 percent for men and 93 percent for women, revealing even higher rates of illiteracy than those given below.²⁷ The largest discrepancies were found in the Veneto and Abruzzo-Molise regions, where male and female rates differed by as much as 20 percent in 1871 and 1881.²⁸

²⁶ Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood*, 239.

²⁷ Michele Coppino, *Sull'obbligo della istruzione elementare nel Regno d'Italia. Attuazione della legge 15 luglio, 1877* (Rome: Tipografia Eredi Botte, 1878), 41, 43.

²⁸ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1997), 36.

Figure 1.2: Urban Illiteracy Rates²⁹

	1861	1871	1901	1911
Turin	49	35.8	13.2	8
Genoa	72.3	65.3	26.9	17
Milan	56.8	49.1	19.5	11
Bologna	77	70.8	38.3	26
Florence	75.9	68.7	45.6	35
Rome	N/A	66.8	43.8	33
Naples	78.4	75.8	54.9	44
Palermo	86.8	80.3	62.5	45
Total	78.1	72.8	48.5	37.5

Figure 1.3: Urban and Rural Combined Illiteracy Averages³⁰

	1871	1881	1901	1911
Piedmont	42.3	32.3	17.7	11
Lombardy	45.2	37	21.6	13.4
Veneto	64.7	54.1	35.4	25.2
Emilia-Romagna	71.9	63.5	46.3	32.7
Tuscany	68.1	61.9	48.2	37.4
Lazio	67.7	58.2	43.8	33.2
Campania	80	75.2	65.1	53.7
Calabria	87	85	78.7	69.6
Sicily	85.3	81.2	70.9	58
Sardinia	86.1	79.8	68.3	58
Total	68.8	61.9	48.7	37.9

In addition to the divides generated by linguistic, cultural, and social differences, the new state was further hampered by the daunting practical task of unifying the administrations, currencies, infrastructures, and institutions of the pre-Unitary states. Further, the costs of Unification meant combining the budget deficits of the various regions. Although such daunting

²⁹ Wilking, *Mutter, Missionarin, Meisterin*, 59.

³⁰ *Annuario Statistico Italiano*, quoted in Clark, *Modern Italy*, 36.

tasks made a decentralized federal system appealing, the ruling Piedmontese class decided in favor of centralization in order to attempt to combat both threats to its legitimacy from foreign powers, the Church, and massive uprisings in the South.³¹

The deep regional divides meant that political coalitions of the new state focused primarily on stability and cohesion. The differences between the Liberals of the Right and Left (Historic Right and Historic Left) were often divided more by historical or personal disagreements rather than clear ideological divisions.³² Upon Unification, the government was led by the Historic Right that grew out of the Piedmontese ruling class, which promoted moderation and morality in defense against extremism and popular political participation.

The school structure created by the Casati law, which was intended to be temporary but lasted until 1923, reflected these moderate goals. In a country with an immense debt burden, the Casati system had the advantage of being inexpensive, with the majority of the financial obligation laid on communes and regions for the elementary grades. While the Casati law was hierarchical, focusing on the creation of a new bureaucratic class, it had the benefit of leaving access to the Universities relatively open. Educational historian Donatella Palomba notes, “In a situation of poor attendance, greater selection would have been counterproductive.”³³ This openness, however, was really only possible for the middle classes; the majority of Italians had little contact with the State system until the political ascent of the Historic Left in 1876 brought a new focus to popular education.

³¹ Donatella Palomba, “Education and State Formation in Italy,” *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, vol. 2, ed. R. Cowen and A. M. Kazamias (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 198.

³² Riall, “Progress and Compromise in Liberal Italy,” 206.

³³ Palomba, “Education and State Formation in Italy,” 201. See also Marzio Barbagli, *Educating for Unemployment: Politics, Labor Markets, and the School System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

Church/State Relations

The fourth chapter of the study delves into the tense relationship between the Liberal State and the Catholic Church, arguing that the promotion of a secular school system in a traditionally religious country led to the cultivation and idealization of a new model of teacher as a morally constrained, maternal, and locally focused representative of the State. As the State, particularly following the ascent of the Historic Left in 1876, pushed for an increasingly secular system, teachers were drawn into wider debates over the status of private clerical institutions, the education of women, and the role of the Church within a developing Italian civil society.

Tension between the interests of Italian Unification and the Church existed long before the new Italian State began to eclipse the Church's role in the education of children. While hostility between religious and secular authorities simmered throughout Europe, the Roman Question was of particular centrality to the Unification of Italy as it was home to the Pope's temporal domain. While the Democrats and Freemasons had long been adverse to religious authority, it was only the Church's staunch opposition to Unification and modernity that led most moderate Liberals into anticlericalism. The election of Pope Pius IX in 1846 had been greeted with much anticipation that he might be more favorable to Liberal reform or even a cornerstone for the independence movement. Following his 1850 return from exile after the fall of the Roman Republic, however, the Pope reemerged as a force hostile to modernization and attempts at Unification, excommunicating nationalist leaders and relying on foreign troops to protect the Church's interests. Piedmontese efforts at reducing Church authority in the 1850s, including the passing of the Siccardi laws, limiting the Church's legal and financial privileges, abolishing many monasteries, and restricting clerical education, prefigured the hostility that would characterize the post-Unification Church-State relationship.

Despite the overwhelmingly Catholic population and the dominance of the Church in the pre-Unification educational system in Italy, the Church officially considered the new Liberal State as a usurper, thus prohibiting the kind of conciliation of educational systems found in other countries.³⁴ This already unsteady relationship was intensified by the annexation of the Papal States in 1859-60 and of Rome itself in 1870, which ended the Pope's temporal power and exacerbated the break between the State and Church. Pope Pius IX's condemnation of liberalism and the new secular state in the 1864 Syllabus of Errors led to the closure of religious orders and sale of Church properties, further weakening Church control of education.³⁵ The concurrent issuance of the encyclical *Quanta cura* solidified Pope Pius IX's position as a force in opposition to modernity, religious pluralism, and secular authority. Pope Pius IX's publication of the encyclical *Rescriptes* represented a formal rift with the State.³⁶ The Church's policy of *non expedit*, in practice by 1868 and officially reaffirmed in 1874, held that loyal Catholics refuse participation in the Italian State, both as voters and elected officials, in order to undermine the state's legitimacy and authority. The policy did not apply to local elections and the religious tended to vote in alliance with right-wing Liberals. Leo XIII, elected in 1878, made this recommendation into an absolute ban on parliamentary voting.³⁷

³⁴ The voluntary system was dominant in England and Belgium as well as France and Germany in the 1860s.

³⁵ Pamela M. Pilbeam, *The Middle Classes in Europe, 1789-1914: France, Germany, Italy, and Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 190.

³⁶ Simonetta Soldani, "The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy on Primary Education in the Period Following Unification, 1860-1877) in *L'Offre d'École*, ed. Willem Frijhoff (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983), 99-100.

³⁷ Alice A. Kelikian, "The Church and Catholicism," in *Liberal and Fascist Italy* ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47.

There was tense conflict between liberal Catholics, who sought reconciliation and relations with the state, and intransigent Catholics, who eagerly sought its demise. During the 1874 Catholic Conference in Venice, hardline Catholic leader Giuseppe Sacchetti pledged, “We pray to God that the [Liberal] revolution dies tomorrow, but we work as though it will last forever.”³⁸

Debate over secularization raged following the parliamentary success of the Historic Left in 1876. Parliament dealt a strong blow to the rights of the Church in civil society by passing a bill in 1879 that required civil marriage before any religious celebration of matrimony.³⁹ Relations between Church and State improved during the pontificate of Pius X (1903-1914); relaxation of the *non expedit* policy led to a clerical-moderate alliance against socialism. While the new pope replaced the previous emphasis on social welfare with a focus on strict religious orthodoxy, he did encourage lay female charity and outreach.⁴⁰

Historian Simonetta Soldani has noted that in addition to such internal pressures, international events further heightened the stakes of educational control. The success of Prussia over France, famously said to have been won by German schoolteachers and the superior literacy of German troops, made the illiteracy of Italian troops a source of embarrassment in a nation desperate to compete with European powers. Enthusiasm over the need to educate the Italian populace was tempered by fears stoked by the Paris Commune; the traditional oligarchy worried

³⁸ Giuseppe Sacchetti, *Primo Congresso Cattolico Italiano*, vol. I, no. 63, quoted in Luciano Pazzaglia, “Educazione e scuola nel programma dell’Opera dei Congressi (1874-1904),” in *Cultura e società in Italia nell’età umbertina* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1981), 429.

³⁹ Fulvio Cammarano, “The Professions in Parliament,” *Society and the Professions in Italy, 1860-1914*, ed. Maria Malatesta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 286.

⁴⁰ Kelikian, “The Church and Catholicism,” 54-56.

that education without the moderating force of religion could provoke instability, even revolution.⁴¹

French influence, however, extended beyond political turmoil, directly into the realm of educational control and curriculum. The effects of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conception of the relationship between the citizen and the State as well as the French Revolution's experiments in secular education and civic religion had reverberated throughout nineteenth-century educational debates. The watershed moment was the creation in 1881 of a French school system that was free, compulsory, and resolutely secular. In Norway, the French educational movement helped to influence the contemporaneous move by the Liberal party to pass a law supplanting religious instruction with civic instruction. This law, passed by the parliament and rejected by the government, was revisited in 1889 in a new system that kept religion in the school, but only as one of multiple subjects in an encyclopedic curriculum, rather than as the dominant force and unifying theme of instruction.⁴²

While foreign anticlericalism and the advent of a unified state with secular institutions were seen as disruptive to the role of the Church in the life of an overwhelmingly Catholic Italy, in many ways the power of the Church was already in decline. The effects of both the French occupation under Napoleon Bonaparte as well as the Austrian reforms in Lombardy and Tuscany had included confiscation of Church properties and suppression of religious orders. The economic effects of the loss of property were significant, although many religious orders were reestablished during the Restoration and the Church still owned 15% of all productive land in the

⁴¹ Soldani, "The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy," 100.

⁴² Åge Holter, "Church-School-State: The Norwegian Case from the Parish School of 1739 to the Public School of 1889," in *History of Elementary School Teaching and Curriculum*, ed. Giovanni Genovesi, International Standing Conference for the History of Education, et al. (Hildesheim: Edition Bildung und Wissenschaft, 1990), 37-46.

Peninsula by the mid-nineteenth century. While the ratio of clergy to inhabitants was around one per 50 during the eighteenth century, by the time of Unification, it was just one per 250. Nevertheless, the local priest continued to be a source of local authority and the Church's spokesperson for most of rural Italy.⁴³

The Catholic Church of the nineteenth century was marked by significant tensions between the local priests and parishes and the larger Church hierarchy. The southern provinces were impoverished, disorganized, and sometimes criminal; the northern dioceses, on the other hand, oversaw a network of official and lay charitable, educational, and social bodies that could compete with the secular state.⁴⁴ Southern clergy tended to receive their support from local elites rather than the Vatican and were less inclined to organize opposition to the Italian state.⁴⁵

The relationship of the Church to the State in Southern regions was highly diverse. In 1862, Minister of Public Instruction Carlo Matteucci emphasized "that in the southern provinces, there is a large influence by the Church, focused on its own mission of charity and religion, not in supporting the just aspirations of the Italian nation." While the clergy in most areas avoided national politics, "when it is as loyal as it should be to the King that the nation has chosen and to the fundamental institutions of the State, it becomes a powerful instrument, the most efficient

⁴³ David Kertzer, "Religion and Society, 1789-1892," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182-87.

⁴⁴ Kelikian, "The Church and Catholicism," 45.

⁴⁵ This difference can be seen in reactions to the death of King Victor Emanuel II in 1878; refusal by the cathedral in Parma to hold mass for the monarch led to violent clashes between Church supporters and patriots, while in Potenza, all church bells rang in mourning as the bishop himself led a mass. "La morte di Vittorio Emanuele II," Appendix 8 to Roger Aubert, *Il Pontificato di Pio IX (1846-1878) Storia della Chiesa XXI/2* (Milan, 1990), 771-72, cited in Kertzer, "Religion and Society," 199-200.

auxiliary of the government in the goal of popular education.”⁴⁶ The State was thus aware of the intense power of the Church to shape and direct public patriotism toward the new nation.

While most rural Italians viewed the Church from the standpoint of their local community, several high profile scandals did little to ingratiate the Church in the eyes of the people and even led to anti-clerical sentiment. International outcry following the 1858 Edgardo Montara⁴⁷ and 1864 Giuseppe Coen⁴⁸ captation cases led to serious doubts about the desirability of Church influence in the new nation and dramatically increased the size and virulence of the anti-clerical camp. Anti-clericalism focused not only on individual scandals, but also on critiques of the Church’s role in providing the education of the young, particularly among the poor. For opponents of religious education, like Luigi Falaschi, the Church had long been guilty of “sowing discord and arousing fanaticism among the ignorant and superstitious masses; for these reasons the Catholic clergy has ceased to have the right to instruct the people and has indisputably proved its perversity and its own ignorance.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Carlo Matteucci, “Ministero della pubblica istruzione, 30 giugno, 1862,” in *Regolamenti per l'istruzione pubblica nelle provincie Napoletane*, manuscript collection, 1960, BSMC, Rome, 4.

⁴⁷ In 1858, young Edgardo Mortara of Bologna was baptized while sick by the family maid and brought to Rome under the direct custody of the Church. International controversy ensued; Prime Minister Camillo Cavour intervened to return the child to his family and Sir Moses Montefiore led an international delegation for the child’s return. However, Pope Pius IX did not consent and the child had to remain in Rome, eventually becoming a priest. See David Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997).

⁴⁸ Annalisa Pinter, “L’emancipazione ebraica e le scuole delle comunità,” in *Formazione nell’Italia unita: strumenti, propaganda e miti*, Vol I, ed. Giovanni Genovesi (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2002), 43.

⁴⁹ Luigi Falaschi, *Degli effetti del cattolicesimo sui popoli di razza latina e dell’istruzione obbligatoria e laica* (Fossombrone: Tipografia di F. Manacelli, 1876), 28, 32.

Status of Women

As this dissertation argues that the feminization of education was intrinsically connected to Liberal-era debates over the legal, economic, and social status of women, the following section provides some preliminary context regarding the women's rights movements, morality, and maternity.

Women had played instrumental roles in the drive to unify Italy and most politicians who supported Unification saw an improvement in the status of women as being central to the cause.⁵⁰ However, rather than enjoying the proliferation of equal civic liberties and emancipation, women in many regions experienced an actual decline in educational, political, legal, and familial rights following the establishment of the Kingdom in Italy in 1861. For example, "marital authorization", the submission of women's legal and financial consent to her husband or father, was instated through the 1866 *Pisanelli Code*, constricting many of the rights that women in Lombardy and the Veneto had enjoyed under Austrian rule and that Tuscan women had under the Grand Duchy.⁵¹ In her educational guide, Maria Cleofe Pellegrini, outlined the restriction inherent in this arrangement: "The labor of a married woman who earns a wage, is no longer her exclusive property, but property of her husband, the head of the household. Without her husband's authorization, a woman cannot give or sell real estate, sign public documents, accept an inheritance, or give legal testimony." Despite this legal superiority, Pellegrini insisted, a woman could still exert soft influence: "She can, however, prudently and sweetly advise her husband, and if she has chosen a wise man and she is reasonable and good,

⁵⁰ Clara M. Lovett, *The Democratic Movement in Italy 1830-1876* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 206.

⁵¹ Perry Wilson, "Introduction: Gender and the Private Sphere in Liberal and Fascist Italy," in *Gender, Family and Sexuality: The Private Sphere in Italy, 1860-1945*, ed. Perry Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1-19.

her word will be listened to. In such a way does a savvy woman win little by little moral authority greater than that given by the Civil Code.”⁵²

Improvement in the education of women was central for the entire spectrum of women’s rights advocates, including moderate and Catholic advocates of women’s rights. While Turinese moderate Giulia Molino Colombini opposed women’s entrance into political and social debates in 1855, preferring to focus on the “spiritual equality” granted by Christianity, she recognized the need to improve and modernize the education given to women.⁵³ The issue of educational reform could be justified as instilling in women, i.e. future mothers and teachers of the next generation, a love for Italian culture, language, and literature.

For the women’s advocates of the Left, John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* became the cornerstone of women’s emancipation, especially following its 1870 translation by Anna Maria Mozzoni, the preeminent Italian feminist; Mill’s program advocated suffrage, an end to male legal domination, and female employment outside the home. Mozzoni was also the central contributor to *La donna*, Gualberta Alaide Beccari’s female emancipationist journal that had a strong readership among female schoolteachers. As such, the cosmopolitan journal frequently addressed international events and theorists and promoted wage parity, secular instruction, and other topics of interest to both educational reformers and women’s emancipation advocates; Beccari promoted wage parity as beneficial to men as well as women, noting that women, especially in the teaching field, were at a significant disadvantage in terms of salary,

⁵² Maria Cleofe Pellegrini, *I lunedì nella scuola. Conversazioni sui doveri e sui diritti. Libro per le scuole femminili e per le famiglie* (Milan: Casa Tip. Libr. Editr. Ditta Giacomo Agnelli, 1898), 50-52.

⁵³ Bortolotti, *Alle origini del movimento femminile in Italia, 1848-1892*, 32-33. For discussion of the influence of education debates on various women’s movements, see Chapter Four: Civil Missionaries.

position, and social prestige. Women were frequently paid between one third and one half of male teacher's salary until 1911.

Figure 1.4 Minimum Wage Rates, in Lire, for Male and Female Teachers, 1885⁵⁴

		1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class
Urban School				
Superior				
	Male	1,320	1,110	1,000
	Female	1,056	880	800
Inferior				
	Male	1,000	950	900
	Female	800	760	720
Rural School				
Superior				
	Male	900	850	800
	Female	720	680	640
Inferior				
	Male	800	750	700
	Female	640	600	560

Socialist Anna Kuliscioff argued that as women flooded the teaching profession and men separated themselves from the plight of female instructors laboring under unequal wages, the social and economic prestige of the field dropped as a whole.⁵⁵ Advocating for equal wages would not only ameliorate the material conditions of female teachers, but also improve the overall status of teachers and education.

⁵⁴ Ester De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia: I. Dall'Unità all'età giolittiana* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 203. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class categories designated the location, size, and wealth of the commune. The pay difference between inferior and superior levels was abolished in 1904. Martin Clark notes that between 1871 and 1914, 5 lire was equal to about \$1. Clark, *Modern Italy*, xii.

⁵⁵ Beatrice Pisa, *Venticinque anni di emancipazionismo femminile in Italia: Gualberta Alaide Beccari e la rivista 'La donna'* (Roma: FIAP, 1964).

Morality

The emphasis on the primary school as a formative site of national character and the entrance of large numbers of women into these institutions led to concerns about social stability. There was thus a reassertion of the values of modesty and obedience and an emphasis on the preservation of the bourgeois family model with a clear gendered hierarchy. Lucia Re argues that the subjugation of women by the Kingdom of Italy was not just a result of Catholic or conservative tradition, but was a tool used by the new government to promote middle-class values and consolidate State power: “Indeed many of the forgers of the Unification were themselves (from Cavour on) aristocrats who embraced a new middle-class rhetoric as the best for the new Italy.”⁵⁶

Central to this scheme was the promotion of the cult of domesticity and the image of woman as ‘angel of the hearth’, and as a patriotic example of the virtues of patience, modesty, thrift, and efficiency. This model was promoted to the working class through compulsory education, national campaigns to improve personal hygiene, in the households of middle-class employers of the working-classes, and through the rhetoric of work and womanhood. While working-class women were encouraged to adopt bourgeois models of femininity, historian Deborah Simonton also notes that employment as seamstresses, laundresses, domestics, and agricultural workers led to the presentation of such women as unsexed. Although the concept of a family wage, with a man working for wages outside the home and a woman performing unpaid household labor, was promoted a sign of bourgeois respectability, the economic realities and

⁵⁶ Re, “Passion and Sexual Difference,” 170.

cultural traditions of working-class Italian life mean that women's acceptance or adherence to such models cannot be assumed.⁵⁷

The potentially disruptive entrance of large numbers of middle-class women into the public arena led to the codification of acceptable female morality and the prescription of acceptable appearance. Historian Carmela Covato notes that women's fashion in the late nineteenth-century presented a constant tension between an emphasis on outward displays of modesty and the role that married women often played as the manifestation of a man's wealth or power. Thus, for a women entering the world of higher education or extra-domestic work, often placing her outside the confines of the traditional family unit, "rigor or austerity become an unavoidable social imperative, instantly interiorized by the most committed intellectual women, codified for elementary-school teaching by the normal school that prepares them." To avoid the charge of impropriety to which the teacher working in solitude in a rural village school was frequently subject, austere, cloister-style dress was seen as a necessary defense. For most women, argues Covato, such demeanor was often not a conscious choice, inculcated as it was by the convent educations that many of the first generations of female teachers had received.⁵⁸ It is ironic that while the entrance of increasingly large numbers of women into the public labor market helped to encourage and populate the nascent women's rights movements, their rigidly controlled training sheltered them from the literature and institutions of the growing emancipationist movement.

⁵⁷ Deborah Simonton, *A History of Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1998), 89-90.

⁵⁸ Carmela Covato, "Una bella vestina color caffè. Istruzione, identità femminile e abito negli ultimi decenni dell'800," in *Abito e identità: Ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*, ed. Cristina Giorelli, vol. I (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1995), 162, 167.

Conservative reaction against female extra-domestic employment and roles in the public sphere were further allayed by the growing consensus that teaching was a natural outgrowth of maternal instinct. Educational journalist Severina Cavallero, for example, was both a staunch critic of women's emancipation, and an advocate for the feminization of teaching. In an 1882 article in the educational journal, *La collaboratrice della maestra*, Cavallero railed against women's political, social, and economic movements as disruptive of social order:

With this kind of emancipation, we would see women as men in skirts, exchanging the modesty of homemaking duties for public concerns, leaving the protection of the domestic roof for the office. We would find her in public discussing politics, science, and art with men, forgetting her womanly duties.⁵⁹

This fear of public roles for women increasingly excluded the position of schoolteacher. While the schoolteacher occupied a public and potentially disquieting role outside the domestic walls, representing the interests of a secularizing and modernizing State institution, she was no longer a threat to gender roles and social stability. For Cavallero and other moderates, a female teacher's maternal instincts, alliance with local family and community interests, and careful and modest training, made her a reassuring, yet influential figure: "The destiny of our nation lies in education, a future developed in the lap of the family and desk of the schoolhouse. Women are thus the linchpins of the destiny of the people. On her depend the life, value, and glory of future generations."⁶⁰

Maternalism

In addition to discussing the impact of positivist and progressive pedagogy, Chapter Three

⁵⁹ Severina Cavallero, "Emancipazione della donna," *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 40 (August 3, 1882), 313.

⁶⁰ Cavallero, "La carriera della maestra," *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 39 (July 20, 1882), 306.

focuses on the development of maternalist pedagogy. Rousseauian ideals of natural, maternal early education helped to drive a new vision of women as the natural caregiver of young children and contributed to the emergence of a bourgeois idea of motherhood as an elevated, emotional calling during the first half of the nineteenth century. Rousseau made clear that while mothers were to cultivate the natural moral and ethical instincts of the young child, women's supposedly innate vulnerability and volatility made them unsuited to the instruction of older children; formal teachers in the later years were to be male-rational and objective, capable of developing the young man into an autonomous citizen.⁶¹

Robert Davis has noted that the outpouring of pedagogical literature by women during the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as the pedagogical textbooks they inspired, helped to elevate the status of female teachers, repositioning them not only as instruments of emotional maternal instinct, but capable of leading rational instruction: "This was a subversion of the assumption that the demands laid on mother-educators to nurture autonomous, socialized individuals were in some sense incompatible with the fundamental character of femininity and its ineluctable bondage to embodiment and nature." In Italy, even moderate female pedagogical theorists, including Caterina Franceschi Ferrucci, Giulia Molino Colombini, Erminia Fuà Fusinato made the connection between rational and emotional intelligence central to their writing. This contestation of the Enlightenment dichotomy between rational and emotional was accompanied by the adoption of Pestalozzian and Froebelian pedagogy, and helped to bring women into formal, professional teaching.⁶²

⁶¹ Robert A. Davis, "Mother-child relations and the discourse of maternity," *Ethics and Education*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (2011) 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 8. See also V. Walkerdine, "On the regulation of speaking and silence: Subjectivity, class and gender in contemporary schooling," *Language, Gender, and Childhood*, ed. C. Steedman, et. al. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 203-241.

This entrance into the public sphere, as well as the growth of the women's emancipatory movement to which it was connected, resulted in a changing notion of maternalism. Historian Gabriella Seveso argues that the assertion of public identities by women led to reactionary changes in the Rousseauian model of maternalism through medical and educational literature, transforming an idea of maternal love and responsibility to a real biological imperative, an "uncontrollable natural instinct." As women began to explore alternative or multifaceted futures, Seveso writes, motherhood became an irresistible force of nature.⁶³ Historian Bruno Wanrooij argues that this new model of unavoidable, biological maternalism meant that women were "destined for maternity" and "could claim neither the right to work outside the home, nor access to determine her profession, nor the right to vote."⁶⁴

The evolution of the idea of maternity as a biological imperative can also be connected to the growing influence of the positivist assertion that science could solve the political, social, and economic problems of the nation. Historian Linda Reeder argues that this influence helped to shift the Italian concerns regarding unmarried people from bachelors to spinsters; while single men were considered dangerous during the immediate post-Unification period due to the secularizing State's antipathy toward religious orders and the elevation of masculinity, by the 1870s, the focus had shifted to single women and their perceived violation of maternalism as the natural and healthy definition of femininity. This shift, Reeder notes, connected citizenship to a

⁶³ Gabriella Seveso, *Come ombre leggere. Gesti, spazi, silenzi nella storia dell'educazione delle bambine* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), 50, 51. Seveso notes that simultaneous to the promotion of biological maternalism, female knowledge about childbirth and maternity was medicalized, placed in the hands of obstetricians and pediatricians, and mystified, resulting in the development of origin story fantasies of storks and cabbage patches.

⁶⁴ Bruno P.F. Wanrooij, *Storia del pudore. La questione sessuale in Italia 1860-1940* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, Venezia, 1990).

woman's status as wife and mother; without these titles, women were seen as abnormal and detrimental to the nuclear family's role as the formative site of Italian character.⁶⁵ She quotes Paolo Mantegazza's assertion that "maternity is the first and essential mission of women, and she cannot become a mother except through love, that is to maternity, as the flower is to fruit."⁶⁶

What Reeder's argument omits, however, is the possibility of an alternative path to a maternal role through teaching. While Mantegazza may have essentialized maternity in the above passage in a 1894 work on physiology, in a tract about his mother in 1876, he connects the work of teachers with that of mothers: "Every good teacher is always a mother at heart, even when she does not have children of her own. Education is always more effective and fertile when inspired by maternity."⁶⁷ Reflecting upon her earliest days as an elementary teacher, Concetta Ferrara wrote that she was overcome with maternal love, becoming a mother to children without ever having given birth.⁶⁸ The elevation of maternalism as the central quality of womanhood, including its transition from an emotional connection to a biological imperative, changed the definition of an ideal teacher. Female teachers were not convenient solutions to budgetary concerns, willing to perform the low paid, low status position increasingly abandoned by men; by the late decades of the nineteenth century, they were the preferred teachers of young Italians.

⁶⁵ Linda Reeder, "Unattached and Unhinged: The Spinster and the Psychiatrist in Liberal Italy, 1860–1922," *Gender & History*, vol. 24, no. 1 (April 2012), 187–204.

⁶⁶ Paolo Mantegazza, *Fisiologia della donna*, vol. 2 (Milan, tip. Treves, 1893), 8–10, quoted in Linda Reeder, "Unattached and Unhinged: The Spinster and the Psychiatrist in Liberal Italy, 1860–1922," 198.

⁶⁷ Mantegazza, *La mia mamma* quoted in Rosa Piazza, *Distribuzione dei premi agli alunni ed alle alunne delle scuole elementari e festive comunali nel giorno 23 agosto 1886* (Venice: Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, 1886), 19.

⁶⁸ Concetta Ferrara, *Dal diario di una maestra* (Pavia: Caio Rossetti, 1906), 23.

Sources

Utilizing feminist and educational periodicals, government reform bills, textbooks, normal school bylaws and annual reports, as well as the writing of pedagogical theorists, politicians, administrators, and teachers, the dissertation explores both the connection between feminization and the modernizing, centralizing, secularizing school and popular and elite reaction to such transformations. I consulted the majority of these materials through the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Biblioteca Marucelliana, Centro e Museo Didattico Nazionale in Florence; the Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea and *Casa Internazionale delle Donne* in Rome; and the Centro Documentazione delle Donne, Biblioteca Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione, Biblioteca Università di Bologna, and the Biblioteca Walter Bigiavi in Bologna.

Consulted and referenced educational journals include *Il corriere delle maestre*, *L'educatrice italiana*, *L'Avvenire della scuola: foglio settimanale di pedagogia e didattica*, *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, *Scuola materna*, Florence's *L'insegnante elementare italiano* (1882-1884), Verona's *L'Alba* (1869-1872), Modena's *Istruzione popolare* (1880-1881), and Catania's *Il Galilei* (1886-1887); Women's emancipation journals included *La donna* and *La rassegna degli interessi femminile*. National political publications included *La nuova antologia*, *Il corriere della sera*, *Rassegna settimanale*. The Italian Socialist Party's *Critica sociale* and Catholic journals *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *L'Osservatore* were also consulted.

In 1994, the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* began publishing massive volumes of government proposals, reviews, inquests, reforms, legislation, and pamphlets regarding the history of education in Italy. Six of these volumes, covering normal schools, school boards,

classical instruction, government inquests, the University system, and female institutes have proved rich sources⁶⁹ as have the data published by several Italian statistical institutes.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), *Fonti per la storia della scuola (FSS)*, vol. I-X. I: *L'istruzione normale dalla legge Casati all'età giolittiana*, II: *Il Consiglio superiore della pubblica istruzione 1847-1928*, III: *L'istruzione classica, 1860-1910*, IV: *L'inchiesta Scialoja sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile, 1872-1875*, V: *L'istruzione universitaria*, VII: *Gli istituti femminili di educazione e di istruzione*.

⁷⁰ Vigo, "Appendice statistica nel secolo XIX." Other statistical sources include: Ministero di agricoltura, industria e commercio, *Statistica della Istruzione elementare pubblica e privata in Italia. Anni scolastici 1877-78 e 1878-79* (Rome: Tipografia Elzeviriana, 1881), 71-81.

La maestra sventurata: Centralization, Feminization, and Tragedy in the Italian Elementary

School

La Donati, buona e martire,
ne soffriva e lagrimava.
Ella aveva nome Italia,
e il suo nome meritava.

Il dolor le scurò l'anima,
bella come notte in maggio;
si sentì per viver debole,
e a morire ebbe coraggio.

In un'acqua verde e tremula
d'un pacifico canale
annegata la trovarono
con un foglio nel grembiale.

“Lascio il mio corpo: tagliate.
Muio come sono nata
senza colpa. Perdonate
la maestra sventurata.”⁷¹

The 1886 suicide of Italia Donati, the 23-year-old teacher immortalized by poet Pompeo Bettini in the above stanzas, ignited a torrent of coverage in the national, scholastic, and feminist press, and helped to direct national attention not only to the plight of young female teachers, but the need for significant reform in the Italian school system. The focus by the press on teaching conditions points to several major developments of the Liberal era: the dramatic increase in the size, scope, and importance of elementary teaching to the nation, the feminization of the teaching corps, and the heightened attention on the Southern Question and regional inequality. The processes of feminization and centralization followed not only concurrent, but intersecting paths,

⁷¹ Pompeo Bettini, “Italia Donati (luglio, 1886),” in *Le poesie di Pompeo Bettini*, ed. Benedetto Croce (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1942), 39-40.

with the growing public awareness of the conditions of female teachers influencing both rhetorical strategies and scholastic legislation.

The teacher was a divisive figure in a system attempting to forge a sense of national identity and civil society out of a conglomeration of regions with disparate languages, values, and cultures. As a representative of the secular Italian State, an entity intending to impose its intellectual and moral values on populations accustomed to regional and local loyalties, she was considered an interloper. As historian Ilaria Porciani has noted, “the lay teacher, especially in the countryside, was a subaltern figure, who lived on the fringes of society, imprisoned in an iron cage of convention, hypocrisy, and fears.”⁷² The clear solution to such a precarious existence, in the eyes of many scholastic reformers, was clear: the complete assumption of educational control by the State.

This transfer, enacted in 1911 through the Daneo-Credaro law, bringing all elementary schools, public and private, under centralized control by the State, was the result of a gradual and often erratic process that began in 1859 with localized, disparate, underfunded, and understaffed schools. While this scholastic transformation can be seen as representative of a wider contemporary trend in the nationalizing of resources and institutions by the Italian State, it also reflects the growing importance of popular education, and its central emblem, the female teacher, to the formation of Italian character and identity.

Teaching Conditions

Even absent a hostile populace, scandal or abject misery, the condition of most teachers was tenuous; the security of both her employment and her welfare was dependent upon a careful

⁷² Ilaria Porciani, “Sparsa di tanti triboli: la carriera di maestra,” *Le donne a scuola. L’educazione femminile nell’Italia del Ottocento. Mostra documentaria e iconografica*, ed. Ilaria Porciani (Florence: Il Sedicesimo, 1987), 173.

display of impeccable morals. This scrutiny, clearly evident in the restrictions of reading material and correspondence allowed in the *normale* (normal school for teacher training),⁷³ extended to the austere clothing and behavior prescribed for women working in the public sector. This sobriety, however, did not protect her from her position as a social outsider, an interloper who represented an often foreign set of customs and comportment. As historian Simonetta Ulivieri notes, “The little cap that she would wear, even shabby and wrinkled, was the sign of her otherness from the local and her social affiliation among the bourgeoisie.”⁷⁴

The status of an unmarried teacher, particularly a newly licensed young female teacher, was further complicated by her status as a single woman. According to the 1871 census, over 70% of women between 20 and 40 were or had been married, a rate that was even higher in rural areas. Historian Linda Reeder argues that a woman’s unmarried status would have branded her as potentially disquieting to social and sexual mores, often making her a target of local speculation. Reeder notes that this concern with the status of unmarried women was heightened by the last decades of the century, a result of the Liberal State’s identification of the nuclear family as the foundation for a healthy society.⁷⁵ Of course, not all teachers were unmarried, since Italy, unlike other countries like Germany, Austria, and parts of the United States, did not place a ban on married teachers;⁷⁶ however, all of the cases highlighted in this chapter and in the

⁷³ For more on such restrictions, refer to Chapter 4: Defining Norms

⁷⁴ Simonetta Ulivieri, “La maestrina con la penna rossa: Immagini di maestre nell’Italia dell’Ottocento tra letteratura e realtà,” *CADMO*, year I, no. 3, (December 1993), 52.

⁷⁵ Linda Reeder, “Unattached and Unhinged: The Spinster and the Psychiatrist in Liberal Italy, 1860–1922,” *Gender & History*, vol. 24, no. 1 (April 2012), 187–204.

⁷⁶ James C. Albisetti, “The Feminization of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparative Perspective” *History of Education*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993) 257-58. While Italy had no official ban on marriage, individual schools often had their own policies regarding married teachers; the *Società degli asili d’infanzia* of Rome, for example, excluded married teachers.

nineteenth century press were of unmarried teachers. Thus, in addition to the dangers inherent in being alone in a distant locale, single teachers had to contend with the growing distrust of those seen as avoiding prevailing norms.

As the educational goals of the State changed and the elementary school became the locus of a new narrative about Italian history and identity, the elementary teacher became a subject of interest in both popular literature and the press. With the exception of a few instructors in Edmondo De Amicis' *Cuore*, most popular literature with pedagogical themes portrayed the elementary teacher, especially in rural settings, as isolated, persecuted, and unappreciated.⁷⁷

The extensive coverage of teaching conditions, especially following the rise of the Historic Left in 1876, helped to raise awareness of the precarious position occupied by instructors under communal authority. Late nineteenth-century journals and newspapers seized upon a protracted series of stories, filling pages with tales of pathos and tragedy. Historian Fiorenza Taricone has noted that an 1890 article in the journal *Il secolo* recounted a lengthy list of such tales:

Lodi teacher Pietrabissi escaped dishonest persecution through death. Piedmontese teacher Maria Prassendra, sick with typhus and unable to purchase needed medicine, abandoned by all, was found in an attic. Giovanna Errico was Tuscan and fired because her school was closed; with only four lire in her pocket, she traveled on foot until she died from exhaustion and starvation. Odilia Arrigani, a Bolognese teacher, was unfortunately beautiful and pursued for her steadfast virtue and died a horrible death after poisoning herself. Amalia Vitali, a Sicilian teacher, was forced to suffer terrible deprivation, humiliated, wounded by a merciless job transfer, flung herself from the church bell tower....⁷⁸

⁷⁷ On the literary depiction of late-nineteenth century teachers, see Elisa Bonadimani, *La figura del maestro elementare nel romanzo di scuola in Italia dal 1860 al 1920: Ricostruzione del profilo sociale e culturale del maestro italiano attraverso la letteratura e le riviste pedagogiche nel sessantennio liberale* (PhD Dissertation, Department of Pedagogy, Università degli studi di Bergamo, 2009). Bonadimani mentions "*I maestri rurali*" by Riccardo Nigri (1871), "*Il romanzo di un maestro*" by Edmondo De Amicis (1890), and "*Scuola normale femminile*" by Matilde Serao (1895) as examples of this genre.

⁷⁸ Fiorenza Taricone, "Introduzione," in *Figlie, spose, madri: testimonianze di vita quotidiana. Brindisi 1860-1915* (Brindisi: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1991), 31.

As teachers, frustrated with the slow pace of reform and amelioration of dire conditions, began to publicize their plight in educational, women's, and national journals, the press capitalized on stories of abject poverty, abuse, or suffering to further their ideological or policy agendas and increase readership. As a result, scholastic and communal authorities began to fear the ability of the press to incite and create scandal.⁷⁹

While the image of the young teacher described in De Amicis' *Cuore*: happy, affectionate, and beloved by her young pupils, may have been the ideal of some young women entering the teaching profession, the reality was often decidedly less sanguine, and closer in line to De Amicis' impoverished and persecuted teacher in *Il romanzo di un maestro*. It should also be noted, however, that the relentless focus on teacher tragedy and distress by the national and scholastic press often depicted a rather generalized, even clichéd depiction of teaching conditions that presented young female teachers as either brave and virginal martyrs confronting rural backwardness or hardened social misfits with socialist tendencies. The reality, of course, was that conditions varied significantly, depending on the teaching post, the society and authority of the locale, and the preparation and character of the teacher.⁸⁰ With tens of thousands of female teachers employed across the peninsula and islands, records do not show a statistically significant number of deaths of young teachers; much more frequent were the short duration of teaching careers, with instructors abandoning posts for marriage or more lucrative positions and fields. The depiction of teacher tragedy and the casting of the teacher as a central emblem in debates over State centralization and national mores, however, denote the rising importance of

⁷⁹ Simonetta Ulivieri, "La maestrina con la penna rossa," 56.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 52; see also Emma Scaramuzza and Simonetta Soldani.

the school in the nationalizing project and the popularity of the young, female teacher as an evocative romantic and tragic trope.

Italia Donati

Among the many scandalous examples of teacher tragedy, none was more poignant or influential than that of Italia Donati, a young elementary teacher who committed suicide following a rash of salacious gossip and intimidation. Donati, born in Cintolese, near Pistoia, Tuscany in 1863 and named for “the beautiful land that is divided by the Apennines and encircled by the sea and the Alps,” was appointed to teach at a *scuola mista* in Porciano, in her home province in 1883. Earning just 45 lire per month (25% less than a female domestic servant), a sum she shared with her impoverished family, Donati’s financial dependence on the commune compelled her to accept a room near that of the town mayor, Raffaello Torrigiani.⁸¹

After about a year, rumors and anonymous letters began to circulate that Donati was not only conducting an affair with Mayor Torrigiani, a known philanderer living together with his wife and mistress, but had had an abortion. After Donati’s request for an inquest was refused by the district attorney, she persisted and the town council released an official document, based on the testimony of Torrigiani, affirming her innocence. She also petitioned the regional scholastic inspector, Renato Fucini, requesting a medical exam to prove her virginity; Fucini refused, claiming that such an exam would be humiliating and provocative. These legal proceedings only intensified the gossip, and after Donati moved to a new residence, rumors began to circulate that she was now conducting an affair with her new landlord’s son, a relative of the mayor. As the slander became increasingly vicious, Donati kept teaching for fear of her losing her post and the

⁸¹ Giuseppe Baronti, *Parole sul feretro d’Italia Donati pronunciate nel camposanto del Cintolese dal maestro Giuseppe Baronti, 4 luglio 1886* (Pescia: Tip. G. Bossi, 1886), 4-7.

income required by her family. Although she transferred schools, tales of the events in Porciano followed her, as did the recurrence of the scourge of anonymous letters and graffiti.⁸²

The persistence of her harassment and persecution led Donati, distraught and humiliated, to drown herself in 1886. A suicide letter requested that her brother bring her body to a doctor and midwife for an autopsy to prove her virginity and innocence:⁸³ “I leave my body to the judicial authorities so that there is a way to recognize my honesty.”⁸⁴ Additional letters found in her desk focused on the shame inflicted on her and her family; a letter to her brother begged him to forgive her desperation: “Rather than be frightened by my death, let it calm you to know that it will return the honor of our family.”⁸⁵

The autopsy vindicated Donati’s claim and the lamentable tale soon became national news. The Milanese newspaper *Il corriere della sera*, in fact, launched a nationwide fundraiser to transfer Donati’s body to her hometown, a fund that one contributor called, “not only an affectionate homage, but a declaration of protest.”⁸⁶ While her initial burial and mass were attended, as per Donati’s request, by her family and her youngest students, the funeral procession ceremony that carried her body back to her home town included 20,000 mourners, among them local and regional authorities, students, common people, and many teachers.⁸⁷ The tragic story

⁸² Enzo Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” *Studi di storia dell’educazione*, vol. 3 (1981), 35-41.

⁸³ Roberto Puccini, *L’educazione delle donne ai tempi nostri nei popoli più civili* (Milan: Tip editrice L.F. Cogliati, 1904), 465.

⁸⁴ Aristide Gabelli, *L’istruzione in Italia* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1891), 23.

⁸⁵ “Lettera di Italia Donati del maggio 1886 indirizzata al fratello Italiano,” *Il corriere della sera* (June 10/11, 1886,) printed in Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 38.

⁸⁶ “Per la tomba d’Italia Donati,” *Il corriere della sera* (June 17/18, 1886) printed in Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 39-40.

⁸⁷ Taricone, “Introduzione,” in *Figlie, spose, madri*, 31.

of the young Tuscan teacher entered popular lore, recounted by both journalists and poets and variously appropriated as a symbol of female vulnerability and bourgeois hypocrisy. In a hagiographic memorial, Tuscan teacher Giuseppe Baronti promoted the idea of Donati as a religious and courageous martyr, a “burnt offering to God”; a victim of malicious gossip, her “voluntary, but sublime self-sacrifice” signified that “her emblem would continue to be the snow-white lily.” Baronti scorned Donati’s accusers, including the local elites and the lecherous mayor, for attending her funeral, thinking themselves penitent despite having “barbarously cut this flower in front of the squalid home of the wretched, venerable, old man.”⁸⁸ The emphasis on Donati’s virginity was highlighted throughout the commemorations and references to her death that followed. In his poem “Italia Donati (July, 1886),” excerpted at the beginning of this chapter, poet Pompeo Bettini, best known for his socialist writing, focused not on the corrupt system and authorities that exploited her, but on the innocence and bravery of the suicide victim, who “died as she was born, without guilt.”⁸⁹

While Italia Donati’s story makes for a tragically fascinating case of female victimhood and martyrdom, its relevance here is located in the dramatic renown of her story and its utilization in political discourse. Donati was cast as emblematic of one of the three archetypes of female teachers publicized in literature and the press: the young victim of local antagonism (Donati); the teacher tied financially and ideologically to Church authority; and the elderly, but pensionless, teacher reduced to begging.⁹⁰ Donati’s story was taken up as proof of the

⁸⁸ Baronti, *Parole sul feretro d'Italia Donati*, 3-8.

⁸⁹ Bettini, “Italia Donati (luglio, 1886),” 39-40.

⁹⁰ Alba Porcheddu, “La donna nell’insegnamento: storia e prospettive,” *Scuola e città*, year XXIX, no. 9 (September 30, 1978), 354.

deprivation endured by teachers, the inefficiency and corruption of local scholastic authority, and the need for greater oversight, centralization, and reform.

In the immediate aftermath of Donati's death, there was an outpouring of press coverage. Articles written in national, educational, and women's periodicals paralleled Donati's case with the stories of dozens of other young, female teachers fallen victim to assault, harassment, starvation, or suicide. National newspapers tended to focus on the stories of particular victims and the culpability of the local authorities, in the Donati case, particularly focusing on the mayor, Torrigiani; progressive women's journals ran articles about the plight of female teachers and the status of female education. Scholastic journals, however, perceived the Donati case as indicative of generalized structural problem in the school system and focused their ire on the breakdown of supposed educational authority and protections, arguing that Fucini, the school inspector, was particularly culpable for protecting the interests of local authorities over the welfare of the teachers. The Milanese educational journal *Il risveglio educativo* noted that its coverage intended to both "call the attention of the public, a public which has cared for little about the schools and teachers, to the deplorable conditions of the rural [female] schoolteacher," and to "rouse the government into taking prompt action and Parliament into voting for proposed improvements in order to finally put to an end the current situation which is deplorable and unfitting for a great nation. In other words, to advocate for the take-over of the schools by the State."⁹¹

Historian Enzo Catarsi has noted that there were a few educational journals that dissented with the call for State control; both the Brescian journal *Sentinella bresciana* and the Turinese *La guida del maestro elementare italiano* were skeptical about the ability of a State-run system to ameliorate the many problems plaguing the Italian schools and argued that while they opposed

⁹¹ "Interrogatorio di Marcati," *Il risveglio educativo*, year III, no. 31 (May 8, 1887), 421 printed in Catarsi, "Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati," 49-50.

the complete dispossession of local influence, they did support laws protecting teachers from the abuse of local authorities.⁹² However, the majority of the press covering the Donati case called for major reforms, particularly the transfer of authority to the State. While *Il corriere della sera*, the Milanese journal that had initiated press coverage, had previously opposed centralization, the Donati case had convinced its editorial board that “small municipalities were too broken and too ignorant to be entrusted with the instruction and education of children.”⁹³

Donati’s story also alarmed prominent women’s rights advocates. Pedagogical writer, folklorist, and *normale* director Caterina Pigorini-Beri wrote that the case proved the dangers of appointing teachers to positions far from their residences and families. Historian Franca Pieroni Bortolotti notes that Anna Maria Mozzoni, the most influential Italian feminist, went further, arguing that not only should elementary instruction be removed from communal control and entrusted to the State, in order to remove the influence of “local factions,” but wages for male and female teachers be made equal in order to improve the prestige of the position.⁹⁴

While pedagogue Aristide Gabelli resisted the transfer of the elementary system to a government ministry already struggling to oversee universities and secondary schools, he did contemplate the idea of bringing at least rural schools under government purview.⁹⁵ For Gabelli, Donati was not just a lamentable martyr, but a call to arms; without improvement in the pay,

⁹² Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 50-51.

⁹³ O. Brentani, “Le condizioni delle maestre comunali,” *Corriere della Sera*, (June 21/22, 1886) printed in Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 51.

⁹⁴ Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, *Alle origini del movimento femminile in Italia, 1848-1892* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1963), 124.

⁹⁵ Gabelli, *L’istruzione in Italia*, 24. In addition to concerns over the dramatic increase in the size of the State educational bureaucracy, Gabelli doubted that large cities, such as Milan, Turin, Genoa, Venice, and Rome, would be willing to cede control to the State.

conditions, and treatment of teachers, such tragedies would never end. His hope overall was that the tale of Italia Donati would become an impetus for reform both within the school system and in society as a whole. Gabelli compared her to the sixteenth-century Venetian story of the Fornaretto, a young baker who was falsely accused and condemned for the death of a noble. Just as the cry of “Ricordatevi del Fornaretto [Remember the Baker]” became a rallying point for the enactment of legal and social reform, Gabelli hoped the cry of “Ricordatevi della Donati [Remember Donati]” would be the catalyst for dramatic scholastic and social transformation.⁹⁶ He also recognized that no legal reform, including the transfer of the schools to State control, would change the abject position of the teacher without significant reform of customs and mentality.⁹⁷

Journalist and author Matilde Serao, who had worked briefly as a teacher in the 1870s,⁹⁸ was similarly outraged; she wrote an impassioned article, entitled “Come muoiono le maestre [How (female) Teachers Die],” in *Il corriere di Roma* that connected Donati’s plight to that of other young teachers, and incorporated Donati into her 1886 story “Scuola normale femminile”.⁹⁹ Donati’s story entered international attention in 1892, when Grace Greenwood (pseudonym of American journalist, author, and advocate of women’s emancipation Sara Jane Lippincott) used her case to advocate for an end to the moral injustices endured by Italian women. Greenwood, who had been living in Italy at the time of Donati’s death, lamented the sad tale and expounded upon its reception in the national press: “The story of Italia Donati was given

⁹⁶ Ibid., 25, 29.

⁹⁷ Gabelli, “I rimedi ai soprusi e alle persecuzioni contro le maestre,” *L’istruzione in Italia* quoted in Olivieri, “La maestrina con la penna rossa,” 56.

⁹⁸ Olivieri, “La maestrina con la penna rossa,” 53.

⁹⁹ Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 45.

to the world by the journals of Pistoia, Lucca, Florence, and Milan, and soon all of Italy was profoundly moved to pity, admiration, and wonder over the somber heroism of this ‘martyr to honor’, who in her extremity had invoked the championship of Death.” Greenwood condemned both the callous slander of the citizens of Porciano and what she perceived as an Italian tendency toward skepticism of the virtue of women: “Nobody, except perhaps her mother, believes in her absolute, incorruptible ‘*onestà*’-honesty. The very priest who christened, confirmed, and married her, never fails to angle in the confessional for the always suspected *peccato* [sin].” Alongside her criticism of Italia society, Greenwood was struck by the sad beauty of Donati’s funeral procession and the lamentations of elite strangers for an unknown peasant girl, noting that “Italians, who are nothing if not romantic, see the grand passion in every tragedy.”¹⁰⁰

Following this initial outburst of attention in the years after her death, Italia Donati’s case was mentioned only as an occasional aside in historical scholarship on education or in analyses of the works of Matilda Serao. Recently, however, there has been a public revival of interest. Author Elena Gianini Belotti’s 2003 work of historical fiction, *Prima della quiete*, based on the aforementioned press coverage of the events, archival research in Porciano, and the work of historian Enzo Catarsi, was received with some acclaim in Italy and theatrical and film rights have been optioned.¹⁰¹ Belotti’s account of Donati’s dignity, persecution, and pitiful death characterize the schoolteacher as a true martyr, both casualty and emancipator, the innocent

¹⁰⁰ Grace Greenwood, “The Vindication of Italia Donati,” *Stories and Sketches* (New York: Tait, Sons, and Company, 1892), 111, 103, 110.

¹⁰¹ Carlo Onofrio Gori, “Italia Donati, suicidio di una ‘maestrina’,” *Microstoria*, no. 66, (October-December 2010).

victim of both overt and covert harassment and a courageous rebel, “subverting the archaic order of a small town frozen in time.”¹⁰²

The extensive coverage of Donati’s story led to the publicizing of other tales of teacher tragedy. A year after Donati’s death, writer and professor Ernesto Corti published the story of another young teacher, Erminia, lost to suicide twenty years earlier. Despite holding a superior level license for two years, Erminia could not secure a job near her home and finally accepted a post in Sicily. Erminia left her young child with relatives and arrived at her new position. Like Donati, Erminia was driven to suicide by malicious gossip about supposed sexual affairs with local men. Corti connects the deaths of these two young women, separated by twenty years, arguing that they prove both the intolerable conditions endured by teachers, and the lack of legal and social responsibility for men engaging in immoral behavior: “The law makes no requirement of a man who has taken advantage of a woman over 14 years of age without violence; and society in general does not think differently, with this lovely saying: ‘man is a hunter’.” Thus, “the poor girls, after having been seduced, are abandoned, unprotected by the law, finding no comfort in society and instead disgrace and dishonor.”¹⁰³

Elisa

A story with similar elements: a young female teacher alone in a distant town and innocent victim of malicious gossip of perceived moral transgressions, was told by Professor Adolfo Belforti, a scholastic inspector and school director, in 1893. Belforti recounted the tale of Elisa, a young teacher he had mentored from her adolescence. Elisa finished normal school in 1884 and accepted a job in a marshy village near Rome. In 1888, Belforti, who had recently been

¹⁰² Elena Gianini Belotti, *Prima della quiete: Storia di Italia Donati* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2003), 238-39.

¹⁰³ Ernesto Corti, *Erminia: Peripezie d'una maestra* (Stradella: Tipografia di Pietro Salvini, 1887), 3-4.

appointed to a position of authority in her region, received a letter from Elisa detailing her difficulties in her new post and asking for assistance. Elisa claimed that while the students and common people had embraced her, she had made some dangerous enemies: “It is almost as if a secret law has directed the people around me to disrespect me with every footstep, word, act, thought. There have been voices of protest and anonymous letters about me. I know that I am innocent, unwaveringly innocent.”¹⁰⁴

Belforti traveled to Elisa’s town and found her profoundly changed; Elisa was “now a suffering woman, pale, skinny, and delicate; precociously mature, with a thin voice that was testament to the weakened state of her health.” Belforti uncovered the insidious events that had led to Elisa’s ostracism from the town’s good graces. Two powerful men had sexually pursued the young teacher and been refused: Mr. Armando, the town alderman and Mr. Giorgio, nephew of the priest. “The two men knew how to wield the fatal weapon that is the privileged patrimony of cowards and liars: the anonymous letter.” Rejected together, the two rivals became friends, and enlisted the help of the priest and the school superintendent, who saw the scandal as an opportunity to rally local support for religious instruction in the school. Rumors and accusatory graffiti spread throughout the town, parents complained, and Elisa’s young students, bombarded by such stories at home, began to openly disrespect her. The priest sermonized from the pulpit about the direction of the modern school and painted young female teachers as the propagandizers of atheism and corruption.¹⁰⁵

Belforti informs the reader that Elisa was vindicated following his investigation. She assumed a new teaching post in Emilia and was later appointed director of a college “to whom

¹⁰⁴ Adolfo Belforti, *Le gioie del Magistero: Se io pure fossi Maestra! Bozzetto dal vero* (Camerino: Tipografia Sauni, 1893), 22-23.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-28.

she dedicates all of her truly maternal character.” Belforti cites British Lord Chancellor Henry Brougham as saying that the “power of cannons should be put into the hands of school teachers.” According to Belforti, however, Italy focuses instead on “guns and deserts” with its colonialist wars and ignores the country’s desperate need for public educational reform:

If we want the public school to occupy a competitive place and truly follow the modern pedagogical style; that buildings and furnishings correspond to the basics of hygiene and esthetics; that the position of teacher have moral and material guarantees, there is but one energetic and irrefutable remedy: the control of the school by the State.

A key difference in Elisa’s tale was the intervention of Belforti; as a government inspector, he represented the kind of oversight and protection missing from Donati’s case. According to Belforti and other advocates of increased scholastic centralization, the plight of young teachers like Italia Donati or Elisa, sent to work in hostile, isolated, and capricious village schools, was intrinsically tied to the lack of central scholastic oversight and rational governance.¹⁰⁶

Brigida De Angelis

While the story of elementary teacher Brigida De Angelis was not nearly as tragic as that of Italia Donati, it reveals much about the relationship between municipal authority and young instructors and governmental control over perceived moral transgression. In 1877, De Angelis, an elementary teacher in Brindisi, was impregnated by local telegraph operator Giuseppe De Lorenzo; De Angelis hid her pregnancy, resigned from her teaching post, and gave birth in June. In August, De Angelis was called before the Provincial Council on charges of “illicit relations and conception of a child with Giuseppe De Lorenzo.” In her defense, De Angelis responded that she and De Lorenzo had been unable to wed before the birth of their child, but were planning to marry presently. De Angelis insisted that there had been no scandal caused, as her young

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 30, 40.

students were unaware of her pregnancy, there had been no complaints from parents, and she had received no reprimand from her superiors. In September, the Prefect announced his judgment; while De Angelis could resume her teaching position, she would receive a two-month suspension: “The scandalous facts that transpired in Brindisi between Brigida De Angelis and Giuseppe De Lorenzo have not been contested. While their marriage may have restored the honor of the teacher, it certainly cannot rectify the scandal imposed on her students and the public for having become a mother before becoming a wife.” The Prefect insisted that this sentence was pronounced in “observance of public morality.”¹⁰⁷

Often such clashes were the result of cultural differences between the instructor and the local population. Domitilla and Teresa Tommasi Spina, sisters from Le Marche, traveled to the Apulian town of Canosa to take positions in the elementary school. Scandal erupted when a student observed a kiss on the hand between one of the sisters and her fiancé. Following an initial reprimand, both she and her sister were suspended. While the Scholastic Inspector, who found nothing scandalous about a single kiss on the hand between an engaged couple, reinstated the sisters, the discomfort produced by the episode led the sisters to leave Canosa for other teaching positions.¹⁰⁸ This dissonance, between the local mores that condemned a kiss on the hand and those of the outsiders that found such affection innocent, illustrate both the continued heterogeneity of Italian culture and the critical need for additional State inspection.

¹⁰⁷ Taricone, “Introduzione,” in *Figlie, spose, madri*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁸ Archivio Centrale di Canosa, categoria 9, classe 1, fasc. 5, 15-17, printed in Ernesto Bosna, *Scuola e società nell'Mezzogiorno: Il problema della alfabetizzazione di massa dopo l'Unità* (Bari: Puglia Grafica Sud, 1986), 58.

Placido Cerri

While the case of Placido Cerri, a Piedmontese *ginnasio* teacher sent to a small town in the province of Agrigento, Sicily, is not one of a female elementary teacher, his experiences are indicative of the conditions experienced by Italian instructors, particularly in rural areas and throughout the South and island regions. Cerri's story was transcribed by Alessandro D'Ancona as part of the Scialoja Inquest into the state of the school system and published in the periodical *Nazione* without identifying details in 1873. Cerri had high expectations following graduation from the University of Turin and a year studying philology in Germany but found few employment options at the *liceo* level and was compelled to accept a *ginnasio* job in the small town of Bivona with a salary to range between 1280 and 1600 lire per year, a salary roughly three times that paid to female instructors.¹⁰⁹ Traveling to western Sicily, described in Sidney Sonnino and Leopoldo Franchetti's report as bereft of culture and infrastructure, plagued by brigands, and economically controlled by the incipient mafia,¹¹⁰ cost Cerri nearly a month's salary and required transport by mule due to the absence of roads.¹¹¹

Cerri's arrival reveals much about the bureaucratic inefficiency and financial instability of the fledgling public school. Because Cerri had been notified of the position after the start of the academic year, he arrived to find that his salary had been suspended and had to wait two and half months to be paid. His colleagues all possessed second, even third jobs, including roles as tax collectors, lawyers, clerks, and customs agents; the director was also the vice curate of the parish. Echoing a complaint by many teachers and pedagogues, one of the main obstacles toward

¹⁰⁹ Alessandro D'Ancona, "Prefazione," in Placido Cerri, *Tribolazioni di un insegnante di ginnasio*, Preface by Alessandro D'Ancona, ed. Marino Raicich (Florence: Passigli Editori, 1988), 38-42.

¹¹⁰ Marino Raicich, "Un Piemontese in Sicilia," in Cerri, *Tribolazioni di un insegnante*, 5-6.

¹¹¹ Cerri, *Tribolazioni di un insegnante*, 68.

improving education and combating astronomical illiteracy was the lack of interest by families; even educated parents saw little benefit in the work of the school or the benefit of a classical education.¹¹²

The school facilities were similarly an impediment. The room assigned to Cerri lacked sufficient desks, flooded during the rain, and was regularly frequented by dogs and pigs grazing in the hall and wandering into classrooms. Complaints to the school director were met with obstinacy. After requesting that the main door to the school be kept closed, the director refused, resulting in the following exchange:

Director: The disturbance that the animals are giving you is not such a big deal, because once they find nothing to eat, they leave. If they occasionally stay, just make them leave.

Cerri: I am not a shepherd.

Director: And we cannot close off the hallway. The poor animals! Their owners kick them out of the house without feeding them in the morning, so they have to eat what they can find. So they come here to graze on the grass, and why would you want to lock them out, wasting all this food?¹¹³

Such anecdotes, relayed in the national press, seemed to confirm Northern suspicions and stereotypes of the southern regions of the new Italian nation. The growing concern with the “Southern Question” in the 1870s, elaborated by Pasquale Villari’s 1875 *Lettere meridionali* and fueled by Sonnino and Franchetti’s 1876-77 inquest,¹¹⁴ could find a perfect model in Cerri’s experience, which included all the essential elements: a secular school that retained obtuse

¹¹² Ibid., 78-85.

¹¹³ Ibid., 86-87.

¹¹⁴ Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911: Meridionalismo, Empire, and Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). On Orientalism and the ‘Southern Question’ in Italy, see also Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); John Dickie, *The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1999); Marta Petrusiewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1998); Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy’s Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

clerics in central roles, disinterest of local families and students, general backwardness, and acute resistance to both modernization and the nationalization efforts of the new Liberal ruling class. For Cerri, along with many of his fellow teachers, however, the realities were significantly more complex and consequences of harsh conditions often dire. Even without the additional hardships that confronted female teachers: abysmal salary, social isolation, and physical and/or sexual intimidation, Cerri's year spent in the overcrowded, dank, flooded Bivona classroom was likely the direct cause of the illness that proved fatal a year after his departure from Sicily.

Desperation and Duty

For many teachers, material deprivation led to a difficult existence, even desperation. Professor Roberto Puccini pointed to the arrest of Antonietta Scaramuzzo, a young teacher from the commune of Ciriè, at *Cannone d'oro*, a Turin inn: "She had occasionally been caught stealing laundry from hotels, because, she confessed, sobbing, she was starving."¹¹⁵ Such anecdotes proliferated, even after years of legal reform and improved conditions. In an April 10, 1901 circular, Minister of Public Instruction Nunzio Nasi (MPI 1901-1903) noted, "there are frequent and pitiful cases of male and female teachers who are not only unable to make their payments, but live in the most squalid misery."¹¹⁶ While most of the tragic cases that became well known focused on the plight of young teachers, journalist Guido Fabiani, who noted that 1897 had already witnessed three documented teacher suicides, argued that the "verified cases of elderly female teachers forced to travel seeking charity for the same reason" would increase due

¹¹⁵ Roberto Puccini, *L'educazione delle donne*, 465.

¹¹⁶ Nunzio Nasi, quoted in *Ibid.*, 465.

to changes in normal school laws that eliminated the lower level teaching certificate and prohibiting holders of that degree from finding or retaining positions.¹¹⁷

Although women were consistently paid less than men, they were not alone in enduring, and occasionally succumbing to the harsh conditions of a life as a teacher. Progressive teacher and advocate of scholastic reform Gaetano Poli railed against such indignities, citing the suicide of Domenico Arietti, an elementary teacher from Minerbe, in the province of Verona, as an example of the deprivation and uncertainty in which elementary teachers were forced to live: “After having futilely waited for years and years” and holding out hope “until the last moment, always hoping that a ray from that promised sun would pierce the gloom of his miserable days, as an act of solemn desperation he finally decided to throw into the face of the world the horror that our country was guilty of, having been left languishing in squalid poverty.”¹¹⁸

The pay offered to teachers was so insufficient that many were compelled to take up second jobs to survive. Gabelli noted that teaching was among the worst paid jobs: “The teaching profession wins the unhappy contest of most disgraced, worst paid, least secure, the most exposed to humiliations and bitterness.” Such conditions led to the annual flight of hundreds of teachers from the field in order to become “commune secretaries, postal employees, telegraph operators, railway workers, and government typists.”¹¹⁹

The need to take up a secondary position was not, of course, limited to teachers in Italy. Elementary instructors, especially female teachers in rural areas, were underpaid throughout Europe, although the income disparity was not usually as uneven as it was in Italy. In Germany,

¹¹⁷ Guido Fabiani, “Per le maestre e per i maestri senza posto,” in *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, no. 12-13 (December 21, 1897), 51.

¹¹⁸ Gaetano Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre d'Italia e per le famiglie dei lavoratori* (Florence: G. Nerbini, 1901), 26-27.

¹¹⁹ Gabelli, *L'istruzione in Italia*, 126.

for example, female teachers were legally to be paid 75 to 80 percent the salary of a man, a much more equitable percentage than the 35 to 50 percent rate in Italy.¹²⁰ Pauline Herber, the founder of the Association of Catholic Women Teachers in Germany, portrayed the assumption of additional work not as a financial necessity, but as a means to pass time and fulfill “duties to your status as a woman.” While she encouraged jobs like gardening, cooking, and cleaning, she warned that teaching must remain the primary focus:

Be careful that your secondary job does not become your plaything or expensive hobby, but apply yourself only to those jobs that can serve your sense of utility and beauty, and only in measures that will not harm your health, because excessive manual labor has been the cause of other teachers’ weakened nervous system and a lessened ability to do their essential job.¹²¹

The idea of a second income as a financial necessity is not broached. Rather, Herber focused on the primacy of fulfilling one’s duties as both a teacher and a woman.

To deal with the isolation, deprivation, and ostracism endemic to the teaching profession, particularly in rural areas, many instructors sought support in one of the numerous educational periodicals aimed toward them. The Milanese weekly periodical *Il corriere delle maestre*, whose motto was “with you and for you”, was published by Professor Guido Fabiani, whose publishing interests also included both a girl’s and boy’s literary journal, supplementary guides for classroom instruction, and maps, illustrated posters, and other didactic tools.¹²² *Il corriere delle maestre* aimed to “bring together and form connections between the teachers of Sicilian shores and Alpine villages, the teacher from the city and the teacher of the isolated town” and to provide

¹²⁰ James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 82.

¹²¹ Pauline Herber, *La vocazione della maestra. Lettere ad un antica allieva*, translated by Don Giuseppe Polvara (Milan, L.F. Cogliati-Tip Editore, 1895), 50.

¹²² *Guida all'insegnamento dell'Economia Domestica nelle scuole elementari femminili. Proposta dalla Redazione del Corriere delle maestre. Corso Inferiore* (Rome: Antonio Vallardi, 1898).

“didactic advice, news from both the scholastic world and the larger world; to be a sounding board for our unknown, suffering, unfortunate colleagues; to fight for the best conditions possible for every single female Italian teacher; and to organize conferences, expositions, and initiatives.”¹²³

Despite concern for the conditions expressed by the educational press and the publicity received by such tragedies in the press, many educational authorities insisted that while circumstances were tough, teachers were well prepared to deal with such obstacles. In an 1887 letter to Geminiano Corazziari, the director of the Modenese normal school, the Ministry of Public Instruction recognized that “many sad external difficulties impede the desired effects of the teacher, the angst and poverty of the place... the ignorance, laziness, and carelessness of the families and a lack of assistance from the local authorities.” However, the letter insisted, teachers could “easily overcome such obstacles” and that he and his school should “have faith that the efficiency of the Ministry will manage to obtain the greatest advantages of the marvelous virtues that the school contains.”¹²⁴

Authorities were not alone in their contention that teachers had been adequately trained to deal with adversity; several pedagogical writers insisted that the sense of duty that had supposedly drawn young women to the field would be sufficient to protect them from such conditions. In 1899, Turinese normal school instructor Matteo Miraglia quoted one of his pupils who extolled its power: “Duty is the muse of the teacher, the light that illuminates her, brightens her difficult path, guides and drives her to her destination, the support that sustains her, animates her, and encourages her when she is worn down and tired.” Due to this “noble ideal,” she is

¹²³ Guido Fabiani, “Introduzione,” *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 1 (October 3, 1897), 1.

¹²⁴ Geminiano Corazziari, *Scuola normale femminile in Modena: Relazione dell'anno scolastico 1886-87* (Modena: Tipografia Domenico Tonietto, 1887), 9.

compelled to “sacrifice everything: youth, beauty, distant family, entertainment; she spends the day together with seventy children in a crowded room, that is too cold in winter, too hot in summer, and sad during the spring when it is sunny and breezy outside with the scent of fresh flowers.” Miraglia’s student, referred to as C.O., claimed that teachers lived entirely for their students, thus mitigating the deprivation, instability, and isolation of her position: “She is totally focused on doing a job that is often miserable, but she is always content and happy. Her many discomforts are amply compensated by the satisfaction of conscientiously fulfilling her duty.”¹²⁵

Such claims were echoed by Ernestina Gemme, the head of the *normale* in Piacenza in 1889 in a speech to her student teachers. Gemme acknowledged the teaching profession’s reputation as difficult and precarious, but insisted that not only were the students well trained, they were guided by a sense of duty:

Someone hinted to me that these young women are on a delicate, possibly scandalous, path, rough with dangers and obstacles that may discourage their spirits. But do not fear, the student teachers already know pretty well the difficulties of teaching through their lessons, and have already fought their first battles and have avoided these unforeseen obstacles; our teachers know how to overcome them.¹²⁶

The well-publicized stories of Italia Donati and other victims of the isolation and ostracism of rural positions led to further rumors: “Outside of school they will likely encounter the apathy, the indifference, disdain, and slander that will discourage the teacher.” Gemme rejected such disparaging remarks, as well as the assertion that teachers joined the profession out of necessity,

¹²⁵ C.O. in Matteo Miraglia, *Temi di pedagogia generale e speciale: assegnati dal prof. Matteo Miraglia, e svolti dalle alunne della R. Scuola normale Domenico Berti, del R. Istituto della Provvidenza di Torino e di alcuni corsi di preparazione a concorsi di direttori e ispettori nelle scuole elementari, raccolti ad uso degli allievi e delle allieve delle scuole normali, degli aspiranti privatisti alla licenza normale, degli insegnanti elementari, dei direttori e degli ispettori scolastici*. vol. I (Turin: Libreria Scolastica di Grato Scioldo, 1899), 43, 45.

¹²⁶ Ernestina Gemme, *Parole dette nell'occasione del saggio di canto, dato il 27 giugno 1889 dalle allieve della r. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Piacenza* (Piacenza: Tipografia Marchesotti, 1889), 9.

rather than a true calling: “No, I respond, no! Such claims are ridiculous. The *normale* will have reinforced their sense of duty.”¹²⁷ Speaking to an audience of young women about to enter the profession, Gemme was careful to acknowledge and reject the idea that her pupils might fall victim to the harsh conditions and material deprivation that had become notorious.

Improving Conditions: Unionization, Advocacy, and Professionalization

Despite the aforementioned claims, following a vague sense of duty was not always sufficient to keep teachers in the profession. Demands by teachers for higher wages and benefits, more stable appointments, and superior classroom and didactic conditions, led to improved circumstances. In addition to the increases in wage minimums stipulated by legislation, there was also a push by educational congresses, journals, and pedagogical writers to professionalize the job by tightening educational requirements and licensing restrictions, and to improve material conditions by establishing a pension system, conducting regular conferences, and eventually forming a union in 1901.¹²⁸

The second Congress of Italian Elementary Teachers, held in 1881, pushed for several reforms that would take years, even decades to be enacted. Among the resolutions were calls for equal pay for male and female teachers, an end to the inferior level teaching certificate,¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Susanne Wilking, *Mutter, Missionarin, Meisterin: Der Beruf der Lehren in Italien von 1860 bis 1914* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 97-113.

¹²⁹ Following the second year of the *normale* or the conclusion of the *magistrale*, a student-teacher could take the examination for an inferior level certificate, allowing an instructor to teach the first two years of the elementary school. A superior level license would be awarded, following examination, after the third year, allowing a teacher to assume all elementary positions. The inferior level certificate was abolished in 1904, when the distinction between inferior and superior school ended and all elementary school grades were to be taught by holders of the superior degree, forcing holders of the inferior degree to return for additional certification.

permission for women to teach all elementary levels of male schools, the streamlining of the school inspector promotion process, and better regulation of private school instruction.¹³⁰

Another major factor in the amelioration of teaching conditions was the educational journals that helped to promote “a spirit of solidarity, love for the school and education, and a hope for a better future” through years of “assiduous propaganda.”¹³¹ Editor of the Roman monthly periodical *La rassegna degli interessi femminili*, Fanny Zampini Salazaro argued in 1887 that forming female teachers’ associations would not only improve the quality of education, but also improve the opinion of the public, who often imagined teaching as the refuge for women who either could or would not accept other employment. Salazaro, who envisioned reading rooms filled with both the latest pedagogical literature and treatises and general interest books, argued that improving the quality of teaching and public standing would help to end the salary discrepancy between male and female instructors. She argued that instead of standing up for themselves in solidarity, as men did, women seemed only to happy “point out the defects, weaknesses, and faults of members of their own sex.”¹³² Salazaro, who traveled frequently to speak on Italian women in international conferences, claimed that in London alone, there were hundreds of such associations that provided both training and advocacy for women of various classes and professions. For Italian women to improve both their condition and standing, they would have to act in solidarity and engage in the professionalization of primary teaching.

¹³⁰ Modesta, Miosotide and Francesco Giordano-Orsini, "Congresso di Maestri Elementari Italiani." *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 5 (November 5, 1881), 18-19.

¹³¹ Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre*, 4.

¹³² Fanny Zampini Salazaro, "Associazioni Femminili," *La rassegna degli interessi femminili*, year I, no. 2 (February 15, 1887), 74-78.

German pedagogue Herber echoed Salazaro's calls for continued education as a means to professionalization. Herber argued that one way to stave off judgment from local authorities and families was to engage in cultural and intellectual enrichment: "read voraciously and constantly compare what you have read with your own experiences." In addition to rereading pedagogical works retained from normal school training, teachers were advised to borrow or subscribe to the latest educational journals and books.¹³³ Francesco Di Bari-Bruno, author of a tract on Italian grammar that was adopted throughout Italy in accordance with new educational legislation in 1888, pushed not only for an improvement in the general culture of teachers, but an improvement in textbooks and didactic materials provided for instruction: "If we want to see the just aspirations of the educators of the popular classes fulfilled, we must give them the tools. We want teachers to believe that they can improve themselves and thus render themselves truly worthy of the delicate and noble office they hold."¹³⁴

Advocates of both improved teaching conditions and the centralization of the school system pushed for tighter training and licensing requirements by making the State-run normal school the dominant training ground for teachers. This entailed marginalizing privately-trained teachers and ending the normal school's *de facto* role as the main secondary school for women, whether they intend to pursue a teaching career or not.¹³⁵ The head of the education ministry, Paolo Boselli (MPI 1888-91, 1906; Prime Minister 1916-17), pushed for tighter requirements for

¹³³ Pauline Herber, *La vocazione della maestra*, 38.

¹³⁴ Francesco Di Bari Bruno, *La grammatica razionale della lingua italiana in 30 tavole sinottiche ad uso delle classi elementari superiori, del 1. anno di scuola tecnica, normale e magistrale: libro coordinato ai nuovi programmi governativi del 1888* (Bari: Tipografia del Commercio, 1889), 32.

¹³⁵ For a full discussion of the dual role of the female normal school, see Chapter Five: Defining Norms.

privatisti,¹³⁶ mandating that after they pass the examinations for both inferior and superior level licenses, they complete two years at a State *tirocinio* (model school) and then pass an additional examination.¹³⁷ Since *tirocini* were attached to female normal schools and *convitti* (boarding schools) Boselli's requirement reflects the high level of feminization among elementary graduates by 1890.

In 1901, a decade before becoming the Minister of Public Instruction (MPI 1910-1914), Professor Luigi Credaro helped to found the *Unione Magistrale Nazionale*.¹³⁸ For Credaro and other supporters of unionization, platitudes about duty did little to ameliorate the difficult conditions endured by teachers: "Not with the hopeful prayers of individuals, but with the well organized action of all colleagues in Italy, can the primary teachers escape from their present straits and reach the social position they deserve."¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *Privatisti* refers to instructors who passed licensing examinations but did not graduate from State *normali* or *magistrali*. See Chapter Five: Defining Norms, 208-211.

¹³⁷ Paolo Boselli, *Regolamento per le scuole normali e per gli esami di patente di maestro o maestra elementare. Approvato col R. decreto 14 settembre 1889* (Milan: Risveglio Educativo e Antonio Villardi, 1890), 38.

¹³⁸ Wilking, *Mutter, Missionarin, Meisterin*, 97.

Figure 2.1: Membership in the *Unione Magistrale Nazionale* (UMN)

Year	Members
1901	30,180
1904	32,000
1905	32,781
1906	34,228
1907	35,750
1909	40,000
1910	29,512
1911	31,340
1914	30,000

¹³⁹ Luigi Credaro, quoted in Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre*, 27.

In addition to unionization, progressive advocates sought the formation of mutual aid societies to provide benefits in case of illness (including a sick spouse or child), unemployment, and retirement. In 1909, Pedagogue Emma Teresa Mandalino, who promoted the progressive idea of the school as an engine of social transformation, “making citizens knowledgeable of their own dignity and the new means of wellness and progress,” noted that the growth in unions and mutual aid societies during the second half of the nineteenth century among laborers, scientists, and white-collar employees had led to improvements in both moral and economic conditions. Because the expansion of popular schooling had been so central in forming “the character and ideals of a new society” that recognized the rights and duties of all citizens, Italian schools must be at the forefront of this progressive movement, encouraging unionization of student teachers and the formation of mutual aid societies within schools.¹⁴⁰ Mandalino’s arguments, which were echoed by contemporaries Carlo Rugarli and N. Ruffini,¹⁴¹ held that the school should be a locus of progressive reform, with teachers helping to introduce mutual aid societies within both schools and the larger communities.

Centralization

Under the leadership of the Historic Right, the public school system focused on the creation of a state and social stability rather than mass politics. The level of government control and support increased according to the grade level, with the primary schools locally run and

¹⁴⁰ Emma Teresa Mandalino, *Della mutualità scolastica. Conferenza detta alle alunne della scuola normale femminile di Casale Monferrato il giorno 22 giugno 1909* (Casale: Stabilimento Arti Grafiche già Fratelli Torelli, 1909), 8-16.

¹⁴¹ Carlo Rugarli, *La Mutualità Scolastica. Guida pratica agli insegnanti per istituire Mutualità Scolastiche nei grandi e nei piccoli comuni* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1909); N. Ruffini, *La Mutualità Scolastica. Guida per la istituzione della mutualità nelle scuole elementari* (Milan: Antonio Villardi, 1909).

funded, the classical *ginnasio* (the first five years after elementary grades) under partial commune authority, the *liceo* (the last three years of secondary education) financed by the State, and the Universities under the tightest control.¹⁴² The State subsidy for elementary education, 500,000 lire per year in 1859, was doubled in 1866 and raised again to 1.7 million in 1876.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, Universities were given about 6.5 million lire and secondary schools about 4 million (both institutions were also able to charge student fees, a source of income not practicable in impoverished elementary schools).¹⁴⁴ This hierarchy of support and control was connected to the goals of the successive Liberal-Conservative national governments, in which the primary schools received little more than unenforceable policy and the secondary *licei* were promoted as the bureaucratic training ground of the middle and upper classes. There was also a three-year *scuola tecnica* that aimed to provide access to higher technical institutes and industrial training and a three-year *scuola normale* and two-year *scuola magistrale* for the training of teachers.

While it brought secondary and University education under direct control of the Ministry of Public Instruction, elementary education was directed by the Ministry but managed, funded, and driven by the regions and communes. The 1859 Casati Law, which was intended only for the Piedmontese and Lombard regions, but was applied to the dramatically expanded and regionally disparate nation in 1861, left hiring, firing, and funding of elementary schools to the communes.

¹⁴² Edward Tannenbaum, "Education," in *Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861*, ed. Edward Tannenbaum and Emiliana Noether (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 232-34. In addition to State schools, there were private and local secondary schools at both *ginnasio* and *liceo* levels, which, although privately or locally funded, were still under State standards.

¹⁴³ Ester De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall'Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 116.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

Soon after Unification, the effects of astronomical illiteracy and the inadequacy of popular education manifested in military shortcomings. Although the Veneto had been added to the Italian nation in 1866, the losses at Custozza and Lissa had been at great cost and revealed the lack of culture and preparation in the new nation. In his popular 1866 pamphlet, *Di chi è la colpa? O sia la pace e la guerra*, positivist reformer and historian Pasquale Villari (MPI 1891-92) claimed that the war had been a triumph for science, proving that the “most learned nations [France, Prussia, and Austria] were also dominant in the field of battle.” Where then was Italy? Villari noted that while Italian military schools were orderly and disciplined, the abysmal level of general scientific culture throughout the nation crippled Italian skill in military planning, strategic logistics, mapmaking, and military technology. The cause for this military backwardness was not only the impoverishment of the schools, but the fact that the new State was made up of three distinct groups, “the employees of the old regimes, liberals from the new provinces, and the Piedmontese,” that lacked a shared vision for the new nation.¹⁴⁵

In a report to the Senate regarding the condition of primary schools in 1866, the Ministry of Public Instruction, under the leadership of Domenico Berti (MPI 1865-67), stressed the importance of keeping the elementary schools under communal control, “because in Italy the communes have led all of the glorious memories of civility and liberty, because the commune, since it is made by us, can promote the interests of the family and those members of the public in favor of instruction.” The proposal emphasized the importance of maintaining private schools, especially in areas like Naples and Tuscany, where they had a long, rich tradition. As in Switzerland, Belgium, or Holland, concessions should be made to private schools and the systems should be allowed to operate side by side: “In the midst of the decay of the lazy and

¹⁴⁵ Pasquale Villari, *Di chi è la colpa? O sia la pace e la guerra* (Milan: Tipografia di Zanetti Francesco, 1866), 5-7.

burdensome public school, these speak to the perseverance of native industriousness; and even if they are not enough on their own, they should not be destroyed, as they are valuable, together with the public schools, in the promotion of national culture.” The report also referenced other nations in its recommendation to end free schooling, arguing that free schools are unprecedented in other European states; in Italy, free schooling places undue pressure on communes, and forces people to pay for the education of others. Despite the clearly conservative position of Berti’s ministry, in line with modest goals of the Historic Right for the elementary school, the proposal did call for the creation of a national policy for the primary schools. Although such a recommendation should not be taken as a call for greater State control, it does represent a clear recognition of the pernicious lack of cohesion in the educational system.¹⁴⁶

The 1876 victory of the Historic Left did not represent a major shift in political ideology but did promote new positivist educational policies; while support for the Right had been strongest amongst Northern industrialists, the new Leftist coalition was based on Southern interests that favored greater government intervention. Free, obligatory, secular education was one of the cornerstones of the Left’s platform of social reform and the expansion of political participation. The first Agostino Depretis government in 1876 attempted to remedy the lack of general culture and vocational training for peasant and working-class youth and rectify the regional literacy divides that had become exacerbated under the previous government’s uneven support and enforcement by instituting the rural magisterial school in 1879. Depretis underlined the importance of education in the extension of suffrage: “The elementary school was the only means of elevating men to participation in liberal institutions and to bring to both their minds and

¹⁴⁶ “Progetto di legge per la riforma dell’amministrazione dell’istruzione primaria presentato in iniziativa al Senato nella tornata del 1 marzo, 1866,” in Ministero della pubblica istruzione, *Documenti sull’ordinamento delle scuole* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1866). 5-9, 82-92.

souls a foundation of reform, which otherwise cannot penetrate tradition and will remain superficial, a plant without roots.”¹⁴⁷ Illiteracy also had direct political implications, as literacy replaced wealth as the dominant qualification for voting following the 1881 electoral law.¹⁴⁸ In addition to making attendance obligatory, the 1877 Coppino law expanded the minimum requirement from two to three years of elementary schooling, with funding still to be provided by the local communes, and mandated full application of norms to the entire peninsula.

Political control by the Historic Left included several attempts to reform and improve teaching conditions, including successful measures to augment salaries and improve job security and tenure in 1876, 1885, and 1886. Historian Enzo Catarsi has noted that while improvements in wages, job security, and tenure did not even keep up with the cost of living, they were welcomed by the scholastic press and helped to publicize the need to dramatically improve the status of public school instructors. According to many educational journals, the government attempts at improving minimum salaries were useless without amending the central problem in teaching conditions: the dependence of teachers on local authority.¹⁴⁹ While the hiring and firing of teachers was nominally in the hands of the local school board, the mayor often wielded significant influence. Further, in addition to a teaching license and clean bill of health, a prospective teacher required a testament of morality from her local mayor, placing her career prospects under his authority. Such authority, often wielded in a paternalistic and controlling

¹⁴⁷ *Sull'obbligo dell'istruzione elementare*, from bill presented to Minister of Public Instruction, Coppino, December 16, 1876. Quoted in De Fort, *La scuola elementare*, 116-117.

¹⁴⁸ Christopher Duggan, “Politics in the Era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870-96,” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796-1900*, ed. John Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 162-63. Duggan notes that the 1881 law made literacy the dominant criterion for enfranchisement, replacing wealth. Wealth, which had previously qualified 4/5 of the electorate, now became the qualifier for only a third. The new law increased the number of voters from 620,000 to over 2 million.

¹⁴⁹ Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 31-34.

manner, was a frequent target of those educational journalists and reformers who called for the transfer of the schools to national, centralized jurisdiction.

In 1882, Minister of Public Instruction Guido Baccelli (MPI 1881-84, 1898-1900) presented a series of reforms to ameliorate and regulate the conditions, salaries, and benefits accorded to elementary teachers. The reforms included augmenting the minimum salary, increasing pay according to seniority, and requiring communes to submit salary and hiring proposals to provincial authorities. In response to the well-publicized cases of egregious or petty termination of instructors, the reforms also brought the firing of teachers under provincial, rather than communal authority and provided for a hearing on the teacher's behalf.¹⁵⁰ Such reforms were intended both to improve and homogenize teaching conditions and to protect instructors from capricious local authorities.

The *trasformismo* of the Left and Right into a centrist bloc in 1883 made the elementary teacher a vital player in the goals of improved literacy and the promotion of a new unifying historical narrative.¹⁵¹ The rise to power of Risorgimento-era Democrats and Mazzinians like Agostino Depretis and Francesco Crispi ushered in a “more ecumenical reading of the national movement,” making the Risorgimento the central myth of the nation, emphasized in national celebrations, public statues, and monuments, with Garibaldi rebranded as a secular saint, a patriotic hero around which the centralizing State could rally.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Francesco Giordano-Orsini, “Notizie,” *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 16 (January 21, 1882), 128.

¹⁵¹ Duggan, “Politics in the Era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870-96,” 167.

¹⁵² Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 295.

In 1888, in response to criticism of the languid pace of mandatory instruction implementation, Paolo Boselli (MPI 1888-91, 1906; Prime Minister 1916-17) claimed that as of 1888, only 36 communes remained noncompliant, and that the gradual spread of the law had led to a more organic transformation of public opinion toward public instruction, “bringing education into the sentiments, opinion, and habits of the people.” Boselli connected his reluctance to hastily centralize the system to his adherence to a positivist educational philosophy that encouraged “experimentation and testing,” proceeding gradually and with careful observation. While he advocated improved education, pushing for the expansion of obligatory education to five years, he also aimed to limit government intervention, arguing for keeping elementary schools under communal control and preserving the autonomy of approved private schools.¹⁵³

Another major impetus toward State takeover was the heavy, and growing financial burden placed on the communes. The growth of bureaucracy came often at the expense of the elementary school. While the educational budget of 1882 was augmented by 300,000 lire from the previous year to around 29 million lire, most of the increase went to the *ginnasi* and to the new State school board. Despite the increase in teacher salaries, and the continued expansion of the school, the subsidies provided to communes for elementary teaching were decreased by 5 percent to just over 4.2 million lire annually.¹⁵⁴ Between salary increases, improved facilities, and raised mandatory instruction periods, communal costs skyrocketed, from 757 million lire in 1877 to 1214 million in 1896; elementary schools came to absorb increasingly large percentages

¹⁵³ Paolo Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione: Discorso del Ministro Paolo Boselli, pronunciato alla Camera dei deputati nella tornata del 21 giugno, 1888* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei deputati, 1888), 9, 35, 36, 38-39, 40.

¹⁵⁴ Francesco Giordano-Orsini, “Notizie,” in *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 31 (May 11, 1882), 248.

of local budgets, from 8.5 percent in 1876 to 13.7 percent in 1899. These rising costs were due to the combination of increased mandates by the State and decreases in subsidies provided by the State, and contributed to demands for State assumption of education.¹⁵⁵

By 1911, with the passing of the Daneo-Credaro law, the mission of the school was transformed from an elite training ground to a free, obligatory, and expanded school for the popular classes. All schools, including private institutions, were brought under State financial and administrative control, women were admitted to all secondary schools and University faculties, and teaching conditions were significantly improved through unionization and standardization of pay and benefits, finally equalizing the salaries of male and female teachers.¹⁵⁶ It also mandated school inspectorates in every commune in order to promote *asili* (nursery schools) and directly oversee schools for the nationalized system.¹⁵⁷ With the increasingly secularizing school substituting civil morality and ethics for religious morality and the growing influence of progressive pedagogy advocating a larger role for the school in society, the idea of the State as the rightful educational authority was strengthened, resulting in improved status and conditions for elementary teachers.

Piedmontisation and Bureaucratization

From its inception, the Italian school system was a compromise; the 1859 Casati law tried to appease liberal and democratic parties while also avoiding the ire of reactionaries. Because

¹⁵⁵ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia: I. Dall'Unità all'età giolittiana* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 166-173.

¹⁵⁶ Gabriella Seveso, *Come ombre leggere. Gesti, spazi, silenzi nella storia dell'educazione delle bambine* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), 59.

¹⁵⁷ Carl Ipsen, *Italy in the Age of Pinocchio: Children and Danger in the Liberal Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 170.

Piedmont had been the only region with a stable constitutional government, viable military, and administration, its laws, bureaucracy, and school system were assimilated onto the rest of the peninsula following its annexation of the other regions. The Farini-Minghetti bill of 1859, which proposed a modestly decentralized federal government, included a design for decentralized educational administration; regions were to control the upper grades, provinces the middle grades, and communes the elementary level schools. It was defeated in favor of the extension of a Piedmontese Casati law.¹⁵⁸ While many advocates of Unification, including Mazzinians and Democrats, hoped that Piedmontese dominance would be provisional until a more organic decentralized governance could be developed, the chaotic brigand and separatist wars that erupted in much of the South meant that Piedmontese rule was confirmed.¹⁵⁹

Hesitation about the Unification and the exportation of Piedmontese institutions was common among many in the North. While Piedmontese politician Massimo D'Azeglio is most closely associated, incorrectly, with the adage, "Now that we have made Italy, we must make Italians," he was extremely wary about the unification of the entire Italian peninsula. Indeed, another adage, "In all ways the fusion with Neapolitans makes me afraid; it is like going to bed with a smallpox patient"¹⁶⁰ reveals the reservations he shared with many Northerners. Although Camillo Cavour had been well aware that Piedmontese administration and institutions could not be successfully exported to the rest of the Peninsula, especially the South, these warnings were quickly ignored following his untimely death in 1861. His less astute successors, recognizing the

¹⁵⁸ Filippo Linati, *Le leggi Minghetti e la pubblica istruzione. Considerazioni del conte F.L. senatore del Regno* (Parma, 1861) printed in Giuseppe Talamo, *La scuola dalla legge Casati all'inchiesta del 1864* (Milan: Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1960), 91.

¹⁵⁹ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 228-232.

¹⁶⁰ Massimo D'Azeglio and Diomede Pantaleoni, *Carteggio inedito*, ed. Giovanni Faldella (Turin: Roux, 1888), 430 quoted in Wong, *Race and the Nation*, 19.

need for trained bureaucrats but lacking school systems in most regions, disseminated the Piedmontese model and its personnel. As a result, many unprepared Piedmontese teachers were expedited to the South and islands to oversee the new system, “turning a good Turinese elementary teacher into a malicious director or a terrible inspector.” Villari claimed that the bureaucracy was made up of a growing corps of untrained, incapable men who “multiplied like locusts” and became increasingly powerful.¹⁶¹ Villari noted that just as John Stuart Mill warned, these functionaries had become routine, since “a bureaucracy always tends to become a pedantocracy.”¹⁶²

The Casati Law of 1859 laid out the details and organization of the schools, while the Mamiani law of 1860 and De Sanctis law of 1861 spread them throughout the newly annexed regions. Proposals to standardize such programs fell into two categories: the first, referred to as the Tuscan model and supported by Domenico Berti and Carlo Cadorna, aimed for legislative intervention in setting basic guidelines and promoting increased educational efforts while making local cities and provinces responsible for covering costs and implementation; the second, known as the Piedmontese model and promoted by G. B. Michellini, advocated national investment in public education, both financially and pedagogically.¹⁶³ In line with the growing recognition that public education had a nationalizing potential, the government mandated a larger role in the formation of teachers, resulting in the Piedmontisation of the new school system. In practice however, the lack of both financial resources and interest in popular schooling during the rule of the Center-Right meant that elementary schools remained marginalized, locally

¹⁶¹ Villari, *Di chi è la colpa?* 9-11.

¹⁶² John Stuart Mill, quoted in *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶³ Maria Cristina Morandini, *Scuola e nazione: Maestri e istruzione popolare nella costruzione dello Stato unitario, 1848-1860* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2003), 111-13.

funded and dominated, with often unenforceable mandates from the State Ministry of Public Instruction.

The problem with applying a Piedmontese bureaucracy throughout the entire peninsula was the high level of regional disparity and the unevenness of applied reforms. Each carpetbagging¹⁶⁴ bureaucrat came armed with his own set of reforms, convinced that he had a “secret talisman that would save the country,” oblivious to local culture and educational tradition. Villari noted, for example, that bureaucrats tried to “mandate compulsory schooling, while in Tuscany it was optional;” they ignored regional history, like the fact that “private teachers proliferated in Naples, while in Turin, Pavia, and Pisa, this tradition was not entrenched. Since 1859, the Ministry had tried nearly every system, the remnants of which had resulted only in making instruction equally terrible for everyone.” Villari argued that the national government needed to better understand its citizens and the conditions and traditions of its various regions, focus on the moral, hygienic, commercial, and industrial instruction of the people, and invest in education as the only true source of lasting freedom. While “the State cannot do everything,” he concluded, through “modesty, willpower, and hard work,” it might help to raise living conditions, improve national and individual intelligence and character, and increase military preparedness.”¹⁶⁵ Forty years after Villari’s warnings, the uneven and hasty application of the Casati law remained a problem. Professor Angelo Mosso noted that this “dizzying and miserable” system led each successive Minister of Public Instruction to act like “a student called to the blackboard who scribbles, erases, and rewrites his plan; the next Minister comes to the

¹⁶⁴ Judith Jeffrey Howard, *The Woman Question in Italy, 1861-1880* (PhD Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1977), 11.

¹⁶⁵ Villari, *Di chi è la colpa?* 16, 27, 32.

board and erases everything and begins a new plan; then a third steps up and rewrites what the first did.”¹⁶⁶

As part of the Scialoja Inquest into male and female secondary schools between 1872 and 1875,¹⁶⁷ Federico Napoli, parliamentary deputy and former Secretary General for Public Instruction in Sicily, noted that the status of secondary education varied from province to province, depending on its pre-Unification educational history, culture, and organization. While the reform of schools began in Piedmont in 1845 and was reinvigorated with the academic laws of 1848 and 1859, other regions, with the exception of Lombardy and Veneto which had Austrian-founded secondary schools, had little tradition of schooling outside that provided by religious and/or profit-driven enterprise. In these provinces without a long scholastic tradition, “the provisional governments rushed to institute secondary schools, choosing, for the most part, local instructors who were often not legally trained or licensed; often these choices were made more for political reasons than educational ones.” The major problem with Italian secondary schools, according to Napoli, was the prevalence of inferior private schools. While Napoli conceded that bringing all such schools under government control might be inopportune and offensive to the principle of “freedom of schooling,” he claimed that “the greater the degree of freedom of schooling allowed, the more incisive government vigilance must be in the governance of schools not dependent on the State,” including annual inspections. Like most pedagogical reformers of the 1870s, Napoli saw the German educational system as being the ideal model: “it is undeniable that in Germany, the most lauded politicians have proclaimed that education is one of the principal rights and duties of the State and one of its most essential

¹⁶⁶ Angelo Mosso, in Arcangelo Ghisleri, *Scuola e libertà* (Lugano: Stamperia del Tessin-Touriste, 1902), 12.

¹⁶⁷ For a full description of the Scialoja Inquest, see pages 86-92 of this chapter.

functions.” Thus, the augmentation and amelioration of State schools should take precedence over the preservation of independent, private, or religious institutions.¹⁶⁸

An investigation, conducted by Michele Coppino (MPI 1867; 1876-78; 1878-79; 1884-1888) into the ability of regions to comply with the 1877 obligatory attendance revealed significant differences in the number and training of qualified teachers. In Lombardy, the Casati law replaced the Austrian regulation of 1818, meaning that even small communes and Alpine provinces possessed many long-established schools, and would require only reorganization and improved female schools.¹⁶⁹

The Veneto had also been subject to the 1818 Austrian regulations before annexation and could boast a good number of male schools. However, in large cities, the female schools were in poor shape and in small cities very rare, with rudimentary lessons taught by volunteers. The few schools that existed to train female teachers were private, fee-driven and populated by young girls. These were the basis for the new public magisterial schools tasked with preparing teachers for the new female school. The increase in female students, from 20,000 in 1867 to 87,441 in 1877 meant that as of 1877, there was still a shortage in teachers for female schools, resulting in 61 out of 794 schools without obligatory attendance. However, with a corresponding quadrupling of normal and magisterial students since 1859, Coppino was convinced that all schools would soon be fully staffed.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Federico Napoli, “Risposto scritto, 7 aprile, 1873,” ACS, MPI, *Div. scuole medie (1860-1896)*, b. 11, fasc. 78, printed in ACS, *FSS IV: L'inchiesta Scialoja sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile (1872-1875)*, ed. Luisa Montevicchi and Marino Raicich (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1995), 520-533.

¹⁶⁹ Michele Coppino, *Sull'obbligo della istruzione elementare nel Regno d'Italia. Attuazione della legge 15 luglio, 1877* (Rome: Tipografia Eredi Botte, 1878), 6, 12.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Tuscany, which had seen itself as a special case during both the Risorgimento and the early national period, tried to avoid Piedmontisation and centralization, an effort that shaped both local government and its schools. Although Tuscany joined the new nation in 1860, its plebiscite did not accept all laws, resulting in administrative and organizational differences until 1865 when the capital was transferred from Turin to Florence. However, educational differences, stemming from debates over cost and obligation, were in place until the 1877 Coppino law made all regions subject to uniform regulations, including compulsory, free schooling.¹⁷¹ In Tuscany, popular school organization in the 1877 inquest differed from province to province. Ironically, some of the worst public school conditions were found in the wealthier provinces, likely due to the established dominance of private institutes in such areas. In some provinces, including the unhealthy swamp regions with poor roads, nearly every commune had sufficient teachers and mandatory instruction. However, other provinces, including some with better climate, roads, and larger cities, lacked sufficient schools and teachers to comply with the law: “Of 277 communes in Tuscany, 161 can comply with the law and 116 cannot; most of the non-compliant are in the provinces of Florence, Arezzo, Pisa, and Siena, while the provinces of Livorno, Lucca, Massa, Carrara, and Grosseto have only seven communes between them that cannot meet the requirements.” Coppino noted that the female normal school in Lucca, furnished with good teachers, buildings, supplies, and “an industrious populace,” was the best in Tuscany and had trained almost half of the teachers in the province in both the major cities and the rural *scuole miste*.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Pietro Causarone, *Combinare l'istruzione coll'educazione. Municipio, istituzioni civili ed educazione popolare a Firenze dopo l'Unità* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005), 18-20.

¹⁷² Coppino, *Sull'obbligo della istruzione*, 30.

The province of Pisa was less successful in 1877, with only 26 of 40 communes able to comply. Worse were the conditions in the province of Florence; a region endowed with easy communication, good transportation, and prosperous agriculture, only 14 of 44 Florentine communes were able to comply with obligatory attendance. Coppino depicted this shortcoming as a lack of will, both by the mayors and the people: “The populace does not lack for desire for education, quick wit, or civility; but those who wish to learn must attend private schools for a fee.” Such private schools, predominantly clerical, were prolific, and boasted 13,922 students.¹⁷³

In Abruzzo, L’Aquila had the best-developed school system. Throughout the region, however, female education was quite inadequate, as “it has been difficult to win the war against the last remaining opposition to female education.” While the State now supplied a sufficient number of normal and magisterial schools, the teacher training institutes before annexation had produced illiterate graduates, who continued to dominate teaching for years.¹⁷⁴

While there was a long history of private schooling in the Neapolitan provinces, illiteracy rates and the lack of a tradition of public instruction meant that application of the Casati law would be particularly difficult. In 1862, Minister of Public Instruction Carlo Matteucci (MPI 1862) noted that while the former rulers of southern regions had neglected popular education, the Neapolitans should be praised for their “natural genius, vivacious imaginations, and self-confidence.” He also praised the Church for its potential as a helpful auxiliary to popular education in an attempt to alleviate concerns about radical secularization and claimed that while a decision had not yet been made regarding obligatory attendance, schools would be free and

¹⁷³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 36.

open to all.¹⁷⁵ This announcement regarding a postponement of obligatory attendance contradicted a statement of obligation made just a year prior. An 1861 publication of *Legge e regolamenti sulle scuole elementari nelle provincie napoletane* clearly stipulated mandatory attendance beginning at age six:

At the beginning of the scholastic year, the mayor will send to the Communal Commission a list of all school-age children, who will then invite parents to obey the obligatory attendance. In the case of non-fulfillment, the parents will be given a warning. If parents remain obstinate after a month, their names will be given to the church and town hall and will be read in the parish every first Sunday of the month.¹⁷⁶

A decade after Unification, private schools remained dominant in Naples. According to the liberal priest, politician, and educator Ippolito Amicarelli, while government schools had made some inroads, private schools continued to attract the majority of Neapolitan students due to both “religious opinion” and the fact that “there had never been government schools in the past.”¹⁷⁷ Until the implementation of the 1911 Daneo-Credaro law, Neapolitan popular elementary education suffered severely under communal authority and was characterized by “a series of crises, government commissions, special laws, scandals and clientelism, and parliamentary inquests to place responsibility and devise solutions.”¹⁷⁸ For positivist pedagogue Edoardo Fusco, founder of the scholastic journal *Il progresso educativo*, one of the 426 journals

¹⁷⁵ Carlo Matteucci, “Ministero della pubblica istruzione, 30 giugno, 1862 alla commissione incaricata di visitare le provincie Napolitane per l’Istruzione elementare e scuole magistrale, normale, licei, ecc.,” 1-5 in *Regolamenti per l’istruzione pubblica nelle provincie Napoletane*, manuscript collection, 1960, BSMC, Rome, 91-96.

¹⁷⁶ *Legge e regolamenti sulle scuole elementari nelle provincie Napoletane* (Naples: Stamperia nazionale, 1861), 6 in *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Ippolito Amicarelli, “Seduta di Napoli, 18 febbraio 1873,” ACS, MPI, *Div. scuole medie* (1860-1896), b. 4, fasc. 7, in ACS, *FSS IV*, 271-75.

¹⁷⁸ Paolo Russo, “‘Il progresso educativo’ e la scuola a Napoli tra Otto e Novecento,” *Formazione nell’Italia unita: strumenti, propaganda e miti. Volume III*, ed. Giovanni Genovesi (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2002), 104.

begun between 1860 and 1870 in Naples, the Neapolitan region seemed destined to remain traditional, and had made little progress in the decade since Unification in the areas of technical instruction, classical education, and primary schools, with even less progress in female education at all levels.¹⁷⁹

The lack of secular female instructors was acute throughout the southern provinces. In the immediate years following Unification, the Bourbon tradition of entrusting female education to the *Figlie della carità* was found to be insufficient and the new State was faced with almost a total absence of secular, qualified instructors for the female elementary schools. In 1862, literary critic, professor, and politician Francesco De Sanctis (MPI 1861-62; 1878; 1879-1881) instituted a provisional solution in the creation of six-month preparatory courses in sixteen Neapolitan cities with a faculty comprised of a directing professor, a catechist instructor, a calligraphy teacher, and an assistant to teach knitting and needlework. At the conclusion of the training program, which provided either scholarships or subsidies to its adolescent pupils, the graduates would be granted a provisional license and/or admission into the one of the four regional normal schools. Concurrent with the incipient training of these provisional teachers, most communes began advertising for teachers from elsewhere in Italy, promising superior salaries and reimbursement for travel and housing. These teachers often had short tenures in their new positions, either pushed out due to local clashes with perceived differences in culture or comportment, or pulled out by promises of improved conditions and remuneration in new positions.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Edoardo Fusco, "Il Progresso educativo," year I, no. 1 (1869), 8, quoted in *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸⁰ Bosna, *Scuola e società nell Mezzogiorno*, 52-59.

While the state of female education in southern regions was abysmal in 1859, some areas had made significant strides by 1877. In Puglia, the number of female schools was nearly equal to that of male schools and every province had normal and magisterial schools. In Calabria, however, the few schools that existed paid teachers below the minimum levels and were poorly attended. According to Coppino, Sicily had made much improvement in the decade “in the areas of high civic engagement.” Overall, female schools were fewer and more poorly attended than male. A central problem was the lack of teachers for the female schools. Although all provinces had instituted magisterial schools, there had been no teacher training before Unification except the *Collegio di Maria* schools, whose graduates could teach catechism, sewing, and knitting but could not read or write Italian.¹⁸¹

Forty years after its implementation, the Casati law was referred to as the “source of all of the ills that we lament on a daily basis.” This legislation, according to pedagogue Gaetano Poli, was anachronistic and incongruent to contemporary needs and the rights of citizens.¹⁸² The problems with the initial design of the school system had lingering consequences and prompted the series of reform measures that culminated in the Daneo-Credaro law. For supporters of nationalized State schooling, however, the benefits of unified instruction outweighed the difficulties in its implementation. For Francesco Aymar, who predicted and advocated the continued absorption of the school system into the central government, the State had “the right to initiate, moderate, and guide instruction” in order to best address social problems and the needs

¹⁸¹ Coppino, *Sull'obbligo della istruzione elementare*, 43. As of the 1871 census, only 19 percent of Sicilian men and 7 percent of women were considered literate.¹⁸¹

¹⁸² Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre*, 13.

of the country.¹⁸³ Thus, centralization was often connected to progressive goals for an expanded role for the school in society.

Standardization and Regional Specificity

Centralization was also needed in order to unify both curriculum and examinations in order to clarify the goals and elucidate the results of schooling. Beginning in the 1870s there was a general trend toward both the standardization of teaching and institutional standards. While the 1880s and 1890s saw a continued push toward standardization and centralized control, there was also a growing consensus that didactic materials and curriculum should be adapted to differences in local traditions, urbanization levels, and gender while promoting a unified narrative of Italian history, language, and identity.

Attempts to stimulate national unity and identity through the schools were sporadic under the governments of the Center-Right. The history curriculum mandated in the schools focused on Roman and Medieval history due to the tumultuous politics of the Risorgimento, seen as potentially disquieting to royal authority. Political representation was similarly hesitant about embracing a new national message; rather than create a new Italian identity, the new State seemed a continuation of Piedmontese tradition. The King remained Victor Emmanuel II, rather than symbolically beginning a new dynastic line; the only new national holiday was not an Independence Day or Memorial Day, but a celebration of the adoption of the Piedmontese *Statuto*; indeed the systems of currency, weights, law, and education were all Piedmontese.¹⁸⁴

The only non-Piedmontese feature in the new nation was the adoption of the Tuscan language as

¹⁸³ Francesco Aymar, *La Scuola normale di Pinerolo e il movimento pedagogico e scolastico in Piemonte* (Pinerolo: Tipografia Chiantore-Mascarelli, 1898), 161-63.

¹⁸⁴ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 290-91.

the national tongue, a language that almost none of the Piedmontese ruling class could speak. Dialect in the schools was officially forbidden, but Tuscan Italian did not become the first language of the majority of Italians until after World War II. The new government certainly did not heed Manzoni's suggestion that in order to institute the use of Tuscan as the national language, Tuscany should be the site of all recruitment and training of teachers for the entire peninsula.¹⁸⁵

Centralization also involved great regulation of norms and enforcement of teaching standards. Such uniformity, according to pedagogue Enrichetta Laurenti Parodi, would both improve instruction and forestall complaints from superiors, parents, and local observers: "If all elementary instructors understood and followed regulations and directives, there would be a significant decrease in the damage done to schools and students in the case of a change of instructor."¹⁸⁶ Gabelli argued that while an 1886 law made all schools subject to the same organizational structure, traditions and local customs had prevented the material unification of elementary schools.¹⁸⁷ For example, Geminiano Corazziari, head of the female normal school in Modena, noted that while he was proud that all of his students took the examination to become certified in gymnastics instruction, he lamented the fact that examinations differed from one normal school to the next.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ T. De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Rome-Bari, 1984), 325 cited in *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁸⁶ Enrichetta Laurenti Parodi, *Lezioni di pedagogia in conformità del programma ministeriale: Parte III, per la terza classe normale e per le maestre elementari*, vol. III (Florence: R. Bemporad e Figlio Edit., 1901), 25.

¹⁸⁷ Gabelli, *Sul riordinamento dell'istruzione elementare. Relazione della commissione nominata con decreto del 28 marzo 1887 dal ministero della pubblica istruzione* (Padua: Libreria all'Università, Drucker & Senigaglia, 1888), 3, 14.

¹⁸⁸ Corazziari, *Scuola Normale Femminile di Modena*, 4.

Despite the push for greater uniformity, most pedagogues recognized that given the intense regional divides that continued to exist even after decades of unification, an identical education could not be offered throughout the peninsula. In their 1889 didactic manual aimed at female teachers of rural girls' schools, writers Giuseppe Silvestri and Pietro Cervetti noted that due to the extremely diverse conditions in elementary schools, they would not "purport to impose anything on teachers that would be unalterable or abstract, but only to suggest possibilities; each teacher could determine what would best suit the particular conditions of the locale and students."¹⁸⁹

While the regional school became increasingly homogenized, there were also pushes for increased differentiation. According to Boselli, the mandate of textbooks, for example, should be limited to prescribing classics and prohibiting "bad" books, while leaving other choices up to teachers under provincial approval.¹⁹⁰ This was a sharp contrast to earlier calls, like that of Bolognese prefect Cesare Bardesono di Rigras, for uniform texts as a means to "compensate for the deficiency of teachers;" As part of the Scialoja Inquest in 1873, Bardesono claimed that the rush to replace clerics in the schools had led to uneven quality of instructors that required standardization through uniform texts and curriculum.¹⁹¹ In 1896, the Central Commission on Textbooks pushed for textbooks intended for male and female students to feature divergent and gendered situations and content, arguing, "masculine and feminine education cannot be naturally

¹⁸⁹ G.A. Silvestri e P. Cervetti, *Nuovi programmi didattici graduati e particolareggiati, mese per mese, materia per materia secondo il metodo oggettivo sperimentale*. (Turin: Tipografia Dell'Unione dei Maestri, 1889), 88.

¹⁹⁰ Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione*, 14.

¹⁹¹ Cesare Bardesono di Rigras, "Seduta di Bologna, 26 marzo 1873," ACS, MPI, *Div. scuole medie (1860-1896)*, b. 5, fasc. 19, in ACS, *FSS IV: L'inchiesta Scialoja sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile (1872-1875)*, 308-313.

blended.”¹⁹² This resulted in an increase in educational materials aimed specifically at female students, notably those by Ida Baccini, and the entrance of many women into writing and publishing.¹⁹³ Textbooks also differed according to school locale. Urban schoolbooks emphasized local arts, industry, and commerce, while rural books stressed agriculture.¹⁹⁴ Antonio Pasquale, director of the Neapolitan pedagogical journal, *L’Avvenire della scuola*, noted that “we should not forget that both general principles and their application cannot be evenly applied to all areas, given the diversity of conditions caused by both history and ethnography; even within the same region, individual districts may vary according to local temperament, culture, and traditions.”¹⁹⁵

Despite the trend toward training teachers according to the needs of the local populace, almost thirty years after Casati and the institution of regional normal schools, teachers were still being recruited from distant locales. Indeed, MPI Boselli defended the practice as potentially beneficial to the formation of national identity: “As long as they are given frequent visits home, it can be good for national unity if teachers traveled to other areas, planting seeds of fraternity and national solidarity.”¹⁹⁶

Italy’s long history of regional division had led to significant cultural and social differences. The positivist criminology based on biological pathology, promulgated by Cesare

¹⁹² Commissione centrale per i libri di testo, “Relazione a SE Il Ministro della PI in Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministro della PI,” suppl. no. 3 (September 29, 1896) 1510, quoted in Simonetta Ulivieri, *Educare Al Femminile* (Pisa: ETS, 1995), 40.

¹⁹³ Seveso, *Come ombre leggere*, 60. Ida Baccini was a pedagogical writer, educator, and editor of *La Cordelia*, a literary journal for young women.

¹⁹⁴ Parodi, *Lezioni di pedagogia*, 26.

¹⁹⁵ Antonio Pasquale, “Lo insegnamento della lingua nazionale,” *L’Avvenire della scuola. Foglio settimanale di pedagogia e didattica*, year I, no. 1 (November 18, 1874), 2.

¹⁹⁶ Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione*, 42.

Lombroso in the late nineteenth century, led some to claim that unification of such disparate people was futile. As a normal school instructor in Basilicata, Maria Denone rejected such notions of racial difference and hierarchy: “The separatist science that strains to find physiological difference and establish hierarchies between people of different Italian regions is extremely reprehensible, unjust, and unpatriotic. My God, is this the way to make Italy and make Italians, spreading hate and rancor?” Echoing the views of sociological criminologists like Filippo Turati and Napoleone Colajanni,¹⁹⁷ Denone insisted that any cultural and social differences lay not in racial division, but in historical legacy: “If there are differences, they are not in the mind or body, but habits formed under centuries of vain, arrogant, and repressive governance. Centuries of rule by a liberal, honest, legal, democratic, and enlightened government would have erased these differences. What can one expect from a country that has only been in existence for 40 years?”¹⁹⁸

The solution to such disparities was thus education and democratic and enlightened governance. For supporters of the State assumption of the elementary school, the lingering disparity in literacy and development and persistent differences in culture and traditions could be best addressed through greater oversight, inspection, and administration by the national Ministry of Public Instruction.

¹⁹⁷ Mary Gibson, “Biology or Environment? Race and Southern ‘Deviancy’ in the Writings of Italian Criminologists, 1880-1920,” *Italy’s “Southern Question”: Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 111.

¹⁹⁸ Maria Denone, *Conferenza patriottica tenuta in occasione dello Statuto alle allieve della scuola normale di Lagonegro il 1 giugno, 1902* (Lagonegro: Tipografia Lucana, 1902), 10.

Inspection and Enforcement of Scholastic Legislation

While the precarious social and moral conditions endured by teachers often dominated the national periodicals, the main complaint by teachers in the scholastic press was the flagrant violation of financial regulations and the capricious nature of hiring practices.¹⁹⁹ The response to such violations was the growth in scholastic inspection. While inspection during the 1860s was generally conducted by Piedmontese officials, by the 1870s, inspectors tended to be former teachers promoted by the provincial school board, a process generally supported by instructors. For example, the 1881 meeting of the *Congresso dei maestri elementari italiani* voted to limit the examinations for scholastic inspectors to Italian language, scholastic legislation, and pedagogy in order to make the promotion process more transparent and reflective of the needs of popular education.²⁰⁰

The growing bureaucratization of the 1880s and 1890s, however led to the growth of a corps of professional inspectors, generally male, hired from outside the teaching ranks. Among the reforms proposed by Minister of Public Instruction Paolo Boselli to the Italian parliament in 1888 was the formation of a permanent corps of scholastic inspectors. While he applauded efforts to make supervisors both more autonomous and responsible, he doubted that a permanent inspector could possibly be suited for the investigation and judgment of all programs, given “all of the different types of schools, and the varieties of subjects.” Boselli argued for inspection based not on “petty or pedantic ideas, but open-minded and informed didactic norms.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ For violations of hiring examinations, see Chapter Five: Defining Norms, 210-212.

²⁰⁰ Modesta Miosotide and Francesco Giordano-Orsini, "Congresso di Maestri Elementari Italiani." *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 5 (November 5, 1881), 19.

²⁰¹ Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione*, 40.

Despite Boselli's concerns, consistent with his resistance to rapid centralization, such a body was implemented, often to the detriment of the understanding of the real pedagogical and material needs of teachers and schools. According to the royal decree of April 12, 1894, scholastic inspectors were to be hired based on a competitive examination every other year by the Ministry. Applicants were to be younger than 35, possess the superior level license, be in good health, have displayed irreproachable conduct, taught in a public school for at least 8 years (with at least 4 four in the superior level), and have a specialty in pedagogy.²⁰² Despite such requirements, appointments were often made based on politics rather than real experience in the type of rural schools requiring the closest inspection.

In the first edition of his educational journal, *Il corriere delle maestre*, in 1897, Professor Guido Fabiani directly addressed the central concern of his audience of female elementary teachers: continued financial deprivation, instability, and inequality. "Too often," Fabiani wrote, "teachers are not in charge; in many places, too many places, they are subordinate to the demands of administrators or deputies." This supervisory role, formerly performed by scholastic inspectors who had risen from the ranks of teachers, was performed now by an authority who frequently lacked didactic experience, who focused on superficial and difficult results rather than "practical lessons and exercises that directly relate to the lives of the students."²⁰³

The lack of government oversight allowed for the gross evasion of the minimum salary requirements. According to the April 11, 1886 law, teachers were to be paid a minimum of 560 lire per year. According to Fabiani, such a salary, reduced to 537 lire after deductions for the

²⁰² Bruto Amante, *Codice scolastico vigente: Raccolta completa de' testi di leggi, decreti, regolamenti, circolari, programmi emanati del 1859-1896* (Rome: B. Amante Editore, 1896), 450.

²⁰³ Guido Fabiani, "Introduzione," *Il Corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 1 (October 3, 1897), 1.

Monte pensioni (pension fund), could only be sufficient for ‘saints and miracle workers’ who could “repeat the miracle of loaves and fishes.”²⁰⁴ Despite the paltry minimum established by the 1886 law, job notices were routinely offered below this amount. For example, Fabiani’s journal listed an 1897 job announcement for an elementary position in the Piedmontese commune of Mergozzo with an annual salary of 450 lire, significantly less than the annual income of a domestic servant.²⁰⁵ Such flouting of the 1886 minimum law, experienced throughout the peninsula, sparked a day of protest by Milanese teachers in 1897; Fabiani supported this announcement but remained frustrated by the lack of a general teachers’ federation capable of organizing significant and cohesive protest.²⁰⁶

The journal featured articles and letters by teachers that detailed the difficult conditions exacerbated by the lack of effective government oversight. Inspired to write by the plight of her sister, a school teacher with 70 students in an overcrowded mixed urban classroom, *Il corriere delle maestre* journalist Amalia Giolli implored teachers: “Stop begging in silence, sighing within the four walls of the classroom” and begin to “yell, let your voice reverberate.” Giolli argued that terrible conditions were the norm among elementary teachers, and that instructors were compelled to ruin their health in order to keep a teaching post and accept salaries lower than the legally required minimums. Giolli directed her exhortations to the journal’s director, Guido Fabiani, “You know well, dear director, that for us, the laws are not those that are written. Any local authority, commission, or deputy can proclaim themselves the law.” Teachers, in turn

²⁰⁴ Fabiani, “Gli stipendi irrisorii,” *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 2 (October 10, 1897), 10.

²⁰⁵ Fabiani, “Posti vacanti,” *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 3 (October 17, 1897), 12.

²⁰⁶ Fabiani, “La protesta dei maestri di Milano,” *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 14 (January 2, 1898), 97.

were “ignorant victims, glorious victims, [who] uniquely embody the meaning of the word ‘martyr’.”²⁰⁷

Scialoja Inquest

In addition to an emphasis on individual school inspection, the State continued a long tradition of government inquests into the status of institutions. The Scialoja Inquest into the male and female secondary schools (*L’inchiesta Scialoja sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile*), conducted between 1872 and 1875, was one of a series of government inquiries into the new nation.²⁰⁸ The ruling coalition of the Historic Right saw their inquest in line with similar studies conducted in nineteenth-century Europe, particularly the British tradition of system-wide commissions. The young nation had already conducted several smaller-scale studies during its brief history, including Tuscan pedagogue Girolamo Buonazia’s study of primary schools and Minister of Public Instruction Correnti’s limited inquest into secondary teachers.²⁰⁹ For the Center-Right, the secondary schools were the source of the transformation of middle-class values, “work, sobriety, and thrift,” that if properly understood through a large-scale study, could “improve, even change, the proletariat.”²¹⁰ While the Inquest aimed primarily at addressing the status of secondary schools, particularly evaluating the balance between the more specialized

²⁰⁷ Amalia Giolli, “Vittime ignoranti,” *Il corriere delle maestre. Monitore didattico settimanale illustrato*, year I, no. 1 (October 3, 1897), 6-7.

²⁰⁸ Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182.

²⁰⁹ Marino Raicich, “Introduzione I. L’inchiesta Scialoja e la crisi della politica scolastica della Destra,” in ACS, *FSS IV*, 17.

²¹⁰ Antonio Scialoja, “Relazione del ministro Antonio Scialoja al re sul decreto che ordina un’inchiesta sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile, e r.d. 29 sett. 1872, n. 1016, ACS, MPI, *Div. Scuole medie (1860-1869)*, b. 4, fasc. 1, s. fasc. 1, in *Ibid.*, 149-150.

tecnica and the generalized and elitist *classici*, it also reveals much about the status of women, the relationship between the Church and the State, and the extent and reaction to the centralizing policies of the young nation.²¹¹

The history of the Inquest itself reveals much about the political crises of the early 1870s. Cesare Correnti's (MPI 1867, 1869-72) second tenure as Minister of Public Instruction had focused on efforts to enforce obligatory attendance and reduce the clerical influence in the schools by removing spiritual directors from secondary schools and closing the university theology departments. Such reforms had led many on the Right, including Senator Federico Menabrea to become concerned with charges of anticlericalism and hesitant about the expanding growth of the school system. Although Menabrea's 1872 proposal to suspend reform discussions until a study of the status of secondary schools could be completed was not passed, it was the direct impetus behind Correnti's successor Antonio Scialoja's (MPI 1872-74) implementation of a large-scale inquiry into the secondary schools. Both the Leftist politicians and press saw the Inquest as a pointless exercise, implemented only to delay reform; Salvatore Morelli, for example, saw the Inquest, which was necessary in the British context due to its decentralized and voluntary system, as completely superfluous in a system that was State-run and supposedly uniform. Journalist and politician Ferdinando Pertuccelli della Gattina predicted that just like all of the government studies of the last dozen years, Scialoja's would result in nothing: "a minister who wants to do nothing, but is clever, will order an inquest, vegetate, and then die. His successor will think it dishonorable to inherit anything from his predecessor and will confine the

²¹¹ For further discussion of Church/State relations discussed in the Scialoja Inquest, see Chapter Four: Civil Missionaries, 161-162.

inquest's reports to the limbo of the archive. *Pulvis et umbra sumus!*"²¹² Despite such criticism, Scialoja, who had little scholastic experience, remained convinced that the Inquest would be as revelatory and useful as the industrial inquests that he had headed as president of the *Commissione d'inchiesta industriale*.²¹³

The formation of the commission reflected prevailing concerns over national unity and equitable representation. Historian Marino Raicich notes that in addition to concerns about geographical origin, the Inquest's composition also factored in differences in regional scholastic culture, such as "Neapolitan purism, Romagnole classicism, subalpine pedantry, etc." that had persisted since Unification. The commission was careful to include members from the Veneto, Neapolitan, and Tuscan regions, which were most resistant to homogenization.²¹⁴ The appointment of Scialoja as MPI had been similarly controversial due to concerns over regional equality; the journal *La perseveranza* wrote that Giovanni Lanza's government had been criticized for appointing the Neapolitan Scialoja to a list of ministers that already included three Piedmontese, two Genoese, two Neapolitans, and one Lombard, with no representation from the Veneto, Tuscany, Emilia, or Sicily.²¹⁵

The commission composed a survey consisting of 79 questions; the results included both written responses and interviews in the various Italian regions. A major drawback to the Inquest that is indicative of the obstacles to government inquest and unification in general, was the fact

²¹² Ferdinando Petruccelli della Gattina, "L'inchiesta dello Scialoja," in *Il Pugnolo*, October 26, 1872, in ACS, *FSS IV*, 565.

²¹² Raicich, "Introduzione I.," 25-29.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 16-21.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

²¹⁵ "Il nuovo ministro della pubblica istruzione," *La Perseveranza*, August 4, 1872, in ACS, *FSS IV*, 558.

that the commission was unable to conduct interviews in Sardinia and Sicily, the areas most in need of State investigation into the persistence of clericalism and clientalism, due to both transportation difficulties and a fear of brigandage. A notable improvement over previous inquests was the inclusion of families into the respondent pool, which included university professors, *liceo* and *ginnasio* instructors, administrators, pedagogues, and politicians.²¹⁶ According to the Ministry, out of 24,000 questionnaires, the commission received 8000 responses. Even allowing for the possible loss or destruction of responses, the fact that only 492 written responses remain in the Archive suggests that the Ministry's claim of 8000 was likely highly exaggerated in order to stave off criticism.²¹⁷

As early critics predicted, the Inquest amounted to little change. Unlike the results of the nearly contemporaneous industrial inquest, also headed by Scialoja, the suggestions of the scholastic inquiry were not widely published or distributed; eventually, some limited data were published, including the names of respondents. The major reason for the Inquest's limited consequence was the 1876 election and the transfer of power to the Center-Left, which disliked the secondary school focus and the moderate composition of the commission.²¹⁸

Despite the limited success of the Inquest as an impetus for reform, it remains an illuminating source into the perceived status of secondary education, including a wide variety of opinions on secularism, government centralization, and the quality of institutions and instructors. The Inquest confirmed a series of crises in the secondary schools: instructors of radically varying quality, untrained in the latest pedagogy; a major debate regarding the role of the secondary school as providing general culture or specialized vocational training; and a general lack of

²¹⁶ Raicich, "Introduzione I.," 25-29.

²¹⁷ Luisa Montevicchi, "Introduzione II. Le carte dell'inchiesta Scialoja," in ACS, *FSS IV*, 57.

²¹⁸ Raicich, "Introduzione I.," 32-37.

funding, organization, and uniformity. Unsurprisingly, most responses confirmed that teacher salaries were too low, and necessitated the supplementation of additional work in private institutes or tutoring in order to support a family, often lowering the quality and quantity of public school instruction and placing teachers under considerable stress. The responses also revealed that a large number of instructors were operating without the proper licenses and degrees required by the Casati law. The various origins of the unlicensed instructors, which included liberal clergy, foreigners, local intellectuals, as well as teachers from the schools of the pre-Unification regimes, led to significant differences in skill, preparation, and ideological, cultural, and political backgrounds and loyalties. The problems encountered by this diverse group of teachers, generally untrained in the latest pedagogy and didactic methods, were significantly exacerbated by the lack of a standardized language. Despite efforts at unifying the new nation under a Tuscan Italian, the reality was that written Italian differed drastically from most spoken dialects and that the language varied not only regionally, but also contextually, with considerable variances in the language used in a law courts, schoolhouses, churches, and marketplaces.²¹⁹

Of the 79 questions on the survey, several dealt with topics relevant to the status of female teachers and women's education: questions 1-11 examined teachers and administrators; numbers 52-61 dealt with normal and magisterial schools and connected *convitti* (boarding schools); 62-63 concerned superior level schools for women; and 73-77 covered female education. Other questions discussed textbooks, private versus public institutions, administration, health, and examinations.²²⁰ The questions regarding female education were the first in Italian

²¹⁹ Ibid., 47-52.

²²⁰ Montevercchi, "Introduzione II.," 57.

scholastic inquiries to specifically mention female secondary education. Despite this milestone, the commission interviewed only 12 women and nine others provided written responses; among these women were inspectors of female schools, directors of secondary institutes and *convitti*, secondary teachers, and one mother of secondary-age students. This low turnout, according to Raicich and archivist Luisa Montevocchi, was the result of prevailing cultural conventions that labeled women immodest for speaking in public, and likely also limited women from responding in writing to an authoritative commission; moderate pedagogue Giulia Molino Colombini, for example, had her scholastic reports read by male colleagues during the 1869 Pedagogical Congress.²²¹

Despite the limited number of responses by women, the Inquest reveals a variety of opinions regarding education by and for women. Montevocchi has noted that several male respondents had commented negatively on the role of women in education. For example, Giacomo Filippo Aioli, who was himself in charge of the training of female teachers as head of *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero* in Florence, claimed to prefer hiring male teachers as instructors at the normal school, arguing that women's innate "delicacy" made them "more inclined toward imagining things."²²² While Enrico Labriola, a Sicilian *ginnasio* teacher, similarly argued that normal school teaching be left to men, he proffered a different justification. Rather than claim that women were inherently unsuited to the job of training other teachers, Labriola claimed that there was currently a shortage of well qualified female applicants:

Undoubtedly, it would be beneficial to entrust both men and women with directing and instructing female normal schools. However, given the difficulty in finding men who are truly suited to direct and instruct... where and how would be find sufficient women?... Earlier, I briefly mentioned the abysmal state of our

²²¹ Montevocchi and Raicich, "Nota Metodologica," in ACS, *FSS IV*, 141.

²²² Giacomo Filippo Aioli, quoted in Montevocchi, "Introduzione II.," 65n.

normal schools; until they can be fixed, until we have truly learned women, it seems better or at least necessary, except for rare exceptions, to keep the direction and instruction of female normal schools in the hands of elderly, married, polite, respectable, and learned men.²²³

The Scialoja Inquest, as well as Minister Coppino's 1877 study of obligatory attendance, revealed that of the many lacunae in the Italian school system, none was more egregious than the lack of qualified teachers for female schools of all levels. With the growth of the size and scope of both popular schooling and secondary schooling for men and women, it was clear that the government needed to significantly increase its efforts to improve the quality and quantity of instructors. The government responded with the founding of the *Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero*, in Rome and Florence in 1882. This elite institution aimed to “both provide and enhance the literary and scientific culture of a woman and to qualify her as a specialized instructor in female normal schools, elite boarding schools,” and all female classical, technical, commercial, and industrial schools.²²⁴ While the buildings and furnishings for these institutions, administratively connected to the *Regia Università* in Rome and the *Regio Istituto di studi superiori* in Florence, were to be provided by their host cities, the Ministry of Public Instruction controlled their governance and funding.

Anticentralization

Professor Francesco Perez's 1862 book, *La centralizzazione e la libertà*, featured the tagline, “Ways to reconcile the unification of Italy with the needs of Sicily.” In voting for

²²³ Enrico Labriola, “Breve risposta a quesiti dell’inchiesta su l’istruzione secondaria dedicate a S. E. il Ministro della pubblica istruzione del Regno d’Italia da Enrico Labriola professore nella quinta classe nel R. Ginnasio di Modica,” ACS, MPI, *Div. Scuole medie* (1860-1896), b. 10, fasc. 76, printed in ACS, *FSS IV*, 511-514.

²²⁴ *Documenti e ricerche per la storia del magistero*, ed. Giulia Di Bello, Andrea Mannucci, et al. (Florence: Luciano Manzuoli Editore, 1980), 154, 169. *Istituti Superiori Femminili di Magistero* were proposed under an 1878 law and finally funded and established in 1882.

Unification in the 1860 plebiscites, Perez held, the Italian states had voted not for equal membership in a synthetic State, as Mazzini had envisioned, but had consented to unquestioned annexation to the old Savoyard regime, augmenting the territory of the Kingdom of Sardinia and blindly adhering to essentially foreign laws. While Perez allowed that centralization might make sense for a small, military hierarchy, the various Italian regions were significantly dissimilar, differing in terms of tradition, habits, temperament, economic interests, and laws, with no inherent loyalty to Turin or its government: “These regions do not recognize any city, except perhaps Rome, as having the right and suitability of being their capital.” This lack of loyalty or identity with the new nation would bring Sicily into direct conflict with the State throughout the 1860s, as a sizeable separatist movement actively combated rule from Turin or Florence. Perez asserted that centralization was far from synonymous with liberty, as the concentration of power into a few hands had led historically to destruction: “As history has shown in France, the State that is made to homogenize will eventually produce a cycle of corruption, servility, and republican, parliamentary, socialist, and imperialist revolutions, where power becomes omnipotent and despotic in order to control the people.” Perez further attributed one of the causes of the collapse of the Roman Empire to a lack of local power at the expense of overly centralized authority and wealth. The German states, on the other hand, while divided, seemed to be thriving; German art, culture, commerce, agriculture, universities were among the best and most emulated.²²⁵

More than fifty years after the Unification of Italy, there was still significant resistance to centralization. Despite its gradual encroachment since the Casati law, the full assumption of national control over education by the 1911 Daneo-Credaro law was not universally applauded.

²²⁵ Francesco Perez, *La centralizzazione e la libertà* (Palermo: Stabilimento tipografico di Francesco Lao, 1862), 4, 44, 72.

Unlike Perez, P. Coffano, an advocate of religious education, based his opposition to centralization not on the heterogeneous nature of Italian regions, but on an argument of individual liberty: “The State is not the source of all the rights, but the protector of rights of families.” According to Coffano, the State monopoly of education deprived parents of their essential rights, forcing them to send their children to a particular school with a government-mandated curriculum, and violated rights of free press and assembly. While he allowed that the State could, indeed should, inspect schools in terms of health, morality, and public safety, nationalized education was “making individuals into automatons, controlled by the State.”²²⁶

The Catholic press was among the most vocal opponents of the idea of a State takeover of the school system. The Florentine journal, *La rassegna nazionale*, argued that direct State control would deprive parents and communes of influence over their children’s education; further, it was alarmed that State control had become the *de facto* solution for every ill of the late nineteenth century: “It is strange that for every inconvenience, whether minor or serious, of any institution, [State control] is offered as the foolproof panacea, my goodness!”²²⁷ Rather than force local authorities to relinquish control of the schools, the State should simply do what it was supposed to do: pass protective laws and provide qualified inspectors.

Another objection to State control was the substitution of one powerful source of corruption, a powerful Ministry of Public Instruction, for many small sources, the local authorities. For Antonio Labriola, the idea of “tens of thousand of male and female teachers

²²⁶ P. Coffano, *Libertà e scuola, cenno sui diritti e doveri dei genitori nella educazione dei figli di fronte allo Stato e di fronte alla Chiesa* (Novara: Grafia Novara, 1914), 20. For further information on the concept of “freedom of schooling” see Chapter 4: Civil Missionaries.

²²⁷ “Un vecchio insegnante, di una possibile riforma delle scuole elementari e secondarie in Italia,” *La rassegna nazionale*, year VIII, vol. 32 (1886), 786, printed in Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 53-54.

under the orders and bureaucratic dependence of one man” was inherently dangerous.²²⁸ In addition to concerns about corruption, Labriola claimed that depriving citizens of participating in local administration, including education, weakened their democratic spirit: “a population incapable of administering itself will certainly be unable to educate itself.”²²⁹

Such criticisms, along with the growing popularity of a neo-idealist pedagogy, would lead to the overthrow of the Liberal school system under Gentile’s Educational Reforms of 1923. Among other major changes, Gentile’s plan aimed to decentralize the system, restoring the autonomy of private institutions, and defeminize the teaching corps, reversing the two intersecting developments of the Liberal era and undoing many of the reforms intended to improve the lot of *la maestra sventurata*.²³⁰

²²⁸ Antonio Labriola, “Della scuola popolare,” University of Rome Conference, January 22, 1888, printed in Catarsi, “Il suicidio della maestra Italia Donati,” 54.

²²⁹ Labriola, “Lettera di Antonio Labriola ad Alessandro D’Ancona del 28 febbraio 1888,” *Critica Marxista*, 2 (1971), 38, printed in *Ibid.*, 55.

²³⁰ The early Fascist efforts at decentralization, including private school autonomy, were followed by State attempts at continually greater intervention through the Ministry of Education. The 1948 Constitution challenged a century of centralized structure by promoting autonomous local bodies and decentralizing the role of the State. However, this focus on decentralization was not carried through. See Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Educational Reforms in Italy* (Paris: OECD, 1985), 95.

Pedagogy and Progress: Educational Theory and Curriculum

Women and female teachers must be the force that advances the people to understand and participate in the universal progress discovered by positivist science, progress that must embrace life in all its manifestations and reproduce and renovate it.²³¹

By the time that Omobono Buzzi celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his teacher-training institute with the preceding words in 1912, the Italian public school system had been profoundly transformed in its theoretical foundations, its outlook and purpose, and the composition of its instructors, resulting in an elementary system feminized in both its teaching staff and its character. The responsibility for this transformation is generally placed on economic expediency, changing labor patterns, and social and cultural shifts,²³² ignoring the central and complex role played by the pedagogical development of the Liberal era. The political shift toward the Center-Left in the 1870s brought profound changes to the school system and ushered in a new theoretical and methodological regime. The emerging positivist, maternal, and progressive education movements, combined with socio-economic, cultural, and political transformations, made for a situation in which women became both increasingly desirable to the educational establishment and increasingly persuaded to enter the teaching profession.

In 1863, women constituted 46% of instructors in both private and public schools, in 1881, around 55%, and in 1901, 68%.²³³ The feminization of the elementary school, however, went beyond the quantitative transformation of the teaching profession. As the school became

²³¹ Omobono Buzzi, *La R. Scuola normale promiscua "Candida Lena-Perpenti", commemorando il suo primo semisecolare giubileo* (Tirano: Tip. Fiorentini e C., 1912), 101.

²³² James C. Albisetti, "The Feminization of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparative Perspective," *History of Education*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993), 263.

²³³ Giovanni Vigo, "Appendice statistica nel secolo XIX," in *Istruzione e sviluppo economico in Italia*, Archivio economico dell'unificazione italiana, series II, Vol XVIII (Turin: ILTE, 1971), 46, 66, 87.

increasingly central to the goals of the new Liberal government, “education was equated with the patriotic cause. Teaching at a nursery school was cast as an act of patriotic love, a protest against reactionary factions.”²³⁴ The pedagogical developments of the second half of the nineteenth century made the school central to a civilizing mission of national progress and unity, a mission feminized in both scope and character.

Pre-Unification Education

The development of Italian education prior to Unification was halting and piecemeal, dominated by the interests of the Catholic Church and ruling elites. The impetus to create a unified, national, compulsory school system has its roots in the regional attempts to improve education prior to Unification. The 1729 attempt by Victor Amadeus II of Savoy to implement secular secondary schools (one of the first such endeavors in Europe), aimed to provide trained bureaucrats, strengthen the state, and counter the power of the Church, but was thwarted after only a few decades by a lack of funds, a limited number of secular qualified teachers, and popular reaction to the usurpation of Jesuit control.²³⁵ Under Napoleonic dominion, there was a brief institution of free elementary schools in Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and parts of Tuscany and the Veneto; following the Restoration, these institutes closed for lack of teachers and funding or reverted to clerical control. Later, Restoration-era attempts to mandate education, as in the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1822 and Parma in 1831, failed due to an inability to enforce local

²³⁴ Matteo Miraglia, *La Scuola femminile "Domenico Berti" nell'educazione dell'insegnamento normale durante il cinquecento storico 1848-98* (Turin: Stabilimento Tipografico Giuseppe Patrito, 1898), 10.

²³⁵ Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State, 1675-1730* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 220-22. See also *La Scuola in Italia dalla controriforma al secolo dei lumi*, ed. Donatella Balani and Marina Roggero (Turin: Loescher, 1976).

compliance and a lack of funding.²³⁶ The Austrian Empire had implemented a Prussian-style system in Lombardy and Veneto in 1818, which included two years of basic education for boys and girls, funded by local communes, followed by three and four years, for girls and boys, respectively, of superior level classes and the possibility of technical training for boys. This system, providing education in Italian, was maintained, even after the 1848 Revolutions. While Ferdinando IV instituted educational reforms at the end of the eighteenth century in the Bourbon South, education there returned to clerical control following the Restoration.

All governmental educational efforts were focused on rhetoric and philosophy for those entering the University, with few efforts made for either young women or the popular classes. Poor children were left in the hands of the clergy, educational orders, or other religious associations sponsored by the municipalities or provinces. The mandates for such groups came from the Vatican, and were therefore focused on Latin, prayer, catechism, and sacred history and literature, utilizing a methodology of rote memorization, repetition, and discipline. For girls, there was not a single public school in all of Piedmont; aristocratic girls were sent to the *Annunziata* in Florence, the *Collegio Imperiale* in Milan or to the Institute of the Sacred Heart in Chambéry.²³⁷

Strong advocacy for public education returned in the 1840s, particularly in Piedmont, Lombardy, and Tuscany, where scientific conferences and journalists linked secular education to the cause of Italian unity. The influx of international philosophy and pedagogy during this period emphasized positivist and scientific fundamentals and tied itself to larger political movements.²³⁸

²³⁶ Ester De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 16.

²³⁷ Francesco Aymar, *La Scuola normale di Pinerolo e il movimento pedagogico e scolastico in Piemonte* (Pinerolo: Tipografia Chiantore-Mascarelli, 1898), 3-11.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-32.

The failed revolutions of 1848-49 brought a repression of such Liberal impulses, including a return to Church control of education in Tuscany, Lombardy, and the Veneto, although the Kingdom of Sardinia maintained its educational drive, modeling itself on the Prussian system and pushing through centralized, secular educational reform with the Boncompagni law of 1848, Lanza law of 1855, and Casati law of 1859.²³⁹

The anticlerical nature of the Casati Law, which was applied to each region upon annexation, had its foundations in Count Camillo Cavour's severing of Church control over education in Piedmont in the 1850s. The Casati Law, instituted under Cavour's leadership by Minister for Public Instruction Count Gabrio Casati, established a primary, secondary, and higher education system that was extended to all annexed territories in 1877 and survived nearly intact until the Fascist period. While the structure of the system remained relatively constant, there were significant shifts in the envisioned goals and philosophy behind the school.

Despite the reforms initiated by the Casati law, change was slow to come, particularly in the elite-oriented secondary system. In 1888, Italian pedagogue Aristide Gabelli noted that until 1859, classical instruction had been the only type of education possible outside of Piedmont or the Austrian-dominated regions, and that three decades later, this legacy was still present, with the continued dominance of classical *ginnasi* (junior high schools) and *licei* (high schools) that held Latin and philosophy as the core of the curriculum.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 16-23.

²⁴⁰ Aristide Gabelli, "L'istruzione classica," in *L'istruzione e l'educazione in Italia*, ed. Ernesto Codignola (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1950), 269.

Idealist and Classical Pedagogy

The establishment of the public school system took place under the leadership of the Conservative-Liberal Historic Right and was influenced heavily by Hegelian idealists like Minister of Public Instruction Francesco De Sanctis (1861-1862; 1878; 1879-1881) and parliamentarian Silvio Spaventa; the result was a focus on the secondary school as the training grounds of an ethical, political elite. This hierarchical system provided two tracks after the elementary school: a classical *ginnasio* and *liceo* that led into the University and the technical route that aimed to provide industrial training. Political theorist Antonio Gramsci noted that this division reflected the interests of the governing class and represented a dramatic departure from the classical system:

The fundamental division into classical and vocational (professional) schools was a rational formula; the vocational school for the instrumental classes, the classical school for the dominant classes and the intellectuals.... Side by side with the classical school there developed the technical school (vocational, but not manual), and this placed a question mark over the very principle of a concrete program of general culture based on the Greco-Roman tradition.²⁴¹

In addition to reinforcing a hierarchy that prioritized classical education for the ruling classes, the ostensibly secular Casati law maintained Catholicism as the driving force behind the school at the lower levels. Thus, the methodology remained closely tied to that of the pre-Unification period, focused on rigid discipline and memorization.

Early childhood education, introduced for the first time in most regions, followed the same strict disciplinary style as later grades. For example nursery schools, *asili*, were instituted in Neapolitan communities following Unification. The students, between three and six years of age, were “prohibited to speak in the room during exercise or to move from their place without the teacher’s permission by raising one’s hand;” during recess, children were forbidden from any

²⁴¹ Antonio Gramsci, "On Education," in *Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quentin Hoare and G.N. Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 26.

games that did not focus on “strengthening without danger.” The schools promoted two methods of instruction: demonstration and dialogue: “Demonstration shows the child clear and precise ideas. Dialogue brings them from the known to the unknown.” In addition to praying three times per day, the students were occupied by singing memorized songs and repeating numbers and catechism.²⁴²

It was into such a system that teacher, journalist, and pedagogue Ida Baccini entered in 1871. Writing from the vantage of 1904, thirty years after the end of her teaching career, Baccini lamented the rigid conditions she encountered. Following three months of preparation for her teacher’s credential examination, Baccini entered the Florentine classroom of an established primary teacher. Baccini was “attacked by a warm wave of compassion and the awesome maternal instincts which are in every woman.” The senior teacher instructed her that the four and five-year old pupils were to be disciplined through the rapping of a long rod on the desk and a regimented curriculum of rote memorization and synchronized repetition. After questioning such methods Baccini was reprimanded: “Well then, you do not know the school curriculum! Watch: You ask a question and they respond ...in a chorus. And if you have any doubts, interrogate them separately. They have been repeating the same things for two months and should know them very well.”²⁴³ Baccini transferred schools, but found that the system was nearly identical: “the classes- a barracking of poor children, packed into the desks like sardines in a can; the teachers were poor, pastoral, malcontents, armed with a staff to keep the herd in line.”²⁴⁴

²⁴² “Statuti e regole interne per gli asili infantili delle città di Napoli,” (Naples: Stamperia e Cantiere del Fibreno, 1861), 3-21 in *Regolamenti per l'istruzione pubblica nelle provincie Napoletane*, manuscript collection, 1960, BSMC, Rome, 3, 19, 21.

²⁴³ Ida Baccini, *La mia vita: Ricordi autobiografici* (Roma: Società editrice Dante Alighieri, 1904), 111-13.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

The assumption of education by the State, even in the limited form instituted under the Casati law, was criticized by those seeking a return to traditional education dominated by local control and the Church: “An awful product of secularism, similar to socialism, is the removal of parents from their clear role in education, looking instead to the government.”²⁴⁵ Twenty years later, the advocates of progressive education would also call for more familial involvement, but for decidedly different reasons. In 1866, the family was seen as force of traditional conservative influence; by 1886, it was a force retarding national progress and had to be brought under school influence. Similarly, while the concept of free and obligatory education was portrayed as an unfair burden on the communes and out of line with the practices of other nations in 1866, by 1886, it was seen as necessary for the spread of civilization and national identity.²⁴⁶

While positivism became the dominant ideology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, influencing not only education, but also industrial development, criminology, and social reform, it was not without its critics. Despite the success and gradual adoption of positivist and progressive pedagogy, the currents of idealist and spiritual educational theory remained throughout the Liberal period, arguing for a return to a philosophically oriented education. Indeed, debates between idealist and positivist pedagogy led to the changing of the program three times between 1890-95.

Disputes between the dominant philosophical systems of the later nineteenth century, positivism and idealism, played a major role in the educational programs from the Casati laws through to the advent of Fascism and would serve as convenient trope for later neo-idealist

²⁴⁵ Ministero della pubblica istruzione, “Proposte di legge presentate al Parlamento nella sessione del 1866 dall’onorevole Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione,” Ministero della pubblica istruzione, *Documenti sull’ordinamento delle scuole* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1866), 11.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

criticism of the Liberal school system. For example, Minister of Public Instruction Giovanni Gentile's 1913 tract, *Sommario di pedagogia come scienza filosofica* argued for a self-education, an inner unfolding of one's self, following a neo-Hegelian threefold dialectic process beginning with artistic expression, moving on to religious and scientific experience, and eventually toward philosophic wisdom.²⁴⁷

Pedagogical positivists, in turn, rejected much of the criticism launched by idealists, calling their attacks superficial and based on intentional misreading:

Positivism has been called and not always with good intentions, the philosophy of the fact, the concrete, and the material; and, in reality, this is a type of philosophy that by definition, is opposed to any pure formalism, abstract speculation, or high fantasy. It moves, in general, from actual data, from real consistency; it seeks to penetrate it, to delve into it, to organize and consolidate it more and more; to extract from it its true nature, or to push it or bring it back into a superior climax.²⁴⁸

Positivism

During the mid-1860s, many Italian intellectuals became enthralled by a wave of positivism that was prompted by the spread of Darwinian evolution and the philosophies of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer that promised scientific and secular answers to the incipient nation's social problems.²⁴⁹ Although the victory of the moderate Left in 1876, which continued to promote the interests of the emerging bourgeoisie, did not represent a major shift in political

²⁴⁷ Renzo Titone, "The Development of Italian Educational Philosophy in the 20th Century," *International Review of Education*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1958), 317.

²⁴⁸ E. Troilo, *Idee e Ideali del positivismo*, 1909, quoted in Giuseppe Flores D'Arcais, *La pedagogia del positivismo italiano* (Padua: Editorio Liviana, 1951), 8.

²⁴⁹ Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 185.

ideology, the Left's leadership did promote new educational policies dominated by positivists like Minister of Public Instruction Pasquale Villari (MPI 1891-1892) and pedagogue Roberto Ardigò, who sought to modernize and industrialize the State by raising social and economic conditions through broad education of all classes.²⁵⁰ The move toward the Left brought many of the initial goals of the Casati law into practice, particularly the extension of obligatory attendance and the full application of Casati norms to the entire peninsula through the 1877 Coppino law.

While the 1867 normal school curriculum had an ethical and religious basis with a dogmatic and authoritarian methodology, the 1880 curriculum was scientific and positivist, based on practical training and experimentation.²⁵¹ Politician and pedagogue Aristide Gabelli noted that while there had been significant “reforms to the system, made especially under Victor Emanuel” including “increased teacher salaries and raises, the establishment of a pension system, improved consistency of benefits from one commune to another (ending the constant search for better positions), improved subsidies and building aid to communes, and the institution of regular inspection of schools,” the needs exceeded the financial constraints.²⁵² Despite such restrictions, the changes within the classroom were surprisingly rapid, particularly in urban areas, as noted by pedagogue Rosa Piazza²⁵³ in 1886: “Twenty years ago, with some exceptions, elementary

²⁵⁰ Richard Bellamy, “Social and Political Thought,” in *Liberal and Fascist Italy*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 234-35.

²⁵¹ Redi Sante Di Pol, *Cultura pedagogica e professionalità nella formazione del maestro italiano: Dalle scuole di metodo all'istituto magistrale* (Turin: Sintagma Editrice, 1998), 79.

²⁵² Aristide Gabelli, *Sul riordinamento dell'istruzione elementare. Relazione della commissione nominata con decreto del 28 marzo 1887 dal ministero della pubblica istruzione* (Padua: Libreria all'Università, Drucker & Senigaglia, 1888), 34.

²⁵³ Rosa Piazza, the first female professor of pedagogy at the University of Padua, was a tireless supporter of women's education and head of the *normale* in Padua and *Scuola superiore femminile* in Venice. See Maria Teresa Strega, “Percorsi di emancipazione tra Otto e Novecento,” in *Donne sulla scena pubblica:*

schools were sterile and mechanical, and full of boring and cold memory exercises. Much patience was required on the part of teachers and blind obedience on the part of students.” After two decades of reform within the *normali* and the classrooms, lessons had moved away from abstract rules toward more practical application in the lives of students, a transformation fraught with obstacles and resistance: “Now schools have changed in an amazingly short time with splendid results. The public has no idea how much work and study went into even slight improvements in the training of good and skilled teachers today.”²⁵⁴

Looking back on the reform movements of the previous three decades in his attempt to push through major educational reforms in 1902, Minister of Public Instruction Luigi Credaro argued that for education to be more than mechanical repetition and training in basic literacy, the school must no longer draw on the authoritarian ecclesiastical tradition but be inspired by “healthy pedagogy, social morality, childhood psychology, and the work of Pestalozzi, Herbart, Spencer, Preyer, Perez, Siciliani, Angiulli, and others who have renewed the methods of instruction, raising them to the level of a science.”²⁵⁵ This focus on pedagogy as a science was reinforced through the specialized instruction in pedagogy at the normal schools, distribution of didactic materials, and the development of a child-study methodology.

Positivist pedagogy opposed the formalist philosophy of the idealist, classical education and sought to make abstract concepts concrete and education applicable and tangible, ultimately

Società e politica in Veneto tra settecento e ottocento, ed. Nadia Maria Filippini (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006), 187.

²⁵⁴ Rosa Piazza, *Distribuzione dei premi agli alunni ed alle alunne delle scuole elementari e festive comunali nel giorno 23 agosto, 1886* (Venice: Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, 1886), 11.

²⁵⁵ Luigi Credaro, “Disposizioni intorno alla nominee e al licenziamento dei direttori didattica e dei maestri elementari,” in *Atti parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Documenti*, le. XXI, sess. 1902-1904, n. 8A, cited in De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall’Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 202-203 (n.8).

resulting in graduates prepared for life and capable of pursuing their own educations.²⁵⁶ Professor Giuseppe Pasotti pushed for an educational methodology of continually increasing understanding by the student grounded in practical application: “I would like to outline the natural didactic method for popular instruction so that the school might become an efficient preparation for life. The principal goal of the *scuola popolare* is to put the student in a position to continue to pursue his own education.” The teacher of such a student would necessarily be highly trained in the latest scientific pedagogy, in order to provide an education that was

not a dogmatic instruction, directed only at mechanical memorization, but a teaching style founded on observation and experience, given in such a way that the student is excited to continue toward new research, ideas, and thoughts and will arrive at the acquisition of those governing propositions, those axioms, those laws that constitute the highest levels of knowledge to which a man can rise.²⁵⁷

Materialist and empiricist, positivist pedagogy furthermore allowed the public schools to distance themselves from the spiritual Catholic schools that had dominated pre-Casati education and continued to compete for students, a development welcome in a State considered illegitimate by the Catholic Church. The two major groups of Italian pedagogical positivists can be loosely grouped into two camps: the first included those closely tied to modern scientific theory and systematic pedagogy, such as Roberto Ardigò, Saverio De Dominicis, Nicola Fornelli, and the early Maria Montessori; the second, more pragmatic, were those who attempted to combine political and scholastic reforms, included Pasquale Villari and Aristide Gabelli.²⁵⁸ The

²⁵⁶ Giovanni Bertola, *L'educazione e l'istruzione primaria secondo il metodo naturale: breve trattato di pedagogia ad uso delle scuole normali e magistrali per Bertola Giovanni* (Turin: Tip. di A. Vinciguerra e figli, 1879), 190.

²⁵⁷ Giuseppe Pasotti, *La scuola pratica : Raccolta di Lezioni fatte nelle classi elementari, annesse alla r. Scuola normale di Pavia. Parte II. Grado superiore*, vol. 2. (Mortara: Tipografia Editrice di Paolo Botto, 1887), xiii-xiv.

²⁵⁸ Franco Cambi, *Manuale di storia della pedagogia* (Bari: Gius. Laterza e Figli, 2008), 243.

implementation of positivist pedagogy led to practical reforms that helped drive the feminization of the normal schools, including the importation of the *tirocinio*, the model school that became an essential part of every normal school. As these training schools were attached to female rather than male normal schools at the nursery level, this emphasis on practical training helped to increase attention on women as natural teachers, particularly in early childhood education.²⁵⁹ Despite financial constraints, the last two decades of the nineteenth century brought other significant reforms, including increased teacher salaries, the establishment of a pension system, improved consistency of benefits, enhanced subsidies and building aid to communes, and the institution of regular inspection of schools, all aiding in the rising status of both national schooling and the increasingly female elementary teaching corps.²⁶⁰

Maternalism and the Natural Method

In addition to positivism, the influence of international pedagogy that emphasized child-focused, maternal education in the elementary school helped to drive the notion of education as a career suited for women. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the ideas of Swiss early childhood advocate, Johann Pestalozzi, whose protagonist Gertrude represented a role for mothers as responsible for both the ethical and moral development of her children and their entrance into formal schooling, and his German student Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the kindergarten, were being introduced in Italy. Promoting a nurturing education based on child study, such theories were advocated by Italian pedagogues like Gabelli²⁶¹ and reinvigorated the

²⁵⁹ Gabriella Seveso, *Come ombre leggere. Gesti, spazi, silenzi nella storia dell'educazione delle bambine* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), 63.

²⁶⁰ Aristide Gabelli, *Sul riordinamento dell'istruzione elementare*, 34.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

early education work already being done by Ferrante Aporti, whose *asilo*, focused on Catholic social reform, antedated Froebel's kindergarten.

Ferrante Aporti, who was both a priest and a professor of pedagogy at the University of Turin, opened his first *asilo*, intended for wealthy boys, in Austrian-controlled Cremona in 1828; a charitable *asilo* for working-class boys followed in 1831 and one for girls the following year.²⁶² Like Pestalozzi, Grégoire Girard, and Froebel, Aporti envisioned an idealized archetype of a natural mother. Unlike the institutes offered by the Church, which did not differentiate early childhood pedagogy from that of older children, Aporti's *asilo* was to be nurturing and tender, led by teachers who were called "mothers" rather than "instructors:" "I did not intend to make the *asilo* like a little university that stifles the tender mind with a flood of useless ideas, forcing the child to sit still and quiet, which is contrary to his nature, exhausting the spirit with work unsuited to his age and temperament." Despite Aporti's intentions, the dominant pedagogy of pre-Casati era corrupted the *asilo*:

But the old school, protective of its traditions and dogma, transferred to the *asilo* the rusty apparatus of the old system, extinguishing the flame of playful warm maternal affection in favor of a cold, dreary childhood. Gone were the childhood games played out in vast corridors, laughter in the fresh air and sunshine, in favor of a sad overcrowded rows of sitting children, forced to remain immobile for long hours, repeating irrational mnemonic exercises.²⁶³

Following the permeation of Froebelian pedagogy into Italy, Aportian schools were reinvigorated and even preferred by some who claimed that their religious focus best suited Italian children.

²⁶²James C. Albisetti, "Froebel Crosses the Alps: Introducing the Kindergarten in Italy," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 2 (May 2009), 161.

²⁶³ Giuseppe Spagnol, *Froebel e Aporti. Conferenza tenuta il 30 giugno 1890 all'Accademia olimpica in Vicenza [per commemorare il cinquantesimo anniversario della istituzione del primo Giardino d'infanzia]* (Vittorio: Tip. L. Zopelli, 1890), 17-22.

The new maternal schools sought both a new strategy of teaching and discipline, as well as a new relationship between students, teachers, and families. The introduction of a maternalist pedagogy brought significant changes to the *asilo* curriculum. Unlike the Neapolitan *asili* described earlier, which focused on the physical and moral health of the child, the new pedagogy encouraged early childhood intellectual development, conducted within a nurturing, maternal atmosphere. The kindergarten was intended to function as an allegory, with the school as a garden, pupils as plants, and teachers as observant gardeners.²⁶⁴ The daily schedule normally consisted of two hours of lessons in the morning, two in the afternoon, and two hours of play,²⁶⁵ all regulated by a “mother made conscious,” an instructor guided by both maternal instinct and formal training. As historian Gabriella Seveso notes, “The most famous example of the new maternal figure was the Pestalozzian Gertrude, the undisputed protagonist of the pedagogical novels of the early nineteenth century, surrounded by a halo of redeeming wives and delineated by a precise and concrete concept of the mother.”²⁶⁶

As Italy moved toward a secular education based on the development of a wider civil society, the adoption of this new pedagogy fit well into the goals of the Liberal government; it featured both a scientific, positivist use of psychology and observation of students as well as a rejection of clerical control over early childhood education and its replacement with a maternal, child-focused pedagogy. This eclipse of Catholic control made Froebelian education particularly

²⁶⁴ Francesco Paolo Scaglione, *G. A. De Cosmi e f. Froebel: Conferenze tenute nella R. Scuola normale superiore maschile "G. A. De Cosmi"* (Palermo: Remo Sandron, 1890), 42.

²⁶⁵ *Regolamento del Giardino asilo d'infanzia, annesso alla scuola normale femminile superiore in Novara* (Novara: Tip. Commerciale dei Fratelli Valoggia, 1891), 7.

²⁶⁶ Seveso, *Come ombre leggere*, 49.

attractive to religious minorities; Jewish and Protestant women were among the early adherents of the new methods and instituted them in new and established institutions.²⁶⁷

Julie Schwabe, who was of German Jewish origin, but English Unitarian after her marriage, was one such adherent. Historian James Albisetti has noted that the subject of Froebelian pedagogy in Italy has been largely ignored, with the crucial work of Schwabe nearly unknown. While Schwabe had approached Camillo Cavour about founding *asili* for the poor in Naples in 1861, her attempts were short-lived until the 1870s, by which time she had met Froebel's disciple Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülow in Florence and become an advocate of Froebelian methods.²⁶⁸ Schwabe's efforts to open a kindergarten in 1872 were delayed by opposition from Catholics who claimed that the secular, foreign pedagogy was an importation of the *Kulturkampf* that threatened Vatican authority in Germany. The next year, with support from Minister of Public Instruction Antonio Scialoja and financing from both the Italian government and international philanthropy, Schwabe was finally able to open her school, the *Istituto Froebeliano*, in a former medical school owned by the government. Within a few years, the school had 250 pupils and came to include a girls' orphanage, an industrial training program, and a training school for Froebelian instructors.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Elena Raffalovich Comparetti, "La ricerca straordinaria," in *L'educazione delle donne: Scuole e modelli di vita femminile nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, ed. Simonetta Soldani (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1989), 425-443. Elena Raffalovich Comparetti, a Jewish woman from Odessa, opened a Froebelian school in Venice in 1874, open to children of all religions.

²⁶⁸ Albisetti, "Froebel Crosses the Alps," 164-67. Albisetti also notes that the first Froebelian institutes in Venice were founded by Adolfo Pick and Adele Levi della Vida in 1869; in Rome, American Emily Bliss Gould opened a kindergarten in 1871; in Florence, Marta Berduschek, one of Marenholtz-Bülow's students, opened the first kindergarten in 1872.

²⁶⁹ Albisetti, "Education for Poor Neapolitan Children: Julie Schwabe's Nineteenth-Century Secular Mission," *History of Education*, vol. 35, no. 6, (November 2006), 646-47.

Among the central debates of the 1874 Pedagogical Congress in Bologna was how to best implement the “recent findings of rational pedagogy.” Following the advice of “venerable Professor Giuseppe Sacchi,” the Congress concluded that early education should begin with *scuole materne*, which would be brought under the authority of the Ministry of Public Instruction. These courses, which would last through the first year of primary school, were to employ “intuitive methods” and be entrusted to specialized (female) instructors. These early grades would lead to the superior levels of the primary school, which would impart the “best elements of national culture” and prepare for successive scientific and classical education.²⁷⁰

The development of maternal pedagogy reflected not only a new view of motherhood, but also a new emphasis on the child. For Ildebrando Bencivenni the elevation of childhood was beneficial not to the development of the individual, but society as a whole. Although Bencivenni, as the director of the male *normale* in Nuoro, Sardinia, was particularly invested in the status of instructors, he argues that the condition of children should not be left to those in direct contact, including teachers: “We used to ignore and put down children, saying that the child was insignificant and leave him in his world of mother, nurse, and school teacher.” Rather, the status and progress of children should be a central concern to the entire nation: “But the child is God revealing himself. The cult of the child is thus the inspiration of a people ascending to the heights of civilization.”²⁷¹

Francesco Gastaldi, instructor at the *Scuola normale* in Novara, saw the maternal, child-focused methodology as essential to transforming the school system in general, promoting a more gentle, domestic setting dominated by women:

²⁷⁰ Antonio Pasquale, “Congresso Pedagogico,” *L'Avvenire della scuola. Foglio settimanale di pedagogia e didattica*, year I, no. 2 (November 18, 1874) 10-11.

²⁷¹ Ildebrando Bencivenni, *Fanciulli infelici* (Bergamo: Stab. Fr. Cattaneo succ. Gaffuri e Gatti, 1892), 9.

Who among us cannot recognize how much difference there is between the old method of early childhood instruction and the modern. This has been developing in recent years due to the work of modern pedagogy that has arisen from the solid foundation of Pestalozzi and Froebel, work that has demonstrated the insufficiency, the defects, and the errors of the old system of instruction.²⁷²

By the late 1880s, such early progressive, child-centered ideas were well ingrained in the training and practice of female elementary teachers, with 217 official Italian Froebelian kindergartens, 328 following the progressive pedagogy of Ferrante Aporti and another 1537 incorporating combinations of the two styles or following other child study methods;²⁷³ all were taught by women, who were seen as more suitable for the education of young children:

Because we need education to begin with tender hearts, early education at both nursery and elementary levels should be done by women. If her knowledge is equal to that of a man, a female teacher will surpass the sometimes rough, rugged male in the art of transferring ideas; she is generally more persuasive, gentle, and patient, exemplary gifts for a teacher.²⁷⁴

The growing popularity of the kindergarten model was promoted by the Ministry of Public Instruction through Froebelian conferences held in over 20 Italian cities during the 1880s.²⁷⁵

The programs were encouraged both as a means to educate young students and to train student teachers in the new pedagogical theories. A decade after Gastaldi's 1880 promotion of the new pedagogy in Novara, a kindergarten was established, connected to the normal school, "for the purpose of promoting the development of physical, intellectual, and moral faculties of young children and to offer to the alumnae of the *Corso normale* the opportunity to train in

²⁷² Francesco Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento delle scuole normali e sulla istituzione delle scuole professionali femminili: discorso del professor Francesco Gastaldi letto in occasione della distribuzione dei premi alle allieve delle scuole elementari e della scuola normale femminile in Novara, novembre 1879* (Novara: Stabilimento Tipografico dei Fratelli Miglio, 1880), 7.

²⁷³ Scaglione, *G. A. De Cosmi e F. Froebel*, 31.

²⁷⁴ Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento*, 5-6.

²⁷⁵ Scaglione, *G. A. De Cosmi e F. Froebel*, 32,

childhood education according to the natural method.” The new school was to be a locus of health, with students required to show proof of good health and vaccination, and a new disciplinary strategy, that held that “scolding and praise, within limits, should be sufficient” followed by increasing levels of exclusion from activities, with expulsion as a final option. The children were treated like a family, focusing on polite, ordered, and urbane behavior, with discipline dispensed with sweetness.²⁷⁶ Nowhere was corporal punishment or shaming to be applied. Professor of pedagogy Giacomo Pavesi argued that physical punishment was not only ineffective, but detrimental to the goal of the expanding the popular school: “Do not strike children, it ruins healthy rapport. One of the reasons that teachers are held in such low regard by society is that they used to beat in the past; current society is composed of those who were beaten as children, and thus avenge with scorn.”²⁷⁷

At the turn of the century, the early-childhood schools that followed the pedagogy of Rosa and Carolina Agazzi became increasingly popular and influential; while Froebelian schools had a philosophical approach, Apertian schools a religious basis, and Montessori schools a scientific methodology, the Agazzi sisters promoted what could be called an artisanal approach that promoted a domestic and rural environment focused on self-education and play.²⁷⁸ Maria Montessori’s early educational philosophy and methodology took the Froebelian emphasis on child-centered pedagogy led by a teacher-mother toward a scientific, positivistic emphasis on Freudian psychology that promoted a child’s self-directed development and employed a corps of

²⁷⁶ *Regolamento del Giardino asilo d'infanzia*, 5, 7.

²⁷⁷ Giacomo Pavesi, *L'ultima lezione di pedagogia dell'anno 1891-1892 fatta nella R. Scuola normale di S. B. in G.* (Oneglia: Tipo-Litografia e Libreria di G. Ghilini, 1892), 15.

²⁷⁸ Erica Moretti, “Recasting Il Metodo: Maria Montessori and Early Childhood Education in Italy (1909-1926),” *Cromohs*, no. 16 (2011), 8-9.

specially trained female teacher-scientists.²⁷⁹ The dominance of women in the new secular and natural active method was manifest not only in the increasing number of female teachers, by attracting more young women to the *normali*, but in the feminization of the character of the school itself.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the positivist and maternalist pedagogies had converged; central to the late-nineteenth century child study pedagogy was the connection between natural maternalism and scientific child study methodology. In 1895, Carolina Marimò, a pedagogical instructor at the normal school in the Sicilian city of Trapani, noted that children arrive in the classroom at six or seven years of age as complete strangers to the teacher. The teacher, in turn, places this unknown child among dozens of other unknowns and attempts to teach them as equals, ignoring the differences caused by the “physical, intellectual, and moral elements that have been part of the student’s upbringing.” This process, Marimò argues, wastes the “precious gift of observation and discovery” that the child’s mother possesses, “the result of a long and patient process of investigation.” Were such judgments carefully communicated by the child’s mother, the “teacher could then evaluate this human data with a critical and scientific eye, like a historian with written documents, and create a biography for each student.”²⁸⁰ This combination of loving, maternal observation and scientific analysis by a trained educator, represents an amalgamation of nineteenth-century pedagogy. It is careful to respect the role of the mother, mindful of the family’s potential to undermine the State’s educational goals, and reflective of the growing scientific pedagogical training and professionalism of the teacher.

²⁷⁹ Paola Trabalzini, *Maria Montessori: Da Il metodo a La scoperta del bambino* (Rome: Aracne Editrice, 2003), 10. Quoted in Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 297.

²⁸⁰ Carolina Marimò, *Madre e maestra* (Parma: Stab. Tip. Luigi Battei, 1895), 8-11.

Progressivism

By the mid-1880s, the Liberal government began to envision a new school, both in its pedagogy and its function within society; for the State, the school was to be the site of modernization, transformation, and secularization. Connected to the positivist school that sought practical application based on scientific precepts and the maternalist emphasis on nurture and child-study, the progressive movement aimed at an expanded vision of education, advocating not only for a new attitude within the schools, but a new role for the school within society. The extension of male suffrage, the implementation of literacy rather than property qualifications for voting,²⁸¹ and the increased inclusion of democrats and socialists into the parliament further helped to drive the democratization of the school, a move that increased demand for elementary teachers and led to further feminization.

In its increasing attempts to transform families and communities, the school had to contend with continued conservative resistance to national education. With astronomical illiteracy rates compared to the rest of Europe, especially among women, rural areas, and throughout the South, the State increasingly saw basic education as essential in unifying the new nation.²⁸² The largest discrepancies between rates of attendance for boys and girls were in the former papal lands; in 1863 Abruzzo and Molise, for example, female to male rates of attendance were 16% to 31%.²⁸³ For many families, the idea of sending a daughter to a secular school was

²⁸¹ Salvo Mastellon, "Democracy and Socialism during the Risorgimento," in *Studies in Modern Italian History: From the Risorgimento to the Republic*, ed. Frank J. Coppa (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 27.

²⁸² The 1861 census revealed 86% female to 75% male rural illiteracy and 77% and 65% urban illiteracy. By 1901, overall rates were down to 48.7%, although it would take until the 1950s for the disparity between male and female literacy to abate.

²⁸³ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare*, 50.

anathema to traditional views on a woman's place in the domestic sphere. In addition to this potential disruption of social norms, a school mandated from a distant capital but funded by impoverished communes seemed a waste of scant resources; to many Italians, the school remained "a thief that absorbs all of the wealth of the country."²⁸⁴ Gabelli claimed that Conservatives opposed literacy as a potential source of social revolution that would lead peasants to "abandon the plow and desert the farm to dedicate themselves to interpreting Dante."²⁸⁵ Some doubted the civilizing potential of the school, accusing it of creating an unhappy and restless proletariat greedy for change and made intolerant of political, social, and economic conditions; Deputy Paolo Lioy protested obligatory schools, arguing that they fomented atheist, anarchic, and communist ideas.²⁸⁶

In order to encourage attendance, particularly among rural families, the schools mandated instruction in subjects that would appeal to rural needs, like home economics, manual labor, agriculture, and local artisan crafts and production, all subjects that required specialized training in the increasingly feminized normal schools. Further, there was a growing recognition that attendance lagged in part because of the poverty of the students' families; although tuition was not charged, many families simply could not afford to clothe or feed children enough to send them to school regularly. The establishment of a scholastic welfare agency in Le Marche sought to address such issues in 1901. Seeking to improve attendance and inspire love of the nation and its institutions, the agency provided food, clothing, shoes, books, and educational support to

²⁸⁴ Pietro Meloni, *La nuova scuola normale italiana* (Sassari: Pre. Stab. Tip. G. Dessi, 1893), 9.

²⁸⁵ Gabelli, "L'Italia e l'istruzione femminile," in *L'istruzione e l'educazione in Italia*, 86.

²⁸⁶ De Fort, *La scuola elementare*, 128.

children who had been orphaned or whose parents were out of work “due to injury, not laziness.”²⁸⁷

By the end of the century, the Ministry of Public Instruction and most politicians had become convinced of the close relationship between the school and the economic and social conditions of the populace. In a parliamentary debate at the turn of the century, Minister Nunzio Nasi, claimed, “Where there is a lack of food, there cannot be an abundance of grammar. The schooling issue is a noble and grand social question and cannot be resolved on just didactic criteria.” Socialist Deputy Guido Albertelli pushed the issue farther, arguing that the school could perform an even more radical function, acting as the vanguard for dramatic social reorganization, arguing, “The school should supplant part of the function of the family until the reorganization of society allows for family to elevate the quality of life.”²⁸⁸

Progressive pedagogues pushed not only for a new attitude within the schools, but a new role for the school within society: “We argue that the school should set a goal of expanding its scope; not just instructing how to read, write, count, teach more or less useful and interesting skills, and cultivate the memories of future citizens. Instead, the school should seek to develop more rational and complete human personalities and prepare students to live lives of virtue and decorum.” In an era of economic and social instability, progressive pedagogy promoted the transformative power of the school. For progressives, like pedagogue Gaetano Poli, the school was a tool for social reengineering and enlightenment: “Together with vigor and physical robustness, the school should contribute as much as possible to the opening up of the minds of

²⁸⁷ G. Capucci, *L'educazione della donna. Conferenza tenuta nell'aula magna della R. scuola normale femminile di Camerino* (Camerino: Tip. Savini, 1902).

²⁸⁸ Nunzio Nasi, Guido Albertelli, quoted in Gaetano Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre d'Italia e per le famiglie dei lavoratori* (Florence: G. Nerbini, 1901), 23.

the popular classes and give them a strong and free conscience, to form true, dignified, honest, valiant citizens, capable of thinking for themselves and acting and working according to their own principles.”²⁸⁹

In addition to enlightening the popular classes about their rights as citizens, the school also promoted its potential to instruct the people about their duties and responsibilities, helping to quell the growing social and economic unrest at the end of the century. To Pietro Meloni, a Sardinian *normale* instructor the school was a “panacea that can reach and heal grave social ills that manifest themselves in groups like the Fenians in the UK, the Communards in France, the Mano Nero in Spain, Internationalists in Italy.”²⁹⁰ Such arguments intensified following the assassination of King Umberto by an anarchist in 1900: “There was an outcry against the infamous sects that were infesting the nation. There was a recognition that the moral and economic conditions of the nation were in grave shape and that there was a need to improve education by any means necessary.”²⁹¹ Education was portrayed as a safeguard against demands for social change; students were to be taught “respect for the law, both natural and social” a lesson that would render them good citizens and “less likely to count on sudden miracles for recovery from social or physical ailments.”²⁹² Thus, the school was cast not only as the agent of the civilizing and pacifying State, but as a driver of social progress, a cure for ignorance and hunger among the popular classes.

²⁸⁹ Poli, *Ai maestri e alle maestre*, 21.

²⁹⁰ Meloni, *La nuova scuola normale italiana*, 10-13.

²⁹¹ Roberto Puccini, *L'educazione delle donne ai tempi nostri nei popoli più civili* (Milan: Tip editrice L.F. Cogliati, 1904), 352.

²⁹² Pasotti, *La scuola pratica*, xvi.

Before the school could begin to transform families and communities, they would have to earn the trust and support of these groups. Without the support of the families, even the best teacher could have little impact:

We must battle against our enemies: ignorance and a lack of faith in the work of the school on the part of the families of the students. It doesn't matter if the teacher is a praiseworthy model of gentleness and heroism, the embodiment of maternal love, when the children have spent their entire lives with a rotten mother, from whom they have never heard a kind word. How can they understand the importance and grandeur of childhood education, if in their homes they hear school spoken of as a boring prison from which they need to quickly escape?²⁹³

Bringing the family into the school was promoted as a way to bring the lessons of the classroom into the home, expand the reach of the school's civilizing mission, and further the goals of the new, modern, and maternal school:

The classroom has changed its appearance. No longer is it the severe room of lined-up black-varnished desks as it was in our day; no more tomb-like silence; no more the domain of the rigid instructor of mathematics and science. Everything has changed. It seems as if a ray of sunlight has penetrated a cold, cloudy winter morning, shining on both people and things.²⁹⁴

As the look and tone of the classroom changed, so did its vision. No longer was its function merely to instruct young people in basic skills or provide basic vocational training. The school was recast as the best tool for modernization and civilization. The teacher was exhorted to tell the peasantry that the rigid, social hierarchy could be transformed into a meritocracy through the embrace of the school:

The difference between the rich and the poor is clothing, fortune, and education. Culture no longer belongs to the privileged intellect of the few; if a good dose of reason and science is given to all, you will see how quickly such disparities close and whether uncouthness really belongs to certain classes and certain conditions.

²⁹³ Caterina Artale, *Scuola e famiglia: Dal diario di una giovane maestra* (Palermo: Giuseppe Gianfalla, 1914), 8.

²⁹⁴ Eugenia Pavanetto, *Importanza della Maestra Assistente nella scuola normale* (Lucca: Lib. e Cart. Baroni, 1901), 21.

Tell [the popular classes]: Wipe the sweat from your brows, raise your mind to God, our common father, and provided that you too are lovingly aiming toward the same goals, you are neither abject, nor vile, nor useless, nor miserable.²⁹⁵

The mission of the school, envisioned as providing trained bureaucrats and military leaders just fifty years earlier, was to take on the role of raising Italy, both in the civilization of its citizenry and its international standing. The schools of the 1880s-1910s were increasingly concerned with the promotion of the school as the salve to social ills, and a celebration of increasingly specialized study.²⁹⁶ Specialization in primary and secondary school curricula was promoted through the expansion of both obligatory courses and the scope of the school's vision.

Science

The move toward specialization and increased rigor for both students and teachers can be seen in the creation of scientific credential requirements. One of the 1877 Coppino statutes held that secondary teachers must possess University degrees in the subject of instruction, exacerbating a shortage of female teachers qualified to teach science and math in the expanding secondary schools. Facing continued public resistance toward coeducation, men continued to dominate both male and female secondary science and math instruction. The director of the *Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero* in Florence admitted that scientific training was expensive and required Latin, a subject usually restricted to male schools, but argued that University training should be required only for those women desiring a professional career in the vein of famed eighteenth-century mathematician Maria Gaetana Agnesi. The need for competent

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 22.

²⁹⁶ Pavesi, *L'ultima lezione di pedagogia dell'anno*, 19.

female instructors, at the earlier levels of scientific instruction necessitated an alternative path.²⁹⁷ The *Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero*, founded in Rome and Florence in 1882, intended to provide such paths; these elite institutes provided specialized pedagogical training for future normale teachers and specialized subject matter instruction, such as math, science, and language training, for future classical and technical secondary school teachers.

In 1892, the University of Pavia established a specialized normal school that was specifically focused on scientific instruction. The program was open to graduates of the regular normal, technical, or classical secondary schools. The four-year program included two years of general preparation, split into two sections: physics and math or chemistry and natural science; followed by two years of specialization in one of these four fields. The introduction of a non-bachelor degree program focused on teaching speaks to the expansion of secondary schooling, with an intense focus on scientific and industrial training, as well as the recognition that teaching required special didactic training rather than simply a degree in the subject material.²⁹⁸ As an integral part of both the positivist pedagogical project and the drive to improve Italy's industrial prospects, the sciences were promoted for both those aiming for a university education, as well as to the popular classes, who were assured that scientific education was not incompatible with religion.

²⁹⁷ G.F. Airolì, *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero in Firenze, dall'anno scolastico 1883-84 al 1885-86* (Florence: Tipografia Cooperativa, 1886), 22-23.

²⁹⁸ *Regolamento per la scuola normale in scienze nella R. Università di Pavia* (Pavia: Stab. Tip. Succ. Buzzoni, 1892), 5-6.

History and Geography

The rise of the moderate Left and the extension of male suffrage, from 1.98% of the total population in 1871 to 6.97% in 1882 to 42% in 1912,²⁹⁹ led to the conscious creation of civil and national identity through public instruction, particularly through the teaching of Italian history, language, and geography.³⁰⁰ The still tenuous status of national identity is reflected in geography lesson plans that emphasized national over regional geography and included pictures of the peninsula.³⁰¹ Giuseppe Pasotti promoted the teaching of national history, arguing, "it emancipates reason and forms good judgment [and is] the greatest school of patriotism." The source of such national sentiment was to be wrought from pride about the nation's illustrious past and gratitude for the many sacrifices in the name of unification.³⁰² The Liberal government saw the educational system as the perfect locus for the inculcation of national values and unity, an institution that could change abstract concepts like the nation into "a real and living being whose destiny a child can follow through the centuries."³⁰³

The increased emphasis on historical education led to fierce debates about the proper narrative of the Italian past and the number of history textbooks expanded from 6 in 1801 to 55 in 1900.³⁰⁴ Among the approved history textbooks were Camillo Perricone Siracusa's short primers intended for both male and female elementary schools in 1890. The booklets, which

²⁹⁹ Mastellon, "Democracy and Socialism during the Risorgimento," 27.

³⁰⁰ Maria Cristina Morandini, *Scuola e nazione: maestri e istruzione popolare nella costruzione dello stato unitario* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 2003).

³⁰¹ Pasotti, *La scuola pratica*, 101.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, xii-xiv.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, xiv, paraphrasing Gabriel Compayrè.

³⁰⁴ Anna Ascenzi, *Tra educazione etico-civile e costruzione dell'identità nazionale: L'insegnamento della storia nelle scuole italiane dell'Ottocento* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 2004).

present a hagiographic narrative of Italian heritage, begin with the teaching of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman history in the second year of education, connecting nascent Italian identity to ancient glory; the lessons then move on to “the splendor and heroes of Italian Independence” in the third year, during which topics were to include Napoleon Bonaparte, Luisa Sanfelice-Molino, the Piedmontese Revolution, the Five Days in Milan, Victor Emanuele II, and the Revolution of 1860. This triumphalist narrative, whose topics notably include the “Liberation of Venice and the Liberation of Rome,” functioned to remind students of the happy circumstances of both their geographical and chronological situation: “Oh, young people, you live in a peaceful and prosperous time, but we were not always so: we were divided and unhappy.” The fourth and fifth year covers the medieval and early modern periods, the site for relatively less hallowed grounds for Italian pride, but chooses to focus on Italian artists, inventors and explorers. The book concludes with a patriotic telling of Italian military occupation in Africa, portraying the occupation of Ethiopia as a revival of Thermopylae, with the fall of soldiers as heroes defending national honor: “We have planted the Italian flag in Keren and Asmara, important places in the Abyssinian territory.”³⁰⁵

The inculcation of patriotic sentiment also required improved historical education for and of women. Minister of Public Instruction and positivist pedagogue Paolo Boselli pushed for the inclusion of female heroic archetypes, arguing that “those who write the history of the Risorgimento should also celebrate the nobility and generosity of many Italian mothers.” Having mothers well versed in their Italian heritage was intended to cultivate patriotic sentiment and informed citizenship, as “the secondary instruction of women exerts a large influence not only on

³⁰⁵ Camillo Perricone Siracusa, *La storia educatrice: Piccolo corso di storia ad uso delle scuole elementari*. vol. 1-4. 4 vols. (Palermo: Tip. Dello Statuto, 1890).

the intellectual education of the people, but on their patriotism.”³⁰⁶ This emphasis on secondary instruction in political history and geography points to the maturation of the archetype of the maternal educator; no longer were women posited only as preparers for formal education, but concretely tied to the formation of an informed and politically astute citizenry.

Language and Literature

Language instruction took on special focus, as the lagging adoption of Italian as the national language continued to hamper national identity. The spread and standardization of Tuscan Italian was enforced in all levels of instruction, particularly in the teacher training *normali*, where dialect usage was strictly prohibited. As Eugen Weber noted for the French case, language uniformity, particularly among girls (i.e. future mothers and teachers) was a practical and symbolic requirement for the annexation of disparate regions.³⁰⁷ Romantic nationalism drove the instruction of national languages across Europe. Among the most influential pedagogues were Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose 1772 “Considerations on the Government of Poland” emphasized linguistic pride alongside national history and law, and Swiss pedagogue Père Jean-Baptiste Girard, who promoted the teaching of the “mother tongue” as central to moral and religious education.³⁰⁸ Girard inspired a school of “Girardists” in Italy, including Abbé Lambruschini and Enrico Mayer. Girard’s pedagogy eschewed abstract theories of education and

³⁰⁶ Paolo Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione: Discorso del Ministro Paolo Boselli, pronunciato alla Camera dei deputati nella tornata del 21 giugno, 1888* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei deputati, 1888), 15.

³⁰⁷ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 313-14.

³⁰⁸ Gabriel Compayré, *The History of Pedagogy*, translated by W.H. Payne (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1886), 475.

focused on a systematic understanding of the relationship between language and culture and the maternal role in language acquisition.

Italian pedagogues recognized the challenges and centrality of language instruction to both national unity and the educational modernization projects. Antonio Pasquale, director of the Neapolitan pedagogical journal, *L'Avvenire della scuola*, noted that “the teaching of language is the basis of all other subjects and perhaps due to its importance, is the subject that inspires the most debate and has the most contradictory practices.” According to Pasquale, the central didactic strategy was the contrast between the national language and local dialect.³⁰⁹

For Italy, a country of politically, culturally, and linguistically divided regions, debates over language instruction were fierce and varied. The push for the Tuscan dialect as the official Italian was the continuation of a Risorgimental drive and was reflected in the choice of emphasized reading. Courses in literature placed a similar emphasis on the works of Latin and Italian masters, including Virgil, Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Alberti, Feo Belcari, Da Vinci, Jacopo Sannazzaro, Angelo Poliziano, Lorenzo de Medici, Luigi Pulci, Machiavelli.³¹⁰ Alessandro Manzoni advocated on behalf of Tuscan Italian as the official language of the new nation; while the first edition of his novel, *I promessi sposi* (1827), had been written in the Lombard Italian of his native Milan, Manzoni, “washed his [literary] clothes in the Arno,” and published his 1840 version in the Tuscan Italian then spoken by contemporary Tuscans of the

³⁰⁹ Antonio Pasquale, “Lo insegnamento della lingua nazionale,” *L'Avvenire della scuola. Foglio settimanale di pedagogia e didattica*, year I, no. 2 (November 25, 1874), 26-27, 9.

³¹⁰ Giuseppe Finzi, *Manuale completo di letteratura italiana secondo i vigenti programmi per la scuola normale* (Verona: Donato Tedeschi e Figli, 1891).

upper classes.³¹¹ Manzoni advocated strongly for the implementation of his choice in schools, even calling for the exclusive hiring of all teachers from within Tuscany.

The fight against dialect and regional differences was heightened by the linguistic isolation of the uniting Savoyard line, who spoke primarily Piedmontese and French, and the often mutually unintelligible regional and local variations of the areas now under their dominion. Pedagogue Rosa Piazza, noting that language instruction begins with speaking and moves on to reading and writing, called attention to the difficulties presented to non-Tuscan regions: “For Tuscans, a large part of this study is done within the domestic walls and the teacher only has to continue this work, in other Italian provinces, there is a need to start from the beginning and start each student with a blank slate.” This challenge required not only early intervention and the education of mothers in the Italian language, but a pedagogy that embraced a nurturing, progressive teaching style: “As Dante says, ‘The simple soul which knows nothing, except that, having been created by a happy maker, eagerly turns toward that which charms it.’ Thus the teacher must amuse him so that the student will willingly seek knowledge and be satisfied.”³¹²

Despite the promotion of Tuscan Italian, there was considerable resistance in French-speaking regions like the Val d’Aosta. Article 374 of the 1859 Casati law stipulated that “in communes where French is spoken, French shall be the language of instruction instead of Italian.”³¹³ While the article remained intact, there was considerable pressure to enforce Italian language instruction. By 1873, the *normale* in Aosta was compelled by the Ministry of Public

³¹¹ Remo Ceserani and Pierluigi Pellini, “The Belated Development of the Theory of the Novel,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*, ed. Peter E. Bondanella, Andrea Ciccarelli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-4.

³¹² Piazza, *Distribuzione dei premi*, 14.

³¹³ Bruto Amante, *Codice scolastico vigente: Raccolta completa de’ testi di leggi, decreti, regolamenti, circolari, programmi emanati del 1859-1896* (Rome: B. Amante Editore, 1896), 438.

Instruction to conduct the majority of instruction in Italian and all schools increasingly restricted French –only instruction.³¹⁴ As a second language, however, French was encouraged and made compulsory at the *ginnasio* level in 1891.³¹⁵

The increasing emphasis on language uniformity is reflected in the exhortations against dialect in both the *normali* and the residential *convitti* (boarding schools).³¹⁶ Recognizing the slow pace of Italian uniformity within working-class families, proper language instruction was monitored closely among school teachers. Proper grammar was to be instructed according to the age of the child and presented in comparison to the local dialects.³¹⁷ The pedagogical journal *La collaboratrice della maestra* suggested that “in teaching a child to speak well, which is the basis of learning the national language, use only imitation. If the teacher uses good language in her explanations, the child will very quickly learn to express himself.”³¹⁸

For Minister Boselli, reforming language instruction for women included implementing Latin instruction in both male and female schools: “I believe that our goal should be to concentrate our efforts, strengthening the teaching of Italian language and literature and improving Latin instruction, without which there would be no Italian. Latin allows one to feel the spirit of ancient civilization and encourages the development of new civilization.” During a 1888

³¹⁴ Jack D. Street, “The Independence of Savoy and Autonomy of the Valle D’Aosta,” in *The French Review*, vol. 71, no. 3 (Feb., 1998), 399.

³¹⁵ Ministero dell’Educazione Nazionale, *Dalla riforma Gentile all Carta della Scuola* (Florence: Vallecchi Editore, 1941) quoted in George L. Williams, *Fascist Thought and Totalitarianism in Italy’s Secondary Schools* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 41.

³¹⁶ See Chapter 5: Defining Norms.

³¹⁷ Antonio Pasquale, “Introduzione,” *L’Avvenire della scuola. Foglio settimanale di pedagogia e didattica*, year I, no. 1 (November 18, 1874), 9.

³¹⁸ Modesta Miosotide and Francesco Giordano-Orsini, “Dell’insegnare a parlare, a leggere ed a scrivere nella prima classe inferiore,” *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 30 (May 4, 1882), 233.

congressional address, Boselli connected Latin instruction for women with the cause of Italian Unification; recasting Latin not as the language of educated elites, but as part of the linguistic patrimony of unified Italy: “I know of many women during the Risorgimento who had much influence not only on the literary resurgence of our nation, but also its scientific and philosophical renewal and freedom of thought.”³¹⁹

Language instruction was also reimagined for the wealthy classes. Despite pedagogical reforms, the quality of instruction for even the highest classes remained outside the scope of modern pedagogy, even into the twentieth century. In 1904, Professor Roberto Puccini noted that “the studies and occupations of wealthy young women are limited. There is no such thing as strict and good education, as pedagogy consists of teaching them a little literature, how to strum the piano, and parroting foreigners in diverse languages, often without properly learning their own.”³²⁰ Thus, the efforts of reformers like Boselli seem to have had little real impact on the content of upper-class female education. Indeed, despite efforts from politicians like Boselli and influential intellectuals like Manzoni, standard Italian did not replace dialect as the mother tongue until well into the twentieth century in most regions.

Home Economics

In addition to the promotion of patriotic values and national unity through the school curriculum, changes to home and social life were also pushed through the schools. As the schools came to absorb an increasing range of tasks beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic, teachers were brought into the service of reforming the physical and moral conditions of the

³¹⁹ Paolo Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione*, 5, 15.

³²⁰ Roberto Puccini, *L'educazione delle donne*, 332.

private sphere. This civilizing mission was entrusted to the growing female teaching corps: “society recommends this holy job to the female teachers. It is we that dedicate ourselves with love and enthusiasm to the school, often sacrificing our dear childhood dreams; we must teach young pupils love for work and the good governance of a home.”³²¹

The extension of this mission into the schoolhouse reflects a shift in the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the inculcation of bourgeois values as a tool of national identity consolidation and stability. For Conservatives, this cult of domesticity encouraged a brand of femininity focused on patience, modesty, thrift, and efficiency in the place of the supposed aristocratic characteristics of selfishness, frivolity, and independence, and therefore discouraged education beyond a basic level: “For women, culture must have as its only goal domestic life and the acquisition of those notions required for the good government of the family.” The encouragement of such notions of womanhood was also a tool to pacify class conflict and catch up to European standards of production and economic stability, as “a stratified but peaceful society founded on the principle of class solidarity, and on the ethics of work, self-sacrifice, parsimony and savings, would eventually make up for the lack of industrial productivity.” Women were to be confined to the private sphere of the home in order to increase productivity, create harmony and promote in their children (and often domestic servants) a sense of patriotic pride: “Cultivated in the home, such feelings would hopefully carry over to the larger social body, fostering a sense of national community.”³²²

Pressing against the political motives and ideological underpinnings of an exclusive focus

³²¹ *Guida all'insegnamento dell'Economia Domestica nelle scuole elementari femminili. Proposta dalla Redazione del Corriere delle Maestre. Corso inferiore* (Rome: Antonio Vallardi, 1898), 7.

³²² Lucia Re, “Passion and Sexual Difference: The Risorgimento and the Gendering of Writing in Nineteenth-Century Italian Culture,” in *Making and Remaking Italy*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna Von Henneberg (New York: Berg, 2001), 170, 160, 163.

on domesticity lay the realities within the schoolhouse. In the Apulian city of Brindisi, where the 1861 census measured illiteracy at 92 percent for women and 85 percent for men, the first teachers had to be brought in from Lecce, as there was a complete absence of local candidates. In addition to the usual obstacles to attendance, including poverty, scattered population, and agricultural demands for child labor, was the local aversion to the education of women. In 1868, scholastic inspector Paolo Massone reported, “In many communes, the instruction of women is considered harmful and even sinful.” For many peasant, farming, and fishing families, female education was also seen as a superfluous luxury and the waste of essential labor. With the daughters of wealthy families able to receive either private tutoring or admission into the convent school in Lecce, the candidates for the newly instituted public schools were the small number of bourgeois families, who were hesitant about the supposedly nefarious effect of overeducation. Thus, the 1878 scholastic inspector recommended to the mayor that the local school focus on *lavori donneschi*. Despite efforts to enforce penalties and make the school more attractive to local needs, the attendance rates did not surpass 50 percent and 55 percent for females and males, respectively, until the First World War.³²³

While echoing the focus on women’s responsibilities in the private sphere, the image promoted by positivist pedagogues marked a departure from earlier conservative theorists. Although *lavori donneschi*, broadly conceived as traditionally feminine skills like cleaning, cooking, and sewing, had been included in the original curriculum of the 1859 Casati law, instruction in *economia domestica* differed both in the more scientific nature of the lessons and the importance placed on their instruction. As early as 1870, Gabelli was promoting the idea of

³²³ Elena Lanzi, “Gli anni della scuola,” in *Figlie, spose, madri: Testimonianze di vita quotidiana. Brindisi 1860-1915. Mostra di documenti e oggetti* (Brindisi: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Archivio di Stato, 1991), 53-58.

domestic economics as a science, calibrated for efficiency and run by proficient and erudite women, à la the influential 1861 British guide, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*.³²⁴ Gabelli argued that with the end of legal and economic inequality, a woman could be “a powerful element of rapid civil progress,” if properly educated. He promoted the idea of the home as the practical laboratory for the theories learned in the classroom: “The family is thus immediately connected to the intellectual life of the nation and civil society; scientific discoveries are applied without hesitation and yield immediate results, enhancing and popularizing faith in the sciences.”³²⁵

By the end of the century, Minister of Public Instruction Guido Baccelli mandated the introduction of home economics into the public school curriculum with the goal of “encouraging love of family and hard work.” In response to the new provisions, a special guide was produced by the pedagogical journal *Il corriere delle maestre* to provide “examples of wise mothers” for girls ages 7 to 9 in order to “create good, hard-working, thrifty, dignified girls.” The journal, which promoted itself as “the only Italian journal dedicated specifically to female elementary teachers” that formed a “collaboration between Italian and foreign pedagogical principles” was ordered for all classrooms by the commune of Milan. The special guide emphasized the importance of traditional gender roles, not only for the stability of the family, but the nation: “The prosperity of the State depends on the prosperity of individual families,” thus, “if the heads of the families are good earners, and the mothers prudent, it leads to general well-being. Good economic order in a family contributes to the economy of a country, of a nation.”³²⁶

³²⁴ Isabella Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, reprint (London: Chancellor Press, 1982). First published in 1861.

³²⁵ Gabelli, “L'Italia e l'istruzione femminile,” in *L'istruzione e l'educazione in Italia*, 79-80, 91.

³²⁶ *Guida all'insegnamento dell'economia domestica*, 3-5.

Courses in home economics were to be taught alongside academic subjects in the women's normal schools, whose graduates were to continue inculcating such skills and values not only in their future classrooms, but also in their own homes. Fifteen years after the mandating of such courses, the goal of their implementation remained constant: the promotion of the "valor and virtue of the woman, the natural manager of the home." As the future "material and moral director[s] of the home," young women were required to learn the essentials, including classic skills such as budgeting, hygiene, shopping, cooking, and sewing, but also skills required for a rural population, including practical chemistry, wine cultivation and animal husbandry, including learning about the anatomy and cultivation of chickens, rabbits, and bees.³²⁷

While personal health and hygiene were vigorously promoted, the journal warned teachers not to "confuse personal cleanliness with the refinement of the *toilette*; the first is a virtue, the second a ridiculous vanity that leads to a waste of time and money." Clear here, particularly in the use of the French term *toilette*, is the promotion of acceptable middle class values; while the State sought to civilize the "popular classes", the aping of aristocratic frivolity was not to be encouraged. Students were encouraged to be hard working, methodical, patient, and clear about their priorities: "First work, then play; first family, then personal interest."³²⁸

With the opening of all Universities to women in 1874 and secondary schools in 1883 and an increased focus on specialized study, a growing number of women began entering higher levels of schooling. It was made clear, however, that the responsibility for domestic order and the care of children lay squarely on female shoulders. A 1915 behavioral guide for young teachers noted that "all the sciences are worth nothing if the woman is not a good housewife, an able

³²⁷ *Scuola della buona massaia presso l'istituto Margherita di Savoia-Torino, Programma del corso normale di educazione e di economia domestica* (Turin: Ditta G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1912), 3, 40.

³²⁸ *Guida all'insegnamento dell'economia domestica*, 9, 14.

laundress; it is more of a surprise to find a women who cannot sew than to find one who cannot read.”³²⁹ While large numbers of women entering higher education and the extra-domestic labor force was seen by many as potentially disruptive to established gender norms, the teaching of traditionally feminized vocational skills and mores could serve to calm conservative fears.

The new focus on home economics thus served two, somewhat contradictory, ends: first, it could help to pacify conservative fears of changing social norms, encouraging popular support for State schools and encouraging traditional families to educate their daughters; second, it could expand the scope of the school and the importance of the schoolteacher, elevating her from an imparter of basic literacy and numeracy into a shaper of both citizens and communities, molding the next generation and transforming Italian society. In 1909, American progressive education leader Ellwood P. Cubberley noted that as the care of the child fell increasingly to the State, teachers would need to “become more effective social workers. What teachers need... is a knowledge of democracy’s needs and problems”.³³⁰ Such training could only be provided in specialized pedagogical courses. Progressive education reformers noted that for progressive ideas to truly take hold in the public schools, a new generation of teachers would need to be instructed in the progressive vision and pedagogy.³³¹

³²⁹ Rosalia Arena, *Consigli ad una giovane maestra* (Catania: Tipografia Monaco e Mollica, 1915), 37.

³³⁰ Ellwood Cubberley, *Changing Conceptions of Education* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1909) quoted in Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 97.

³³¹ Ravitch, *Left Back*, 163.

Manual Labor and Vocational Education

Progressive educational proponent John Dewey's 1899 book *The School and Society* argued for changes in the educational system that would reflect the transformation of society, economy, and family. Four decades earlier, Herbert Spencer had similarly argued that particular historical periods create the educational systems that reflect their economic and social contexts: severe and tyrannical in a feudal society, liberal and moderate under a Liberal government;³³² however, Spencer noted, while nineteenth century society emphasized mental cultivation over physical, the physical must not be neglected as it supports intellectual development.³³³ For Dewey, it was misguided for an industrialized, democratic America to continue to employ a medieval approach that emphasized abstract and academic culture for a narrow pool of scholars.³³⁴ What was needed, according to Dewey, was a school that could recreate the democratic industrial society into which the student would graduate.

Influenced by foreign pedagogues like Spencer and Dewey, Italian theorists like Gabelli argued that "classical instruction is by nature aristocratic, and the times are democratic,"³³⁵ positing that a country desiring to modernize and industrialize required a school system focused on practical skills and manual dexterity. With the influence of progressive and positivist pedagogy, there was a consistent move toward making schoolwork more concrete and pragmatic, grounded in real life application rather than abstraction. Mathematics, for example, should focus

³³² Pavesi, *L'ultima lezione di pedagogia dell'anno*, 16.

³³³ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), 188-89.

³³⁴ John Dewey, *The School and Society*, reprint (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 23. First published in 1899.

³³⁵ Aristide Gabelli, "Istruzione classica," *Nuova antologia* (October 1, 1888), printed in Gabelli, *L'istruzione e l'educazione in Italia*, 265.

on the calculation of taxes for everyday goods, and the sciences on chemistry and mechanics above abstract physics.³³⁶ In an incipient nation that lagged behind industrial powers like Germany and England, there was an increasing emphasis on manual labor and the preparation of both an urban industrial workforce and rural artisan craftsmanship. The use of the term, “democratic,” refers, it seems, to the interests of the popular classes; the vast majority of the ruling class continued to emerge from and send their children to the classical *ginnasio and liceo*.

The fact that other, industrialized nations had preceded Italy in the implementation of such methods pushed the issue to the forefront of education policy by 1890. *Normale* instructor Pasquale Zotti argued that pedagogical philosophers like Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel had long made the connection between physical and intellectual education and that other nations had ordered its instruction in normal schools, beginning with Finland in 1866, and followed by Denmark, Germany, France, and Belgium.³³⁷ Italy implemented such educational practices in 1896, when the Ministry of Public Instruction mandated inclusion of manual education in normal school instruction and created a special license for teachers to instruct it in the elementary schools.³³⁸

Manual work was also promoted for the supposed health benefits referred praised by Spencer at the mid-century. Proponents maintained that “tiring, abstract intellectual work” was detrimental to physical health and led to boredom and limited comprehension. Manual education proponent and doctor Fortunato Fratini, who referred to the practice as “an education less

³³⁶ Pavesi, *L'ultima lezione di pedagogia dell'anno*, 8-9.

³³⁷ Pasquale Zotti, *Lavoro manuale educativo, appunti storici e sua importanza: Conferenza tenuta agli alunni della R. Scuola normale di Assisi il 28 giugno 1898* (Assisi: Tip. Froebel Del Collegio Principe di Napoli, 1898), 11-14.

³³⁸ Guido Baccelli, *Regolamento della scuola di lavoro manuale educativo dell'Istituto normale pareggiato suor Orsola Benincasa* (Naples: R. Tipografia Francesco Giannini & Figli, 1896), 5.

fantastical, more practical; less artificial, more natural,” observed its implementation at the *Scuola normale femminile* run by Vittoria Wolf-Bassi in Padua, focusing on its apparent health benefits to the student teachers.³³⁹ Having observed the experiments on manual education begun by the Ministry of Education, Wolf-Bassi had begun implementing Froebelian methodology and manual education practices in teacher training and noted both a decrease in drop-out rates among the student-teachers and the popularity of the activities, which included drawing, drilling, sewing, weaving, pleating, inlaying, winding, dyeing, and modeling. Another practice, woodworking with a steel hacksaw, was stopped due to strong migraines and pulmonary damage among the participants.³⁴⁰

With the publication of Vittoria Wolf-Bassi’s findings in the 1890s and the promotion of manual education from various theorists, the implementation of such practices found wide support by the turn of the century. In addition to the supposed health benefits, it made the State school attractive to those families seeking immediate and pragmatic utility. For the peasantry and working classes, it provided training in industrial skills desired by the nascent manufacturing interests, while introducing basic literacy, numeracy, and civic education. Gabelli supported such curriculum changes as part of his move to improve both the utility and popularity of the public school system: “The school is not attended in part by the lower classes because it does not correspond to their needs. They don’t go because they don’t see the value. Make it so that school satisfies their desires, that it has a direct and practical advantage, and there will not be a need to

³³⁹ Fortunato Fratini, *Gli esperimenti sul lavoro manuale educativo, istituiti nella R. Scuola normale femminile di Padova dalla signora direttrice Vittoria Wolf-Bassi: studio d'igiene scolastica* (Padua: Angelo Draghi-Libraio editore, 1890), 9.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-19.

sue and inflict fines to attract the people.”³⁴¹ For the lower middle classes, it provided the impetus to enter the school and prepare for later entrance into the technical secondary schools and later, the University. Gabelli recognized the growing desire of the *petite bourgeoisie* for the liberal professions, as the “grocer’s son wants to be a doctor, the carpenter’s son a lawyer, and the shoemaker’s son an engineer.” The problem, Gabelli noted, is that the artisan parents have no literary culture and see little point in years of education with no practical application and must therefore be convinced of the application of pre-university coursework.³⁴²

A focus on practical and material utility also extended to *lavori donneschi*: training in traditionally female artisan crafts. Whereas coursework in home economics fit into Liberal goals of encouraging middle-class values through training in unpaid, domestic labor, training in artisanal skill reflected a pragmatic focus on the financial needs of the popular classes. The introduction of *scuole professionali femminili* was a response to the growing demands for practical training as well as a move away from a limited, classical focus for schools. Such institutes had much larger and earlier presence in more industrialized nations like England, France, and Germany, and were often connected to orphanages or located in areas of high unemployment.³⁴³ Beginning in a few cities with specialized artisan traditions, there were calls for expansion both to increase employment among working-class women and to encourage proto-industry. Such institutes focused on a variety of practical and marketable skills, like porcelain production or tailoring, with regional specializations: a Tuscan institute, for example, focused on straw hat and basket weaving; one in Parma on silk production; another in Turin

³⁴¹ Aristide Gabelli, quoted in Zotti, *Lavoro manuale educativo*, 17.

³⁴² Gabelli, “Classical education,” in “L’isruzione e l’educazione in Italia,” 265-66.

³⁴³ Giovanni Schenardi, *Per la inaugurazione dell’anno accademico 1879-80 nella Scuola normale femminile di Piacenza*. (Piacenza: Coi tipi Marchesotti E.C., 1880), 25.

focused on textiles.³⁴⁴ In addition to providing vocational training, these courses were intended to foster pride in regional, artisanal work and improve the standing of schools within their communities.

Among the interviewees of the Scialoja Inquest in 1874 was Laura Veruda Goretti, a Venetian inspector of female schools and advocate of Froebelian and Aportian pedagogy. Veruda noted that while the normal school in Venice flourished, providing secondary education for both aspiring teachers and middle class girls in general, the daughters of the working class required practical training at the secondary level. Veruda claimed that Venetian women and their families would benefit from the institution of a vocational school similar to the Milanese institution that instructed girls in “bookkeeping, porcelain painting, glasswork, painting, and even telegraphy,” but reflecting Venetian markets and artisanal traditions and focusing on the design and production of mosaics and lace. While sewing and drawing were already part of the elementary curriculum, a *scuola professionale* would make young women into masters of their craft and instruct them in manufacturing and marketing their goods. Responding to the commission’s inquiry into whether such courses might be conducted in the female normal school, Veruda replied that the social divisions between the classes of *normaliste* and *professionaliste* were detrimental to the success of the later:

Those young ladies who are learning a trade know that they must do so for lack of a dowry (a painful word for both parents and daughters). Seeing other young ladies who are attending school, accompanied by a servant, in order to refine their education, at the same school could be painfully, even fatally, damaging. Separation is thus a better stimulus for work; Mantegazza has been very pleased with this system in Milan and I would like to see it applied in Venice. We

³⁴⁴ Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento*, 12.

[Venetians] may have arrived late [into Italian unification], but we are always on time.³⁴⁵

While the commission claimed that it could perhaps provide some subsidy for the operation of a vocational school, it would have to be opened, operated, and primarily funded under local authority.³⁴⁶ Such funding, however, was slow to arrive. A decade after the initial request through the Scialoja Inquest, the proposed *scuola professionale* was still in the planning stages.³⁴⁷

The linking of intellectual and vocational development was emphasized both for the middle-class teachers and their working-class pupils. This connection can be seen as part of a general late nineteenth-century move away from a purely classical education, with goals of personal intellectual cultivation for the elite and the growth of a citizenry educated in abstract political ideals, towards a progressive education with vocational or pragmatic emphasis intended to improve the financial and moral conditions of families and inspire the development of the nation.

Health

The linking of physical and intellectual education was aimed not only at vocational training, but represented the increasingly holistic nature of public instruction that came to include physical, moral, and social education along with classical intellectual development. The mandate

³⁴⁵ Laura Veruda Goretti, “Seduta di Venezia, 7 gennaio 1874,” ACS, MPI, *Div. scuole medie (1860-1896)*, b. 7, fasc. 48, printed in ACS, *FSS IV: L’inchiesta Scialoja sulla istruzione secondaria maschile e femminile (1872-1875)*, 410.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 407-412.

³⁴⁷ Rosa Piazza and Guglielmo Stella, *Progetto per la fondazione di una scuola professionale femminile in Venezia* (Venice: Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, 1885).

to provide gymnastics instruction was made compulsory in Italian primary schools in 1878 under the Ministry of De Sanctis. Teacher and doctor Emilio Baumann, whose 1886 guide was a coeducational version of his 1866, male-only edition, argued that physical education's aim was to form valuable and hard-working citizens with two primary goals: first, to educate and form spirit, will, and character; second, to improve the health of the students.³⁴⁸ While the function of such physical education was traditionally rooted in inculcating discipline and military readiness,³⁴⁹ Baumann rejected this objective in favor of a purely pedagogical function and connected its development not to an idealization of Greek or Roman civilization, but rather to the growth and development of the modern, universal school.³⁵⁰

Many advocates of physical education tied it to the shaping of national culture and racial development. In a 1898 book on the history of physical education in Germany, France, England, the USA, and Italy, physiologist Angelo Mosso claimed that Italians were “weakened by their heightened sexuality” and were made “effeminate and decadent” by “treating children like babies.” To remedy such deficiencies and catch up with Northern countries, Mosso advocated reserving afternoons for exercise, claiming that schools were overly encyclopedic and required increased attention to health and fitness.³⁵¹ Mosso extended his concern for the physical health of Italians by pushing for increased rigor, both intellectually and physically, for women as future mothers of Italian citizens. Referencing German physical education advocate Gustav von Bunge,

³⁴⁸ E. Baumann, *La ginnastica italiana. Manuale per uso degli insegnanti elementari e di ginnastica delle scuole normali maschili e femminili e dei corsi complementari*, 2 vol (Rome: R. Scuola Normale di Ginnastica, 1907), xi-xiv.

³⁴⁹ Pasotti, *La scuola pratica*, 156.

³⁵⁰ Baumann, *La ginnastica italiana, vol. 1, 2*.

³⁵¹ Angelo Mosso, *La riforma dell'educazione* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1898), 75, 189.

Mosso claimed that anemia, poor nutrition, excessive mental work, depression, physical weakness, and hysteria could all be aided by good physical education.³⁵² While promoting a balance between physical and mental labor, Mosso was quick to counter the arguments of contemporaries like G. Sergi, who had argued that women were weaker than men.³⁵³ Mosso pushed for increased rigor in both intellectual and physical education, countering claims of intellectual work's threat to femininity by citing Eleanor Sidgwick's study on female students, which showed that students were healthier than their non-University sisters.³⁵⁴ Mosso called for Italian women to be the "jealous guardians" of the superior Italian bloodlines, protecting the "slow selection that perfected our race" through proper education.³⁵⁵

The expansion of the school's mission from instructing pupils in basic reading, writing, and arithmetic to an embrace of extracurricular social and physiological goals included a role for the school in improving the health and habits of the populace. For Ildebrando Bencivenni, it was "not enough to have opened the school to the people, not enough to have made it obligatory and free." For Bencivenni, the school had the obligation to "become the doctor of the family and teach the mother how to have a healthy home." During the previous decades, the scope of this task fell to instructing young women in the normal school in modern home economics in the hope of spreading this knowledge to their future families and/or pupils. By the end of the century, progressive theorists pushed even further, envisioning the school as a fount of new health objectives like encouraging breastfeeding and disease prevention. For Bencivenni,

³⁵² Mosso, *L'educazione fisica della donna* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1892), 3-5.

³⁵³ G. Sergi, "Per l'educazione e la coltura della donna," *L'educazione nazionale*, year III, (April 9, 1892).

³⁵⁴ Eleanor Sidgwick, *Health Statistics of Women Students of Cambridge and Oxford and their Sisters* (Cambridge, 1890).

³⁵⁵ Mosso, *L'educazione fisica della donna*, 38.

educational institutions had the potential to be sites of “peaceful revolution, which will derive in large part from the fecund work of mothers and school teachers,” promoting “justice, morality, progress, and hope.”³⁵⁶

The school’s new status as a local outpost of the State within each commune meant that the larger social aims of the nation could be carried out within the schoolhouse. At the onset of World War I, teacher Casilda Campolmi wrote that all of Italy should follow the examples set by Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, and Milan in instituting careful medical screening in schools. While clean bills of health had been required since the implementation of the Casati law, this plan went further, bringing medical inspection within the school and reflecting the influence of early twentieth-century eugenics movements: “A first thorough examination by the doctor, similar to a military visit, will reveal the physical state of the students and can discover defects and dispositions to disease that the family had not even suspected.” Campolmi noted that such inspections would make the educator the “diligent assistant of the doctor,” teaching mothers to prevent outbreaks and identifying sick or disabled children who would then be placed in special schools for treatment or training.³⁵⁷

Under the auspices of the new school, there was a promotion of not only the previously discussed manual education that promised new ways to link abstract learning with practical application, but an emphasis on the physical development of the populace through the mandatory institution of gymnastics. Not all institutions welcomed the new health and physical education

³⁵⁶ Bencivenni, *Fanciulli infelici*, 23, 78, 234.

³⁵⁷ Casilda Campolmi, *Il compito della scuola: Pensieri di una maestra* (Florence: Tipografia M. Ricci, 1915), 5, 7.

mandates; the resistance by conservative or religious educators, even in secular schools, hampered the efforts of the new government's initiatives.³⁵⁸

Coeducation

By the time that the 1877 Coppino law made primary male and female education mandatory, there had been a generation of female teachers trained at the *normali* and of young women given a basic education who desired increased educational opportunity. Despite the *normale's* function as a de facto secondary school for all women who desired education beyond the elementary school, many women had no intention of becoming teachers and pushed for entrance into technical and classical secondary schools. Such efforts became entangled in century-old debates over the proper education for women and more recent debates about coeducation. Resistance to full equality was strong and usually predicated on a belief in the inherent difference between the sexes or concern over breaches of traditional morality. Many Catholics held to the official prohibitions against coeducation, as outlined by Pope Leo XIII's Encyclopedic of Feb 8, 1884: "The Church has always opposed the so-called mixed or neutral schools."³⁵⁹

The lack of post-elementary education for women had been evident since the founding of the school system. In response to elite demand for post-elementary education for their daughters, the State began the *Scuola Superiore Femminile* in 1861 in Milan and shortly thereafter in Turin. Following the rise of the Historic Left, new locations were opened in Casale Monferrato,

³⁵⁸ *Le donne a scuola: L'educazione femminile nell'Italia dell'Ottocento. Mostra documentaria e iconografica*, ed. Ilaria Porciani (Florence: Il Sedicesimo, 1987), 179-180.

³⁵⁹ P. Coffano, *Libertà e scuola, cenno sui diritti e doveri dei genitori nella educazione dei figli di fronte allo Stato e di fronte alla Chiesa* (Novara: Grafia Novara, 1914), 36.

Alessandria, Bologna, Florence, Rimini, Forlì, Genoa, Padua, Rome, Venice, and Verona, promoting a education based on morality and general culture, clearly intended for the daughters of the upper classes and not as preparation for future education or profession.³⁶⁰ For the majority of female students, especially for non-aristocratic women outside these Northern cities, the few elementary years mandated by the State and paid for by the communes were the only education available, thus leading to the adoption of the *normale* as the de facto women's secondary institution and demands for entrance into classical and technical secondary schools.

In 1878, pedagogue and philologist Agostino Alfani promoted the conclusions of English author Sarah Ellis' pedagogical treatise *Education of the Heart: Woman's Best Work*, first published in Italian in 1870:

Many seem to believe that to obtain a true culture of the heart, it is enough to improve the education of the mind. But if women were to receive the same education as men, instructed in the same classes, examined by the same teachers, awarded the same prizes, their hearts would become cold and rigid, like those of men. Would this make domestic life happier, would society respect them more? What benefits would we gain?³⁶¹

For Alfani, whose stated goal was the improvement of the Italian national character, an instructed woman was not the same thing as an educated woman. Without the revival of Christian morality as the guiding force in the education of women, Alfani claimed, "It is like putting a weapon in a woman's hand without giving them the guidance and advice of a sound moral and religious education to prevent them from giving offense to themselves and others."³⁶²

Alfani's sentiments were echoed by pedagogical writer Oreste Bruni in 1881: "It is a thousand

³⁶⁰ Simonetta Ulivieri, "Scuole Superiori Femminili provinciali e comunali nell'Italia postunitaria (1860-1900)", in *CIRSE(Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativo), Problemi e momenti di storia della scuola e dell'educazione: Atti del I Convegno nazionale Parma 23-24 Ottobre 1981* (Pisa: ETS, 1982).

³⁶¹ Agosto Alfani, *Il carattere degli italiani* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1878), 130.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 131.

times better for a woman to never learn to read than for her to lose any part of her good nature.”³⁶³ Bruni noted that several classical secondary schools for women closed due to low attendance or women leaving serious study to begin families, but halted any speculation that his solution to such problems would be coeducation. Bruni insisted that coeducation was perilous to social order and morality: “Thus, one may conclude that those few women who want to dedicate themselves to classical or scientific learning should mix with men in the *ginnasio*, *liceo*, or University. Practical life, however, proves this is immorality; where it is not already, it will become.”³⁶⁴

Among the dissenters to such opinions were Alfani and Bruni’s female contemporaries. While the most prominent of mid-century female educational writers, Caterina Franceschi Ferrucci,³⁶⁵ had insisted that a woman’s education, while academically rigorous, be based on morality and maternalism, the next generation of female pedagogues, writing in the 1870s and 1880s, tended to advocate for equal access to institutions, subjects, and opportunities.

Like Ferrucci, Giulia Molino Colombini (1812-1879) was a moderate liberal and was careful to insist that while she intended to provide pragmatic educational or career options, she did not intend to subvert traditional roles for women.³⁶⁶ Unlike Ferrucci, she was an advocate of educational parity for men and women, arguing in favor of opening all subject areas to women,

³⁶³ Oreste Bruni, *La donna e la civiltà: la donna, emancipazione, religione, il matrimonio, la famiglia* (Parma: Libreria Luigi Battei, 1881), 179.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁶⁵ The most lauded of female Italian pedagogues, Caterina Franceschi Ferrucci (1803-1887) was also among the most highly regarded female intellectuals of her era. She was the first female member of the Accademia della Crusca, admitted under Archconsul Raffaello Lambruschini in 1871; she was also decorated with the order of San Carlos by Maximilian of Austria, the Emperor of Mexico.

³⁶⁶ Silvana Patriarca, “Journalists and Essayists, 1850-1915,” *A History of Women’s Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 153.

including law and philosophy, in order to ensure the well-being and prosperity of future generations.³⁶⁷ Colombini's emphasis on a thorough, serious education was intended to create a rational, reasonable generation of young Italian women, free from the frivolity and sentimentalism that had dominated the education of their mothers: "I do not intend to transform Italian women into women of letters; but I care that they are not vain, ignorant, superficial, and lost in useless amusements."³⁶⁸ For writer Bice Miraglia, who opposed coeducation, Colombini's claims of moderation belied a dangerous desire to masculinize women, substituting intellect for sentiment and subverting the work of God: "She wants that women become cold thinkers on par with men; she wants, therefore, to pervert their nature in order to render them like men. What an ugly ideal of education to try to take from women their natural grace, modesty, sentiment, and gentleness in order to render them, frankly, caricatures of men."³⁶⁹ Thus, while her "republican motherhood" intentions may be similar to those of Ferrucci, the progressive parity of her principles reveal a different vision of what such a role may have entailed.

Similar in her desire for expansion of women's education while careful to avoid transgressing traditional social order was poet and pedagogue Erminia Fuà Fusinato (1834-1876). Fusinato, who moved from Florence to Rome with her Senator husband in 1870, was the head of the *Scuola normale femminile* in the new capital. While, like Colombini, she pushed for full access to all subject areas, Fusinato cautioned against careerism, instilling in her readers a focus on individual improvement within the boundaries of conventional middle-class society and institutions: "But remember, my young ladies, that women were made for the family." Fusinato

³⁶⁷ Giulia Molina Colombini, *Pensieri*, 169, quoted in Bice Miraglia, *Le pedagogiste italiane* (Florence: Tipografia di Salvatore Lardi, 1894), 58.

³⁶⁸ Giulia Molina Colombini, *Sull'educazione delle donna*, 3rd edition (Turin: 1869), vi, quoted in Patriarca, "Journalists and Essayists, 1850-1915," 153.

³⁶⁹ Bice Miraglia, *Le pedagogiste italiane*, 65.

saw that a limited education made women into perpetual minors, dependent on others their entire lives, and did not respond to the reality and needs of modern Italy. Fusinato's writing, her "pedagogy of the heart", was written in clear, straightforward language. Bice Miraglia saw her as the ideal pedagogue for women's education because "she kept her distance from the encroaching ideas of emancipation, and all of the exaggerations of that school of thought. She had the correct mix between the pedantry of old educators, and the boldness of modern writers."³⁷⁰

Despite the heated debate over the perceived dangers to morality and familial stability, the move toward increased access for women into the secondary schools was already underway. Beginning in 1874, the Bonghi regulation opened all parts of the University to women; in 1883, women were able to enter the classical *ginnasio* and *tecnica*.³⁷¹ However, even after the abolition of formal rules prohibiting coeducation in the secondary schools, popular opinion mandated that women's secondary education be left to female *normali* or private or religious finishing schools. In 1886, G.F. Aioli, the head of *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero* in Florence, noted that "until public opinion changes, and it may take many years, it will not be possible for the government to experiment, as the Americans have already done, with coeducational secondary schooling of young adults." He recognized that resistance had been inculcated since childhood, and that men would resist the entrance of women based on moral, traditional and economic objections.³⁷²

The entrance, therefore, of individual women into the male secondary schools was seen as disruptive and controversial. Giulia Sacconi was the first woman to enter her classical

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 76-77.

³⁷¹ Seveso, *Come ombre leggere*, 63.

³⁷² Aioli, *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero in Firenze*, 22-29.

ginnasio and liceo in 1882; her matriculation was the result of the impassioned efforts of her father, Torcello Sacconi, the head of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF). Much of his obituary was devoted to praise over his efforts to open both the library system and secondary education to women:

He was not only a virtuous citizen and a civil servant, but also an intensely loving and enlightened family man. Precursor of a new age and proponent of classical culture... [Torcello Sacconi] therefore ... wanted his daughter to become the first among young Italian women to attend the *ginnasio*, which at the time was exclusively masculine, and then [to enter] the *liceo*; he rejected the widespread sophisms used to deny women the usefulness of this kind of education. He believed that what was considered as the perfect spiritual harmony, the highest lesson, the preparation for a superior conception of duty and life for men, should not have been considered inappropriate for women.³⁷³

Following the successful completion of her secondary schooling, Giulia Sacconi became, like her father, an influential librarian.

In speaking to the lower house of parliament in 1888, Minister of Public Instruction Paolo Boselli stressed the importance of women's education to the nation as a whole and pressed for improved access to all educational institutions: "I believe that secondary education of women, especially in the elevated classes, should be extended to all spheres of classical instruction."³⁷⁴ Boselli's address, which was well received by the deputies, recognized the limitations of available funds for such expansions. He noted that a 1883 law, which pushed for public recognition and accreditation of religious educational institutions and foreign-run training schools had effected little change due to the fact that only four inspectors were available to

³⁷³ Zulia Benelli, *In memoria di Torcello Sacconi, già prefetto della R. Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1912), 9.

³⁷⁴ Boselli, *Sul bilancio della pubblica istruzione*, 15.

implement such accreditation. The push for further avenues of higher education, along with the lack of funding for separate institutions, helped to drive the move toward coeducation.

Despite initial resistance to coeducation, by the turn of the century, many schools had been integrated without incident. As noted in Chapter Five: Defining Norms, the schools were made coeducational in 1909-1910 due in large part to the flight of men from male normal schools, the desire of the local populace to keep such institutes open, and the continued need to train female instructors for the feminized elementary schools.

At a 1909 conference on women's rights, reformist Professor Alessandrina Gariboldi, argued that while coeducation had been debated for years, producing both "fervent supporters and tenacious opponents," its implementation in classical and technical courses had been smooth. Despite a slow start, coeducational efforts soon proved "how deceptive the worries of the reactionaries were and how damaging their educational forecasts were." Coeducation had been carried out without any special protections for the women or methodological changes. Rather than being disruptive to male students, the changes, according to Gariboldi, had been beneficial to both male and female pupils:

Therefore, in the mixed schools the young men have acquired better discipline, improved courtesy and gentility, and, through emulation, more alacrity in studying; the young women have acquired more seriousness and serenity, more robustness in thought, better harmony with themselves in the extracurricular environment; both groups have gained greater sense of comradeship and respect for each other and consciousness of individual worth. (26-27)³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Alessandrina Gariboldi, *L'Educazione e l'istruzione della donna in Italia. Relazione al primo Congresso di attività pratica femminile tenuto a Milano nel maggio 1908* (Reggio-Emilia: Cooperativo lavoratori Tipografi e Aftini, 1909), 26-27.

Popular Schools

By the turn of the century, both the size of the school population, which included nearly 3 million pupils by 1891,³⁷⁶ and the scope of the school's mission, which now included civilizing projects like the improvement of health and hygiene, as well as vocational training, had profoundly changed the function of the school. With the school assuming a growing role in State policies of modernization and unification, the lagging literacy and attendance rates became a topic of vigorous debate and led to calls both for improvements in the pedagogy of existing schools and for the introduction of a new type of school directed at the "popular classes."

Minister Baccelli proposed the opening of a *scuola complementaria*, which was aimed at combating the persistent illiteracy rates that were exposed by the military conscription in the 1890s. The proposed school was obligatory for those not attending the secondary level of elementary school. It was to begin at age 15 for illiterate students, and 16 for those with basic literacy skills. The program entailed two courses of six months duration, with three classes per week, including instruction in both academic subjects and military exercises like marching, sprinting, and athletics. It aimed at the preparation for informed citizens including knowledge of their rights and duties and encouraging love for the nation and its institutions.³⁷⁷

The clear military nature of this proposal was met with resistance by advocates of a different vision for the popular school. Angelo Valdarini argued for a school along the lines of the *scuole professionali femminili*, schools that focused on practical and material application. Valdarini's proposal was an obligatory program that began at the end of the primary school and lasted until age 14, teaching morals, history, civics, industry, and the arts. Taking into account

³⁷⁶ Angelo Valdarini, *La scuola popolare in Italia e la riforma della scuola normale* (Bologna: Stabilimento Tipografia Zamorani e Albertazzi, 1894), 6.

³⁷⁷ Baccelli, *Il Nuovo educatore*, year XIII, no. 20 quoted in *Ibid.*, 4.

both the economic and social practices of both urban and rural families, “attendance was to be regular and daily in the winter, and part-time in the summer to allow students to work in the home, field, and shops. After the first year, the school would divide into sections according to the needs and attitude of the area.” The program was to further the scope of the primary school, containing courses in home economics and physical education. The proposal was inspired by the German *Realschule* and sought to bring Italian practices in line with those of other industrialized nations.³⁷⁸ Such proposals also reflect the increased electoral returns of the socialist party through the later 1890s and popular demand for social programs that addressed the economic and political tumult of the era.

As the mission of the school moved from the teaching of basic literacy toward national identity formation and social conditioning, the State assumed a growing role in its governance, a move supported by writers who promoted a progressive role for the school. Francesco Aymar argued that without increased funding and attention for education, the State would have to pay for the consequences, funding “the prison without the school, the policeman without the teacher.”³⁷⁹ Aymar predicted that the State would assume even greater control of education in the coming years, predicting that “in the next century, the State will end up taking possession of all of the schools, organizing them in order to better align with the needs of society and the nation.”³⁸⁰

The result of many of these initiatives was limited. The 1904 Orlando reform aimed for a three-year *corso popolare* that would raise the compulsory schooling age to twelve. The actual

³⁷⁸ Valdarini, *La scuola popolare in Italia*, 20-21.

³⁷⁹ Aymar, *La Scuola normale di Pinerolo*, 161.

³⁸⁰ Aymar, *La Scuola normale di Pinerolo*, 163.

result, however, was merely the addition of a sixth grade. The 1911 Daneo-Credaro reform transferred the control of elementary schools to provincial councils; half of the council members were provincially elected and half were appointed by the State. This transfer resulted in greater standardization, improved conditions for rural teachers, and social welfare programs to impoverished children.³⁸¹ It was also responsible for finally creating parity in the incomes for male and female teachers.³⁸²

The Montessori Method

Both the educational theory and biography of Maria Montessori reveal much about the theoretical, institutional, and social legacies of the Liberal era, including the development of positivist, maternalist, and progressive pedagogies, the influence of new sciences of psychology and anthropology, the opening of educational opportunities for women, and the growing impact of the women's movement. Central among the transformations instituted by Montessori's new model was the shift of the schoolteacher from teacher-mother to teacher-scientist, from a maternal missionary of unifying Italian culture to an educator informed by the latest child psychology.³⁸³ The numerous biographies on Maria Montessori, particularly English-language studies, focus mainly on her writings and the international impact of her pedagogy, but provide little Italian educational context.

³⁸¹ Edward Tannenbaum, "Education," in *Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861*, ed. Edward Tannenbaum and Emiliana Noether (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 236.

³⁸² Seveso, *Come ombre leggere*, 59.

³⁸³ Paola Trabalzini, *Maria Montessori: Da Il metodo a La scoperta del bambino* (Rome: Aracne Editrice, 2003), 10. Quoted in Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect*, 297. Literary critic Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg notes that Montessori had a major cultural impact by utilizing Italian mythmaking in formulating a new pedagogy.

Decades before the worldwide fame garnered by the English language publication of the *Montessori Method* in 1913, Montessori was famous in Italy as an advocate of women's emancipation and scientific education. Her own family had not approved of her entrance into male-dominated secondary schools; a bright student, Montessori was expected to enter the *normale*. Instead, she insisted upon entrance into the technical *liceo* and went on to become the first female graduate of the University of Rome, paving the way for other scientifically oriented female students. An advocate of the "new woman", liberated from domesticity by education and the efficiency of household technology, Montessori was an Italian delegate to the 1896 International Women's Congress in Berlin and argued for the suppression of political and ideological differences in favor of social and economic progress for all women. As the Italian government's representative to the 1899 International Council of Women in London, Montessori spoke of the poor working and health conditions of women and children, focusing on the plight of the female schoolteacher. A promoter of "practical" or "philanthropic" feminism, she advocated education as a means to economic and social advance, independence, employment, and the ultimate goal of female equality.³⁸⁴

Upon graduation from the University of Rome as a Doctor of Medicine in 1896, Montessori entered medical practice, became involved with the League for the Care and Education of Mentally Deficient Children from 1899, and in 1901 pursued further anthropological research, working as a lecturer in the *Magistero femminile*, a female teacher's college attached to the University of Rome. Her study of skull-size and intelligence followed the dominant positivist anthropology of the time, dominated by Cesare Lombroso and Giuseppe Sergi, who sought connections between cranial dimensions and racial and social anthropology.

³⁸⁴ Valeria Babini, Sarah Morgan, Daniel Pick, "Science, Feminism and Education: The Early Work of Maria Montessori," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 49 (Spring 2000), 51-53.

However, Montessori was highly critical of such leaders in her new field, referring to them as misogynists and practitioners of bad science, and proceeded to conduct a parallel investigation into the criteria used to determine the subjects' intelligence. While deeply involved with positivist culture, Montessori can be seen as integrating scientific research with her own feminist positions.³⁸⁵

Maria Montessori's educational philosophy and methodology took the Froebelian emphasis on child-centered pedagogy away from the idea of natural mothering toward a scientific, positivistic emphasis on Freudian psychology that promoted a child's self-directed development. The 1909 publication of her *Il metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica applicato all'educazione nelle Case dei Bambini*, based on her work in the Casa Dei Bambini experimental school in the working-class San Lorenzo neighborhood of Rome, announced Montessori as the advocate of a new pedagogy of radical social transformation through educational policy. In addition to its focus on the development of the child, her school-home allowed local mothers to work without worry about childcare and contributed to Montessori's envisioning of a reoriented gender relationship. Her trainees, mostly young women enrolled in an eight-month course, were instructed to adhere to the Montessori method and employ the pedagogical tools without deviation; a rigidity portrayed in the secondary literature as contradictory to Montessori's promotion of independence among children and women.³⁸⁶

There was an immediate and transforming reaction to the book. Worldwide attention led to a more international second edition in 1913, resulting in criticism that the method was ill-suited for Italian children. The real changes took place after the fascist takeover. In an effort to

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 58.

³⁸⁶ Gerald Lee Gutek, "Introduction," in *The Montessori Method: The Origins of an Educational Innovation*, ed. by Gerald Lee Gutek (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 21-22.

appease the nationalist regime and the Catholics, the 1926 edition was stripped of its “Inaugural Address” on feminist, economic, and social activism, and gained a chapter on religious education. Her positivist social interventionism was replaced with a personal psychology that follows from the change in her original title to one reflecting her own identity.³⁸⁷

Reflecting these changes, Montessori was initially popular within Fascist pedagogy:

While the Montessori system as a whole has not been very largely adopted, its cardinal idea, under the name of “individual work”, is spreading widely in infants’ schools in Italy, modifying or replacing the tradition of the Froebelian kindergarten. It has also helped to inspire numerous attempts to break away from the old-fashioned routine of class-instruction in the education of older scholars, and to give in both elementary and secondary schools, a larger place to individual and self-directed study and practical activity.³⁸⁸

In 1926, the same year as the aforementioned “Fascist edition”, the regime approved a course through the *Società Umanitaria* of Milan for the preparation of kindergarten and elementary teachers using the Montessori method, studying “the physiology of children, the Montessori method, psychology, religion, domestic economy, music, and art.”³⁸⁹ Mussolini, who had been introduced to Montessori through Gentile, recognized the propaganda value of an Italian female educational expert enjoying worldwide attention; a journal, *L’Idea Montessori*, two teacher training schools, and seventy infant and elementary courses were all funded by the State. While Montessori’s philosophies had proved amenable to the influence of her new patrons, she was not willing to relinquish control of her pedagogical empire or succumb to the increasingly totalitarian and nationalist demands of the State educational system.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect*, 326-27.

³⁸⁸ Howard Marraro, *Nationalism in Italian Education* (New York: Italian Digest & News Service, Inc., 1927), 21.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁹⁰ Rita Kramer, *Maria Montessori: A Biography* (Reading: Perseus Books, 1988), 300-304.

Montessori's philosophies had clearly changed from the positivist, scientific pedagogy of her early work in the *Casa Dei Bambini*. Victoria De Grazia notes that even before leaving Italy, Montessori's "progressive educational principles, for the children of the Italian poor, had given way to moralistic Catholic norms".³⁹¹ Maria Montessori's educational philosophy and methodology had a tumultuous relationship with the Fascist state and reveal much about the changing relationship between pedagogy and political authority. Before her exile in 1933, Montessori's theories were quite influential, both in Italy and abroad, and she wielded palpable political clout in the late 1920s.

³⁹¹ Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 125.

Civil Missionaries: Secularization and Morality

Who will exercise the high ministry of education? Who will step up to the holy altars of innocence and youth and be consecrated to them? The teachers! Yes, the teachers, the true priests of the people's education, true ministers of this sacred mission. The teacher is the principal figure in the moral progress of a nation and the school in which the teacher works is the depository of the country's future. If people understood the holy work of education, they would regard the teacher not just as a professional, but as the ardent apostle of civilization, as the zealous missionary of education, who sees abnegation as a duty.³⁹²

Well after the establishment of the Italian public school system in 1859, religious rhetoric continued to permeate the training of teachers, the formation of curriculum, and the nature of Italian pedagogy, belying the ostensibly secular educational system established by the Casati law and successive legislation. The weakness of the middle class and the entrenchment of religious authority meant that Liberal attempts to equate secularization with modernization often fell short. Many communes were unprepared, either financially or philosophically, to provide secular instruction; local oligarchs and clergy often opposed the encroachment of the State school, alternately presenting it as a force of Piedmontisation and atheism. In response to such fears, there was a conscious effort by the Liberal government, particularly following the political shift toward the Historic Left in the 1870s, to introduce modernity by way of regionally focused, morally constrained, and carefully presented State teachers. Removing clergy from the schoolhouse, who made up 17.7% of the female teachers and 43.8% of the male teachers in

³⁹² Ernestina Gemme, *Parole dette nell'occasione del saggio di canto, dato il 27 giugno 1889 dalle allieve della R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Piacenza* (Piacenza: Tipografia Marchesotti, 1889), 6, 11.

1863³⁹³, meant replacing them with agents of the State that would be affordable, morally unthreatening, and representative of the new, maternal pedagogy, namely women.

In an 1866 parliamentary report, the Ministry of Public Instruction announced that such teachers had to be created, as the current staffing was less than one third the number required. In order to make the female schools “popular and flourishing,” a teacher should be trained to “accommodate to the needs and conditions of the place and her students.” She would “teach young girls maternal affection, modesty, simplicity of behavior, and exemplary living. She must be sincerely religious, a lover of hard work, and diligent in fulfilling her duties.” Such a teacher would be welcomed throughout the new nation, “vanquishing fears and dissipating prejudices.” In possessing a combination of maternal affection, religious devotion, and local focus, her school would be flooded by students, “an asset to the town that employed her, an example of charity not only to her students but their mothers, as well, and effectively contribute to preserve or restore the fine sentiments and virtuous habits of the families.”³⁹⁴ This was the ideal teacher, who in 1866 would help to bridge the gap between the local reticent populace and the new State’s secular school system.

This process meant that both teachers and educational writers were brought into wider debates on the relationship of the Church to the State and the social, economic, and moral roles of women, forced to grapple with the precarious balance between the religious heritage of their nation and constituencies and the secularizing drives of the Liberal State and pedagogy. The

³⁹³ “Statistica del Regno d’Italia,” in *Istruzione pubblica e privata. Istruzione primaria, anno scolastico 1863-64*, (Florence 1866) quoted in Ester De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 192.

³⁹⁴ Ministero della pubblica istruzione, “Relazione sulle riforme proposte per le Scuole Normale di allievi-maestri e allieve-maestre,” in Ministero della pubblica istruzione, *Documenti sull’ordinamento delle scuole* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1866), 116. Following the 1864 Matteucci inquest, this proposal was submitted to parliament as part of an educational reform bill.

Liberal regime had also seen teachers as occupying a critical, but often contentious and resented role in the relationship between the State and masses. Minister of Public Instruction Guido Baccelli considered teachers as representatives in the villages of the new regime, of liberalism against the forces of the reactionary Church, introducing a new civic morality based on faith in institutions, a sense of responsibility, and hard work.³⁹⁵ Amidst State attempts to secularize the school by removing religious instruction and appropriating religious institutions into the secular school network, women were employed as both agents of the modern nation and salves to reactionary criticism.

Educational Legislation

There was a heated controversy between the Liberal state and the Catholic Church over control of education and proper roles for women within educational systems. Elementary education had been entrusted to the Church after the defeat of Napoleon, and while the national state assumed authority over instruction following Unification, religious institutions continued to provide much of the education available to girls, particularly at the secondary level.³⁹⁶ Following the revolutions of 1848-49, reactionary governments strengthened their relationship with the Church while also recognizing the importance of a carefully educated populace. The result was the nearly complete subordination to Church control in educational matters and an insistence on the Catholicism of instructors: the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies' Ferdinando II required all teachers to pass an examination on the catechism and placed hiring and inspection under the

³⁹⁵ Guido Baccelli, in December 20, 1881 congressional session, quoted in De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall'Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 123.

³⁹⁶ In addition to the near monopoly held by religious institutions, private lay schools with based on a French or Austrian model were popular in the pre-unitary decades. See: Silvia Franchini, "Gli educandati in Lombardia nell'Ottocento: fonti e temi per una ricerca," in *Donna lombarda, 1860-1945*, ed. A. Gigli Marchetti and N. Torcella (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1992).

control of the bishop; religious congregations oversaw primary education in the Central Italian duchies; and in Austrian-controlled Lombardy and the Veneto, where there was a relatively independent school system, bishops were given the power to nominate school inspectors and direct religious instruction. The Kingdom of Sardinia's reformist constitutional monarchy and vibrant pedagogical movement, however, led to a distancing from ecclesiastical authority through the Boncompagni law of 1848, which, while maintaining the presence of spiritual directors and religion within the curriculum, included the ability of the state to oversee not only public schools, but private institutions run by religious orders.³⁹⁷

The modest goals of the Kingdom of Sardinia's 1848 Boncompagni and 1857 Lanza laws were expanded under the 1859 Casati law, which envisioned the creation of a free public school system that could adapt to an expanding Kingdom.³⁹⁸ Title V, article 315 of the Casati law made religious instruction part of the required curriculum in the lower level of the elementary school. According to article 325, an examination was to be given by the parish every semester and only non-Catholics and the children of parents who specifically requested exemption were not required to take it.³⁹⁹ While the Casati law maintained religion within the elementary curriculum, it forbade communes from counting the existence of a private religious institution toward its obligatory funding of a public school; this effectively ended the ecclesiastical monopoly over the elementary school, as the communes were required to provide a secular institution to meet the

³⁹⁷ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 20-22.

³⁹⁸ The Casati Law mandated four years of education, divided into two parts, although the communes were only obliged to provide for the first two years if there were fewer than 4000 inhabitants. While all costs and hiring of primary teachers fell to local governments, curriculum, administration, and examination were controlled by the state. See Title V of the Casati Law, reprinted in Giorgio Canestri and Giuseppe Ricuperati, *La scuola in Italia dalla legge Casati ad oggi* (Turin: Loescher, 1976), 43-48.

³⁹⁹ Enrico Giurati and Emidio Agostinoni, *Storia della legislazione scolastica sub-elementare, elementare, e normale ad uso degli allievi delle scuole pedagogiche, universitarie, dei Direttori didattici, dei Municipi, e dei professionisti* (Treviso: Ditta Editrice L. Zoppelli, 1907), 98.

requirement. The increasing expansion of the Casati law from the Kingdom of Sardinia and Lombardy to the gradually unifying peninsula entailed a rapid centralization, bureaucratic reorganization, and Piedmontisation that threatened regional autonomy and the Church's role in education. The main point of the debate in the first decades following Unification was over secondary education, since the state required trained bureaucrats to run the new state administrations; the Church had long dominated secondary education, particularly in more rural areas, where seminaries, classical colleges, and high schools provided the main avenue for advanced learning.⁴⁰⁰

After the first decade following Unification, the need for mass education became increasingly recognized by elites and the debate began to shift from secondary to primary education in an attempt to expand Liberal political participation, break the hold of pre-Unification local oligarchies, and compete with industrialized nations. With national illiteracy at 61.9 percent for males and 75.7 percent for females in 1871, Italian levels dramatically dwarfed the Western European countries against which Italy wanted to compete. However, fears that mass free education would lead to popular uprising along the line of the Paris Commune caused significant reactionary attitudes towards compulsory education without the mediating force of religion. The Church opposed compulsory secular education by adopting the idea of "freedom of schooling" in order to protect its waning voice in popular education, claiming that the Liberal government was attempting to obtain a corrupting monopoly over education and that mass literacy would lead to a spread of anarchist and socialist ideas. This was precisely what Davide Albertario, priest and editor of Milanese Catholic newspaper *L'osservatore cattolico*, argued was happening in schools. He claimed that the 1873 Scialoja inquest had revealed the presence of

⁴⁰⁰ Simonetta Soldani, "The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy on Primary Education in the Period Following Unification (1860-1877)," in *L'Offre d'École*, ed. Willem Frijhoff (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983), 98-99.

atheist teachers in Catholic schools under State control. These “faithful disciples of irreligious government programs” were promoting dangerous and unsuccessful ideas. Because of this infiltration, the “school desk [did] not serve as a tool to convert the nation, but [helped] to build barricades and gallows.”⁴⁰¹

The Liberal government reacted to such debates with a repositioning of the role of religion in the public school system in the 1870s. The Correnti Circular of September 29th, 1870 reversed the 1859 policy on religious instruction, making it optional rather than obligatory. Debates over the interpretation of this law continued for decades, as the inconsistency of its application can attest. For example, the 1887 regulations for the *convitti* attached to both the Avellino and Perugia *normali* included religious instruction requirements without any mention of exemption; the Avellino *convitto* required biweekly religious instruction by a priest chosen by the provincial director⁴⁰² and the Perugia *convitto* implemented twice daily group prayer.⁴⁰³ The Sanginesio *convitto* made clear, however, that brief daily prayers and holiday church attendance were to be optional for students of other faiths.⁴⁰⁴ Another pointed attack on religious education during the Correnti ministry was the 1873 suppression of the State universities’ theology departments, which had been supported under the Casati law. However, as there were only a total

⁴⁰¹ Albertario Davide, “La circolare Scialoja sui ginnasi vescovili in rapporto col insegnamento in Italia,” in *La scuola cattolica: periodico religioso, scientifico, letteraria*, year 1, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 31, 1873), 37.

⁴⁰² *Regolamento del convitto provinciale annesso alla R. Scuola normale femminile di Avellino* (Avellino: Tipo-litografia Tulimiero e C., 1887), 18.

⁴⁰³ *Regolamento disciplinare pel convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Perugia* (Perugia: Tip. Boncompagni, 1887), 14.

⁴⁰⁴ *Regia Scuola normale maschile superiore con convitto in Sanginesio. Annuario per l'anno scolastico, 1888-1889* (Sanginesio: Tipografia di F. Guidoni, 1889), 31.

of four students enrolled in all State theology programs in 1872⁴⁰⁵, this measure was just as much a reflection of financial constraints as a general tendency toward further separation of the State from the Catholic Church and the influence of positivism.⁴⁰⁶ According to moderate positivists like Aristide Gabelli, the popular classes had not benefited from the bourgeois revolution represented by the Risorgimento due to the subversive influence of the Church; the State school would thus be required to dispel this ideological backwardness.⁴⁰⁷

Gabelli realized, however, that such a penetration in a deeply Catholic country would have to be pragmatic: “[Religion] answers a need of the Italian people, and if it is not provided by the public school, it will be satisfied elsewhere.”⁴⁰⁸ If eliminating religion from the curriculum would cause a mass exodus from the State school toward the clerical institutions, where the next generation would remain unexposed to the latest scientific pedagogy, religion would have to remain in the school. Other opponents of Church influence in schools promoted the retention of catechism in the school since prohibiting it would serve as a powerful propaganda tool for the Church, making the country “howl in outrage”. A better option, it seemed, was to retain “that sickly larva of official catechism imparted with providential apathy by elementary teachers.”⁴⁰⁹

The Coppino law of 1877 attempted to follow this path of passive secularization by not mentioning religion as among the required subjects, an omission unsuccessfully intended to skirt

⁴⁰⁵ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 69.

⁴⁰⁶ Luciano Pazzaglia, “Educazione e scuola nel programma dell’Opera dei Congressi (1874-1904),” in *Cultura e società in Italia nell’età umbertina* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1981), 427.

⁴⁰⁷ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 65.

⁴⁰⁸ Aristide Gabelli, “L’insegnamento religioso nelle scuole pubbliche,” *Nuova antologia*, XX (1872), 324, quoted in *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁰⁹ *Atti del IX Congresso pedagogico*, Bologna 1875, 70, quoted in Simonetta Soldani, “The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy,” 102.

the issue entirely. A product of the political ascent of the Center-Left, the law replaced instruction in religion with instruction in the rights and duties of a citizen, a substitution that reflected the positivist pedagogy of the new ministry. While the Left had promised sweeping reforms, including repeal of the 1871 Law of Papal Guarantees that granted the Pope total sovereignty and funding of the Vatican, once in power, its secularization gains were modest and unevenly enacted.⁴¹⁰ Indeed, Michele Coppino (MPI 1867, 1876-78, 1878-79, 1884-88) himself was opposed to militant secularism; he hesitated to enact the legislation desired by many leftist members of the Chamber of Deputies, and instead aimed for a clear division between the public and private spheres.⁴¹¹ While most communes preserved religious education for those students whose parents requested it, some institutions abolished it completely, as the *normale* in Velletri, Lazio, did in 1880.⁴¹²

The move toward secular control did not exclude the teaching of religious topics, as many public institutions substituted biblical history and morality lessons for catechism or dogma.⁴¹³ Even by 1915, three decades after religious instruction was phased out of the schools, teacher Rosalia Arena advised young student teachers that she “must speak of religion, since I believe that a good teacher cannot form good children and give the nation wise mothers without speaking of God, without them learning and observing the laws. Just as there is no populace that does not observe its own particular religious duties, there should not be a school that does not teach religion.” Arena clarified her flouting of educational policy by noting that “doctrine does

⁴¹⁰ Spencer Di Scala, *Italy: From Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 142.

⁴¹¹ De Fort, *La scuola elementare*, 125.

⁴¹² *La R. Scuola normale e il convitto Clemente Cardinali di Velletri* (Velletri: Tip. Pio Stracca, 1897), 19.

⁴¹³ A. Bellentani, *La scuola normale femminile di Capua a sua eccellenza il signor Ministro di pubblica istruzione* (Naples: Società A. Bellisario e C., 1886), 19.

not create virtue. Let the Church teach catechism. You should teach morals, values, and modesty.⁴¹⁴

Just as morality was substituted for catechism in female schools, religion was replaced by a focus on civic responsibility in male schools. The male *normale* in Sanginesio mandated the civic focus for each year: the first year was dedicated toward man's duties toward himself and family; the second toward man in society, emphasizing duties of justice and caring and an individual's role in governments and the Italian kingdom; the third year emphasized the political rights and duties guaranteed by the *Statuto*.⁴¹⁵ Although the education ministry and the State pushed for secularization as a modernizing process, the families of many students, particularly in rural areas, were resistant to the removal of religious education, even with its replacement by "civic morality."

Many politicians of the Left publicly advocated for the abolition of religious instruction in the public schools but insisted on sending their own daughters to institutes run by religious entities.⁴¹⁶ Advocate of religious education Geremia Bonomelli noted such hypocrisy in quoting Minister of Public Instruction Ruggero Bonghi's (1874-76) speech to the Chamber of Deputies in 1873: "I see many who speak even more strongly against the priests than do I, send their children to the schools of the priests." He further cites Deputy Liroy's 1875 speech: "I could name colleagues from both sides of the Chamber who send their children to the Scolopi, the Oblati, to the daughters of Maria, rather than to the government's schools or even to the

⁴¹⁴ Rosalia Arena, *Consigli ad una giovane maestra* (Catania: Tipografia Monaco e Mollica, 1915), 34.

⁴¹⁵ *Regia Scuola normale maschile superiore con convitto in Sanginesio. Annuario per l'anno scolastico, 1888-1889* (Sanginesio: Tipografia di F. Guidoni, 1889), 13.

⁴¹⁶ Beatrice Pisa, *Venticinque anni di emancipazionismo femminile in Italia: Gualberta Alaide Beccari e la rivista 'La donna'* (Roma: FIAP, 1964), 63.

Jesuits.”⁴¹⁷ It should be noted that Bonomelli’s references are both from 35 years before his 1910 tract; this may be due either to the notoriety of these particular references, or the fact that by 1910, while the place of religion within the State curriculum was still controversial, the dominance of the secular State school was well established and nearly completely centralized under State authority.

While the law failed to fully secularize the curriculum, Coppino’s 1877 law did bring major changes to the system with the institution of three years of obligatory elementary schooling and major changes to the instruction of religion. While the position of “spiritual director” had been abolished in some technical schools since 1865, this position was eliminated in classical *licei* and *ginnasi* and all technical secondary schools beginning in 1878.⁴¹⁸ While this position was also to be removed in *normali* the following year, school records show that the role, albeit in a more limited and optional scope, was maintained in *normali*. In Vercelli in 1890, regulations stated that the spiritual director was in charge of conducting holiday mass and providing moral and religious instruction to those students who had requested it. However, it was made emphatically clear that this person “must absolutely abstain from any relationship with the non-Catholic students.”⁴¹⁹ Due to the removal of mandatory religious education in *normali*, Catholics worried that the teachers trained in these institutes would be ill-prepared to provide religious instruction where requested in the primary schools. Thus, special effort was made to expand access to extra-curricular religious courses for young women, acknowledgement that they were now the primary educators of the nation’s youth and often the only source of

⁴¹⁷ Geremia Bonomelli, *La scuola laica* (Rome: Desclée, 1910), 61.

⁴¹⁸ Pazzaglia, “Educazione e scuola nel programma,” 438.

⁴¹⁹ *Regolamento interno del convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale femminile “Rosa Stampa” in Vercelli* (Vercelli: Tip. e Lit. Guidetti e Comp., 1890), 13.

information on religious matters.⁴²⁰

The political changes of the end of the nineteenth century, in which economic downturn and anti-socialist sentiment among the ruling classes led to Prime Minister Agostino Depretis' 1882 *trasformismo* of Italian politics, in which he recognized that the Right and Left had merged to form a moderate bourgeois Liberal block, had direct impact on educational legislation. A new emphasis on making education practical and regionally focused while emphasizing social order, encouraged a school for the popular classes more educative than instructive. A proposal by MPI Baccelli argued that while the popular classes should be instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic in order to become "hardworking gentlemen", it was essential to educate them with the goal of "learning about and loving their country and awakening a sense of *italianità*."⁴²¹ For a growing block of Liberals, the threat of socialism and anarchy had supplanted their fears of the priest in the classroom and led them to seek a renewed employment of religion as an educative methodology. Historian David Kertzer has noted that the cult of the unified nation was a syncretism of anticlericalism and Catholicism that developed in part due to opposition to the rise of socialism.⁴²²

While catechism was not reinserted into the curriculum, there was a distinct reconciliation between the Church and the State school in the 1890s. As part of the 1895 law, article 18 allowed for private, even religious institutions to be brought within the centralizing State system:

⁴²⁰ Pazzaglia, "Educazione e scuola nel programma," 442.

⁴²¹ "Relazione al re del ministro Baccelli sulla riforma dei programmi," in *Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministro dell'Istruzione Pubblica*, XXI, vol. 2, no. 49 (December 6, 1894) quoted in De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 121.

⁴²² David Kertzer, "Religion and Society, 1789-1892," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 205.

Subject to the approval of the *consiglio scolastico provinciale* in each individual case, schools founded by moral or private groups or associations will be accepted as fulfillment, either total or partial, of the Commune's obligation, so long as they remain public, free, and maintained in accordance with the laws and regulations regarding teacher qualifications, location, the length of the school year, the schedule, the curriculum, textbooks, exams, scholastic inspections, and teacher pensions.⁴²³

As the role of the elementary school increased and its importance highlighted, even hardline Catholics recognized that their abstention from political and educational institutions had led to the sidelining of their interests. The 1895 law sought middle ground on the debate: while it upheld the previous stipulation that communes were only required to provide religious instruction if parents so requested, it did allow for communes to decide to bring in an outside party to teach the subject. Minister Baccelli claimed that this stipulation would allow freedom of conscience for teachers.⁴²⁴ However, the law can also be seen as reflective of both the changing status of teachers and the changing political climate. While local and rural populations may have long been suspicious of these agents of the State, the ruling classes had generally considered them to be apolitical and uninfluential, especially in comparison with secondary and University instructors. By the end of the century, however, the increasing importance of the elementary school in the formation of Italian identity among the popular classes, a rise in the status of the teaching profession, and the growth of socialism led some reactionary forces to question the traditionally passive view of the role of the schoolteacher. Criminal anthropologist Raffaele Garofalo claimed that: "The teachers are misfits, malcontents, misunderstood geniuses, who, being denied the ideals they dreamed of in the Normal School and having become bored with teaching grammar rules in the countryside, exact their revenge by promoting socialism, teaching

⁴²³ Bruto Amante, *Codice scolastico vigente: Raccolta completa de' testi di leggi, decreti, regolamenti, circolari, programmi emanati del 1859-1896* (Rome: B. Amante Editore, 1896), 511.

⁴²⁴ Dina Bertoni Jovine, *La scuola italiana dal 1870 ai giorni nostri* (Rome: Editori Reuniti, 1967), 166.

things that offend morality and religion.”⁴²⁵ Therefore, the 1895 law can be seen both as an attempt to reconcile with Catholics, as well as a recognition that the elementary teacher could be an influential, even dangerous, figure.

The first decade of the twentieth century was fraught with debate over the place of religious instruction in the State school. Unwilling to upset his alliance with the new moderate Catholic parties but also careful to pacify the growing Socialist presence, Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti chose to sideline the issue, and the 1905 curriculum made no mention of religion, instead mandating “moral education” and “civil instruction” that would be compatible with any faith. The legislation of the new Minister of Public Instruction, Luigi Rava, also included a reworking of the 1895 law regarding the hiring of an outside religious instructor; the role of religious instructor could now only be filled by a teacher who both held a State teaching license and was approved by the school board.⁴²⁶ This solution satisfied neither socialists nor Catholics, who demanded, respectively, the complete absence of religious instruction and the return of the priest and catechism into the classroom. Similarly, in response to Socialist Leonida Bissolati’s 1908 bill to completely secularize the school, Giolitti urged pragmatism, arguing that such a move would hurt efforts to combat illiteracy and expand the school.

Such an expansion was conducted through the 1911 Daneo-Credaro law, which centralized the school system under State financial and administrative control, reducing local clerical influence, and also included closer supervision over private schools, including religious institutions, mandating final examinations for all students. The secularization of the public school system was a contentious issue that fluctuated according to cultural and social contexts

⁴²⁵ Raffaele Garofalo, *La criminalità in Italia in rapporto all’educazione del popolo*, cited in *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴²⁶ De Fort, *La scuola elementare*, 241.

alongside the relationship of the Church to the fluctuating ruling parliamentary coalition, not made mandatory again until 1930 following the Vatican Concordat.

Secularization

Positivist theorists were strongly anti-clerical and argued that the persistence of clerical influence was responsible for Italy's lagging educational evolution: "So long as the government remains irrelevant to national culture, controlled by priests and [local authorities], we will be at the tail end of educational progress."⁴²⁷

In her 1889 moral guide for mothers, Virginia Paganini exemplified the frustrations with the Church of the late nineteenth century. She challenged the message promulgated by the clergy that the insubordination and incivility of children is due to the secularization of both school and society. Paganini informed mothers that the true reason for the lack of manners and religion was the false nature of contemporary Catholicism:

Because the religion that you are professing is not the humanitarian work professed by Christ and preached by the apostles; it is a religion of an era of ignorance and superstition; all of the beliefs and material practices which do not teach you to love your neighbor are opposed to the human reason of our times. People have lost faith in such beliefs and, having no guide to their duties, now no longer believe in God or the eternity of the soul and thus you see the people rebel against the laws that you make in His name and which render life miserable.⁴²⁸

Paganini thus connected anti-clericalism not to an embrace of atheism, but a rejection of Church scandal and doctrinal corruption.

Such criticism of the Church led to a wider social disregard for both the institution and religious practice. According to Professor Roberto Puccini, a decline in Church attendance was due not only to the fact that children followed the example of their non-attending mothers and

⁴²⁷ Pietro Meloni, *La nuova scuola normale italiana* (Sassari: Pre. Stab. Tip. G. Dessi, 1893), 77.

⁴²⁸ Virginia Paganini, *Guida morale e pratica per le madri del popolo* (Florence: Tipografia Cooperativa, 1889), 10.

teachers, but also that children were raised in a society where they “hear the Church blamed, reviled, and accused both at home and outside, in the school and in the shop, in the piazza and meeting halls, from books, pamphlets, journals, from people both common and well-connected.”⁴²⁹

The historical power of the Church and its continued influence over the lives and loyalties of citizens was another area of criticism for the opponents of religious education. For positivist and progressive political journalist Arcangelo Ghisleri, allowing a priest into the schoolroom was akin to “inviting a competing shopkeeper in to run your store;” with his true loyalty due to the Vatican, the priest was not to be trusted to impart the State’s civil curriculum. According to Ghisleri, it was not only the loyalty of the individual priest, however, that was to be questioned. The Church itself held that “it is not a rival or competitor on a field of equal rights, but rather is a superior; it argues that due to divine right, it is destined to guide the people and the King.”⁴³⁰ Thus, while the mandatory teaching of religion had been removed from the curriculum since 1877, Ghisleri noted that its influence continued in 1902:

Who is not aware that the catechism and sacred history are still obligatory subjects of instruction in elementary schools, with a few exceptions? Who is not aware that even where religious instruction has been suppressed, all instruction is *a priori* spiritual, metaphysical, and theological; this influence permeates our textbooks, scientific treatises, manuals, awards, and syllabi.⁴³¹

The Catholic Church and the State school were inherently incompatible, according to Ghisleri and other anticlericals, as the goals of the two institutions were antithetical.

While Ghisleri’s contemporary, Milanese teacher and writer Sereno Villa, claimed that he favored the concept of religious instruction in the schools, he echoed Ghisleri’s arguments about

⁴²⁹ Roberto Puccini, *L'educazione delle donne*, 355.

⁴³⁰ Arcangelo Ghisleri, *Scuola e libertà* (Lugano: Stamperia del Tessin-Touriste, 1902), 67, 69.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

the inappropriateness of priests in the classroom, noting, “No matter how erudite and good they are in terms of things both divine and human, the dear priests do not belong in the schools.” The confusion produced by the educational legislation, in which only some children receive religious instruction, was compounded by the fact that teachers received a modern training that makes religious instruction seem almost ridiculous. For Villa it was clear that all religion should be discussed equally and impartially, and that religious education be kept to the church and home. While catechism may have once been a central part of the education of the young, the public spirit had changed.⁴³²

Freedom of Schooling

The concept of “freedom of schooling”, which placed private and public schools on equal footing, was first supported by moderate Liberals, in part due to the lack of funding and political interest in popular education in the 1860s. As the Church had long dominated elementary education, the moderate Liberal position was to promote the secular State school as a free alternative. In other European nations, like England, State goals to improve literacy and culture of all classes were aided by the parallel promotion of both private (either secular or religious) and public educational initiatives; in most of Italy, however, the lack of a viable middle class or civil society in the immediate post-Unification period meant that only religious orders were capable of offering alternatives to the State school.⁴³³

The next decade’s focus on combating illiteracy and encouraging the development of a middle class made the elementary school and the education of the lower classes increasingly

⁴³² Sereno Villa, *Catechismo e Scuola?* (Milan: Cat. Tip.-Lit. Volonterio P., 1901), 3-7.

⁴³³ Marino Raicich, “Momenti di politica culturale dopo l’Unità (De Sanctis e Ascoli)” in *Belfagor*, a. XXV no. 5 (September 1970), 505, quoted in De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 57.

central, leading to the expansion of free, secular, and (after 1877) compulsory instruction in order to supplant continued Church dominance. The State's promotion of widespread, secular schooling, based on positivist pedagogy, directly clashed with the goals of the Church, which saw its entrenched position in Italian life eroded by a State that it considered both illegitimate and encroaching. For priest Albertario Davide, the idea of obligatory instruction was intolerable and "contrary to the interests of studious pupils" and "would result in the closing of seminaries and the casting of students into public schools."⁴³⁴ The Church, therefore, adopted a position in favor of "freedom of schooling." Although this argument was a contradiction to its totalitarian claims to a monopolistic right to control education, the Church reclaimed the concept and adopted it as a tactic to regain its position and re-Christianize society from its base.⁴³⁵ Indeed, Pope Pius IX, in a speech to Italian youth in 1875, recognized the utility of this argument: "When I say that I demand freedom of schooling, I demand it not as a *principle* which I do not accept, but a true necessity."⁴³⁶ Intransigent Catholics, opposed to the new State, were also opposed to its conception of "liberty," which violated Catholic integralist ideals, which held that the State and society be united under obedience to Church law; however, notes historian Gabriele De Rosa, "if liberty was adopted by the secularists to combat the Church, it could just as well be adopted by clerics to combat the bourgeois State."⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Davide, "La circolare Scialoja sui ginnasi vescovili," 40.

⁴³⁵ Soldani, "The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy," 100-101.

⁴³⁶ Pope Pius IX, January 6, 1875, *Insegnamenti Pontifici*, vol. III, 60 quoted in Pazzaglia, "Educazione e scuola nel programma," 426.

⁴³⁷ Gabriele De Rosa, *Storia del movimento cattolico in Italia: Dalla restaurazione all'età giolittiana* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1966), 138.

Another strategy adopted by hardline Catholics was to influence religious instruction through the hiring process, a tactic that directly affected the careers of teachers in many communes and increased the tendency to hire female teachers with convent backgrounds. Since the 1859 Casati law generally placed the subject in the hands of the official teacher, unless a commune had the desire and funds to hire an external instructor, many Catholics were concerned that the official instructor might lack either the requisite training to teach the catechism, or more alarming, might not impart orthodox Catholic instruction.⁴³⁸ The Catholic press urged that a redoubled effort be made to elect religious magistrates to counter secular attempts to do the same; in 1877, a rumor was circulated that a Milanese Masonic lodge had instructed its members to flood the municipalities with those willing to expunge all Church influence from the primary schools.⁴³⁹ With communes in charge of hiring and policy, Catholics, whose participation in local elections did not violate the papal edict of being “neither elected, nor electors,” attempted to influence local schools through administrative elections. In 1883, for example, Gualberta Alaide Beccari’s journal, *La donna*, printed the story of a teaching candidate in a Lombard commune as reported in *Il messaggero di Cremona*:

Before she was hired, a lawyer, speaking for the commune, called forth the woman and asked her if she was willing to make a statement about her belief in the existence of God and profession of a religion. The brave young teacher frankly responded that she neither wanted to nor could make such a declaration and that she preferred not to be hired rather than have to do so.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Pazzaglia, “Educazione e scuola nel programma,” 425.

⁴³⁹ *La civiltà cattolica*, vol. II, (1877) 103-04, quoted in *Ibid.*, 438.

⁴⁴⁰ Gualberta Alaide Beccari, “Firmezza di carattere di una maestra,” *La donna. Propugna i diritti femminili*, year XIV, series II, no. 1 (December 5, 1883), 8.

While impressed by the response of the young teacher, Beccari was outraged at the commune's "immoral" violation of the sanctity of her conscience during a period in which religion was officially extraneous to the public school.

Such interference, however, was common and encouraged by Catholic activists. Like many other Catholics, Modenese lawyer G.P. Casoli recognized that the "freedom of schooling" promised by the Casati law was likely to result in a competing network of Church-run schooling, and instead used the principle to push for the Christianization of the public schools in 1879: "The law establishes what licenses and documents are required to apply for a teaching position; when these items are in place, who is to prevent the nomination of a good Catholic who would recognize their indebtedness to the parish? Who could find fault if that selected male or female teacher happened to be a priest or a nun?"⁴⁴¹ Efforts to influence hiring increased following the 1888 law that made the appointment of an outside, "special" religious instructor extremely exceptional. This new law, often attributed to Minister of Public Instruction Paolo Boselli (1888-1891, 1906), but actually enacted by Coppino, and with the express intention of finally removing priests from the schoolhouse, made the selection of an orthodox Catholic teacher even more important to hardline Catholics.⁴⁴² This new law further enraged Catholics, who pointed to a 1889 Milanese poll that showed that 25,380 out of 27,516 families requested religious instruction for their children as evidence that families supported religious education by specialized, qualified instructors.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ "Quinto Congresso Cattolico Italiano tenutosi in Modena dal 21 al 24 ottobre 1879," in *Atti e Documenti* (Bologna, 1880), 227, quoted in Pazzaglia, "Educazione e scuola nel programma," 447.

⁴⁴² Pazzaglia, "Educazione e scuola nel programma," 455.

⁴⁴³ "L'insegnamento religioso delle scuole," *L'osservatore cattolico* (January 11-12), 1889, cited in *Ibid.*, 457.

In 1890, Boselli introduced a bill to partially transfer the primary school from local to State control. While the reasoning behind the bill included a recognition of the financial burden placed on communes due to the expansion of the school and a desire to somewhat homogenize teacher salary and hiring, there was also an understanding that local municipalities were allowing more Church influence than that stipulated by State law.⁴⁴⁴ While this transfer finally took place in 1911, Catholic concern over the religious affiliation of State teachers persisted, as is evident in Luigi Vincenzo Drago's invective against Liberal school authorities: "They say to keep the religion in church, but they are hiring teachers that are atheists and Freemasons who take every opportunity to use their wit and sarcasm against the priests and against religious mysteries and all that belongs to religion."⁴⁴⁵

Religious Orders

While both the secularization of the curriculum and the training of teachers were on a steady rise from the founding of the Kingdom of Italy, private schools, particularly those that were religiously funded and directed at young women, continued to operate. For many parents, female education was seen as disruptive, wasteful, even dangerous, especially in the South. For example, in Sicily in 1863, only 11% of school-age girls were enrolled in school; the rate of male enrollment, it should be noted, was only 17%. The largest discrepancies between rates of attendance for boys and girls were in the former papal lands; in 1863 Abruzzo and Molise, for example, female to male rates of attendance were 16% to 31%.⁴⁴⁶ For such families, the idea of

⁴⁴⁴ Pazzaglia, "Educazione e scuola nel programma," 458.

⁴⁴⁵ Luigi Vincenzo Drago, *Il catechismo e la scuola laica* (Genoa: Tipografia della Gioventù, 1912), 18.

⁴⁴⁶ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 50.

sending a daughter to a secular school was anathema to traditional views on a woman's place in the domestic sphere. A clerical education guaranteed that the education would be in line with such views, providing rudimentary reading, writing, and counting, but focusing on catechism and training in *lavori donneschi*.

The Casati provision that communes provide one elementary school per 400 residents led some communes to convert previously clerical institutions into State schools with nuns retaining their posts as schoolteachers after obtaining State licenses. Debate over the quality of those candidates trained in private, usually religious training programs versus those trained in secular, State normal or magisterial schools included questions about the ability of convent-trained teachers to understand the lives of their poor, rural pupils and perceived issues regarding the morality of secular, urban candidates.⁴⁴⁷ While the general trend was toward encouraging prospective teachers to enter the State normal schools, there was a continued interest in training nuns as teachers. Mother Maria Teresa Lega of Fognano, for example, founded a new order of teaching nuns in 1871 aimed at teaching the poor.⁴⁴⁸

The lack of qualified secular candidates meant that nuns or their protégées continued their prominence in the elementary classrooms for the first decades of the Italian school system, often delaying the possibility for secular female teachers to fulfill the goals of anticlericalists, namely the conversion of the “severe school into a nurturing, domestic environment.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ For a full discussion of *privatiste* versus *normaliste*, see Chapter 5: Defining Norms, 209-212.

⁴⁴⁸ Maria Elisa Procaccini, *La madre Maria Teresa Lega* (Cesena: Scuola Tip. Orfanelli dell'Addolorata, 1954), 122.

⁴⁴⁹ Francesco Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento delle scuole normali e sulla istituzione delle scuole professionali femminili: discorso del professor Francesco Gastaldi letto in occasione della distribuzione dei premi alle allieve delle scuole elementari e della scuola normale femminile in Novara, novembre 1879* (Novara: Stabilimento Tipografico dei Fratelli Miglio, 1880), 6.

Advocates of secular education, including Amalia Cirillo, a contributor to *La donna* in 1871, noted that while the new teachers were not technically nuns, their convent education shaped their worldview and prevented a truly secular education:

How were these students to be made into teachers and instructors capable of living in society and performing the role of teacher in this society? And when these girls enter the world, they will be worthless for themselves and others, floundering amongst temptations, sins, and fears without the love and comfort of the confessional and without a priest to tell them what to think and do.⁴⁵⁰

Twenty five years later, school inspector Maria Conti Jonni echoed similar complaints about the lingering effects of convent education on the next generation of female teachers: “The nuns, for the most part good creatures with limited intelligence, give nothing to the girls except to keep innocence locked away, hidden from life, secured away from any danger behind the impregnable monastery walls. But is this virtue enough to form the type of character in women to allow them to live in society, for society?”⁴⁵¹

For conservatives, however, it was precisely this cloistered education, along with a focus on religious instruction and *lavori donneschi* that made monastic instruction the continued preference for the daughters of middle and upper-class families.⁴⁵² To address such concerns, secular advocates, like Maria Gazzone, emphasized that the State school had no interest in subverting gender roles or social stability: “We educate the woman, who is to be the noble and faithful companion of the man, the inspirer of great virtue and generosity; do not fear that the instruction will make her superficial, neurotic, or priggish.” In fact, Gazzone stressed, it was the

⁴⁵⁰ Amalia Cirillo, “Istruzione e educazione,” in *La donna. Periodico morale e istruttivo*, year IV, no. 159 (May 10, 1871), 641.

⁴⁵¹ Maria Conti Jonni, *L'Educazione femminile in Italia: Studi e proposte* (Rome: Tipografia di Pacifico Antonini, 1896), 7.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 18.

monastic education that creates “pedants who forget their homes and duties.” Conversely, the secular State school, she claimed, was more capable of creating a sensibly educated and modest woman whose interests lay in the real world and her familial concerns: her first ornament will be silence; her thoughts on the education of her children or students; their virtue will be her joy.⁴⁵³

Although nuns were gradually replaced by secular female teachers in the classroom, both the demand for and supply of female religious grew in response to social welfare needs. While the number of monks and priests dropped from 103,161 to 89,329 from 1882 to 1900, membership in female orders jumped from 28,424 to 40,564 from 1878 to 1903. Nuns were drawn to Pope Leo XIII’s emphasis on social welfare and fulfilled roles in hospitals, asylums, orphanages, preschools, and even factories that could not be filled by the secular State. While monks were under papal control, nuns practiced under episcopal authority, and as such, were closer to the concerns of parishioners.⁴⁵⁴

The Feminization of the Church

Catholic piety of the nineteenth century was characterized by a marked feminization, distinguished by “excessive sentimentalism, morbid intensity, uncontrolled mysticism, or on the other hand, merely repetitive habit and short household prayers.”⁴⁵⁵ As historian Caroline Ford has noted for the French case, this shift, which included a substantial growth in female religious

⁴⁵³ Maria Gazzone, *Lettere ad una giovane maestra. Visita ad una scuola, 1875*. 2 ed. (Montepulciano: Teodoro Fumi, editore, 1878), 10-11.

⁴⁵⁴ Alice A. Kelikian, “The Church and Catholicism,” in *Liberal and Fascist Italy* ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 49.

⁴⁵⁵ Michela De Giorgio, “The Catholic Model,” in *A History of Women in the West: Volume IV, Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 185.

communities, fueled concern over the power of the Church to disrupt family and property rights, and led to an increase in anticlerical sentiment and eventually a ban on religious instruction in public schools. By 1903, the anticlerical Republican government applied the 1901 Law of Associations to French schools, leading to the closure of over 10,000 congregational schools and the expulsion of nuns from teaching.⁴⁵⁶

In Italy, where strong currents of anticlericalism also flourished, especially among the Left, the feminization of the Church was pronounced. The model of the “new” Italian women, as promoted by pedagogical writers like Niccolo Tommaséo, Raffaello Lambruschini, and Maria Cleofe Pellegrini, was marked by a mixture of strong patriotism and devout Catholicism, and elevated the role of the mother in both education and society.⁴⁵⁷ Historian Michela De Giorgio has noted that Catholic iconography shifted significantly to reflect this move toward a maternal, female piety:

The Baby Jesus of Romantic iconography was an image of suffering, with his little heart surrounded by thorns. In the second half of the century, the Virgin and child were images not of unhappy but rather of familial maternity. The heart pierced with a sword and surrounded with spines moved from its organic center to Jesus’ hand like an apple or a toy; it was no longer an open accusatory wound.⁴⁵⁸

Morality

The expanding role of women, both within, but especially outside cloister walls, led to heightened concern with moral integrity. De Giorgio has noted that concern over “contamination

⁴⁵⁶ Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 118, 139, 140.

⁴⁵⁷ Rosanna Basso, *Donna in Provincia: Percorsi di emancipazione attraverso la scuola nel Salento tra Otto e Novecento* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000), 82.

⁴⁵⁸ De Giorgio, “The Catholic Model,” 185.

outside the protection of family and domestic hearth,” led to strict surveillance of women.⁴⁵⁹ This scrutiny, clearly evident in the restrictions of reading material and correspondence allowed in *normali*,⁴⁶⁰ extended to the austere clothing and behavior prescribed for women working in the public sector. While most middle-class women were caught between two models of dress, one dominated by the modesty and simplicity dictated by an emphasis on bourgeois maternalism and the other on the ostentation of a social class eager to display its ascent with ornament, teachers were restricted in their outward appearance. Historian Carmela Covato has noted that the often solitary nature of the teaching career, in which a young woman was required to travel and live alone in pursuit of employment, meant that the teacher had to protect herself from any doubt about her morality by presenting herself in an austere manner, defined by a dark wardrobe similar to that found within cloister walls.⁴⁶¹

German pedagogue Pauline Herber echoed the call for careful cultivation of a modest appearance, imploring her students to arrive simply, cleanly, and conservatively dressed: “Woe to her that that arrives at her post in gaudy colors adorned with pearls, lace, or ribbon! The mothers, with their fine and guiding tact, will immediately insist that they are equally capable of educating their children at home and will adopt a diffident attitude toward you. The fathers, and other men, will take you for a fashion plate and a flirt.” Rather than have one’s clothing make one’s behavior suspect, a teacher ought to adopt a rigidly controlled attire and countenance.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 177.

⁴⁶⁰ For more on such restrictions, refer to Chapter 5: Defining Norms.

⁴⁶¹ Carmela Covato, “Una bella vestina color caffè. Istruzione, identità femminile e abito negli ultimi decenni dell’800,” in *Abito e identità: Ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*, ed. Cristina Giorelli, Vol. I (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1995), 162.

⁴⁶² Pauline Herber, *La vocazione della maestra. Lettere ad un antica allieva*, translated by Don Giuseppe Polvara (Milan, L.F. Cogliati-Tip Editore, 1895), 53.

In addition to maintaining an unassailably modest appearance, female teachers and candidates were required to provide proof of upstanding personal behavior through a “certificate of morality.” Article 326 of the 1859 Casati Law stipulated that testimonials of morality should be provided by the mayor and/or city council of the commune in which a candidate resides; if the period of residence, however, was less than two years, such a testimonial should be provided by the authorities of her previous residence.⁴⁶³ Such requirements were enforced throughout the Liberal era. Admission to the *convitto* in Grosseto in 1896, required four documents: “birth certificate, police record, certificate of morality given by the municipality, and a medical certificate.”⁴⁶⁴

These requirements were also enforced for female students of other institutions. For example, entrance into Venice’s *Scuola professionale femminile*, a school which aimed to train young women in traditional artisanal trades like lace making, tailoring, and painting, required applicants to prove they possessed high moral character, both to ensure the reputation of the school and protect against bad influence on younger pupils. While Article Two of the school’s charter required all girls between twelve and eighteen to present “birth certificate, vaccination certificate, and third grade diploma, students fifteen and over must have a certificate of morality.”⁴⁶⁵ In praising the work of reformer Laura Solera Mantegazza, her son, educational writer Paolo Mantegazza, emphasized that her groundbreaking *Scuola professionale femminile*, founded in Milan in 1870, aimed to train the “thousands of women who rely on their own labor

⁴⁶³ Amante, *Codice scolastico vigente*, 433.

⁴⁶⁴ *Regolamento del convitto annesso all R. Scuola normale femminile di Grosseto* (Grosseto: Tipografia dell'Ombriere, 1896), 2.

⁴⁶⁵ Rosa Piazza and Guglielmo Stella, *Progetto per la fondazione di una scuola professionale femminile in Venezia* (Venice: Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, 1885), 5.

not only to procure their daily bread, but also as a means of protecting their own virtue and dignity,” in an attempt to combat poverty, prostitution, and the appeal of radical leftist groups.⁴⁶⁶

An emphasis on morality and modesty was not restricted to institutes that focused only on the lower classes, however. The most elite branch of the State system for women was the *Istituto superiore femminile di magistero*, established in Rome and Florence in 1882. These schools, which consisted of two years of general courses and two years of specialized humanities, math, scientific, or pedagogical training, prepared teachers for employment in normal and other secondary schools. Upon their founding, Minister Guido Baccelli wrote,

It seems opportune to add that in the nomination of all teachers, in addition to the scientific ability and didactic skills already proved in secondary schools or elsewhere, there should be an accounting for moral education and character. While the morality of teachers is necessary in all schools, the existence and future of the new female institutes is principally dependent on it. It cannot be forgotten for a moment that these schools produce teachers who should have the moral qualities of good mothers. The most desirable characteristic of the *Istituti superiori* will always be the great dignity and moral education of all those associated with them.⁴⁶⁷

While these institutes were significantly more professional in scope and character than the *normali*, which often functioned as general secondary schools, or the vocational *scuole professionali*, the focus on modesty, morality, and maternity was no less careful. The position of disciplinary director, for example, was to be assigned to a woman over 30, in possession of both a university or *Istituto superiore* diploma and a “chaste demeanor, in order to serve as a moral and civil exemplar to the students.”⁴⁶⁸ If the nation was to have a secular school system that was

⁴⁶⁶ Paolo Mantegazza, *La mia mamma* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1886), 39.

⁴⁶⁷ Guido Baccelli, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, no. 296 (December 19, 1882) quoted in G.F. Aioli, *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero in Firenze, dall'anno scolastico 1883-84 al 1885-86* (Florence: Tipografia Cooperativa, 1886), 11.

⁴⁶⁸ *Documenti e ricerche per la storia del magistero*, 178.

attractive to conservative families and able to supplant clerical institutions, the reputation of its instructors and institutes would have to be unassailable. Indeed, for G.F. Airoli, head of the Florence *Istituto superiore*, such a focus on modesty in female institutes was necessary until public opinion could be changed regarding coeducation and equality of male and female education. Until the public could accept equal standards, a female education, Airoli argued, should strive to preserve women's "natural modesty, instinctive sense of shame and thus personal dignity, affection for the family and gentility, maternal regard for children, and effortless sympathy for the weak and unhappy."⁴⁶⁹ Only by proving to the public that the instructors produced by the *Istituto superiore* were moral, humble, and unthreatening, could it produce sufficient teachers to fully take over female secondary teaching and improve the overall quality of female education.

Emancipation, Education, and Religion

Advocates of improved rights and opportunities for women, including education, were careful to denote the limits of the envisioned liberation and quick to reassure their audience that they did not support an overthrow of familial or social relations. Oreste Bruni, the director of a female school, announced himself an advocate for the emancipation of women, but insisted that "by emancipation I do not mean the distancing of woman from the obligations for which she was created." He claimed that women who were proud of their dignity and position within the family had no desire to abandon the home. Thus women were to be educated, but carefully, through specially designed schools and curricula, so that they might educate the people.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ Airoli, *L'Istituto Superiore Femminile di Magistero in Firenze*, 22-23.

⁴⁷⁰ Oreste Bruni, *La donna e la civiltà: la donna, emancipazione, religione, il matrimonio, la famiglia* (Parma: Libreria Luigi Battei, 1881), 7, 167.

In promoting women's education in 1901, Sardinian writer Rinaldo Brambilla was careful to note that he was "not talking about the ridiculous feminism where women want to fight men, ride bikes, and sit in the legislature." Rather than a force of subversion, he argued, women's education was good for society since improving the education of future mothers would lead to an educated citizenry. Further, while he reassured readers that while he believed that "religion and purity are indispensable qualities for a woman," he was not interested in much of what was being taught to women in the name of religious instruction: "But if by religion you mean blind superstition, if by religion you mean intolerance, mysticism, and mechanization, then let that religion fall away. Liberty of conscience is a sacred right and duty and we modern people want women to believe it and teach it to their children."⁴⁷¹ Thus, while he condemned the idea of women sitting in the legislature as a ridiculous notion, Brambilla was eager to entrust religious pluralism and rational education, backbones of the Liberal platform, to women.

Co-education advocate Alessandrina Gariboldi held that much of the inequality between men and women could be traced not only to differences in the curricula offered, but in the very ontological foundations of that education:

In the male schools, one expects that solid and serious instruction will induce, as a corollary, an education; the young men come, without timidity or reserve, into full and sincere contact with science and life; to learn about the past, they aim for a future of conquest, and ethics they derive from a frank and new critical examination of the subject of study and the way it moves them. Female instruction, however, for the little that is available, generally proceeds from the inverse in both content and form; it derives from stable and immutable moral concepts usually based on dogmatic religious morality, with conclusions that are predetermined and circumscribed.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Rinaldo Brambilla, *Educazione e istruzione della donna moderna*. (Milan: Stab. Tip. G. Martinelli e C., 1901), 23.

⁴⁷² Alessandrina Gariboldi, *L'Educazione e l'istruzione della donna in Italia. Relazione al primo Congresso di attività pratica femminile tenuto a Milano nel maggio 1908* (Reggio-Emilia: Cooperativo lavoratori Tipografi e Aftini, 1909), 10.

Gariboldi, writing in 1908, noted that it was the religious underpinning of female education, in addition to historical and social advantages held by men, which led to lifelong inferiority. Thus, even after the removal of religion from the required curriculum, its effects on the education of women remained.

Just as supporters of the women's movement tied secularism to liberation, opponents saw direct connections between anticlericalism and emancipation. Luigi Vincenzo Drago considered secularism to be a grave illness whose symptoms included rebelliousness among the masses, an undisciplined public administration, disrespect for both human and divine authority, and an epicurean lusting that destroys families. The "most strange and indecent" of these symptoms, however, "has been in the women's movement, where one can see girls of every rank parading around in the most indecent clothing, rejecting the modesty and decency that is the very source of female beauty."⁴⁷³

Women's Emancipation Movements

The debate over the place of religion in education was a central and divisive issue among women's rights advocates. Gualberta Alaide Beccari's journal, *La donna*, was a reference point and vehicle of diffusion for the first women's emancipation movements of the newly unified Italy and was addressed, particularly in its earlier years, to an audience composed mainly of educators interested in the social and cultural advance of women. Founded with Mazzinian inspiration and goals of educational equality that aimed to create women contributors to the new nation, the journal was also influential in the development of individualist feminism in Italy and promoted a female viewpoint and pride in self-sufficiency. By the late 1870s, the influence of the

⁴⁷³ Drago, *Il catechismo e la scuola laica*, 4-5.

journal gave way in a generational shift from post-Risorgimental conspirators and emancipationists to those concerned with combining women's rights advocacy with political dogma, educational reform, technology, and economic problems.

The journal was criticized by Catholic groups for its supposedly insidious influence on young women; after just two issues of *La donna*, the Modenese paper *Il diritto cattolico* launched a series of attacks that Beccari considered bilious and fatuous.⁴⁷⁴ While a Christian and a promoter of private religious instruction in the home and in Church, Beccari considered herself a believer in both scientific inquiry and “tender religious sentiment” and rejected the influence of a Catholic Church that she considered reactionary, exploitative, and encouraging of female passivity.⁴⁷⁵ In addition to her criticism about Church policy and its role in retarding women's emancipation, Beccari was a firm believer in individual freedom of conscience and in the equality of all faiths and thus opposed religious instruction in the public school.

A frequent contributor to *La donna*, feminist Anna Maria Mozzoni expressed her frustration with the regressive nature of religious education, particularly for women. Addressing the opening of a *Scuola secondaria femminile* in Milan in 1870, Mozzoni wrote, “The female youth of our country is still today educated according to the views and principles of a civilization that is no longer ours.”⁴⁷⁶ Mozzoni noted that Italian women are instructed by the Church through the “pulpit, the confessional, the 876 cloisters and 18,178 nuns dedicated to instruction” in both the catechism and biblical history and literature, resulting in young people unable to distinguish “myth from reality...legend from history...plausible from implausible” while at the

⁴⁷⁴ Beatrice Pisa, *Venticinque anni di emancipazionismo femminile*, 19.

⁴⁷⁵ “Corrispondenza in famiglia,” *La donna* (July 15, 1878), quoted in *Ibid.*, 75-76.

⁴⁷⁶ Anna Maria Mozzoni, “Discorso letto dalla Signora Anna Maria Mozzoni per l'inaugurazione del liceo femminile in Milano,” *La donna*, no. 140 (December 18, 1870) printed in *Ibid.*, 101.

same time the State provides an inadequate and pedantic education. Thus, “the Church and State, which are eternally at war, have made an offensive and defensive alliance to secure the ignorance of women. The first does so through a moral argument, the other one of social convenience, and the family, caught between these two authorities in an atmosphere of prejudices, clears its shelves of serious books and surrounds its daughters with dresses, ribbons, and baubles and says to them: the time to study is over, the time to please has begun.”⁴⁷⁷

Even among socialists, opinions varied widely over the proper place for women, both with political organizations and within society. For example, while Socialist Deputy Salsi railed against the presence of religion within the school system, he maintained that women and men possessed different intellectual and moral orientations. Other Socialists, however, connected their new economic and social visions with a new outlook on women, encouraging young women to seek out a new life in which they “did not only have a ‘holy mission’ as the ‘angel of the home’, the right and duty to be a ‘person’, to contribute to society their work, thoughts, and initiative.”⁴⁷⁸

Catholic Women’s Movement

At the 1908 national congress of the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane*, consensus was reached on such controversial topics as women’s moral and legal status, emigration, and health and welfare. However, fierce conflict erupted over two topics: divorce and religious education. Socialist Linda Malnati’s resolution, calling for the removal of all religious education in the primary schools on the basis of religious equality for all, received over 1,100 votes, while

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁷⁸ *Critical sociale*, I (1891), 141, quoted in De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 151.

an opposing Catholic resolution received only 100.⁴⁷⁹ Teresa Labriola, the first woman admitted to the bar in Italy and a noted feminist, argued that the conference's debate over the issue of religious education was so heated that it precipitated the split between secular women's rights advocates and the Catholic women's contingent and led to the creation of the *Unione fra le Donne Cattoliche* in 1909. Labriola claimed that while the conference on education did not have a Catholic confessional nature, it did not oppose a religious spirit. This position led, according to Labriola, to a "misunderstanding" between the two factions, as "this spirit frightens the Catholic (or should I say clericalist) women." While this led to a split within the women's movement, Labriola insisted that the "*Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane*, as opposed to the barbs launched by the clericalists, included a large number of observant and practicing Catholic women that work with love and open minds together with women of other faiths and principles."⁴⁸⁰

While Christian democrats rejected the use of the term "feminism", preferring instead to speak of the female Christian movement, by 1900, the Catholic press made regular reference to "femminismo cristiano".⁴⁸¹ Divisions within the Catholic feminist movement, initially focused on divergent levels of religious intransigence, also began to show along the same lines as those within the secular feminist movement: economic alliance and ideology. The Catholic feminist leadership, which consisted mainly of female teachers, intellectuals, and white collar workers, and the popular classes, made up of artisans and workers, had decidedly different interests. In

⁴⁷⁹ Donald Meyer, *Sex and Power: The Rise of Women in America, Russia, Sweden, and Italy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 128-29.

⁴⁸⁰ Ugo Marchetti, "Conversando con Teresa Labriola," *L'Azione democratica*, April 23, 1911 in *Il femminismo cristiano: La questione femminile nella prima democrazia cristiana, 1898-1912* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1979), 248-249.

⁴⁸¹ Francesco Maria Cecchini, "Introduction," in *Il femminismo cristiano*, 23.

general, however, women's associations of Christian democrats tended to occupy a middle ground, with aristocratic, pro-clerical women's groups on the Right and socialist and secular groups on the Left.⁴⁸²

Debate was also heated within Catholic women's groups. Moderates, like Adelaide Coari, sought an "organic penetration" with civil society, while more conservative factions, like that of Elena Da Persico, condemned such compromise as a violation of the Vatican and faith.⁴⁸³ The moderate Catholic position sought a middle ground between full participation in civil society and hardline withdrawal. Alessandro Cantano, who saw no contradiction between Christianity and the pursuit of higher education for women, claimed that while women should be readily admitted to the University, secular institutions could be dangerous breeding grounds for immorality. His solution, rather than the exclusion of women from higher education, was the opening of Catholic universities, as in France and Belgium, where parents could be assured of a healthy moral environment that could "provide the female mind with healthy and nutritious food."⁴⁸⁴

Many hardline Catholics rejected such compromise, fearing that mass education would lead to subversion of traditional social and gender roles. According to the *Unione delle Donne Cattoliche* in 1911, peasant women aspired to become teachers and the teachers aspired to become doctors; "from doctors and professors they are clamoring to become, as far as possible, the same as men, at least as far as social rights are concerned. That is the genesis of the feminist movement in Italy."⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Ibid., 34, 37.

⁴⁸³ Donald Meyer, *Sex and Power*, 128-29.

⁴⁸⁴ Alessandro Cantano, "Femminismo cristiano?" *Cultura sociale* (March 1, 1901), 69-71, in *Il femminismo cristiano*, 73.

⁴⁸⁵ De Giorgio, "The Catholic Model," 190.

Arguments in Favor of Religious Education

Creating a secular school system meant further exacerbating the contentious relationship between the secular Italian State and the Catholic Church. The Church held that since the vast majority of the population was believers, attempts by the State to remove education from religious control violated the will of the people. Claiming that secularization was tantamount to religious persecution, lawyer Carlo La Pegna pointed to the entrenchment of Catholic observance to prove the centrality of the faith in the lives of citizens; he noted that out of 34 million Italians, very few “get married outside the Church, don’t baptize their children, do not receive last rites.”⁴⁸⁶ Conservative Deputy Salandra’s 1908 speech to the Chamber of Deputies echoed these claims: “It is a fact that Christian doctrine and morals have, for centuries, informed the laws and organization of Italian society. It is a fact that the vast majority of Italians continue to believe that Christianity should be the foundation of moral education of their children. It is a fact that Catholicism has deeply penetrated Italian life, history, culture, and art.”⁴⁸⁷

For many opponents of educational secularization, the removal of Catholicism from the schools was indistinguishable from the promotion of atheism. Positivist pedagogue Aristide Gabelli noted that “political necessity had dragged the State into open conflict with the Church” and that due to confusion, the school was seen by many hardline Catholics as an “instrument for the propaganda of disbelief.”⁴⁸⁸ For P. Coffano, for example, the “atheist” State schools turned children “from angels to skeptics, blasphemers, and unbelievers.” As a result, “the souls of the

⁴⁸⁶ Carlo La Pegna, *Sulla nuova dottrina dello stato laico e sulle sue conseguenze specialmente in Italia* (Santamaria Capua Vetere: Stabilimento tipografico Umili Fernando, 1911), 4.

⁴⁸⁷ Antonio Salandra, speech to Camera dei Deputati, February 19, 1908, quoted in *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁸⁸ Aristide Gabelli, *L’istruzione in Italia* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1891), 134.

children are distanced from those of their parents, making love impossible.” Further, it encouraged a “tyrannical conscription of Catholic youth into the enemy field.”⁴⁸⁹ Thus, obligatory attendance at secular schools was damaging both to the traditional family and to Italy’s status as a Catholic nation.

Coffano argued that secularists were not content with simply removing religious education from the schools, as stipulated by the Rava regulation of 1908, which Coffano characterized as “deplorable...malignant, and unconstitutional”. He claimed that as the inheritors of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s pedagogy, they desired a complete break from religion and God: “According to the Rousseauian objective, the confessional school is contrary to the liberty of the child, who should choose his own religion; at 20 years old, when he is capable of deciding which religion he would follow, he can be instructed in it.” Coffano argued that such a delay was antithetical to the desires of Catholic parents and contrary to the interests of a Catholic nation and revealed the true disdain for religion held by most secularists: “[Socialist politician Filippo] Turati added: just as no one has the right to intoxicate a child’s body with alcohol, no one has the right to intoxicate his mind with dogma and superstition.”⁴⁹⁰

Other opponents of secularization saw the gradual weakening of the Church’s role in society as not only damaging to the sanctity of the Catholic family, but also destabilizing to the foundations of Italian morality and social stability. If Catholicism was the basis of Italian law, as Deputy Salandra claimed, the removal of Catholic education would likely upend Italian society. For Luigi Vincenzo Drago, secularizing the school was tantamount to instilling disrespect for authority and fomenting future social upheaval: “So, you would like to ban God from the

⁴⁸⁹ P. Coffano, *Libertà e scuola, cenno sui diritti e doveri dei genitori nella educazione dei figli di fronte allo Stato e di fronte alla Chiesa* (Novara: Grafia Novara, 1914), 11, 45.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32, 40-41.

schools? But if you banish God, from what source could we sanction laws and duties? And, suppressing God, how could we justify one man's authority over another? Where would the right to command and the duty to obey come from?"⁴⁹¹ For Geremia Bonomelli, the idea that a school could provide a moral education without a basis in Catholicism was absurd and impossible for a teacher to conduct:

Where is this unfortunate teacher supposed to derive lessons about laws, duties, and morals? From some book or manual or brief written by some man, proposed by some city and approved by some school board or the Ministry [of Public Instruction]? But with what right, what authority, can the teacher impose it, that can substitute for the ancient catechism that the child has heard at home or in church?⁴⁹²

The accusation, that rebellion, even anarchy, would be the natural result of the secularization of the classroom, was supported by those who saw deleterious consequences for other secularizing nations. Several critics of secularization claimed that Italy was too eager to emulate its northern and western neighbors without considering the negative effects of such adulation. In a 1873 issue of the Catholic periodical *La scuola cattolica*, journalist Pietro Prada likely reacting to Otto von Bismark's Kulturkampf policies attacking the influence of the Catholic Church, argued that Germany, which was hailed as a great model of civilization and educational progress, had been the source of the Ghibellines, Protestant heresy, the Enlightenment and rationalism, and freemasonry, all threats to the Catholic Church and elements of a "war to the death" by modern liberalism.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ Drago, *Il catechismo e la scuola laica*, 7.

⁴⁹² Bonomelli, *La scuola laica*, 25.

⁴⁹³ Pietro Prada, "Dell'elezione nella chiesa cattolica e massime dell'elezione del sommo pontefico di fronte alle pretese del nuovo Impero Germanico," in *La scuola cattolica: periodico religioso, scientifico, letteraria*, year I, vol. I, no. 1 (January 31, 1873), 26.

A generation later, Bonomelli directed similar invectives against French influence, noting that while France had been subject to universal scorn and isolation for introducing secular instruction and civil marriage and morality during the French Revolution, a century later, Italians were eagerly adopting these “French absurdities” in creating a “neutral, secular school that was anti-Christian, even openly atheist.” Bonomelli claimed that in countries without religious education there was a “terrifying growth of rebellious spirit, anarchist and brutally socialist ideas, and the most foul, debauched, and pagan literature and art.”⁴⁹⁴ Lawyer Carlo La Pegna argued that the consequences of secularization in France had led to the cessation of government funds for religion, the removal of the cross from the flag, and the privatization of religious observance. He challenged the Italian parliament to consider such developments in their push for institutional secularization.⁴⁹⁵

For some opponents of secularization, religion offered not only a bulwark against radicalism and subversion, but also the only appropriate basis for the education of the popular classes. French educator Jeanne Campan, whose *L'éducation des femmes*, first published in 1823, was translated and published in Italian throughout the nineteenth century, claimed that religious morality was the only suitable source of popular education: “The daughters of farmers, artisans, and simple workers cannot understand the same style or have the same teachers as the daughters of generals, magistrates, famous lawyers, millionaire bankers; these people, no less important to society, need a different education.”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Bonomelli, *La scuola laica*, 5, 6, 43.

⁴⁹⁵ Carlo La Pegna, *Sulla nuova dottrina dello stato laico*, 6-7.

⁴⁹⁶ Madame Campan, *Consigli alle fanciulle*, translated by Pietro Thoucar, 3rd ed. (Turin: G.B. Paravia e comp, 1888), 6.

While Campan advocated religion as the moral and educational foundation for women of the popular classes in particular, other writers saw it as the only fitting foundation for women in general. Writing in 1878, pedagogue and philologist Agosto Alfani claimed that while he was a positivist and generally operated from scientific evidence, everyday personal experience had shown him that instruction that was removed from morality led to a decrease in the civility and character of the population. He argued that a return to Christianity would “liberate our nation from the dangerous assault of recent doctrines and see the home, of which the woman is queen, return to the condition that will make it possible to create the perfect State and perfect character.”⁴⁹⁷ As a frequent contributor to the pedagogical periodical *La collaboratrice della maestra*, writer Severina Cavallero argued in 1882 that without religion, schools would provide women with possibly injurious instruction rather than an edifying education:

One can only hope that while science adorns the intelligence, it does not suffocate the feelings of the heart. Be careful that it does not make you arrogant and petulant, be careful that your knowledge does not become frivolous pomp, but treat it as a modest virtue. Without modesty, without religion, without virtue, the woman loses the aura of chaste beauty that makes her the idol of the family, the affectionate companion of the man, the consoling angel.⁴⁹⁸

For writers like Alfani and Cavallero, religion granted women a special status in society; to remove Catholic morality from their education was to knock women from their pedestals and inflict damage to society and the incipient State.

Another tactic was to attach secular education to fears and misunderstanding about the effect of modernity on man’s perceived place in the universe. Many conservatives worried about the influence of philosophers and scientists like Freud, Nietzsche or Darwin and claimed that

⁴⁹⁷ Agosto Alfani, *Il carattere degli italiani* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1878), 129, 135.

⁴⁹⁸ Severina Cavallero, “Alle giovanette italiane,” *La collaboratrice della maestra: monitore settimanale letterario-didattico-educativo*, year II, no. 18 (February 4, 1882), 139.

supporters of secular education wanted “to substitute scientific catechism for religious catechism.”⁴⁹⁹ Many Catholics were beset by concerns about the implications of evolution; Luigi Vincenzo Drago, for example, wrote of his concerns in 1912: “I understand that, according to the promoters of this new era, certain lessons regarding our origins and destiny have been cast aside with our beloved ancestors, because if the new science is correct, we do not derive from God and Adam, but from a monkey, and our destiny lies, not with God, but nowhere.” Drago’s comments betray not only the widespread fears about changing traditions, but also common misunderstanding of the new science that was driving so much of the educational and social changes of his era, as noted when he poses the following question: “Can someone please explain how monkeys could have slowly evolved into humans, yet, monkeys continue to exist and give birth to new monkeys, and humans continue to give birth to humans?”⁵⁰⁰

Conflict over the role of religion in the curriculum extended well beyond the teaching of individual subjects into methodology and pedagogy. The new child-study approach promoted by educators like Maria Montessori was predicated upon the idea that children should be allowed to learn and mature at their own pace with the child as the central focus and the teacher as facilitator. This theory conflicted with classical pedagogies that focused on routine and discipline in order to control “the innate inclinations toward evil in all of us due to original sin.” According to such views of early childhood education, Montessori’s pedagogy violated Catholic doctrine about human nature: “She wants to educate children into liberty, independence; she

⁴⁹⁹ La Pegna, *Sulla nuova dottrina dello stato laico*, 10.

⁵⁰⁰ Drago, *Il catechismo e la scuola laica*, 9.

wants to encourage all the spontaneous actions of the child without disciplining the inclinations that should be corrected through education.”⁵⁰¹

Arguments in Favor of Secularization

While the Italian school system had been ostensibly secular since the Casati law in 1859, the legacy of clerical control in many ways remained. Although secularly trained and oriented teachers and administrators had led and designed the curriculum and methodology for almost fifty years, in 1907, popular education advocate and fable-writer Gabriele De Robbio wrote: “Our children, our little brothers and sisters, leave their homes in tears, because they don’t want to go to a school where they receive the same punishments, discouragement, and bitterness that we, ourselves, received.” De Robbio’s main focus was the influence of the Jesuits on education and society in general; since the Jesuits were primarily concerned with secondary education, they were able to shape “the consciousness of the ruling class,” thus extending their influence and morality throughout society: “The school has been manipulated and contorted in the hands of the ruling class, molded according to the needs of the Church and the priests. It should be ripped from this false protection and return to its natural tendencies, goals, and aspirations of the people.”⁵⁰² According to De Robbio, this resulted in the impoverishment of schools for the popular classes and the promotion of the military as the ideal teacher of discipline and respect for rigid hierarchy. Further, the school curriculum was designed to present a triumphalist version of the ruling classes, emphasizing their historical justice and military prowess and denouncing alternative political, economic, and scientific ideas:

⁵⁰¹ Coffano, *Libertà e scuola*, 6.

⁵⁰² Gabriele de Robbio, *Dello spirito laico nella scuola* (Naples: Luigi Pierro Editore, 1907), 6, 17, 39.

The fear of socialist propaganda prohibits the examination of economic problems and reinforces the errors of social prejudices. The crazy fear of atheism and the usefulness of passive obedience serve to impose religious instruction and frustrate the benefits of scientific explanations for the creation of the world and natural phenomena.⁵⁰³

Thus while the school made claim to be a secular institution, De Robbio wrote, it was merely an extension of the Church, existing to corrupt and control the lower classes: “They guide the young student to the local sacristy, where the poor child, chanting until evening and breathing the miserable miasma of tiny rooms-school, bedroom, kitchen. They then absorb the religious, social, and didactic prejudices of the self-righteous [female] teacher and become disfigured in mind, heart, and body.”⁵⁰⁴

The problem, according to De Robbio, was so ingrained that it required a radical solution. He noted that the State, “always ready to realign its sails according to the blowing political winds,” had repeatedly changed its policy on the teaching of religion, with the most recent bill, 1905, removing it from required courses. Such a removal, however, was insufficient, according to De Robbio, for it would not be “enough to dam up the rising sea of blind conservatism reinforced by Vatican obscurantism” or “give Italians a new consciousness and resist assault by the old traditions.” Such a task he assigned to secular teachers, who with “a steady gaze, reawakened energy, a yearning spirit, an open heart and mind,” might transform and redeem the secular school.⁵⁰⁵

For Salvatore Morelli, an outspoken socialist politician and advocate of women’s emancipation, the Church’s hold on education was a primary cause for Italian backwardness. Speaking in the Chamber of Deputies in 1868, Morelli announced that while the Risorgimento

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁰⁵ de Robbio, “Conferenza-Unione Magistrale Napoletana, March 7, 1907,” Ibid., 50-52, 97.

had promised enlightenment, prosperity, and liberty to the Italian people, it actually assured papal power and political despotism: “What, gentlemen, has perpetuated prejudice and bad governance in the world? The school that elevates the priests in the church, the church that governs the schools.” Morelli was outraged that almost a decade into the founding of an ostensibly secular State, catechism was an obligatory subject in Italian schools. The fact that the schools remained severely understaffed, underfunded, and backward, despite the astronomical and persistent rates of illiteracy, meant that the clerics who remained in control desired “reaction, not progress. They want temporal power, not an Italian capital in Rome.” To rounds of applause on the Left, Morelli inveighed against the Church, proclaiming it the enemy of enlightenment and modernity: “I say this because I am not deluded. I believe that he who is with religion is not with science; he who is with the Pope is not with liberty!” To remedy the stagnant condition of the Italian school, he proposed a series of reforms for the 1869 budget, all of which were enacted over the next decade, including the establishment of free and obligator elementary schools, the teaching of agriculture, better training and provision of secular teachers, and improved access to the University for all social classes.⁵⁰⁶

Morelli was concerned not only with the Church’s direct role in education, but also with what he perceived as its insidious influence in society. Just as he saw secular education as the means to remove this force from the formal education of citizens, Morelli saw the emancipation of women as the means to remove extracurricular clericalism. Morelli noted that women are more religious than men and play the most central role in introducing faith to their children; in

⁵⁰⁶ Salvatore Morelli, “Considerazioni sulla riforma della Pubblica Istruzione” Atti Parlamentari. Camera dei deputati, sessione del 1867, tornata February 5, 1868, 4001-02 in Ginevra Conti Odorisio, *Salvatore Morelli: politica e questione femminile: 1. Convegno internazionale di studi su Salvatore Morelli (1824-1880): democrazia e politica nell'Ottocento europeo: Roma-Cassino, 10-12 ottobre 1990* (Rome: L'ed, 1990), 46-49.

return for this loyalty, Morelli claims, the Church treats them as nonentities and ignores their intelligence. In order to elevate the status of women and society in general, education must be wrested from the hands of the clergy and entrusted to a secular cadre of maternal educators:

The educator of man until now has been the papacy, from the cradle to the schoolhouse to the marriage bed to the coffin, with the papacy as nursemaid, teacher, advisor, and tutor. If you want to improve man, don't you think you should abandon this fanatical teacher with his false doctrines and erroneous method of teaching?⁵⁰⁷

In exchange for the clergy, Morelli advocated emancipated and educated women who could teach society that “voluntary ignorance is suicide, a crime that destroys human dignity!” These teachers would be well-paid, respected, and accountable, creating a solid foundation for society through a “maternal, coeducational, and free school,” replacing “religious catechism at the start of education with the crowning of moral strength in children’s consciousness at its culmination.”⁵⁰⁸

Feminization of Teaching

While the first article of the 1848 Statuto had established Catholicism as the official State religion, the succeeding Liberal governments, especially after the shift to the Center-Left in 1877, pursued a policy of gradual secularization in the institution that was increasingly recognized as the foundation of Italian character, the public school. Clear in the heated arguments, both for and against the secularization of the school, is the growing importance of education for an Italian State struggle to define and direct its national identity in a competitive European field. This growing importance occurred alongside the feminization of the elementary

⁵⁰⁷ Salvatore Morelli, *La donna e la scienza o La soluzione del problema sociale di Salvatore Morelli* (Naples: Società tipografico editrice, 1869), 64-65, 102.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

teaching field, a profession that was increasingly recognized as a potentially vital ally in the shaping of Italian identity.

On the occasion of the awarding of accolades to the female students of his elementary and normal schools in 1879, Professor Francesco Gastaldi extended his concerns not only to the immediate education of female students, but to the resulting consequences for future generations of Italians: “I don’t want to wage war against religion, but teachers should know about the lives of their students and understand that the heart must be educated along with the mind. How can nuns form the next generation of strong and virtuous citizens and not weaklings or misfits?”⁵⁰⁹ Gastaldi recognized that if his student teachers were to shape this next generation, they would have to be carefully trained in both the goals of the State and the pragmatic needs of the Italian people.

The successful training of a corps of secular, yet moral and austere, female elementary teachers was essential to the success of the new Italian pedagogy and the embrace of the secular State school by an often deeply religious populace. Although secularization increased alongside centralization, the influence of Catholicism within the Italian school was always evident. The resulting amalgamation of scientific pedagogy, maternal teaching, and Catholic morality can be seen most clearly in the pedagogy of Maria Montessori, whose fusion of positivist science and Catholic ethics can be witnessed in her promotion of Marian artwork in classrooms.⁵¹⁰

Lingering rates of illiteracy, especially among women and in the southern regions, was a source of continued concern and a frequent target in Liberal attempts to eradicate the continued influence of the Church. While Gherardo Ferreri, a professor at the University of Rome,

⁵⁰⁹ Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento*, 11.

⁵¹⁰ Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 293.

emphasized that “female illiteracy is the true dry rot of the rural proletarian Italian family,” he also noted the nefarious effects of continued Catholic dominance in women’s education in all classes: “It is also necessary to transform, secularize, and modernize secondary instruction for the wealthy classes of women, who return to the family home from monastic institutions equally ignorant but cloaked in false and foggy religious education that obfuscate their understanding of what is healthy or decadent.” The successful reformation and modernization of this system lay with female teachers, “the natural standard bearers of civilization:” “We should turn toward our current and future teachers and make them our allies and inculcate virtue, sweetness, and energy, teach them culture and modesty, and above all vigorously and enthusiastically persuade men and encourage women to become the equals of their sisters in other regions.”⁵¹¹ Female teachers were thus to be the civil missionaries of the new nation, agents of both modern scientific pedagogy and a traditional culture of virtue and modesty.

⁵¹¹ Gherardo Ferreri, *I diritti e doveri delle nostre donne. Conferenze e letture popolare* (Rome: Tipografia del Campidoglio Eredi d'Antoni, 1909), 14-15, 57.

Defining Norms: The Transformation of Teacher Training Institutes

The recent multiplication of normal schools was not born, as some believe, from the feminine invasion of the teaching career, signaling its peril and a result of the current economic disequilibrium; rather, it responds to a real and true need. Women desire the elevation of their own intelligence and character in order to further dignify their role as wife and mother.⁵¹²

The feminization of the Italian teaching profession, nearly complete at the elementary level by the turn of the century, was a product of the profound political, economic, and social changes during the first decades of national unity. A position once scorned as the province of part-time itinerant tutors or dogmatically rigid ecclesiastics, the role of teacher was recast as central to a civilizing, unifying mission of national progress. In a nation attempting to assert its legitimacy on the competitive European stage while confronting astronomical rates of illiteracy and regional disparity, public education represented Liberal claims to individual development and progressive citizenship that could also function as a mechanism of social and political control, ensuring stability and order.

To move such assertions beyond rhetoric, the inchoate State recognized the need to train teachers in the goals and values of national sentiment and cohesion. An 1864 government inquest found that the Italian system could boast only 16,770 of the estimated 50,000 skilled teachers needed by the new schools.⁵¹³ Just a few years after the extension of teacher training schools to the newly unified Italian nation, the Ministry of Public Instruction recognized the severe shortage of qualified instructors and sought solutions beyond stopgap measures like provisional licensing

⁵¹² Ildebrando Bencivenni, *Per la bandiera offerta dalle alunne alla R. Scuola normale femminile "Anna Morandi Manzolini" il 9 luglio 1894* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1899), 4-5.

⁵¹³ Ministero della pubblica istruzione, "Relazione sulle riforme proposte per le Scuole Normali di allievi-maestri e allieve-maestre," in Ministero della pubblica istruzione, *Documenti sull'ordinamento delle scuole* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1866), 175-76. Following the 1864 Matteucci inquest, this proposal was submitted to parliament as part of an educational reform bill.

and continued ecclesiastical dominance in an ostensibly secular system. As Minister of Public Instruction Carlo Matteucci (MPI 1862) wrote in 1864, “Finding a sufficient number of teachers who are not ‘matti, frati, o ignoranti (crazy, priests, or ignorant)’ and who have some degree of competence in a non-canonical discipline, has been, for at least a quarter of a century, practically impossible.”⁵¹⁴

By the turn of the twentieth century, such a solution had been found in the tens of thousands of young women who flooded into the teacher training institutes (*scuole normali* and *scuole magistrali*). These new aspirants sought more than the filling of an open labor market; a public school position was promised as an avenue to economic independence, personal development, and a role in the formation of a new generation of Italian patriots. Thus, the feminization of the normal school represents not the economically expedient reaction to a need for inexpensive labor, but a transformation brought on by the changing goals and outlook of the State, a new pedagogy, and a profound shift in social and gender roles.

Within the ample historiography of scholastic institutions in Italy, the study of normal schools has been sporadic and quantitative, possibly due to the marginal role of *normale* graduates in comparison with the predominance of classical and technical school alumni among both intelligentsia and State bureaucrats.⁵¹⁵ However, the dramatic transformation within the teacher training institutes, with three times as many female attendees as male in 1861 and fifteen times as many in 1899, points to a significant shift within an increasingly professional, vital field for the new Italian State.

⁵¹⁴ Carlo Matteucci, “C. Matteucci a R. Lambruschini, 10 agosto 1864,” *Carte Lambruschini*, BNCF, cited in Simonetta Soldani, “Andar per scuola: archivi da conoscere, archivi da salvare,” in *Memoria di scuola: Indagine sul patrimonio archivistico delle scuole di Roma e provincia*, ed. Irsifar-istituto Romano per la storia d'Italia dal fascismo alla resistenza (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006), 25.

⁵¹⁵ Carmela Covato, “Introduction,” in ACS, *FSS I: L'istruzione normale dalla legge Casati all'età giolittiana* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994), 19-20.

5.1 Male and Female Attendance in Normal Schools⁵¹⁶

	1861	1875	1881	1899
Male Students	947	1248	1238	1323
Female Students	2795	5227	7482	19,864

State Reform

Although Piedmont had had a tradition of public education since the eighteenth century and every commune in the Kingdom of Sardinia was required to institute a public school beginning in 1821, the training of teachers was not addressed until the mid-nineteenth century. Pedagogue Vincenzo Troya recognized the need for professionally trained teachers as an essential part of his vision for a modern school system and instituted a school of method at the Collegio di S. Francesco da Paolo in Turin in 1844. Before the opening of this school of method and the introduction of licensing, becoming a lower-level Piedmontese teacher required only a simple test of reading and writing, with the higher levels accessible with the addition of an arithmetic, grammar, Italian language, and catechism examination. To this list Troya's school added lessons in geometry, weights and measures, currency, geography, and some natural science.⁵¹⁷

In the next few years, 22 additional schools of method were opened, the University of Pisa introduced inferior and superior schools, and in 1848, the first legislative scholastic code, the Piedmontese Boncompagni law, divided the system into elementary, secondary, university,

⁵¹⁶ A. Santoni Rugiu, "Orientamento culturali, strumenti didattici, insegnanti e insegnamento," in *Storia della scuola e storia d'Italia: dall'Unità ad oggi*, ed. A. Santoni Rugiu (Bari: De Donato, 1982).

⁵¹⁷ Matteo Miraglia, *La Scuola femminile "Domenico Berti" nell'educazione dell'insegnamento normale durante il cinquecento storico 1848-98* (Turin: Stabilimento Tipografico Giuseppe Patrito, 1898), 9-11.

and specialized schools. The piecemeal nature of these formative years was reflected in both the low pay and social prestige granted to teachers as well as the criticism directed toward hastily prepared instructors, particularly the young women teaching in the inferior level elementary schools. Giulio Re, author of the reformist tract *Educatore primario*, noted in 1847:

Society imposes on female teachers such serious obligations and sentences them to such distressing living conditions that it should not be shocking that the results do not correspond to public desires and hopes. The government should think about improving the conditions, because hunger has never been the best teacher. The anxiety and estranging hardships irritate, discourage, and render them unfit for this difficult career.⁵¹⁸

To address such issues, Domenico Berti, who would serve as Minister of Public Instruction from 1865-67, led a drive for a State-run popular school for female teachers; in 1852, he expanded a course run out of his Turin home into a three-year program complete with a boarding school (*convitto*) for non-residents and model school (*tirocinio*), making it the first public school of its kind in Italy.⁵¹⁹ Following Church opposition to State training schools, the Boncompagni law of 1848 instituted a moderate system, dividing the method schools of the earlier code into superior schools in the main cities and inferior ones in provincial cities, while the Cibrario regulation of 1853 named the method schools “*scuole magistrali*,” giving them male, female, inferior, and superior designations.

With the Kingdom of Sardinia attempting to lead a drive for Italian unification of regions that had the highest illiteracy rates outside Spain and the Russian Empire, education began to take on an increasingly frantic pace.⁵²⁰ In 1858, Minister Giovanni Lanza, with the approval of both houses of parliament, set up six male and six female normal schools in the Kingdom of

⁵¹⁸ Giulio Re, *Educatore Primario*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵¹⁹ Matteo Miraglia, *La Scuola femminile "Domenico Berti"*, 142.

⁵²⁰ Camilla Covato, “Introduction,” in ACS, *FSS I*, 23. Covato lists the rates as 72% male illiteracy and 84% female.

Sardinia. The subjects included morals, religion, Italian language and literature, geography, Italian history and geography, math, geometry, natural history, physics, chemistry, hygiene, drawing, calligraphy, and pedagogy, with the addition of domestic skills for women and agriculture and citizenship for men.⁵²¹

The Casati Law of 1859 laid out the organization of the normal schools, while the Mamiani law of 1860 and De Sanctis law of 1861 instituted them throughout the newly annexed regions. The Casati law mandated the creation of *scuole normali* and *scuole magistrali*, which provided teacher training and certification of three and two years duration, respectively. There were 18 *scuole normali* opened, nine for men and nine for women; women had to be at least 15 and men 16 to be admitted. The more meager *scuole magistrali* were opened in provincial areas; both programs required completion of the fourth grade for men and third grade for women and included bible study, Italian language, basic math, calligraphy, and pedagogy.

The drive toward professionalization of the teaching career during the 1880s and 1890s brought increased focus to the methodology and rigor of teacher training. Positivist pedagogue Aristide Gabelli insisted that students enter normal schools already knowing language, geography, drawing, and math, giving impetus to the extension of elementary school requirements and the addition of a complementary course to bridge the gap between elementary and normal school.⁵²² There were calls for longer normal programs in imitation of the German system of an eight-year-long training course, as well as demands for higher minimum pay and greater job security. Even as conditions and status for teachers improved, men did not return to the normal schools. The growing number of male normal schools facing closure due to low

⁵²¹ Francesco Aymar, *La Scuola normale di Pinerolo e il movimento pedagogico e scolastico in Piemonte* (Pinerolo: Tipografia Chiantore-Mascarelli, 1898), 77.

⁵²² Aristide Gabelli, "Le riforme urgenti nell'istruzione," in *Nuova antologia*, (Feb. 1, 1883): 474-492, quoted in Covato, "Introduction," in ACS, *FSS I*, 32.

enrollment, as well as the foregone conclusion that elementary teaching was a feminized profession, led to calls for mixing sexes in the teacher training institutes.

After scholastic journals began announcing plans for making normal schools coeducational, public reaction was generally favorable. The heads of 29 prominent families of Assisi wrote to education Minister Luigi Rava (1906-1909) in support of the reform, noting that teachers' associations and conventions in Ancona and Rome had praised this change. The families expressed hope that local young women might join the 30 young men in the city's male normal school, thus saving the under-enrolled institution. The mayor of Assisi, Pietro Uber, followed up the citizens' request with his own two months later, noting that as the male *normale* with the second lowest attendance (after Oneglia), the Assisi school would benefit from the admission of women so as to prevent closure of the institution.⁵²³

Although most courses were kept separate for male and female students, the introduction of women into male institutes required infrastructural changes, including the separation of male and female restrooms and demarcation of classroom space for the instruction of *lavori femminili*. While inspecting such modifications for the transformation of a male normal school in Treviglio, the local medical and educational directors noted that the technical and classical secondary schools had been mixed for several years without any health or moral problems. The real concern, noted the inspectors, should be the lack of classrooms for music, agriculture, gymnasiums, and kindergartens.⁵²⁴

⁵²³ “Istanza dei cittadini di Assisi al ministro Rava perché dichiari promiscua la scuola normale maschile (1909)” and “Lettera del sindaco di Assisi al Ministro Rava con cui rinnova la richiesta di rendere promiscua la scuola normale maschile (1909)” in *Ibid.*, 283, 284.

⁵²⁴ Stefano Balp and Augusto Porchiese, “Relazione del medico provinciale e del provveditore agli studi di Bergamo sulla visita eseguita nella scuola normale maschile di Treviglio allo scopo di accertare la possibilità di dichiararla promiscua,” in *Ibid.*, 285-87.

Normaliste Versus Privatiste

The debate over the regulation and centralization of the normal schools had been waged since pre-Unification days. The lack of uniformity in duration, curriculum, and results varied wildly; 1850s Turin schools of method ranged from four-month city-run programs to four-year programs organized by private societies. While the 1859 Casati law had mandated that elementary teachers pass a qualifying exam, the scarcity of teachers in many rural areas led to concessions of that requirement; Article 329 allowed regions with fewer than 500 inhabitants to hire an unlicensed teacher at the discretion of the provincial inspector. The percentage of provisionally licensed teachers, who usually were paid less than the legal minimums, fell from 46.6% in 1863 and to 21% by 1872. The push to remedy the dearth of licensed teachers led to the creation of teaching conferences, between two and ten months in duration, to provide basic training for rural teachers unable to attend *normali* or *magistrali* schools.⁵²⁵

During the licensing examination for the lower elementary levels between the years 1866-1869, only 13% of the applicants had finished the State *magistrale* or the first two years of the *normale*. The vast majority, referred to as *privatisti*, were products of the aforementioned teaching conferences, religious institutes, or private tutoring facilitated by the publication of multiple manuals allowing a candidate to recite memorized examination responses.⁵²⁶

By the 1870s, competition for decently paid urban school positions elevated the stakes and rhetoric regarding instructor qualifications. In calling for reform of the teacher training system in 1879, Francesco Gastaldi, a professor at the normal school in Novara, noted that “many of the young *privatiste* come from the impoverished countryside and have had an

⁵²⁵ Ester De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia: I. Dall'Unità all'età giolittiana* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 197.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 197, 198.

instructor teach them a few names or a few ideas in a few months. They memorize basic math terms and geography. They are all melancholy at the thought of teaching in a school.” The increasingly competitive atmosphere, coupled with heightened rhetoric about the importance of secular teachers and the creation of national identity through the education of children led to calls for increased oversight and raised expectations for the educators of Italian youth: “We ask that the *privatiste* candidates have the same qualifications as *normaliste*. We should implant teachers with hearts formed according to the principles of liberty, patriotism, and morality. Shouldn’t those who graduate from the normal schools be the best army in the defense of nationality?”⁵²⁷

As the normal schools grew in number, attendance, and State recognition, the efforts to professionalize the teaching career led to calls for a renovation of both the licensing and hiring examinations, promoting the advance of State-trained applicants over *privatiste*:

The exam is a trifle that does not discuss instruction methods or seek educators, only dilettantes, barely able to piece together weak, uncertain, and disconnected knowledge. They are not even tested to see if they can teach or possess required qualities like patience. And many times these teachers are preferred to those who graduate from the normal schools!⁵²⁸

Nearly two decades later, the advocates of the normal schools, while certainly not unbiased in their promotion of their own institutes, continued to rail against the advancement of privately educated applicants. In an 1899 criticism of a Florentine competition for elementary teaching positions, politician and civil engineer Amerigo Raddi pointed out both the illegal irregularities of the competition, including allowing students observing a Jewish holiday to leave and return from an ongoing examination, and problems with the examination itself. Students

⁵²⁷ Francesco Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento delle scuole normali e sulla istituzione delle scuole professionali femminili: discorso del professor Francesco Gastaldi letto in occasione della distribuzione dei premi alle allieve delle scuole elementari e della scuola normale femminile in Novara, novembre 1879* (Novara: Stabilimento Tipografico dei Fratelli Miglio, 1880), 9-10.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

were asked to write on the following question: “It is said that the modern school instructs but does not educate and therefore is more damaging than ignorance. Does this accusation have any grounds? What does the candidate think?” Raddi noted that many of the normal school graduates “considered the thinking of Gabelli, Villari, Tommaseo, della Gazzoni and other pedagogues. However, the Commission censured such thinkers and even deducted points for mentioning them.”⁵²⁹ Furious that candidates should be penalized for including pedagogical theorists relevant to the topic, Raddi continued on to note that the hiring commission was in violation of articles 136, 137, 138, and 149 of the *Regolamento generale* of 1895:

The municipal Commission, under article 42 *ad usum Delphini*, claimed that 9 candidates, all with the normal school degree, were incapable of teaching in Florence. Since Florence is under the dominion of the King and is a public administration, it is required to obey all laws. Article 140 clearly says that the most highly classified student at graduation should be appointed, thus negating the competence of the Commune to judge candidates.⁵³⁰

If the “law exists to protect us from caprice,” Raddi argued that for nine open positions, the top 12 graduates of the normal school should have been considered and *privatiste* excluded, rather than holding an open competition of 114 aspirants.⁵³¹

In an attempt to remedy complaints about the disparity between *normaliste* and *privatiste* applicants, as well as a general effort to improve the quality of elementary education, the Minister of Public Instruction, Paolo Boselli (1888-1891), legislated that *privatiste* were required

⁵²⁹ Amerigo Raddi, *Per un concorso di maestre elementari, bandito dal commune di Firenze nel giugno 1899* (Florence: Tipografia S. Giuseppe Gia Cav. A. Ciardi, 1899), 5.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

to pass both the inferior and superior level tests, spend two years as an apprentice teacher in a *tirocinio*, and pass the practical exam before being able to acquire a teaching license.⁵³²

Secularization of *Normali*

Clear in the debate over *privatiste* versus *normaliste* is the role played by historical dominance of the Church in Italian education. The Casati law included a clear secularization drive, seeking to extricate the education of Italian youth from religious control. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the population of the teaching corps in 1863, with clergy comprising 31.7% of the female teachers and 43.8% of the male teachers,⁵³³ meant that such goals would have to be temporarily waived while secular *normali* began the work of training lay teachers.

The primary strategy of the State was to remove religious curriculum through legislation. While the Casati Law had provided compulsory religious education unless the child's parents forbade it, the Correnti circular of 1870 had mandated just the opposite, providing catechism classes only if parents requested it.⁵³⁴ As the primary residence for young women, many *convitti* reintroduced religious instruction through the appointment of a spiritual director, who was charged with celebrating mass and religious holidays and providing moral and dogmatic instruction to young women if so requested by their parents. However, the internal regulation of the female superior normal school in Vercelli makes clear that this faculty member was

⁵³² Paolo Boselli, *Regolamento per le Scuole Normali e per gli esami di patente di Maestro o Maestra elementare. Approvato col R. decreto 14 settembre 1889* (Milan: Risveglio Educativo e Antonio Villardi, 1890), 38. See also Chapter Two: *La maestra sventurata*, 58-59.

⁵³³ Statistica del regno d'Italia, *Istruzione pubblica e privata. Istruzione privata* referenced in De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 192.

⁵³⁴ Simonetta Soldani, "The Conflict Between Church and State in Italy on Primary Education in the Period Following Unification (1860-1877)," in *L'Offre d'École*, ed. Willem Frijhoff (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983), 100-102.

forbidden from having any contact with non-Catholic students, whose religious upbringing was to be determined by their families.⁵³⁵

Another secularization strategy was to transform already functioning convent schools into State institutions. The Royal Conservatory of San Giovanni Battista in Pistoia, which had operated as a school for local girls from the late eighteenth century, was brought under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1867 and turned into a State elementary school in 1872, thereby fulfilling the educational obligations of the local commune. Alongside this new inferior level elementary school, a private teacher-training institute began in the old convent to prepare pupils for the inferior level licensing examination. In 1883, the Conservatory, by then recognized as having a lay nature, without religious qualities or private instruction, was declared a public educational institute, converting the *scuola magistrale* into a *normale inferiore*. With the addition of a Froebelian kindergarten to accompany the elementary *tirocinio*, and an elevation to the status of a superior level normal school, the renamed *R. Scuola normale femminile "Atto Vannucci"* successfully transitioned from a convent school to a full, secular State normal school. In 1912, the director of the school claimed that rather than simply having accepted the inevitable State takeover of magisterial functions, the nuns had actually embraced this transformation as part of the process of preparing future teachers, as the "Institute had gradually come to desire more experience with outside life and healthy pedagogical principles."⁵³⁶

Even with the conversion of religious entities to secular institutes, ecclesiastics continued to direct education in many regions, particularly in the former Papal States. School inspector

⁵³⁵ *Regolamento interno del convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale femminile "Rosa Stampa" in Vercelli* (Vercelli: Tip. e Lit. Guidetti e Comp., 1890), 13.

⁵³⁶ V.C. Sommariva-Tesi, *Monastero di S. Giovanni Battista/R. Conservatorio di S. Giovanni Battista/R. Scuola Normale Femminile "Atto Vannucci" in Pistoia: Notizia Storica* (Pistoia: Stabilimento Tipografico Niccolai, 1912), 14-23.

Maria Conti Jonni lamented the continued dominance of religious teachers in 1896; finding only 67 secular institutes among the 291 she visited in Abruzzo, Umbria, and Emilia, Conti Jonni concluded that this lingering religious dominance was due to the late laicization of the former Church holdings, combined with a conviction among many families that private religious schools could best teach domestic skills and religion.⁵³⁷

Conti Jonni's pejorative attitude toward nuns as naïve, unintelligent, and lacking in the skills (and hygiene) to properly train young women was a common sentiment. The 1906 diary of Concetta Ferrara, a young teacher from Pavia, condemns the strict moral control to which teachers were subjected: "But what do you want, I feel like yelling, that the teacher become a nun? Above all, my girls, the nun is an egotistical being, who despises life and bans love and thus thinks only about herself, while the teacher lives altruistically and when she cannot form her own family, can perform the miracle of maternity without being married."⁵³⁸

Rural Concerns

Even by the turn of the century, with populations in Rome, Milan, Turin, and Genoa growing dramatically, Italy remained a rural country, with 80% of the population living in towns or villages with fewer than 30,000 people.⁵³⁹ Concerns over cultural and economic differences between urban and rural populations extended into the area of teacher training. While poorer regions like Campania could boast the occasional celebrated institutions like the female normal

⁵³⁷ Maria Conti Jonni, *L'educazione femminile in Italia: Studi e proposte* (Rome: Tipografia di Pacifico Antonini, 1896), 3, 18.

⁵³⁸ Concetta Ferrara, *Dal diario di una maestra* (Pavia: Caio Rossetti, 1906), 25.

⁵³⁹ Bolton King, "Statistics of Italy," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 66, no. 2 (June 1903), 217.

school in Capua⁵⁴⁰, the rural interior lacked access to well-trained teachers, and had to rely on the services of religious institutes or hastily licensed *privatiste*.

Professor Gastaldi acknowledged the superiority of State *normale* trained teachers over the more common private and religiously trained instructors, claiming that nuns “approach the school like a one room novitiate” and have little understanding of students’ lives; however, he claimed that teachers with urban training “often bring with them the luxury of the city and practices contrary to the customs of the agricultural classes and are not often sought after or held in high esteem.” Gastaldi argued that rural schools required rural specialists and pushed for the establishment of rural normal schools that would train local teachers and better prepare instructors for the rural populace.⁵⁴¹ For most pedagogues, such instructional adaptations included lessons in local agriculture, increased emphasis on hygiene and home economics, and inculcation of national geography, history, and Italian language, all adapted to local conditions and culture.⁵⁴²

Teachers also had to confront resistance to the imposition of obligatory schooling and a lack of cooperation among local authorities unwilling to assist agents of the State. Teachers with rural backgrounds or training were praised as more closely adhering to local norms regarding morality and dress and less likely to be seen as transgressive to peasant families. The pedagogical congress that met in Genoa in 1868 echoed such sentiments, claiming that rural

⁵⁴⁰ A. Bellentani, *La scuola normale femminile di Capua a sua eccellenza il signor Ministro di pubblica istruzione* (Naples: Società A. Bellisario e C., 1886). In 1866, a female *normale* was instituted in Capua and a male *normale* in Caserta. Capua enjoyed favorable comparisons to institutions like the superlative *Annunziata* in Florence.

⁵⁴¹ Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento*, 7, 11.

⁵⁴² Enrichetta Laurenti Parodi, *Lezioni di pedagogia in conformità del programma ministeriale: Parte III, per la terza classe normale e per le maestre elementari*, Vol. III (Florence: R. Bemporad e Figlio Edit., 1901), 4-5.

normali were best suited to create teachers that would “remain humble, modest, and dressed according to the country style and aligned with the decorum and support of the local families”⁵⁴³

A 1887 letter from the Ministry of Public Instruction to the director of the female normal school in Modena recognized the difficulties that faced the school’s graduates in their future teaching posts, slowing the implementation of desired reforms in rural areas, including “the poverty and distress of the place...the ignorance of the families, the indolence and indifference, the lack of help from influential citizens.”⁵⁴⁴

Such concerns about a lack of rural suitability both in pedagogy and temperament should be coupled with the perennial shortage of licensed teachers in rural areas, mainly due to lack of interest among *normale* graduates to accept positions in rural communes that were even worse paid and less stable than urban positions. Several reform initiatives were instituted to improve both the number and quality of State-trained teachers. The male normal school in Nuoro, begun in 1880 as a rural magisterial school and transformed into an inferior level *normale* in 1883, was elevated to a superior status in 1890, allowing the institute to train teachers of the upper elementary level and attract candidates from across Sardinia.⁵⁴⁵ In 1911, the Ministry of Public Education introduced another strategy, the establishment of biennial courses in isolated regions without normal schools. Open to graduates of the *ginnasio*, this co-ed program granted elementary degrees and emphasized pedagogy, morality, and national history

⁵⁴³ *Atti del quinto congresso pedagogico italiano tenuto in Genova nel settembre 1868* (Genova: 1868), 124-25, quoted in Carmela Covato, “Una bella vestina color caffè: Istruzione, identità femminile e abito negli ultimi decenni dell’800,” in *Abito e Identità: Ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*, ed. Cristina Giorelli (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1995), 171.

⁵⁴⁴ Geminiano Corazziari, *Scuola normale femminile in Modena: Relazione dell'anno scolastico 1886-87* (Modena: Tipografia Domenico Tonietto, 1887), 9.

⁵⁴⁵ Ildebrando Bencivenni, *Nel 14 Marzo 1890, natalizio di S. M. Umberto I., inaugurandosi l'elevazione a superiore della R. Scuola normale maschile di Nuoro a cui le signore nuoresi offrivano la bandiera nazionale* (Cagliari: Tipografia Editrice Dell'avvenire di Sardegna, 1890), 11.

and language, as well as training in the teaching of manual work, agriculture, and home economics.⁵⁴⁶

Convitti

In order to attract and maintain large numbers of young, non-resident pupils to the normal school, the State set up a system of convenient, morally secure surrogate housing. Article Nine of an 1861 decree ruled that the provincial school board inspect and approve the institution of boarding schools, ensuring that the *convitti* meet required standards of hygiene and discipline where students could receive subsidized room and board according to merit and financial need.⁵⁴⁷ Admission into the *convitto* was contingent upon acceptance in the *normale*, the *complementare* (a preparatory course between elementary and normale), or the upper levels of the elementary schools, with students usually ranging in age from nine to 20 years old. Applicants had to provide an affidavit of good moral conduct from their home city as well as a bill of good health and vaccination.

The local and regional school boards were charged with the selection of directors and personnel, who often overlapped with employees of the normal school. The perceived problems in maintaining order, discipline, and decorum led to the appointment of a director (*direttrice*), and often vice-director and rotating student assistant, specifically hired to enforce values and behavioral norms under orders from the director of the normal school. The director position required the precise observance of all regulations, student development, and enforcement of academic rigor. The director was also entrusted with guiding her charges in the acquisition of

⁵⁴⁶ *Legge concernente la istituzione di corsi magistrali in comuni sedi di ginnasi isolati e privi di scuola normale* (Napoli: Casa Editrice E. Pietrocola, 1911).

⁵⁴⁷ ACS, *FSS I*, 133.

polite behavior and training in the required skills of both teachers and good mothers, such as household budgeting and management.⁵⁴⁸ While the director was generally placed in charge of monitoring student-teacher behavior, the nature of the position varied dramatically from one institution to another. The published regulations of the various *convitti* include descriptions of the role of director, ranging from a morally rigid prison warden as in Avellino⁵⁴⁹ to a maternal monitoring of polite behavior, as in Perugia.⁵⁵⁰

The creation of an assistant teacher position was intended to further foster morality and order in both the *normale* and *convitto*. Younger than directors or *normale* instructors, these assistants were to lead by example, dressing and acting modestly and protecting pupils from vice: “The *maestra assistente* helps in the school, dividing work with the director, enforcing discipline, inculcating respect and deference toward teachers, speaking of them with much reverence in front of the students and not tolerating bad acts and words.” In return for her diligence, the assistant teacher was promised training as a future mother and wife, capable of conversing with her husband about scientific matters while also able to “sew a shirt, stitch a tablecloth, and patch a pair of underpants.”⁵⁵¹ She would also have the satisfaction of helping society “in preparing strong women with spirits ready to bring them to the highest mountaintop schools, calling out devotion to god, country, and the law.”⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ “Regolamento del convitto annesso alla scuola normale femminile di Firenze” in *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵⁴⁹ *Regolamento del convitto provinciale annesso alla R. Scuola normale femminile di Avellino* (Avellino: Tipo-litografia Tulimiero e C., 1887).

⁵⁵⁰ *Regolamento disciplinare pel convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Perugia* (Perugia: Tip. Boncompagni, 1887).

⁵⁵¹ Eugenia Pavanetto, *Importanza della Maestra Assistente nella scuola normale* (Lucca: Lib. e Cart. Baroni, 1901), 25.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 17.

As residences for students as young as nine years old, the enforcement of morality was a major concern expressed not only in the published institutional regulations, but also in the diaries of students and advice given to young prospects. In a letter to Laura, a young student in 1878, veteran teacher Maria Gazzone advised concern for both the enforcement and appearance of morality: “Our duties include being irreproachable; Laura, my dear, it is not enough to *be*, it is also necessary to *seem* honest and good.”⁵⁵³ With no normal school near Laura’s family, Gazzone recommended that Laura “live in a *convitto*, but make sure that it is well respected. A *convitto* must be only this: a practical school of every virtue, of civic honesty, modesty, and sound knowledge.”⁵⁵⁴

The hyper-vigilance dictated by such concerns for propriety led to tight regulations of clothing, correspondence, and behavior. The *convitto* attached to the *scuola normale femminile* of Florence ordered that “no letter can be send or received without passing through the hands of the director; letters written to parents can be sealed while those to other parties must be left open. Received letters must always be opened in the presence of the director.”⁵⁵⁵ Regulations at male *convitti* reveal similar concerns over discipline and didactic uniformity. The *convitto* attached to the Sanginesio superior male *normale* prescribed the confiscation of suspicious letters, but did not enforce a family-only correspondence, as in many of the female institutes.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Maria Gazzone, *Lettere ad una giovane maestra. Visita ad una scuola, 1875*. 2 ed. (Montepulciano: Teodoro Fumi, editore, 1878), 27.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵⁵ “Regolamento del convitto annesso alla scuola normale femminile di Firenze” in ACS, *FSS I: L'istruzione normale dalla legge Casati all'età giolittiana*, 139.

⁵⁵⁶ *Regia Scuola normale maschile superiore con convitto in Sanginesio. Annuario per l'anno scolastico, 1888-1889* (Sanginesio: Tipografia di F. Guidoni, 1889), 31.

The desire to protect and morally regulate the students within the walls of the *convitto* extended to a rigid hiring and behavioral policy for employees. The 1894 regulations for the *convitto* of the *normale* in Avezzano prohibited the hiring of any service people not of the highest moral character as well as any fraternization between workers and students.⁵⁵⁷ The Florentine regulations noted that “service people discovered having clandestine conversations of any nature with students will be immediately fired.”⁵⁵⁸ This monitoring of outside contact extended even to the members of the local school boards and State education authorities, whose visits were to be conducted only in the presence of the director.⁵⁵⁹

Moral dangers were to be prevented from entering through the ranks of the enrolled students themselves. The 1898 list of regulations for the *convitto* in Vercelli forbade the entrance of both married and widowed women, a stipulation not enumerated in other *convitto* institutional regulation guides but potentially due to the possibility of destabilizing elements within the ranks of young, protected pupils.⁵⁶⁰ Praise was lavished among those students able to resist sinister influences. Luigia Ferrari, a celebrated teacher from the Marche region, was admired for her moral fortitude during her professional education, resisting “insidious temptations like gambling

⁵⁵⁷ G. Contesini, *Regolamento del convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale Maria Clotilde di Savoia in Avezzano* (Lanciano: Tip. Dello Stabilimento Rocco Carabba, 1894), 7.

⁵⁵⁸ “Regolamento del convitto annesso alla scuola normale femminile di Firenze” in ACS, *FSS I*, 139.

⁵⁵⁹ *Regolamento interno del convitto annesso alla R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di S. Pietro al Nativone* (Cividale: Tipografia Editrice G. Fulvio, 1896), 8.

⁵⁶⁰ *Collegio convitto femminile annesso alla R. Scuola normale "Rosa Stampa" in Vercelli. Istruzioni e programma* (Vercelli: Stabilimento Tipolitografico Librario Chiaia, 1898), 5. Such a prohibition is absent in the 1890 internal report of the same institution.

and devious enticements of fleeting pleasure” by associating with the good students and “wisely avoiding the weak and negligent.”⁵⁶¹

The need for discipline extended to the male *convitti*, where threats of violence were added to the fears of immorality and disrespect feared in the female institutes. In the 1863 report of the *Scuola normale maschile* of Sassari, Bartolomeo Fontana, the vice director of the *convitto*, called for multiple changes to the overcrowded institute, including a disciplinary room equipped with only a desk, bread and water, since the previous punishments, restricting walks and military exercises, had proved ineffective. Fontana also called for a new recreational room that would relieve overcrowding and tension, and allow for a courtyard where students could smoke, a vice not wisely suppressed in older students.⁵⁶²

The elaborate list of regulations common to both male and female *convitti* was not limited to concerns about sexual modesty. The *convitti* were essential sites for the continued nationalizing and civilizing processes introduced in the classroom. The male students at the *normale* in Sanginesio were expressly forbidden from using dialect or language that would “offend modesty or decency,”⁵⁶³ an exhortation common to the bylaws of nearly all *convitti*. In Alessandria, female residents “should strive to be civilized and urbane but at the same time reserved and modest.” The dining hall in particular, was portrayed as an exercise in polite society

⁵⁶¹ Onorio Vidale, *In occasione della consegna della medaglia d'oro di benemerenza alla maestra Ferrari Luigia* (Foligno: Reale Casa Editrice Feliciano Campitelli, 1912), 4-5.

⁵⁶² Bartolomeo Fontana, “Relazione finale del vice-direttore sull’andamento del convitto annesso alla scuola normale maschile di Sassari (1863),” in ACS, *FSS I*, 135.

⁵⁶³ *Regia Scuola normale maschile superiore con convitto in Sanginesio. Annuario per l'anno scolastico, 1888-1889* (Sanginesio: Tipografia di F. Guidoni, 1889), 30.

as students were instructed to “follow all of the roles of civility laid out by Galateo: keep your assigned place clean, avoid waste, and converse quietly.”⁵⁶⁴

Because the residents of the *convitti* varied in age, origin, and social position, the enforcement of rigid norms was of central importance. Historian Carmela Covato notes that the “quasi-claustral character” of the institutes “excluded the echoes of the nascent emancipationist tensions, including knowledge of behavior that fell outside dominant stereotypical confines.”⁵⁶⁵ In exchange for the promise of social advancement through education and future employment, students agreed to the norms of the institution: uniformity, modesty, and simplicity. The rigid regulations of the *convitto*, similar to those of the convent school it helped to usurp, reveal the normal school as not only a professional training school, but a locus of social control, behavioral modification, and nationalist inculcation.

The Dual Role of the Normal School

Mounting expectations for teachers were coupled with the rising entrance standards to the teaching-certificate endowing normal schools, elevating them to the same quality as other, more elite or expensive secondary schools.⁵⁶⁶ Thus, many women who did not intend to become teachers entered the normal school in the absence of secondary schools or due to the prohibitive cost of private institutions.⁵⁶⁷ This dual role was noted well before the establishment of State

⁵⁶⁴ *Regolamento interno del convitto femminile annesso alla R. Scuola normale del comune di Alessandria* (Alessandria: Tip. G.M. Piccone, 1898), 5-6.

⁵⁶⁵ Carmela Covato, “Una bella vestina color caffè: Istruzione, identità femminile e abito negli ultimi decenni dell’800,” in *Abito e Identità: Ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*, ed. Cristina Giorelli (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1995), 166-69.

⁵⁶⁶ De Fort, *Storia della scuola elementare in Italia*, 208-09.

⁵⁶⁷ Pasquale Villari, “Le scuole normali,” in *Rassegna Settimanale*, Vol. IV, 1879, 181-82.

normali under the 1859 Casati law. The first public teacher training school, established in Turin in 1849 with the goal of improving education in the Kingdom of Sardinia, had two goals from the outset: forming teachers and good mothers: “Only if scholastic and common education has a secure correspondence between the familiar and private, can it hope to realize the heights of its desired effects on young women.”⁵⁶⁸

The teacher shortages that followed reforms aimed at secularization or expansion of compulsory education often precipitated calls for more emphasis on the primary task of the *normali*, the preparation of teachers. However, the lack of suitable and affordable secondary alternatives coupled with increased demands for female education meant that the normal school continued to play a twofold function. On the occasion of the renaming of Parma’s *Normale superiore femminile* in 1891, the institute’s director noted that the increased attention to domestic economics had aided in the increased happiness of the Italian family and nation and that *normali* had “radically changed the conditions of our Italy, as now a woman was better able to carry out her mission either in the family or in the school, rendering herself useful to society without taking up the civic roles more suited to men.” Thus, the graduates of the Parma school, recognized as among the nation’s best, would be well prepared to enter the teaching career, pursue specialized study to teach at secondary schools, or to perform the highest office as women-as educators to their own children.⁵⁶⁹

By the late-nineteenth century, not only had teaching become heavily dominated by maternal rhetoric, theory, and practice, but motherhood influenced by education. While earlier

⁵⁶⁸ April 26, 1849 report, quoted in Matteo Miraglia, *La Scuola femminile "Domenico Berti" nell'educazione dell'insegnamento normale durante il cinquecento storico 1848-98* (Turin: Stabilimento Tipografico Giuseppe Patrino, 1898), 142.

⁵⁶⁹ Abele Ferreri and Giuseppe Beduzzi, *Intitolandosi dal nome di Antonietta Tommasini la R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Parma: 17 Dicembre 1891* (Parma: Casa Editrice L. Battei, 1892), 17, 15.

maternalism espoused a natural, instinctive emotional connection between mother and child, the influence of positivist science and the growth of education, professional training was seen as beneficial. In an 1889 speech to her student teachers, Ernestina Gemme, the head of the Piacenza normal school, insisted that not only should teachers be like good mothers, but also good mothers be like good teachers. A supposed natural inclination for mothering was inadequate: “For a woman to be a good mother, it is insufficient for her to understand the running of a home, to be skilled in *lavori donneschi*, to possess a bit culture; it is necessary for her to educate her children.” While the *normale*’s dual role was often criticized as hampering the professionalization of the career, Gemme’s conclusions reflect the increasing importance of teaching to the State, the rising esteem of instruction and instructors, and a changing view of motherhood: “It is true that Providence has gifted women with an exquisite aptitude for education; however, their work will be uncertain, flawed, incomplete, even harmful, if this aptitude is not supported and guided by educational science.”⁵⁷⁰

Although many theorists, directors, parents, and pupils praised the formal training in domestic skills offered to future wives and mothers in the *normali* as an attractive byproduct of the institution’s official function, the ongoing criticisms about the low quality of primary schools and stubborn illiteracy rates led to calls for professionalization of the *normali* and a return to the stated purpose of formal teacher training. While professionalization for some theorists meant increased rigor and methodological instruction, other critics interpreted it as an opportunity to return to a more conservative outlook about the potential of women’s education. Francesco Gastaldi argued that most women lack the capacity for real genius and should focus their

⁵⁷⁰ Ernestina Gemme, *Parole dette nell'occasione del saggio di canto, dato il 27 giugno 1889 dalle allieve della R. Scuola normale superiore femminile di Piacenza* (Piacenza: Tipografia Marchesotti, 1889), 8.

energies on improving their utility to society, narrowing the scope of their education toward subjects needed to teach children:

There is actually too much studying in normal schools, which just creates encyclopedias who lack profound understanding of that which relates to childhood education. The normal schools teach math, grammar, pedagogy, science, history, metaphysics, and astronomy. All these subjects are wonderful to learn, but should normal schools be teaching them?⁵⁷¹

While he would disagree with Gastaldi that the rigor of the *normale* curriculum should be lowered, Omobono Buzzi, director of a northern Lombard *scuola normale*, did bemoan the fact that the normal school did not function purely as a teacher training institute. Writing in 1912, when women were kept out of other secondary schools not by law but by custom or geographical inaccessibility, Buzzi lamented the lack of other secondary alternatives for women and insisted that the *normali* return to their intended goal:

Even today, the *normale* is bound almost exclusively to the secondary education of women. The dual scope of the *normale* hurts the ideals of pedagogical culture and order in the schools. It is true that the culture imparted by the *normale* does contribute to the formation of good mothers as teachers to their own children, but all of the organization and spirit of the *Istituto magistrale femminile* should be directed toward the pedagogical and professional preparation of future teachers, without any distraction.⁵⁷²

Buzzi, whose institution had recently been made co-educational, applauded the reforms in the normal school system, recognizing the need for the system to adapt to changing social needs. For Buzzi, the opening of all secondary institutions would allow for the *normali* to resume their original function as teacher training institutes. Buzzi saw the effect of reforms as progressive and beneficial, “inspiring even among the men more gentle and moral sentiments and enlivening love for study.” For Buzzi, feminization of the teaching career was tied to the triumph of progress:

⁵⁷¹ Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento*, 5-6.

⁵⁷² Omobono Buzzi, *La R. Scuola normale promiscua "Candida Lena-Perpenti", commemorando il suo primo semisecolare giubileo* (Tirano: Tip. Fiorentini e C., 1912), 47

“Women and female teachers must be the force that advances the people to understand and participate in the universal progress discovered by positivist science, progress that must embrace life in all its manifestations, needs, and reproduce and renovate it.”⁵⁷³

Despite the fears of moral outrage over co-education, the predicted mass exodus of scandalized women from the institutes did not materialize. In 1908-09, the year before co-education, Buzzi’s institute had 58 female students at the *normale* level; 1909-10 brought 72 women and 4 men. By the second year of mixed sexes, the institute had 77 women and 11 men. The younger *complementare* classes, which remained for women only, also maintained steady matriculation.⁵⁷⁴

Such results were slow to follow the reforms in most parts of the country, where the opening of secondary schools to women did not necessarily mean that their availability or reception to female pupils was immediate. The *normale* continued to appeal to both men and women who sought educational careers or simply continued instruction or social grooming. The Sicilian town of Modica appealed for the opening of a mixed *normale* in 1913, a request that prompted pedagogue Michele Guerrieri to judge the applicants based on gender and class:

There are [wealthy] young men whose limited intellectual energies prevent prolonged serious study and there are young [poorer] men eager for immediate, practical results for their honest sustenance; young [working class] women with honest, saintly ambitions to improve their social position and young women that insist on acculturation appropriate to their [wealthy] social condition.⁵⁷⁵

The Italian Federation of Middle School Teachers, of which Guerrieri was a member, was unanimous in its support for a new *normale* in the province of Siracusa, creating “an important professional school to educate teachers with faith and modern sentiments; to smooth the path for

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 99, 101.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁷⁵ Michele Guerrieri, *Per la scuola normale* (Modica: Stab. Tip. G. Maltese, 1913), 11.

poorer students unable to get other diplomas and give them access to a modest, but noble, elevated, and civil position; and to aid patrician families in elevating the culture and education of their daughters.” While advocating a professional school, the Federation continued to support the *normale* as beneficial to Sicilian society and to the development of non-professional women: “We will make it easier to elevate the culture of young women, who while not aspiring to the teaching license, desire the continuation of their studies.”⁵⁷⁶

Despite reforms meant to professionalize the teaching field by opening up to women other paths to continued education, the normal school retained its position as a socially acceptable avenue for acculturation. Maria Conti Jonni argued that this dual role was detrimental to both the teaching aspirants and the general education seekers in the *normale*. A major hurdle to meaningful reform was the exclusion of any other career for young bourgeois women. Conti Jonni referred to the *normale* as a “teacher factory,” attracting pupils who have no other career options and producing graduates with little affinity for the vocation. She saw a solution in “the creation of a *scuola tecnica* or at least a reduction of such students in the *normale*. By *tecnica*, I don’t mean what we have now, but a real technical training in the arts, particularly *lavori donneschi*.”⁵⁷⁷ Such an institution, which ultimately failed to attract students due to its clear purpose as a terminal institution, would be created by Giovanni Gentile’s 1923 reforms.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Federazione nazionale fra gli insegnanti della scuole medie, *Relazione sull'opera compiuta dalla sezione federale per la scuola normale e complementare a Modica* (Modica, 1913), 22-23.

⁵⁷⁷ Conti Jonni, *L'Educazione femminile in Italia: Studi e proposte*, 23.

⁵⁷⁸ By closing the 153 *normali* and replacing them with 87 *istituti magistrali*, the Fascist regime sought to remove normal schools’ function as low-cost higher education institutes for non-teaching women. Women were redirected toward the *liceo femminile*, finishing schools for bourgeois women teaching language, arts, and domestic economy. Just as the *scuola complementare* was rejected by the lower classes, the *liceo femminile* was rejected by the middle classes; the schools closed in 1928 after just 471 girls enrolled. See Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 153.

Men Flee the Field

Until the normal schools were made co-educational beginning in 1909-1910, male and female normal schools and *convitti* were under similar regulations with slight differences in policy and practice as set by De Sanctis' 1862 regulations. Differences included minimum age of admission, women at 15, men at 16; supplemental courses, home economics for women, gymnastics and military training for men; and additional faculty assigned to women's schools in charge of moral guidance and domestic skills. There were also differences in the positions available following graduation-women were restricted from teaching the higher elementary levels in male schools, and men could not teach in nursery schools.

As many male normal schools closed due to a lack of applicants, others were promoted from inferior to superior classification. Two such promotions warranted local revelry and public address, as well as the publication of celebratory pamphlets, a rare occasion compared with the spate of publication emanating from female schools. The speeches reveal a number of differences between male and female teacher training, both rhetorically and pedagogically. In contrast to the invocations of maternal missions of devotion employed in addresses to female students, the elevation of a male normal school in Cagliari was feted with military metaphors: "The heroic cycle of our Risorgimento has closed, the cycle of hard work and peace is calmly developing, and the school is fulfilling this process."⁵⁷⁹

The promotion of the Sanginesio normal school from inferior to superior was prompted by the closing of the other male *normale* in the Marche region. While the list of regulations appeared similar to those in female schools, with an emphasis on the teaching of hygiene, character formation, and household skills, there was a significant addition to the study list not

⁵⁷⁹ Bencivenni, *Nel 14 Marzo 1890*, 8-9.

found in female schools. The young men, who could enter the preparatory level at age 14 or the *normale* level at 16, were to be instructed in “rights and duties 1) to himself and his family 2) to society and justice 3) to the State.”⁵⁸⁰ Such lessons served two functions: first, they replaced the moral lacuna left by the removal of religious instruction; second, they helped to train the next generation in both the changing social and political climate represented by the gradual opening of the electorate.

Even before low enrollment led to the shuttering of the two aforementioned male normal schools, the debate over the superiority of male or female instructors was heated. A 1866 educational reform bill argued that women make better teachers simply because they are more readily available:

It can be estimated that a percentage of the male teachers will leave due to military service. Others will leave the profession to pursue easier, more lucrative fields; others will aim for positions in wealthier cities with more generous stipends. This desertion from teaching is not found in the same percentage in female teachers. Women, finding it difficult to locate better employment than that offered by teaching, rarely refuse it or leave it for other employment.⁵⁸¹

The lack of other suitable employment, according to this line of reasoning, made women the ideal candidates. Arguing for fewer, better schools with raised salary minimums for teachers, the proposal called for the reduction of male normal schools from 20 to 8 and reduction of female schools from 21 to 12.⁵⁸²

Thirty years after this call for a reduction of male *normale*, well after the tide of feminization had swept through both male and female elementary instruction, reaction to the

⁵⁸⁰ *Regia Scuola normale maschile superiore con convitto in Sanginesio. Annuario per l'anno scolastico, 1888-1889* (Sanginesio: Tipografia di F. Guidoni, 1889), 13-14.

⁵⁸¹ “Relazione sulle riforme proposte per le Scuole Normale di allievi-maestri e allieve-maestre,” Ministero della pubblica istruzione, *Documenti sull'ordinamento delle scuole* (Florence: Tipografia Cavour, 1866), 176.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 206.

seeming desertion of men from the teaching career prompted some critics to call for a return to male-dominated schools. Ignoring both the last three decades of the feminization process and the fact that, unlike in Germany, modern education had never been a position of high status in Italy, Pietro Meloni, himself a teacher in a male normal school, protested initiatives by the current Minister of Public Instruction, Ferdinand Martini (1892-1893) to close male institutes and entrust superior level male education to female teachers: “Every Province should have a male institute and every other one a female (or fewer) to alleviate two problems—the lack of male teachers and the over-supply of female teachers that augment the number of displacements. By this I do not mean that I wish to restrict the culture of women, who can still get an education in the classical and technical school. To each his place.”⁵⁸³ As noted in Chapter Three, while classical and technical secondary schools began to admit female students in 1883, popular resistance made female matriculation rare and controversial.

For other pedagogical theorists, feminization was not the result of a lack of male normal schools or an overly enthusiastic female population, but the lack of options available for male graduates. Eugenio Cerreto, pedagogical instructor at the male superior normal school in Saluzzo, claimed that male normal school graduates lacked access to university courses or employment beyond primary education. Not only were they at a disadvantage in comparison to other secondary school graduates, but also in comparison to graduates of the female normal schools, who could go on to classes at the superior magisterial schools and then to highly respected positions within secondary teaching. Ultimately, Cerreto concluded, male and female

⁵⁸³ Pietro Meloni, *La nuova scuola normale italiana* (Sassari: Pre. Stab. Tip. G. Dessi, 1893), 27.

normal institutes should be combined and improved, noting that all other secondary schools were coeducational and yet managed to function.⁵⁸⁴

Feminization

The *scuola normale* served a central role in several crucial developments of the late nineteenth century. It prepared lay teachers under a curriculum devised by the national government, helping to drive the secularization and centralization of the new State. Teachers were trained in the latest scientific pedagogy while also inculcated with the values of republican motherhood, and sent out to often isolated schoolrooms as agents of the civilizing, normalizing national government, bringing with them the literacy, linguistic uniformity, and industrious, subservient values sought by the modernizing State. The institution also served as a catalyst for radical change in the lives of tens of thousands of young women; teaching provided extra-domestic employment judged suitable for the rising, striving lower bourgeoisie, a position that allowed for both greater individual economic and social mobility, but also access to a public role in an increasingly democratic society.

Although rhetoric about women's roles was far from universally progressive, the debate was advanced, with women coming increasingly into positions that allowed them to participate publicly, through the burgeoning educational press, local positions of authority, and in a women's emancipationist movement dominated by public schoolteachers. Female teachers became instrumental in redefining notions of female identity and challenging traditional concepts of their place in the public sphere, a process that began in the *normale*.

⁵⁸⁴ Eugenio Cerreto, *I problemi della scuola. Su la riforma della scuola normale* (Saluzzo: Ditta Edit. Giulio Bovo, 1907), 96, 100.

Conclusion

The half-century between the institution of the Italian school system in 1859 and its full assumption by the State in 1911 brought a shift from a tentative, decentralized system focused on the creation of a bureaucratic elite to a nationalized, coeducational system interested in the popular education of all citizens. The passing of early twentieth-century reform bills, leading up to and including the 1911 Daneo-Credaro law, brought all schools under the financial and administrative control of the Ministry of Public Instruction, organized through provincial scholastic councils; this allowed for the realization of many of the attempted reforms of the previous decades, including the extension of mandatory instruction to six years. This confirmation of the popular focus of State education was accompanied by salary parity for male and female teachers, a result of the efforts of the *Unione Magistrale Nazionale* (National Teacher's Union), the success of progressive pedagogy, and the profound feminization of the elementary school on the eve of the Great War.

While there had been little popular demand for education in 1859, by the turn of the century, all classes were clamoring for improved economic and social conditions through access to the school. This was particularly felt in the large numbers of pupils entering the technical secondary school, which promised entry into engineering and technical trades. Sociologist Marzio Barbagli contends that Giovanni Gentile's 1923 reforms would be motivated by a reaction to this overproduction of intellectuals and a desire to restore balance to the labor market. The open system of the Casati law, in which many education avenues led toward advancement, created secondary schools and universities that produced too many educated people entering oversaturated job fields, frustrating the professional classes who suffered from lower prestige and salary with the increase in competition, creating a 'misfit' class of graduates with degrees

but no satisfactory employment, and bloating the bureaucracy to pacify the demands of the intellectual unemployed.⁵⁸⁵ New educational and labor data and analysis, however, show that the public administration market did not grow by a significant proportion and in fact created further regional disequilibrium rather than a bloating of the staffing levels; while the overall number of professionals remained constant, lawyers came to dominate in the South and engineers in the North.⁵⁸⁶

As Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti (PM 1892-1893, 1903-1905, 1906-1909, 1911-1914, 1920-1921) attempted to create alliances with Socialists and Catholics, he recognized the need to expand his political base. The 1911 war in Libya, the granting of full manhood suffrage in 1912, and the growing threat of political extremism and dissatisfaction, exemplified by the 1900 assassination of King Umberto I by an anarchist, further emphasized the need to control the formation of citizenship and identity through the school. Another impetus for the nationalization of education was the persistent illiteracy in the South. While literacy rates had improved in the North, the South remained highly illiterate. In 1911, the Northern regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, and Veneto had literacy rates of 89.9, 86.6, 83, and 74.8 percent, respectively; the Central regions of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, and Le Marche had rates of 67.3, 62.6, 51.4, and 49.3 percent; and the Southern and island regions of Campania, Calabria, Sicily, and Sardinia had rates of 46.3, 30.4, 42, and 42 percent.⁵⁸⁷

Illiteracy rates were not the only statistic denoting the uneven development of the North and South. Due to differences in both natural resources and government and foreign investment,

⁵⁸⁵ Marzio Barbagli, *Educating for Unemployment: Politics, Labor Markets, and the School System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 129.

⁵⁸⁶ See Andrea Cammelli, "Universities and Professions," in *Society and the Professions in Italy, 1860-1914*, ed. Maria Malatesta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸⁷ Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1997), 36.

industrial development had concentrated mainly in the Northwest. According to the 1911 census, 55% of industrial capacity was in Genoa, Turin, Milan; 29% in the NE and Center; only 16% in all of the South, mostly around Naples. The takeover of the school by the State was part of an overall effort to increase government funding and intervention in the underdeveloped areas of the country. As the State expenditure for primary schools increased from 4.33 million lire in 1898-1899 to 50 million lire in 1911-1912, the communes were granted substantial financial relief.⁵⁸⁸

In addition to educational and economic disparities, the State takeover under the Daneo-Credaro law was also tied to the persistent problem of a lack of Italian national identity and a growing concern over political and social division. In a 1910 parliamentary session, Radical Deputy Luigi Fera argued that only a State-controlled school could guarantee the cultural and moral unity of the country against “grievous differences of regions and class.”⁵⁸⁹ Fera’s comment also reflects the concern among both Liberals and the Left about the resurgent influence of the Church following Pope Pius X’s tacit suspension of the *non expedit* policy. The assumption of the school by the State entailed pedagogical, financial, and administrative oversight over all schools, including private, religious institutions.

In addition to the effects of domestic and international pedagogy, changes in the State’s efforts to create a civil society and Italian identity, and economic developments that led to increased popular interest in education, there were significant changes in the role of women in both education and society. In 1909, Reformist Professor Alessandra Gariboldi noted that the school had not been the only site of significant evolution. She praised the efforts of past advocates of women’s rights: “We affectionately salute the women of the past, because without

⁵⁸⁸ Ester De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall’Unità alla caduta del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 304.

⁵⁸⁹ Luigi Fera, June 29, 1910, quoted in *Ibid.*, 236.

them we could not possibly have proposed such radical reforms in female education. There trials brought us to this point.” The previous generations of “sweet, womanly figures of the past...lived in a period in which society demanded from women a mission of love, which required, in practice, much humble sacrifice in a time during which a family could support itself on just the economic labor of a husband or father.” However, changes in economic conditions, industry, and the “new fervor of science, art, civilization,” had led to an “anxious, agitated society” that demanded new roles from women.⁵⁹⁰ Social and economic developments, including the lowering of birth-rates, the introduction of maternity funds, and the rise of consumer culture, brought greater educational and employment options for women.

Feminization and the Liberal State

In 1879, Professor Francesco Gastaldi wrote, “Women should transform the school; their reflection should convert the severe school into a nurturing, domestic environment. Thus, the teacher would also educate herself to the position of mother and the spirit of family.”⁵⁹¹ By 1911, such a transformation had been realized.

Between the beginning of public schooling in the 1860s and the First World War, the image of the female teacher evolved from a deviant figure, avoiding her natural destiny as a wife and mother, to a protagonist in the growing scope of the schooling project, embracing her

⁵⁹⁰ Alessandrina Gariboldi, *L'Educazione e l'istruzione della donna in Italia. Relazione al primo Congresso di attività praticaa femminile tenuto a Milano nel maggio 1908* (Reggio-Emilia: Cooperativo lavoratori Tipografi e Aftini, 1909), 3-5.

⁵⁹¹ Francesco Gastaldi, *Sulla necessità di riordinamento delle scuole normali e sulla istituzione delle scuole professionali femminili: discorso del professor Francesco Gastaldi letto in occasione della distribuzione dei premi alle allieve delle scuole elementari e della scuola normale femminile in Novara, novembre 1879* (Novara: Stabilimento Tipografico dei Fratelli Miglio, 1880), 6.

presumably inherent maternal tendencies.⁵⁹² The dramatic increase in the size and scope of the school meant that new generations of teachers had to be trained, and as men found alternative employment in the expanding bureaucratic and private sectors, women, who were initially paid less than half the male salary, were actively courted. Other practical concerns, including changes in coeducation in the classroom, the lengthening of the school year, and the extension of obligatory schooling, also factored into the feminization of the profession. However, the dramatic feminization of primary teaching by the First World War points to significant changes in the cultural, ideological, and institutional contexts of the Italian system. In addition to the influence of international and domestic pedagogy that promoted a more maternal teacher and a school tied closely to the family, community, and practical utility, there were profound shifts in the State's centralizing, modernizing, and secularizing goals.

Just as the feminization of teaching reshaped the school, the entrance of large numbers of women into professional, respected employment reshaped the role of women in Italian society and led to changes in ideas of women's emancipation, education, and employment. In a 1911 inquest on the status of women, Liberal Senator Guido Mazzoni wrote, "In my opinion, the biggest event of the nineteenth century is that, almost everywhere, the primary school has been officially entrusted to women, and that women, not just in rare occasions, but in large and constant numbers, have demonstrated themselves to be willing and able to study."⁵⁹³ The same

⁵⁹² Gabriella Seveso, *Come ombre leggere. Gesti, spazi, silenzi nella storia dell'educazione delle bambine* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), 106.

⁵⁹³ Guido Mazzoni, 1911, quoted in Simonetta Soldani, "Nascita della maestra elementare," in *Fare gli italiani: Scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea*, Simonetta Soldani and Gabriele Turi, ed. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993), 67.

ideals promoted for the education of women: “moralità, italianità, and modernità,”⁵⁹⁴ became the ideals of the Liberal school system in general.

By 1911, women had come to dominate the Italian school, not only through their assumption of 72% of teaching posts, but in the very nature of the school, a school that had come to symbolize both Liberal State’s desire to normalize national identity and its frustrated attempts to formulate a thriving civil society. This dissertation has endeavored to argue that the process of feminization was transformative not only for the women for whom it presented an opportunity for financial and social independence and potential political and cultural influence, but for the school and the State it represented. In an address to her female students in 1912, Piacenza *normale* instructor Carolina Zerilli Marimò said:

In other countries, philosophical revolution preceded political revolution. For us, it has been the opposite: grand pedagogical renovation is derived from grand political revolution. And now pedagogy has the arduous and serious task of consolidating the great effects of the social revolution, transforming them into a healthy, serious, true revolution; a profitable revolution that can emanate from the schools and whose secrets will be the work of teachers.⁵⁹⁵

The feminization of the school made women central protagonists in the Liberal State’s goal of unifying Italian culture and identity in an attempt to fulfill the illusive goal of “making Italians”.

⁵⁹⁴ Schenardi, *Per la inaugurazione dell'anno accademico*, 30.

⁵⁹⁵ Carolina Zerilli Marimò, *La figura di Vincenzo Gioberti, Presentata alle giovanette: Discorso commemorativo tenuto alle alunne della R. Scuola normale di Piacenza* (Trapani: Tip. Fratelli Messina, 1912), 34.

Appendix

Ministri della Pubblica Istruzione (Ministers of Public Instruction)

Minister	Dates	Government
Francesco De Sanctis	March 17, 1861 - June 12, 1861	Cavour
Francesco De Sanctis	June 12, 1861 - March 3, 1862	Ricasoli I
Pasquale Stanislao Mancini	March 4, 1862 - March 31, 1862	Rattazzi I
Carlo Matteucci	March 31, 1862 - December 8, 1862	Rattazzi II
Michele Amari	December 8, 1862 - March 24, 1863	Farini
Michele Amari	March 24, 1863 - September 28, 1864	Minghetti I
Giuseppe Natoli	September 28, 1864 - December 31, 1865	La Marmora I
Domenico Berti	December 31, 1865 - June 20, 1866	La Marmora II
Domenico Berti	June 20, 1866 - February 17, 1867	Ricasoli II
Cesare Correnti	February 17, 1867 - April 10, 1867	Ricasoli II
Michele Coppino	April 10, 1867 - October 27, 1867	Rattazzi II
Gerolamo Cantelli	October 27, 1867 - November 18, 1867	Menabrea I
Emilia Broglio	November 18, 1867 - January 5, 1868	Menabrea I
Emilio Broglio	January 5, 1868 - May 13, 1869	Menabrea II
Angelo Bargoni	May 13, 1869 - December 14, 1869	Menabrea III
Cesare Correnti	May 13, 1869 - May 18, 1872	Lanza
Quintino Sella	May 18, 1872 - August 5, 1872	Lanza
Antonio Scialoja	August 5, 1872 - July 10, 1873	Lanza
Antonio Scialoja	July 10, 1873 - February 6, 1874	Minghetti II
Gerolamo Cantelli	February 6, 1874 - September 27, 1874	Minghetti II
Ruggiero Bonghi	September 27, 1874 - November 20, 1876	Minghetti II
Michele Coppino	November 20, 1876 - December 28, 1877	Depretis I
Michele Coppino	December 28, 1877 - March 24, 1878	Depretis II
Francesco De Sanctis	March 24, 1878 - December 19, 1878	Càiroli I
Michele Coppino	December 19, 1878 - July 14, 1879	Depretis II
Francesco Paolo Perez	July 14, 1879 - November 25, 1879	Càiroli II
Francesco De Sanctis	November 25, 1879 - January 2, 1881	Càiroli III
Guido Baccelli	January 2, 1881 - May 29, 1881	Càiroli III
Guido Baccelli	May 29, 1881 - May 25, 1883	Depretis IV
Guido Baccelli	May 25, 1883 - March 30, 1884	Depretis V
Michele Coppino	March 30, 1884 - June 29, 1885	Depretis VI
Michele Coppino	June 29, 1885 - June 10, 1886	Depretis VII
Michele Coppino	June 10, 1886 - April 4, 1887	Depretis VIII
Michele Coppino	April 4, 1887 - July 29, 1887	Depretis IX
Michele Coppino	July 29, 1887 - February 17, 1888	Crispi I
Paolo Boselli	February 17, 1888 - March 9, 1889	Crispi I
Paolo Boselli	March 9, 1889 - February 6, 1891	Crispi II
Pasquale Villari	February 6, 1891 - May 15, 1892	Starrabba I
Ferdinando Martini	May 15, 1892 - December 15, 1893	Giolitti I

Guido Baccelli	December 15, 1893 - March 10, 1896	Crispi III
Emanuele Gianturco	March 10, 1896 - July 11, 1896	Starrabba II
Emanuele Gianturco	July 11, 1896 - September 18, 1897	Starrabba III
Giovanni Codronchi	September 18, 1897 - December 14, 1897	Starrabba III
Nicolò Gallo	December 14, 1897 - June 1, 1898	Starrabba IV
Luigi Cremona	June 1, 1898 - June 29, 1898	Starrabba V
Guido Baccelli	June 29, 1898 - May 14, 1899	Pelloux I
Guido Baccelli	May 14, 1899 - June 24, 1900	Pelloux II
Nicolò Gallo	June 24, 1900 - February 15, 1901	Saracco
Nunzio Nasi	February 15, 1901 - September 3, 1903	Zanardelli
Vittorio Emanuele Orlando	September 3, 1903 - March 12, 1905	Giolitti II
Vittorio Emanuele Orlando	March 12, 1905 - March 27, 1905	Tittoni
Leonardo Bianchi	March 27, 1905 - December 24, 1905	Fortis I
Errico De Marinis	December 24, 1905 - February 8, 1906	Fortis II
Paolo Boselli	February 8, 1906 - May 29, 1906	Sonnino I
Guido Fusinato	May 29, 1906 - August 2, 1906	Giolitti III
Luigi Rava	2 August, 1906 - December 10, 1909	Giolitti III
Eduardo Daneo	December 11, 1909 - March 31, 1910	Sonnino II
Luigi Credaro	March 31, 1910 - March 29, 1911	Luzzatti
Luigi Credaro	March 29, 1911 - March 19, 1914	Giolitti IV
Eduardo Daneo	March 21, 1914 - October 31, 1914	Salandra I
Pasquale Grippo	October 31, 1914 - June 18, 1916	Salandra II
Pasquale Ruffini	June 18, 1916 - October 30, 1917	Boselli
Agostino Berenini	October 30, 1917 - June 23, 1919	Orlando
Roberto De Vito	June 23, 1919 - September 16, 1919	Nitti I
Pietro Chimienti	September 16, 1919 - March 14, 1920	Nitti I
Giulio Alessio	March 14, 1920 - May 21, 1920	Nitti I
Andrea Torre	May 22, 1920 - June 16, 1920	Nitti II
Benedetto Croce	June 16, 1920 - July 4, 1921	Giolitti V
Orso Mario Corbino	July 4, 1921 - February 22, 1922	Bonomi I
Antonino Anile	February 26, 1922 - August 1, 1922	Facta I
Antonino Anile	August 1, 1922 - October 28, 1922	Facta II

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