

This article was downloaded by: [115.85.25.194]

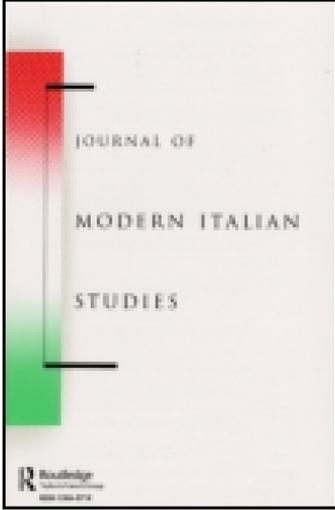
On: 31 March 2015, At: 23:41

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number:

1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer

Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Modern Italian Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmis20>

Protagonists and politics in the Italian women's movement: a reflection on the work of Annarita Buttafuoco

Patrizia Gabrielli

Published online: 09 Dec 2010.

To cite this article: Patrizia Gabrielli (2002) Protagonists and politics in the Italian women's movement: a reflection on the work of Annarita Buttafuoco, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 7:1, 74-87, DOI:

[10.1080/13545710110116932](https://doi.org/10.1080/13545710110116932)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13545710110116932>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or

howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Protagonists and politics in the Italian women's movement: a reflection on the work of Annarita Buttafuoco

Patrizia Gabrielli

University of Siena

Abstract

This article retraces Annarita Buttafuoco's work as a historian of the women's political movement in Italy through a brief survey of her essays and books. These covered more than two centuries of history, ranging from the echoes of the French Revolution in Italy and the constitution of the Jacobin Republics to the struggles for female suffrage and emancipation in the liberal era down to the period after the Second World War and the founding of the Italian Republic. Emphasizing the originality of both the sources and the methodological approaches she used, the article offers a critical appreciation of Annarita Buttafuoco's research and her role in organizing and shaping collective research projects. It is focused on three specific issues: the history of women as conscious historical subjects, the history of women's political movements not only in their social and political contexts but also in relation to institutional networks and the practices of citizenship.

Keywords

Women, Italy, historiography, women's movement, feminism, women's history.

This article analyses the historiographical legacy of Annarita Buttafuoco, professor at the University of Siena and historian of the Italian women's movement, who died prematurely in May 1999. Her twenty-five-year career covered two centuries of history and encompassed varied themes and chronological frameworks. In her magisterial examination of the Italian women's movement, with its victories and its failures, she focused on both famous figures and women who had been completely ignored in traditional political history. Buttafuoco's work, taken as a coherent whole, bears witness to her intellectual depth as well as her vivacity. Reading her books and following the development of her ideas, one cannot help but be struck by the way her rigorous research methods were fuelled by political passion and inspired by her commitment to feminism.

Three main themes seem to stand out and provide continuity to her work: the centrality attributed to the protagonists (*soggetti*), or actors, in history; the study of the political and social expressions of the women's movement; and this

movement's relationship to institutions and the construction of citizenship. If these constituted Buttafuoco's main interests as a historian, another element represented a major novelty, at least as far as the early historiography of Italian women was concerned. This was the use of a vast array of primary sources to open new vistas on the history of the movement for female emancipation, suggesting both new periodizations and previously unexplored categories of research.

Buttafuoco's feminist position and her choice of the field of women's history were interrelated from her debut as a historian. In Rome in 1975 Buttafuoco was one of the founders of the journal, *DWF – Donnamanfemme*. This periodical provided a crucial nexus between political action and scholarly activity, and, in 1979, Buttafuoco became its editor. The politically committed character of Buttafuoco's scholarly engagement animated rather than undermined her work. This was true even in her earliest essays, from which the political questions underlying her work emerged quite provocatively. This attitude softened in later years as she accumulated experience as a historian, although political commitment continued to undergird her passion for research. The confluence of these forces gave her work a particular ethical rigour.

In the 1980s, the Italian feminist movement underwent decisive transformations, and the transmission of history, and women's experiences more generally, became a mission shared by many women's associations. Buttafuoco chose to keep her distance from ideological attitudes fuelled solely by political aims, which she felt ran the risk not only of compromising the quality of scholarly research but of reproducing models that would eventually constrict and even trap women. She maintained a close and fruitful relationship with the feminist movement over the years, participating in debates, conferences, seminars and book presentations organized by women's associations, particularly the *Unione donne italiane*. Today it is still possible to enter the offices of women's associations and see old posters announcing Annarita Buttafuoco's participation in forthcoming events.

Her formation as a historian, beyond the immediate experience of the women's movement, was deeply influenced by the research of French and Anglo-American women's historians, which provided the launching point for her own work. Another formative influence was the historiographical debate that began in Italy in the mid-1970s, aimed at renewing the traditional canons of Italian political history, riding on a wave of Crocean idealism. Buttafuoco entered the debate from the field of the political history of women, following in the footsteps of Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, rightly considered the *doyenne* of Italian women's historians. A professor at the University of Siena, Pieroni Bortolotti published *Alle origini del movimento femminile in Italia* in 1963. As Buttafuoco later wrote, this work 'opened a realm of study that had hitherto been completely unexplored in our country'.¹ In later years, Franca Pieroni investigated the political culture of feminism and, in particular, its complex and difficult relationship with the socialist movement.

Between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s Buttafuoco published,

among other things, a series of historiographical reflections in which she effectively defines her field and research methods. A fundamental part of her emerging maturity as a scholar rested upon her familiarity with archival documents. With patient tenacity, Buttafuoco followed sources that were often inconsistent and fragile, along paths that led to the discovery of new archives of associations and their members, as well as entire collections of periodicals, pamphlets and personal papers. For example, her catalogue of the women's journals held in various Italian libraries provided a broad panorama of sources that over the years has proved itself an invaluable guide to generations of women's historians.² Among her discoveries are the archive of the *Unione femminile nazionale*, the feminist-socialist association founded in Milan in 1899, and the personal archive of its founder, Ersilia Majno.

In recent years, Buttafuoco was particularly involved in the recovery and safeguarding of archival sources for women's history. To this end she founded the *Archivi riuniti delle donne* and, often with her own hands, undertook the work of conserving sources. She was instrumental in the acquisition of the personal collections of many women who had been important in politics or culture, including Ada Sacchi, founder of an umbrella organization for professional women in the 1920s, and Tullia Caretoni, a Senator who was extremely active in the cause of education in Italy after the Second World War. More recently, the *Archivi riuniti* acquired the personal papers of the novelist Alba De Cèspedes.

Important sources such as these, long forgotten, have value in their own right. They have also provided a framework for Buttafuoco's own work, which covers the most significant aspects of the political experience of women over a long line of attempts to gain citizenship after the French Revolution. It is Buttafuoco's recourse to archival sources that marks the break between her research and that of her predecessors. While Franca Pieroni Bortolotti's work was based on collections of published periodicals, pamphlets and propaganda material, for Buttafuoco it seemed to be the 'pleasures of the archive' that sustained her, as well as providing the foundation for her research.

Even the choice of documentary sources indicates the different approaches of these two historians, which were clearly influenced by the different historiographical climates in which they matured. Pieroni Bortolotti, with her emphasis on the history of ideas, follows a long tradition in Italian political history, while Buttafuoco tends to examine the way these ideas worked at the level of everyday life. In other words, she was interested in the concrete experience of the subjects who transmitted these ideas, and in this we see the clear influence of social history. As mentioned earlier, she had three key interests: first, female protagonists in history, particularly the pioneers of female emancipation in Italy; second, the study of the women's movement as a political and social expression; and third, the struggle by early feminists to redefine citizenship.

An early example of the first interest is provided by Buttafuoco's biographical essay on Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel, the heroine of the Neapolitan revolution of 1799. Pimentel's image had been established in a noted essay by

Benedetto Croce, and in certain illustrated albums gathering together 'exceptional women' – a genre that was particularly popular in the period after the Risorgimento. Buttafuoco, beginning her account with a study of the marital separation between Fonseca and her husband, Don Pasquale Tria de Solis, focuses on her militant character. Declaring that she was interested in 'focusing on certain moments in Fonseca's life that pose problems still present in the life of women',³ Buttafuoco questioned the accepted image of the heroine by analysing the interrelationship between her private life and political views. The classic feminist message that 'the personal is political' thus underlies this early work. It contained the seeds of later research, because for Buttafuoco the study of the private realm of her female subjects became an important conduit towards understanding their political choices, and eventually she established a productive dialogue between the two.

Her second major project involved a long and careful study of the Majno family of Milan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This family acted as a fulcrum for Milanese intellectual life, and through a painstaking examination of diaries, notebooks and over 10,000 letters, mainly from the first three decades of the twentieth century, Buttafuoco recreated a crucial period of transformation in Italian politics. The work focused on specific figures and exemplified Buttafuoco's belief in 'valorizing subjectivity' through a biographical approach:

I am mainly interested in what I would call a 'typology' of the militant woman around the turn of the century, not so much the model of the 'emancipationist', but the complex webs linking the constant motivations to action and the specific, personal motivations, that inspired certain women to run the risk of questioning the established female identity. A typology, in short, that flows from a political analysis of emancipationism, together with data on social class, family origins and life-stories, taking account of the 'costs' of militancy, and the need for compromises in order to avoid being completely rejected.⁴

The study of one of the major protagonists of female emancipation, Ersilia Majno, pointed the way to Buttafuoco's principal work, *Le Mariuccine. Storia di un'istituzione laica, l'Asilo Mariuccia*, published in 1985 and reaching a third edition in 1998. The founding of the Asilo Mariuccia, a refuge for young women, was part of Ersilia Majno's crusade for emancipation and one of her most important achievements. The history of the institution was closely intertwined with Majno's life, beginning with the tragic death of her daughter, Mariuccia, in 1901. Majno's grief and the ensuing criticism that she had failed in the duties of motherhood (the child had died of diphtheria while her mother was at a political meeting in Rome) were among the principal motivations for the founding of the refuge. Majno's sense of loss underpinned her political action: 'From that moment, inspired by her position as a grieving mother, she constructed an image of herself as a symbol of martyred maternity, kneeling before all of suffering humanity, mothers and children in particular.'⁵ Although Buttafuoco was

steadfastly against the application of psychological theory to historical analysis because it encouraged simplistic and banal interpretations, in her treatment of Ersilia Majno the death of Mariuccia and resulting trauma play a very important role.

The volume was published in 1985, a period of particular expansion in women's history in general, but one of stasis for political history after its high point in the 1970s. The work met with broad interest and sparked widespread debate.⁶ Buttafuoco reconstructs the history of the Asilo Mariuccia, founded by Ersilia Majno in 1902, against the backdrop of Milan, an industrial city with a large presence of female workers. Majno was the president of the *Unione femminile nazionale*, the highest organized expression of Italian women's emancipationism. The purpose of the refuge was to re-educate girls and young women who resorted, whether continuously or occasionally, to prostitution. The institution operated on a pedagogical model inspired by one of the most important political projects of the late nineteenth-century 'new woman', the struggle against prostitution. The history of the Asilo was closely connected to that of the *Comitato per la tratta delle bianche* (Committee against the White Slave Trade), whose scope was to provide social services that would encourage women to leave prostitution. It also initiated a debate about sex education, an issue generally avoided in pre-First World War Italy.

Carefully re-elaborating models of sexual behaviour promoted by the emancipationists themselves, Buttafuoco examines their difficult dialogue with the young inmates of the refuge. For the emancipationists, sexual relations were to be directed towards reproduction, and anything else was considered to approach perversion, or at the very least, the negation of good moral principles. Representing a moral position that was broadly held within the women's movement, the organizers of the Asilo promoted an austere morality focused upon the negation of the body. Although sharply critical of the sexual double standard, they nevertheless opposed the notion of 'free love', arguing that it would increase the subjection and humiliation of women.

Buttafuoco's analysis of this position focuses upon the concrete experience of the married life of the protagonists, particularly the relationship between Ersilia and her husband Luigi Majno, a lawyer and Socialist Member of Parliament:

For Ersilia the sexual act seemed to have no value in itself: it was a necessary aspect of the life of the couple – whether they were married or not – which for women was redeemed from its 'bestiality' and sublimated by maternity. Her own personal experience was almost certainly at the basis of her vision of sex. This was a vision that was shared by many women, who in turn seemed to experience marriage in a similar way.⁷

From this point of view – which cannot rightly be extended to all middle-class women at the turn of the century and even less to working-class women – married life was to be informed more by the values of companionship than by passion and romantic love.

Ersilia Majno, like her companions, held that it was necessary to study questions connected with sexuality in a rigorous way, and the sexual education programme of the Asilo embodied this view. But at the private level these women resisted real change, and the act of facing the question at the political level did nothing to liberate either Ersilia or her companions from the phantoms of a repressive culture in their private lives. These personal limitations were translated into broader problems, because they limited the possibility for true dialogue between the founders of the institution and the young women it cared for, whose unfettered ways sometimes prompted phobias and moralism on the part of their teachers. There is no triumphalism in this analysis, but, as Marina D'Amelia has acutely noted, Annarita Buttafuoco's book is essentially the history of a defeat.⁸

The causes of this defeat – which is not the only interpretative key to a book that pays close attention to the projects and creativity of its protagonists – lie principally in the fraught relations between the directors of the Asilo and its wards. The young women, though receptive to the care that they were offered, remained estranged if not hostile to the educational project of turning them into 'new women', who would be aware of their rights and determined to promote female interests in the public sphere. To the young girls, the principal attractions of the Asilo were the assurance of regular if frugal meals and the chance to live in comfortable and clean surroundings. It was more difficult for them to appreciate the accompanying cultural and political values. Angela Groppi has pointed out that Buttafuoco's book, suggesting an instructive 'diffidence in the face of any type of rigid pedagogy, feminist or otherwise', contains a useful message that is both historical and political.⁹

The gulf between the two groups of women, due to their different social classes as much as anything else, reveals the existence of two opposing cultural identities. This impression is reinforced by the visits of the young women's relatives. Their way of expressing family relationships, particularly as regards the expression of affection, provides a valuable insight into proletarian family life in early twentieth-century Milan. In Buttafuoco's hands, the Asilo becomes a lens through which to examine both the social history of a city as well as the formation of political feminism. Overall, the book sheds light on the complex dialogue between different women, their shared experiences and their conflicts.

It was with this work that Buttafuoco, while analysing the politics of female associationism, differentiated her approach from that of Franca Pieroni Bortolotti and came to question some of the assumptions that had been absorbed into the canons of historiography. Pieroni Bortolotti had placed emphasis on what she saw as a fracture in the women's movement from the 1890s, arguing that a second wave of feminism had taken over in those years. This was a more moderate movement than that which had risen in the wake of national Unification, embodied by Anna Maria Mozzoni, who had insisted on gender equality as a cardinal principle. Re-evaluating the characteristics of the second wave of feminism, Buttafuoco focused on the value placed on motherhood and the 'politics of maternity', which formed the basis of the movement's assertion of women's political rights.

She saw particular originality in this new stance, aimed at redefining the paradigm of equality that had been formulated by political thinkers:

Significant in this respect is her [Majno's] distinction between equality and equivalence of the two sexes: the first term effaces the differences that distinguish men from women; for Majno, these differences constitute a valued legacy, to be utilized in political action.¹⁰

'Equivalence', then, becomes the new paradigm for a reading of the feminist movement's proposals, embodying both its aims and its contradictions. Buttafuoco uses this paradigm to examine its social programmes, which trained 'a group of women to act out the values of social solidarity, and to learn that it was possible, if both local and central political institutions showed the will, to change the entire face of society'.¹¹

This idea, taken up by the author on several occasions, is articulated in particular detail in her second book, *Cronache femminili*, in which the women's press provides the lens for further examination of the development of the women's movement. On the one hand, the ideas of the movement seem to provide the central theme of the book. On the other, though, the author appears to be particularly preoccupied with the question of 'how this culture translated itself into "politics"'.¹² This leads to a close examination of the controversial dialogue between the women's movement and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), in particular the debate about protective legislation for women and children in the workforce, approved in 1902. Beginning in 1897, this debate revealed conflicting positions among the various strands of the women's movement. An example was the confrontation between Anna Maria Mozzoni, who supported women's right to work, and Anna Kuliscioff, who emphasized the need to protect women by restricting their access to night work and dangerous trades. Pieroni Bortolotti had already studied this encounter in detail, but Buttafuoco took it up again and placed it in the context of national politics. The debate over labour laws for women and children witnessed the PSI persistently ignoring the proposals put by female emancipationists. The PSI maintained a similar attitude in relation to female suffrage, a question which became particularly pertinent during the Giolittian era, and which Buttafuoco considers in relation to various parliamentary proposals.

Another major theme in *Cronache femminili* represents one of the most complex problems in Italian feminist historiography: the problem of war, and the First World War in particular. Buttafuoco examines the question in the light of the internal dynamics of the movement, which was becoming fractured by divisions that were as much generational as they were political. These divisions had a great deal to do with the relationship with the Socialist Party and became particularly evident during the party congress of 1911, held in Modena. Anna Kuliscioff, in line with the war cry she had coined a year earlier, 'march divided to strike united', asked her supporters to withdraw their backing from the pro-suffrage committees, in line with the official position of the party.

The previous involvement of many socialist women in the battle for the vote had won them much admiration from the suffragettes. But the official stance of the party weakened their position and reduced their chances of cooperating with middle-class suffrage organizations. Kuliscioff's contradictory stance and the conviction of Filippo Turati, her partner, that women lacked the necessary political 'maturity' for voting, disoriented socialist women. As a result, many looked to other movements for support of their cause, and when the nationalists and later the Fascists took up the issue of women's suffrage, they attracted the following of a significant number of Italian feminists.

The interaction between the concept of 'equivalence' and the crisis of the looming First World War provides a key to the thesis behind *Cronache femminili*, in that it provides the basis for Buttafuoco's revision of Franca Pieroni's work. Pieroni had, as already mentioned, placed great emphasis on the development of a new strand of moderate feminism in the 1890s, which distinguished itself from its more radical predecessor. Buttafuoco re-evaluates this scheme in terms of both the internal dynamics of the movement, in which generational divisions weighed heavily upon the struggle to define priorities, and the movement's relationship with Italian society, particularly governing institutions. Her examination of the choice to insert feminist activism into the framework of national politics allows her to review the periodization chosen by Pieroni Bortolotti and she shifts the crucial turning point in the Italian women's movement to the decision to invade Libya in 1911. It was the movement's joining Italian society more generally in its embrace of nationalism that, according to Buttafuoco, marked the clearest transformation in the movement's character.

According to this thesis, it was only in the second decade of the twentieth century that the women's political movement began to dilute its radically democratic commitment, based on a pacifist tradition. Many bourgeois feminist organizations supported Italy's entrance into the First World War and organized war relief at the front. Although the women's movement continued to be comprised of diverse ideological strands, feminists were unified by the expectation that this enormous display of female responsibility and virtue would win them the vote at the end of the war. It was during the ensuing crisis that the culture of maternity, brought back into the bosom of tradition, lost its innovative force, and became, as the Fascist years would verify, one of the main obstacles to the achievement of emancipation and full citizenship for women.

Buttafuoco thus offered a broad panorama of questions and ideas that still deserve further research. In particular the generational fracture she discerned needs to be examined in relation to the development of nationalist feminism and its 'flesh and blood' representatives (to use an expression dear to Annarita). The phenomenon remains a significant lacuna in Italian historiography. So does the disbanding of the emancipationist movement after the war, when some elements went over to Fascism and others went underground in opposition to it.

The relationship between political elites and the masses had been one of the principal themes of *Le Mariuccine*, and it receives specific treatment in *Cronache*

femminili through an analysis of the letters addressed to the editor of *L'Unione Femminile*. It is a question that Buttafuoco presses further in later years, deepening the research with new data, and it thus constitutes just one aspect of her desire to analyse more closely the links between the private and the political spheres. She had already attempted to overcome some of the difficulties inherent in this project with her essay on Eleonora Fonseca, and in the late 1980s the private sphere became an instrument which allowed her to measure the weaknesses and contradictions of the women's movement.

The essays published in the wake of *Le Mariuccine* demonstrate a greater awareness of the author's own historiographical aims and further refinements in her methods. Particularly noteworthy is *Vite esemplari. Donne di primo Novecento*, which studies the relationship between Ersilia Majno and Sibilla Aleramo, two of the best-known women writers of the period. Aleramo's autobiographical novel, *Una donna*, published in 1906, focused on the dramatic contradiction between maternity and the right to live an independent life and launched a major debate that attracted strong criticism from many Italian feminists. At the centre of Buttafuoco's study lies the question of the existential transformations in the lives of female emancipationists and, above all, the problem of how those changes could be translated into daily life. On the one hand, those transformations led to a growing consciousness of women's identity as women, and on the other, the weight of the political structure, informed by cultural prejudices, made it complex and difficult to turn this growing consciousness into concrete reality. Using the personal papers of Majno and Aleramo, Buttafuoco traces the efforts made by individual women in this direction, showing the complexities of a political choice that was always linked to a personal conviction.

While the memory of the movement, the dialogue between generations, and the difficult task of transmitting a political and cultural message were the central focuses of Buttafuoco's intellectual engagement, it is nevertheless worth considering another work that was rather different in character. Her sensitivity towards the work of previous generations inspired her to assume responsibility for publication of the papers left by Pieroni Bortolotti, who had been the pioneer of women's history in Italy. Therefore, as Buttafuoco put it in the introduction to the volume, her work on the socialist and democratic movement 'gave "roots", and therefore historical legitimacy, to the present women's movement'.¹³

In the same spirit of recognition of the contribution women had made to the feminist movement, Buttafuoco dedicated her next volume to Elvira Badaracco. In 1979, Badaracco had founded, in partnership with Pierette Coppa, Milan's Centro di studi storici sul movimento di liberazione della donna in Italia, and the volume was prepared to honour Badaracco on her eightieth birthday. In her essay, which examines the origins of models of the state and democracy, Buttafuoco settled upon the theme that would dominate her work in the 1990s.¹⁴ This was the question of women's citizenship, and it found its complete expression in her last volume, *Questioni di cittadinanza*, as well as in an exhibition she curated, entitled *Cittadine*.

The exhibition, mounted at the city library of Arezzo in 1996, was conceived, coordinated and realized by Buttafuoco, in collaboration with other historians of women. The purpose of the exhibition was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the enactment of women's suffrage in Italy. Covering two centuries of national and international history, the exhibition showed the developments and crucial turning points of a long struggle, with documents written by women and portraits of such leading lights as Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft, Clara Zetkin and Teresa Labriola. It showed German suffragettes at the beginning of the twentieth century and images of Italian women lining up to vote for the first time on 2 June 1946. Beyond its importance as a cultural celebration and a representation of women's history, the exhibition conveyed a valuable political message, contrasting a dynamic story with the silence or indifference of the parties, the press and other institutions on the issue. It also offered contemporary women a symbolic date that promised to reinforce their identity as citizens and restore their ties to an earlier generation of feminists. It is also worth noting the particular contribution of another Italian historian, Anna Rossi Doria, who published a volume on the theme of the exhibition.¹⁵

Buttafuoco's last work, *Questioni di cittadinanza*, was a broad reflection on the theme of citizenship. Its focus is again the early days of the emancipationist movement in Lombardy, against a background of economic growth and the development of the middle classes – all of which provided a context for new experiences for women, above all access to the professions. The work provides statistical data on the expansion in women's employment as workers, telephonists, typists and the like, reading the phenomenon in terms of regional varieties and class differences. In Milan, the dynamism of municipal socialism, augmented by a spirit of philanthropy and mutual aid, created a rich cultural humus which nourished the aspirations of a generation of women who became aware of their rights.

This was the background to the founding in 1880 of the Lega promotrice degli interessi femminili (League to promote female interests), by Anna Maria Mozzoni and Paolina Schiff. The founding of this association was a true milestone in the history of Italian women, and it became a 'model that would inspire associations of women in the years to come'.¹⁶ Paolina Schiff was another important feminist of the era, particularly noted for her campaign for the legalization of paternity suits and deeply involved in the effort to establish social policies supporting maternity. Her work provided an important link between the women's movement and the associations of women workers.

Beginning with the foundation of the League in 1880, Buttafuoco examines the aims and character of the various women's associations gathered under its umbrella. What emerges is a varied and lively portrait of an array of subjects, ranging from cultivated representatives of the Milanese bourgeoisie such as Ersilia Majno, to teachers like the socialist Linda Malnati, to workers and clerks such as Giuditta Brambilla and Erminia Rizzioli. The book follows these figures in their rounds between the headquarters of the emancipationist associations,

their newspaper offices, congresses and committees, reporting extracts from speeches and samples of feminist journalism. The result is a synthesis of the principal aims of these women, which could be summed up in the expression of one shared aim: 'the formation of the woman citizen'.

Various ideas and initiatives circulated around this objective, aiming to reinforce women's consciousness of the rights that had hitherto been denied to them, and the disparity between their legal position and that of men. But as Buttafuoco underlines, 'the objective was not in fact to "integrate" women in the public sphere, leaving the overall framework intact, but rather to redefine the very concept and meaning of citizenship'.¹⁷ The determining elements in this process were to be the competence and values that were considered feminine, those very qualities that had determined the exclusion of women from citizenship in the first place. These were now to become their point of strength, and the catalyst for the redefinition of citizenship.

In this volume as in others, Buttafuoco is engaged in the search for a new definition of politics, and for this reason she shies away from applying the rigid analytical frameworks of traditional political history, as well as those of political science and sociology. She presents a critique of the paradigm put forward by T. H. Marshall, who is rightly considered the precursor of modern studies of citizenship, and according to whom the acquisition of citizenship rights follows a linear development from civil to political and finally social rights. Based on her study of the early women's movement, Buttafuoco rejects the classic division between the public and private spheres and instead posits a continual interchange between them; it is this interchange that inspired Italian women to redefine the meaning of citizenship. On the one hand, Buttafuoco's critical analysis affirms the specific contributions of women's history and, thus, its legitimacy. On the other hand, particularly with her last volume, she proves that women's history is not self-referential and 'ghettoized', but multidimensional and able to offer new perspectives on traditional historiographic issues.

Buttafuoco traces differentiated contexts and areas of political intervention in which women were not merely present, but proactive in weaving a dense network of relationships among themselves and with the outside world. These networks, though promoted by impulses that were diverse and sometimes even contradictory, had as an underlying motive the desire to refashion the nature of access to political and social rights. Through these networks women intervened in the public sphere, at the same time modifying its very character. It is in this interaction that Buttafuoco saw the most potential for further research, suggesting several innovative approaches for the future. Among these were the relationships between feminist groups and local administration, in particular in the context of municipal socialism in Milan, and also in Rome during the famous period when Ernesto Nathan was mayor. These administrations represented important phases in the development of democracy and the implementation of new political strategies, but as yet they have not been examined by women's historians.

In my view, the importance of Annarita Buttafuoco's work lies as much in the vistas she opens for future work as in the results of her own research. *Questioni di cittadinanza* takes up and broadens some of the central themes of her career, in particular women's engagement in the public sphere. At the same time the book also foreshadows the direction of research she planned for the future.

Between 1996 and 1998 she focused her attention on the period after the Second World War. Although she had mainly concentrated on the liberal era, this was not a new period for her. In 1980 she had published an essay in which she considered the difficult, and sometimes completely absent, dialogue between the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the feminist movement, with particular reference to the *Unione donne italiane* (UDI), the main women's organization of the post-war period.¹⁸ Whereas this early work, following in the wake of Pieroni Bortolotti's research, emphasized the relationship between women and political parties, the most recent study goes far beyond that framework, privileging the citizenship question as the lens through which to view the women's movement and its proposals.

The motives for Buttafuoco's renewed interest in the post-war period were many, but the most important was the Italian political climate in the 1990s, with its debates on institutional reform and the victory of a conservative coalition determined to recast the values at the base of the republican constitution. The crisis that struck the 'republic of parties' inspired a notable stream of research that, through monographs and works of synthesis, re-examined the preceding half-century of Italian history. In 1997, Buttafuoco wrote an editorial for *Passato e Presente*, which surveyed the Italian political framework from a feminist point of view. She began with the numerous women involved in the Resistance and continued through the achievement of women's suffrage, the entrance of women into the institutions of the state and the participation of the two main women's associations of the post-war period. These were the *Unione donne italiane*, socialist-communist in orientation, and the *Centro italiano femminile*, representing the Catholic wing. Both associations shared the conviction that the achievement of political rights had to be accompanied by the equal achievement of full social rights. This conviction had sustained informal networks of social assistance that refigured those that would be provided by the welfare state. Networks of solidarity to some extent filled the gaps left by the weakening of traditional social links, but they also foreshadowed the possibility of a changing role for women within the family. This political project clashed with the overall choices of the new republic, which, despite a political pact based on the dignity of labour, affirmed the role of women within the family:

The constitution, in fact, in proclaiming the rights of women to work, and in recognizing, with the principle of wage parity, the equal value of women, at the same time limited, as much at the symbolic level as on the practical level, the significance of those solemn proclamations by confirming the 'essentially family-based function' of women (art. 37). In this way the old contradictions

were re-established in the founding agreement of the new state: once again women, if not exclusively, were connected 'essentially' to the private sphere. Confirming their traditionally weak identification as workers also rendered their identity as citizens weak and precarious.¹⁹

These statements are an invitation to reconsider the fragility and contradictions of the women's movement, and in a broader sense to reconsider the characteristics of anti-Fascist culture, the founding paradigm of the new Italian state, which seemed once again to exclude women from full citizenship.

Buttafuoco accompanied her significant scholarly output with a rigorous commitment to teaching and dissemination. Finding ways and means to facilitate research on women's history was a constant aim, to which she dedicated herself not only through her work as a university teacher but also through editorial initiatives, among them a biographical dictionary of women which remained incomplete. She intended this work, on the one hand, as a research instrument, and on the other as a mirror that would reflect the results of work already done by researchers in various disciplines, bringing to light the names of women who had long been either unknown or forgotten.

During these last years Annarita Buttafuoco returned to work on a biography, that of Matilde Bassani Finzi. Matilde came from a well-known Jewish family in Ferrara, and had been involved in the Resistance. Attracted by the broader debate on the Resistance, Buttafuoco was also keen to return to biography, a historiographical territory that she once described as 'extremely slippery and insecure'.²⁰ Buttafuoco had begun the book but, like the history of the *Unione femminile*, the organization of which she herself had been president since 1993, it remained unfinished. Using fragments that appear in various essays it is possible to see the line of interpretation that might have been followed, based on a study of local groups and the activities of various sections and centres around the country. Nevertheless, these elements are insufficient to give a full idea of the complexity of this new area of research, which will, sadly, never be completed.

Notes

- 1 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Introduzione', Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, *Sul movimento politico delle donne. Scritti inediti*, ed. A. Buttafuoco (Rome: Utopia, 1987), p. ix.
- 2 Annarita Buttafuoco and Rosa De Longis (eds) 'La stampa politica delle donne dal 1861 al 1924. Repertorio-catalogo', *Nuova DWF. Donnawomanfemme* 21 (1982): 73–100.
- 3 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel: una donna nella rivoluzione', *Nuova DWF* 3 (1977): 54.
- 4 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Il sentimento della politica', in *Percorsi del femminismo e storia delle donne. Atti del Convegno di Modena 2–4 aprile 1982*, *Nuova donnawomanfemme* (supplement to no. 22) (1982): 53.
- 5 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Vite esemplari. Donne di primo Novecento', in A. Buttafuoco and M. Zancan (eds) *Svelamento. Sibilla Aleramo: Una biografia intellettuale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988), p. 157.

- 6 For example, the prestigious journal *Memoria* took the opportunity to publish a comparative review by three well-known proponents of women's history, Marina D'Amelia, Michela De Giorgio and Angela Groppi, all of whom praised both its thematic and methodological innovations. See M. D'Amelia, M. De Giorgio and A. Groppi, 'L'emancipazionismo italiano tra ideologia e politica', *Memoria* 16–17 (1985): 115–29.
- 7 Annarita Buttafuoco, *Le Mariuccine. Storia di un'istituzione laica. L'Asilo Mariuccia*, 3rd edn (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1998), p. 179.
- 8 D'Amelia *et al.*, 'L'emancipazionismo', p. 124.
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 Buttafuoco, *Le Mariuccine*, p. 183.
- 11 Annarita Buttafuoco, *Questioni di cittadinanza. Donne e diritti sociali nell'Italia liberale* (Siena: Protagon Editori Toscani, 1997), p. 59.
- 12 Annarita Buttafuoco, *Cronache femminili. Temi e momenti della stampa emancipazionista in Italia dall'Unità al fascismo* (Siena: Dipartimento di studi storici-sociali e filosofici, Università degli Studi di Siena, 1998), p. 16.
- 13 Buttafuoco, 'Introduzione', p. ix.
- 14 A. Buttafuoco, 'La causa delle donne. Cittadinanza e genere nel triennio "giacobino" italiano', in Annarita Buttafuoco (ed.) *Modi di essere. Studi, riflessioni, interventi sulla cultura e la politica delle donne in onore di Elvira Badaracco* (Milan: EM Ricerche, 1991).
- 15 Anna Rossi Doria, *Diventare cittadine* (Florence: Giunti, 1996).
- 16 Buttafuoco, *Questioni di cittadinanza*, pp. 55–6.
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 59.
- 18 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Italy: the feminist challenge', in C. Broggs and D. Plotke (eds) *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition* (Boston: South End Press, 1980), pp. 197–219.
- 19 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Cittadine italiane al voto', *Passato e Presente* 40 (1997): 10.
- 20 Annarita Buttafuoco, 'Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel: una donna nella rivoluzione', *Nuova DWF* 3 (1997): 51.